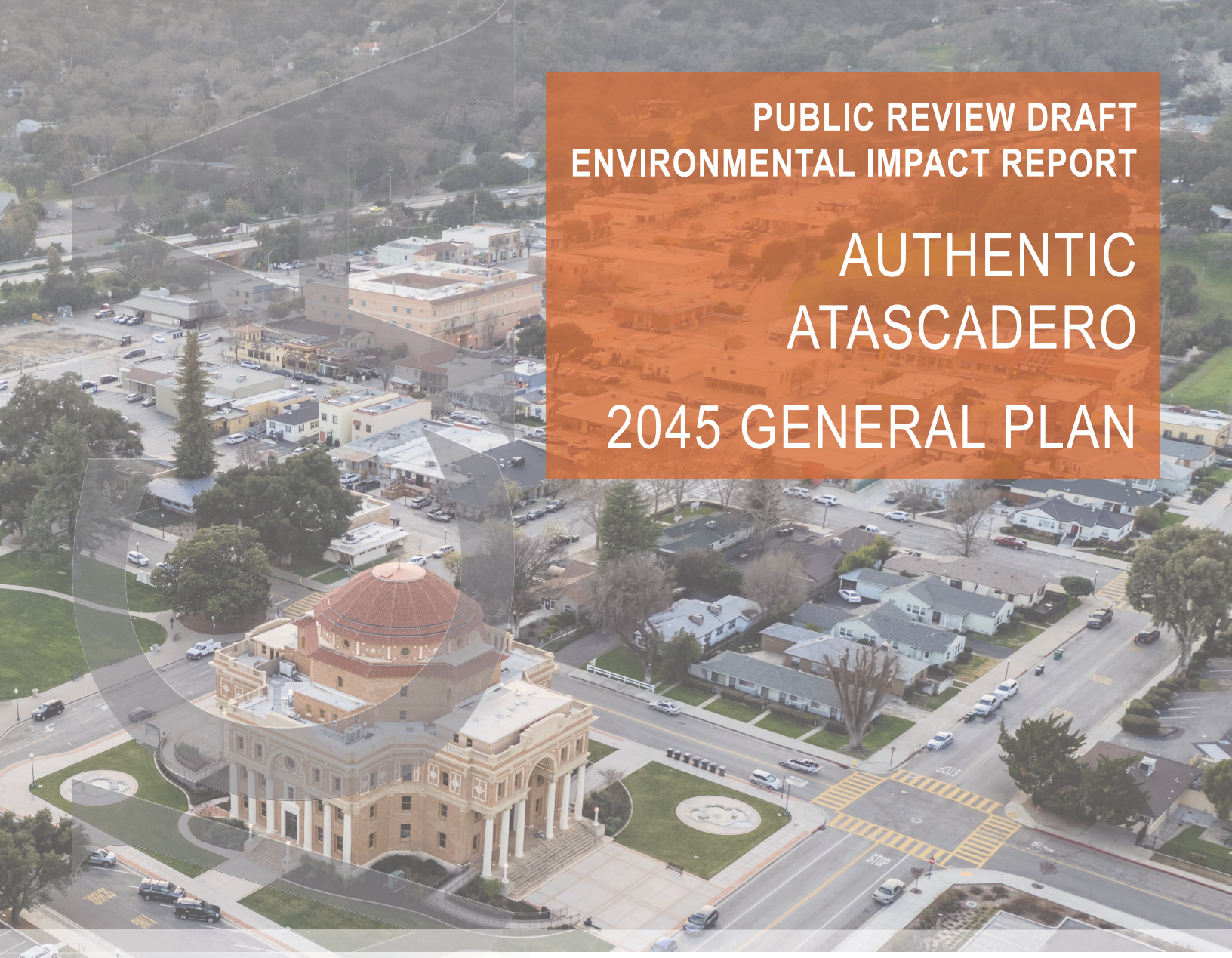

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

AUTHENTIC ATASCADERO 2045 GENERAL PLAN

PREPARED FOR

City of Atascadero
6500 Palma Avenue
Atascadero, California 93422

SCH No. 2024070598

April 2026

PREPARED BY

SWCA Environmental Consultants
4111 Broad Street, Suite 210
San Luis Obispo, California 93401

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2045 GENERAL PLAN

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City of Atascadero
6500 Palma Avenue
Atascadero, CA 93422
Contact: Phil Dunsmore, Community Development Director

Prepared by

Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager

SWCA Environmental Consultants
4111 Broad Street, Suite 210
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
(805) 543-7095
www.swca.com

SWCA Project No. 69101

April 2026

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Term
ABGSA	Atascadero Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
ACM	asbestos-containing material
ADL	aerially deposited lead
ADT	average daily traffic
ADU	accessory dwelling unit
AERHD	Atascadero Estates Residential Historic District
AFV	alternative fuel vehicle
AHERA	Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act
ALPS	Atascadero Land Preservation Society
AMBIENT	AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting
AMWC	Atascadero Mutual Water Company
APD	Atascadero Police Department
APS	alternative planning strategy
AQI	Air Quality Index
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ATCM	Air Toxics Control Measure
AUSD	Atascadero Unified School District
BACT	best available control technology
BERD	Built Environment Resource Directory
BMP	best management practice
BSC	Building Standards Commission
CAAQS	California Ambient Air Quality Standards
CAFE	corporate average fuel economy
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Cal OES	Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CalARP	California Accidental Release Prevention Program
CalEPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
CalRecycle	California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery
CAMP	Construction Activity Management Plan
CAP	Clean Air Plan
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CBC	California Building Code
CCAA	California Clean Air Act
CCIC	Central California Information Center
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CCRWQCB	Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
CCTC	Central Coast Transportation Consulting

Acronym	Term
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CDOC	California Department of Conservation
CDOF	California Department of Finance
CEC	California Energy Commission
CEC	California Energy Commission
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CESA	California Endangered Species Act of 1970
CFC	California Fire Code
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CGS	California Geologic Survey
CH_4	methane
CHL	California State Historical Landmark
CHRIS	California Historical Resources Information System
CI	*Coccidioides immitis*
CIP	Capital Improvement Plan
CLOMR	Conditional Letter of Map Revision
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNEL	community noise equivalent level
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO	carbon monoxide
CO_2	carbon dioxide
COC	constituents of concern
CPUC	California Public Utilities Commission
CREC	Commercial Recreation
CRHR	California Register of Historical Resources
CRR	Community Risk Reduction
CTC	California Transportation Commission
CUP	conditional use permit
CUPA	Certified Unified Program Agency
CWA	Clean Water Act
dB	decibel
dBA	A-weighted decibel
DPM	diesel particulate matter
DPR	Department of Pesticide Regulation
DPS	Distinct Population Segment
DSOD	Division of Safety of Dams
DTSC	Department of Toxic Substance Control

Acronym	Term
DWR	Department of Water Resources
EAP	Energy Action Plan
EHS	Environmental Health Services
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EMFAC 2021	California Air Resources Board Emission Factor 2021
EO	Executive Order
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPAct	Energy Policy Act of 1992
FCAA	federal Clean Air Act
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FESA	federal Endangered Species Act of 1973
FHSZ	fire hazard severity zone
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FICON	Federal Interagency Committee on Noise
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FMMP	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
FP	Fully Protected
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
FRA	Federal Responsibility Areas
GHG	greenhouse gas
GIS	geographic information system
GSA	groundwater sustainability agency
GSP	groundwater sustainability plan
GWP	global warming potential
HAP	Hazardous Air Pollutants
HCD	Housing and Community Development
HDR	High-Density Residential
HFC	hydrofluorocarbon
HS	Historical Site
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
HVAC	heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
Hz	hertz
IRWM	Integrated Regional Water Management
IWMA	Integrated Waste Management Authority
LAFCO	Local Agency Formation Commission
LAMP	Local Agency Management Program
LAMP	Local Area Management Plan

Acronym	Term
LCI	Land Use and Climate Innovation
L_{dn}	day-night average sound level
L_{eq}	Equivalent Continuous Sound Level.
LHMP	Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
LID	Low Impact Development
L_{max}	Maximum Sound Level
LOC	Land Use, Open Space and Conservation
LOMR	Letter of Map Revision
LOS	level of service
LP	Local Potential
LRA	Local Responsibility Areas
LRSP	Local Road Safety Plan
LUCI	Land Use and Climate Initiative
LUST	Leaking Underground Storage Tank
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MDR	Medium-Density Residential
MGD	million gallons per day
MIG, Inc.	MIG
MJHMP	Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan
MLD	Most Likely Descendant
MM	Mitigation Measure
MMBTU	million metric British thermal units
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MRZ	mineral resource zones
MU	Mixed Use
MW	megawatt
N_2O	nitrous oxide
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NESHAP	National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NHSTA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
NOA	naturally occurring asbestos
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOP	Notice of Preparation

Acronym	Term
NOX	oxides of nitrogen
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPL	National Priorities List
NPPA	Native Plant Protection Act
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NRPA	National Recreation and Park Association
NWP	Nacimiento Water Project
OEIS	Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
OES	Office of Emergency Services
ºF	degrees Fahrenheit
OHP	Office of Historic Preservation
OPR	Office of Planning and Research
ORV	off-road vehicle
OS	Open Space
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
OWTS Policy	Water Quality Control Policy for Siting, Design, Operation, and Maintenance of On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems
OWTS	on-site wastewater treatment system
P&R	Park and Ride
PCB	polychlorinated biphenyl
PCC	Portland cement concrete
PD	Planned Development
Penn State	Pennsylvania State University
PFC	perfluorocarbons
PG&E	Pacific Gas and Electric
PHEV	plug-in hybrid electric vehicle
PM	particulate matter
PRC	Public Resources Code
PTASP	Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan
PV	photovoltaic
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RE	Rural Estate
RHNA	Regional Housing Needs Allocation
RHND	Regional Housing Needs Determination
ROG	reactive organic gases
ROW	right-of-way
RR	Rural Residential

Acronym	Term
RS	Residential Suburban
RTP	regional transportation plan
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SA	Special Animal
SAA	Streambed Alteration Agreement
SAF	State Alternative Fuel
SARA	Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act
SC	Service Commercial
SCCAB	South Central Coast Air Basin
SCS	sustainable communities strategy
SE	Suburban Estate
SEMS	Standardized Emergency Management System
SF_6	sulfur hexafluoride
SFR	Single-Family Residential
SGMA	Sustainable Groundwater Management Act
SHMP	State of California's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan
SLCP	Short-lived climate pollutant
SLOAPCD	San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District
SLOCOG	San Luis Obispo Council of Governments
SLOLAFCO	San Luis Obispo County Local Agency Formation Commission
SLORTA	San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority
SMARA	Surface Mining and Reclamation Act
SMGB	State Mining and Geology Board
SOI	Secretary of the Interior
SOI	sphere of influence
SP	service-population
SRA	State Responsibility Areas
SSA	Safe System Approach
SSC	Species of Special Concern
SVP	Society of Vertebrate Paleontology
SWPPP	storm water pollution prevention plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TAC	toxic air contaminant
TCM	transportation control measures
TDM	travel demand model
TIF	traffic impact fee
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Loads
TOT	transient occupancy tax
TPZ	Timberland Production Zone

Acronym	Term
TRU	transport refrigeration unit
TSCA	Toxic Substances Control Act
TSEG	total system electric generation
UCMP	University of California Museum of Paleontology
UPRR	Union Pacific Railroad
URL	Urban Reserve Line
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
USL	Urban Services Line
UWMP	Urban Water Management Plan
VFCE	Valley Fever Center for Excellence
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
WDR	waste discharge requirements
WOTS	waters of the State
WOTUS	waters of the United States
WRF	Water Reclamation Facility
WUI	Wildland-Urban Interface
ZEV	zero-emission vehicles

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The City of Atascadero (City), as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to assess the impacts that may result from the approval of the proposed 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning code Update (project; see Chapter 2, Project Description, for the full description of the proposed project). This EIR will serve as a public information document to be used by the general public, responsible and trustee agencies, and decision-making bodies to review and evaluate the environmental effects associated with the project and potential mitigation measures recommended to address or minimize those effects. The review process gives both agencies and individuals an opportunity to share expertise, discuss agency analyses, check for accuracy, detect omissions, discover public concerns, and solicit mitigation measures and alternatives capable of avoiding or reducing the significant effects of the project while still attaining most of the basic objectives of the project.

The remainder of the Executive Summary consists of the following sections:

- A brief description of the project location;
- A summary of the project background;
- The project objectives; and
- A summary of key impacts and mitigation measures associated with the project.

A detailed evaluation of project alternatives and the environmentally superior alternative is provided in Chapter 6, *Alternatives Analysis*, of this EIR. Therefore, a discussion of project alternatives is not included in this executive summary.

2. PROJECT LOCATION

The City of Atascadero encompasses an area of approximately 26 square miles and is situated in San Luis Obispo County, roughly midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. The project area covers approximately 32 square miles within Atascadero's Planning Area, extending beyond the City limits. This area includes the entirety of the City as well as adjacent areas, including the sphere of influence (SOI), which largely corresponds to the historic boundary of the Atascadero Colony.

3. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The City of Atascadero, incorporated in 1979, has a rich and varied history that has shaped its development over time. Originally established as part of the historic Atascadero Colony in the early 20th century, the City has evolved from its roots as a planned community with agricultural, residential, and civic uses into a vibrant municipality serving a diverse population. Over the decades, Atascadero has seen significant changes in land use, infrastructure, and community character, influenced by regional growth, transportation improvements, and state and local planning initiatives.

The 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update encompass the entire City and its planning area, which includes all lands within the City limits as well as adjacent areas within the SOI. This update provides a comprehensive framework to guide future growth and development, address community needs, and respond to challenges such as housing, economic development, transportation and open space preservation.

The 2045 General Plan Update proposes a vision for Atascadero's future that balances growth with the preservation of community character and natural resources. Detailed descriptions of proposed land use changes, policy updates, and implementation measures are provided in Section 2, Project Description.

Through this process, Atascadero aims to ensure that future development is consistent with community values, supports a high quality of life, and meets the needs of current and future residents.

4. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(b), this statement of objectives describes the underlying purpose of the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update and will guide the development of reasonable alternatives evaluated in the EIR. The purpose and goal of the 2045 General Plan is to articulate a community-driven vision for Atascadero's future, providing a comprehensive policy framework for preservation, growth, and change citywide. The 2045 General Plan aims to ensure that Atascadero continues to be a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive community, responsive to evolving trends, community needs, and regional challenges, while honoring its unique history and character. The following guiding principles are intended to achieve these purposes:

Guiding Principles – Our Places

- Respect Atascadero's semi-rural character as the community evolves.
- Facilitate vibrant public spaces that encourage community connections. Support City parks, trails, and facilities that provide access to a variety of recreation experiences.
- Promote investments in downtown that support the needs of local businesses and residents and provide a quality experience for visitors.
- Encourage synergistic commercial and residential uses along the El Camino Real and Morro Road corridors to support long-term viability of commercial spaces.

Guiding Principles – Our People

- Support a culture that is welcoming, inclusive, and based on mutual respect.
- Create and maintain opportunities for people of all income levels and ages to live, work, raise families, and retire in Atascadero.
- Target growth to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life.

Guiding Principles – Our Economy

- Incentivize a mix of business and revenue streams that support a resilient economy.
- Diversify Atascadero's employment opportunities to address the needs of an evolving workforce and attract jobs for all skill levels and income ranges.

Guiding Principles – Our Infrastructure

- Facilitate safe, convenient, and comfortable connections for people of all abilities and in different stages of life.
- Support and maintain efficient and sustainable infrastructure systems.
- Organize public service systems so that all neighborhoods and business districts have access to public services and emergency response.
- Plan and prepare for community safety and resiliency from evolving climate threats, natural, and human-caused hazards.

Guiding Principles – Our Natural Environment

- Integrate Atascadero's natural, historical, and cultural landscapes and resources into planning decisions.

These guiding principles collectively serve as the guidance for the policies, programs, and actions detailed in the 2045 General Plan, guiding Atascadero's evolution as a thriving, authentic, and resilient community.

5. SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS IDENTIFIED

Impacts of the proposed project and alternatives have been classified using the categories described below:

- **Significant, unavoidable, adverse impacts (Class I):** Significant impacts that cannot be fully and effectively mitigated. No measures could be taken to avoid or reduce these adverse effects to insignificant or negligible levels.
- **Significant, but mitigable impacts (Class II):** These impacts are potentially similar in significance to those of significant, unavoidable, adverse impacts, but can be reduced or avoided by the implementation of mitigation measures.
- **Less than significant impacts (Class III):** Mitigation measures may still be required for these impacts as long as there is rough proportionality between the environmental impacts caused by the project and the mitigation measures imposed on the project.

The term "significance" is used throughout the EIR to characterize the magnitude of the projected impact. For the purpose of this EIR, a significant impact is a substantial or potentially substantial change to resources in the local proposed project area or the area adjacent to the proposed project. In the discussions of each issue area, thresholds are identified that are used to distinguish between significant and insignificant impacts. To the extent feasible, distinctions are also made between local and regional significance and short-term versus long-term duration. Where possible, measures have been identified to reduce project impacts to less than significant levels. CEQA requires that public agencies should not approve projects as proposed if there are feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen the environmental effects of such projects (CEQA Statute Section 21002). Included with each mitigation measure are the plan requirements needed to ensure that the mitigation is included in the plans and construction of the project and the required timing of the action (e.g., prior to development of final construction plans, prior to commencement of construction, prior to operation, etc.).

The impacts and associated mitigation measures are shown in the Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures (refer to Table ES-1). The table includes significant impacts, which are identified with an impact number (e.g., Impact AQ-1). The table also includes less than significant impacts, which are not identified with an impact number, but are included and summarized in the table for reference.

The impact summary table describes and classifies each impact, lists recommended mitigation when applicable, and states the level of residual impact (i.e., impact after implementation of mitigation).

Table ES-1. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Aesthetics		
Impact AES-1: The project would potentially have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact AES-2: The project would not substantially damage any scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact AES-3: The project would potentially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views within nonurbanized areas or conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact AES-4: The project would potentially create a new source of substantial light or glare that could adversely affect day or nighttime views.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact AES-5: The project would potentially contribute to a cumulative source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Agriculture and Forestry Resources		
Impact AG-1: The project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland Of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact AG-2: The project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact AG-3: The project would not conflict with existing zoning for or cause rezoning of forest land, timberland, or Timberland Production zones.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact AG-4: The project would result in the loss of forest land or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact AG-5: The project would result in other changes that could result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact AG-6: The project would contribute to a cumulative source of substantial loss or conversion of agricultural or forest land.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy		
Impact AQ-1: The project would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.	No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.	Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I)
Impact AQ-2: The project could result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants for which the project region is non-attainment.	No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.	Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I)
Impact AQ-3: The project could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.	No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.	Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I)
Impact AQ-4: The project would not result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact AQ-5: The project would result in cumulatively considerable impacts associated with projected long-term increases in vehicle miles traveled and mobile-source emissions.	No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.	Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I)
Impact GHG-1: The project could generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may result in a significant environmental impact and could conflict with applicable plans, policies, or regulations adopted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	**GHG/mm-1.1:** The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption: Update the City of Atascadero Climate Action Plan to identify ways to reduce GHG emissions and limit climate change impacts on the residents to the extent possible. The Climate Action Plan shall integrate the State's future GHG-reduction goals, such as the State's goal of attaining carbon neutrality by 2045. **GHG/mm-1.2:** The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption: Until the City adopts a qualified Climate Action Plan consistent with Mitigation Measure GHG-1, the City shall incorporate development standards into the Municipal Code for new development projects located along existing or planned public transit routes that require features that promote the use of public transit. Examples include the installation of sidewalks or pathways that facilitate ease of access from onsite locations to nearby transit stops, installation of transit improvements (e.g., benches, bus turnouts) for future planned transit stops located adjacent to the development site.	Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I)

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
	GHG/mm-1.3: The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption: The City shall participate in San Luis Obispo Council of Governments's Sustainable Communities Strategy/Regional Blueprint Planning effort to help increase consistency between local development plans and associated population and employment growth and the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy.	
Impact GHG-2: The project would result in cumulatively considerable greenhouse gas emissions associated with projected increases in VMT and mobile source emissions and would conflict with applicable state greenhouse gas reduction plans.	Implement Mitigation Measures GHG/mm 1.1 through GHG/mm 1.3.	Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).
Impact EN-1: The project would Not result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact EN-2: The project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact EN-3: The project would not result in a cumulative impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Biological Resources		
Impact BIO-1: The project would impact special-status species and suitable habitat for special-status species.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact BIO-2: The project would potentially adversely impact riparian habitat and other sensitive natural communities.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact BIO-3: The project would potentially adversely impact federally or state-protected wetlands.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact BIO-4: The project would potentially interfere with the movement of native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, or conflict with any native resident migratory wildlife corridors.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact BIO-5: The project would not conflict with applicable local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Impact BIO-6: The project would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact BIO-7: The project would result in cumulative impacts to biological resources.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources		
Impact CR-1: The proposed project would potentially adversely affect historical resources pursuant to California Code of Regulations Section 15064.5.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact CR-2: The proposed project would potentially cause adverse changes in the significance of archaeological resources	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact CR-3: The project would potentially disturb human remains.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact TCR-1: The proposed project would potentially adversely impact Tribal Cultural Resources.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact TCR-2: The project would contribute to a cumulative source of substantial loss of cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Geology and Soils		
Impact GEO-1: The project would not cause substantial adverse effects due to rupture of a known earthquake fault.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact GEO-2: The project would not result in substantial adverse effects related to strong seismic ground shaking.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact GEO-3: The project would not result in substantial adverse effects related to seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Impact GEO-4: The project would not directly or indirectly result in substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving landslides.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact GEO-5: The project would not cause significant soil erosion or result in the loss of topsoil.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact GEO-6: The project would potentially expose people or structures to risks associated with being located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that could become unstable.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact GEO-7: The project would potentially expose people or structures to risks associated with unstable or expansive soils.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact GEO-8: The project could allow for future development be located within soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact GEO-9: The project would potentially directly or indirectly destroy unique paleontological resources or sites or unique geological features.	**GEO/mm-9.1:** The City shall incorporate the following Policy and Actions into the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element of the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption: • Policy REC-6.3: Paleontological Resource Protection. Protect unique paleontological resources from disturbance associated with development. – Action A: Maintain a current GIS-based map of generalized areas of paleontologically sensitive areas and areas that have yielded significant fossils. – Action B: Require preparation of a Paleontological Resource Study for projects that would include proposed development within a geologic unit with high paleontological sensitivity and earthwork would occur in areas that have not previously been developed with urban uses, or when excavation depths would exceed those previously disturbed. The Paleontological Resource Study shall evaluate potential impacts to unique paleontological resources and identify appropriate avoidance/mitigation measures in accordance with processional standards set forth by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology.	Residual impacts would be less than significant with mitigation (Class II)
Impact GEO-10: The project would contribute to cumulative impacts related to geologic hazards and the loss or disturbance of geologic and paleontological resources.	Implement Mitigation Measure GEO/mm-9.1.	Residual impacts would be less than significant with mitigation (Class II)

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Hazards and Hazardous Materials		
Impact HAZ-1: the project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HAZ-2: The project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HAZ-3: The project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HAZ-4: The project would not located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HAZ-5: The project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HAZ-6: The project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HAZ-7: The project would potentially expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HAZ-8: The project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact related to hazards and hazardous materials.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Hydrology and Water Quality		
Impact HYD-1: The project would potentially violate water quality standards and waste discharge requirements and/or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HYD-2: The project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Impact HYD-3: The project would potentially substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the area in a manner which would Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HYD-4: The project would potentially substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HYD-5: The project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a manner which would create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HYD-6: The project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a manner which would Impede or redirect flood flows.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HYD-7: The project would not impede or redirect flood flows In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HYD-8: The project would not conflict with or obstruct water quality control plans or sustainable groundwater management plans.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact HYD-9: The project would contribute to cumulative changes in hydrology, water quality, drainage, groundwater, impervious surface area, and flooding within the Planning Area; however, impacts would be less than significant.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Land Use and Planning		
Impact LUP-1: The project would not physically divide an established community.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact LUP-2: The project would not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact LUP-3: The project would not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with the Atascadero Municipal Code, adopted City Specific Plans, or other local plans and policies.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact LUP-4: The project would not result in any cumulatively considerable impacts associated with land use and planning.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Mineral Resources		
Impact MR-1: The project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact MR-2: The project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact MR-3: The project would not result in any cumulatively considerable impacts related to mineral resources.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Noise		
Impact N-1: The project would not generate a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact N-2: The project would not generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact N-3: The project is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or within two miles of a public airport or public use airport and would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact N-4: The project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact to noise.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Population and Housing		
Impact PH-1: The project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly or indirectly.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact PH-2: The project would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact PH-3: The project would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to population and housing.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Public Services and Recreation		
Impact PS-1: The project would potentially result in adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered facilities for fire protection services.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact PS-2: The project would potentially result in adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered facilities for police protection services.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact PS-3: The project would potentially result in adverse physical impacts related to the need for new or modified school facilities, the construction of which could cause notable environmental effects.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact PS-4: The project would potentially result in adverse physical impacts associated with the need for new or physically altered parks facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact PS-5: The project would potentially result in adverse physical impacts associated with the need for new or physically altered library facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact PS-6: The project would have the potential to result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to public services.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact REC-1: The project would potentially increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact REC-2: The project would not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.	Mitigation is not necessary.	No impacts would occur
Impact REC-3: The project would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to recreation.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Transportation		
Impact TR-1: The project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Impact TR-2: The project would exceed applicable thresholds of significance associated with VMT.	No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.	Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).
Impact TR-3: The project would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact TR-4: The project would not result in inadequate emergency access.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).
Impact TR-5: The project would result in cumulatively considerable impacts associated with VMT.	No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.	Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).
Utilities and Service Systems		
Impact USS-1: The Project would require the construction of new or expanded water, wastewater, stormwater, electric power, natural gas, and/or telecommunications facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact USS-2: The project would have sufficient water supplies available to serve reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact USS-3: The project would potentially increase demand for wastewater treatment services accommodate future development throughout the City.	**USS/mm-3.1:** The City shall incorporate the following Action into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption, under Policy PSI-3.3: • Action D: Require all proposed new projects and new development requiring wastewater collection and treatment service to be reviewed for adequate wastewater collection and treatment capacity prior to issuance of building permits.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact USS-4: The project would potentially generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, and it would potentially impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact USS-5: The project would contribute to cumulative changes in the demand for utilities and public service systems, including the physical construction of utility facilities and the provision of adequate capacity to serve future development within the planning area.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)

Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
Wildfire		
Impact WF-1: The 2045 General Plan would not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact WF-2: The 2045 General Plan Update could exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact WF-3: The project could require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact WF-4: The project could expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)
Impact WF-5: The project would contribute to cumulative changes in wildfire risk and post-fire hazards, including the potential exposure of people and structures to increased threats from wildfires, landslides, and flooding within the planning area.	Mitigation is not necessary.	Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III)

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This document is a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that assesses the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the City of Atascadero (City) General Plan update (the 2045 General Plan Update) and corresponding updates to the zoning code provisions of the Atascadero Municipal Code (the Zoning Code Update) (herein referred to as the 2045 General Plan/Zoning Code Update, or project). The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update proposes a comprehensive update to the City's general plan and Municipal Code to reflect the City's refined vision for long-term, gradual change. The 2045 General Plan Update serves as the City's (top-level planning document to guide future growth and development. The Zoning Code Update amends the City's zoning regulations in the Municipal Code to ensure consistency with the 2045 General Plan Update. The 2045 General Plan/Zoning Code Update is described in detail in Chapter 2, *Project Description*. The City of Atascadero, acting as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency, has prepared this programmatic EIR with assistance from its environmental planning consultant, SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA), in accordance with the CEQA Statute (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15000 et seq.).

This chapter provides an overview of the EIR purpose, the EIR scoping and Notice of Preparation (NOP) process, EIR contents, project sponsors, and information regarding the public review of the Draft EIR.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

According to the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15000 et seq.), a "project" refers to the whole of an action which has a potential to result in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment; this encompasses activities directly undertaken by any public agency including, but not limited to, amendment of local General Plans or elements thereof (Title 14 CCR). The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update qualifies as a project under CEQA and requires the discretionary approval of the City of Atascadero City Council; therefore, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is subject to the environmental review requirements of CEQA (PRC Section 21000 et. seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines. In accordance with Section 15121 (a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the purpose of an EIR is to:

> . . . 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 is programmatic in nature and evaluates the broad, comprehensive effects of actions taken under the 2045 General Plan Update and the Zoning Code Update. A program EIR considers the broad effects of implementing programs and does not examine the individual environmental effects of specific projects as would be done in project EIRs. According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(a), a program EIR may be prepared on a series of actions that may be characterized as one large project. These actions may be related geographically, as logical parts of a chain of contemplated actions, in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, or plans that govern the conduct of a continuing program, or as individual activities carried out under the same authority and having generally similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways. Once a program EIR is prepared, later activities must be examined in the light of the EIR to determine the necessary level of additional documentation (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c)). A program EIR may also be used to simplify the task of preparing later environmental documents in the program by providing a basis for significance determinations, allowing incorporation by reference for broader program-wide issues and focusing later EIRs on new impacts not previously considered (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(d)).

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(b) cites five advantages of the use of programmatic EIRs, including:

1. Providing an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in individual EIRs.
2. Considering cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis.
3. Avoiding redundant reconsideration of basic policy considerations.
4. Allowing the Lead Agency to consider broad policy alternatives and programmatic mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility.
5. Reducing paperwork by encouraging tiering.

This EIR evaluates the potentially significant environmental impacts associated with buildout anticipated to occur pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update, if adopted, as well as the physical effects that may result from implementation of the 2045 General Plan goal and policies (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*, for the full description of the proposed project). In addition, this EIR identifies feasible mitigation measures for potentially significant environmental impacts and presents a reasonable range of project alternatives that would reduce or eliminate these impacts. This EIR is intended to provide decision-makers and the public with full disclosure of the environmental impacts associated with 2045 General Plan Update implementation to consider when determining the final action on the project.

1.2 SCOPING AND NOTICE OF PREPARATION PROCESS

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, as amended, the City circulated an NOP to responsible, trustee, and affected agencies and other interested parties for a 30- day public review period that began on July 15, 2024, and ended on August 14, 2024. The NOP was also posted at the County of San Luis Obispo (County) Clerk-Recorder's office for 30 days and sent to the CEQAnet Web Portal at the California Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation to solicit statewide agency and public participation in determining the appropriate scope of the EIR. The purpose of the NOP was to formally convey that the City, as the Lead Agency under CEQA, was soliciting input regarding the scope and proposed content of the EIR.

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082 (c)(1), for projects of statewide, regional, or areawide significance, the Lead Agency is required to conduct at least one scoping meeting. The scoping meeting is for jurisdictional agencies and interested persons or groups to provide comments regarding, but not limited to, the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, and environmental effects to be analyzed. The City held a public scoping meeting on July 24, 2024, at the Atascadero City Administration Building, located at 6500 Palma Avenue, Atascadero, California 93422.

Table A-1 in Appendix A summarizes comments received at the scoping meeting in addition to those received during the NOP circulation period. The purpose of Table A-1 is to present a summary of the comments, and it is not intended to list every comment received by the City during the NOP review period. Regardless of whether an environmental or CEQA-related comment is listed in the table, all relevant comments received in response to the NOP and during the EIR scoping meetings are addressed in this EIR.

Section 15123 of the State CEQA Guidelines states that an EIR shall identify areas of controversy known to the Lead Agency, including issues raised by public agencies, public organizations, and individual members of the public. Based on comments received during the NOP comment period and the scoping meeting, the following issues are known to be of concern and may be controversial:

- Adequacy of biological resource impact analysis, conservation, and mitigation
- Assessment, mitigation, and protection of cultural and tribal cultural resources
- Concerns about degradation of the Salinas River Corridor, including illegal motor vehicle use and lack of enforcement
- Existing and potential flood hazards for existing and new residential areas, including areas that would be affected by a Salinas Dam failure
- Mapping, monitoring, and protection of water quality, groundwater, waterways, and riparian areas
- Impacts of encampments and trash on groundwater and waterways
- Zoning, management, and uses on properties owned by the Atascadero Mutual Water Company
- Affordable housing priorities and requests for high-density/mixed-use development
- Maintenance of existing recreation trails and establishment of new recreational resources, including De Anza Trail connectivity, pedestrian and bicycle access, multi-use trails, and public access to the Salinas River
- Safety, noise, and environmental considerations associated with public recreational facilities and allowed uses including all-terrain vehicle use, designated all-terrain vehicle areas, and equestrian and non-motorized transportation modes on trails
- Safety considerations associated with vehicle speeds, traffic, and intersection improvements (e.g., San Jacinto Ave, Curbaril interchange)
- Potential urban fire hazards, including backyard burning, fireworks, and wood-burning fireplaces in new construction

These concerns are addressed in the evaluation each environmental issue area included in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, identification of feasible project alternatives in Chapter 5, *Alternatives Analysis*, and Chapter 6, *Other CEQA Considerations*.

1.3 EIR CONTENTS

The scope of the EIR includes issues identified by the City during the preparation of the NOP for the proposed project, as well as environmental issues raised by agencies and the general public in response to the NOP and at the scoping meeting. The EIR is divided into the following major sections:

Executive Summary. Provides a brief summary of the project background, description, impacts and mitigation measures, and alternatives.

Chapter 1: Introduction. Provides the purpose of an EIR, as well as scope, content, intended use of the document, and areas of known controversy.

Chapter 2: Project Description. Provides the general background of the project, objectives, a detailed description of the project characteristics, and a listing of necessary permits and government approvals.

Chapter 3: Environmental Setting. Describes the physical setting and surrounding land uses, and the cumulative project setting.

Chapter 4: Environmental Impacts Analysis. Discusses the environmental setting as it relates to the various issue areas, regulatory settings, thresholds of significance, impact assessment and methodology, project-specific impacts and mitigation measures, cumulative impacts, and secondary impacts. The EIR analyzes the potentially significant impacts to the following resource areas, as identified during preliminary evaluation and preparation of the NOP:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

Chapter 5: Alternatives Analysis. Summarizes the environmental advantages and disadvantages associated with the project and alternatives. As required, the "No Project" alternative is included among the alternatives considered. An "Environmentally Superior Alternative" is identified.

Chapter 6: Other CEQA Considerations. Identifies growth-inducing impacts and a discussion of long-term/short-term productivity and irreversible environmental changes.

Chapter 7: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. This section contains a matrix of all mitigation measures contained in the EIR, the requirements of the mitigation measures, the applicant's responsibility and timing for implementation of these measures, the party responsible for verification, the method of verification, and verification timing.

Chapter 8: References and EIR Preparers. This section provides a list of all references used within the EIR and the individuals involved in the preparation of this EIR.

1.4 PROJECT SPONSORS

Lead Agency/Project Applicant: City of Atascadero
6500 Palma Avenue
Atascadero, CA 93422
Phil Dunsmore, Community Development Director

Environmental Consultant: SWCA Environmental Consultants
4111 Broad Street, Suite 210
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager

1.5 AGENCY USE OF THE DOCUMENT

Lead Agency reviewers and decision-makers (i.e., the City Planning Commission and City Council) will use the EIR as an informational document to assist in the decision-making process, ultimately resulting in the approval, denial of the project. Section 15381 of the State CEQA Guidelines defines responsible agencies as other public agencies that has discretionary approval power over a project and must rely on the environmental document prepared by the Lead Agency when deciding whether to approve its portion of the project. As the project consists of a General Plan and Zoning Code Update, and does not include any specific development entitlements, there are no formal responsible agencies for this project.

Although not responsible agencies under CEQA, several other agencies have review authority over aspects of the proposed project or approval authority over future projects that could potentially be implemented in accordance with the various goals, policies, and actions included in the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update. These agencies are listed below:

- The State Geologist is responsible for the review of the City's programs for minimizing exposure to geologic hazards and for regulating surface mining activities.
- The California Department of Transportation has responsibility for approving future improvements to the state highway system, including U.S. Route 101 and State Route 41.
- The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has responsibility for issuing take permits and streambed alteration agreements for any projects with the potential to affect plant or animal species listed by the State of California as rare, threatened, or endangered or that would disturb waters of the State.

1.6 PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR was distributed to responsible and trustee agencies, other affected agencies, surrounding cities, interested parties, and all parties requesting a copy of the Draft EIR in accordance with PRC Section 21092(b)(3). The Notice of Completion and Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR are distributed and posted as required by CEQA. During this 45-day period, the EIR and all technical appendices are available for review at the following locations:

Atascadero Public Library
6555 Capistrano Avenue
Atascadero, CA 93422

Atascadero City Hall
6500 Palma Avenue
Atascadero, CA 93422

On behalf of the Lead Agency, comments on the Draft EIR shall be addressed to:

City of Atascadero
Attn: Kelly Gleason, Planning Manager
6500 Palma Avenue
Atascadero, CA 93422

Comments on the Draft EIR may also be sent via email to Kelly Gleason, Planning Manager, at kgleason@atascadero.org.

The public review period is 45 days. Written responses to all significant environmental issues raised will be prepared and included as part of the Final EIR and the administrative record for consideration by decision-makers for the project.

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CHAPTER 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project involves a comprehensive update to the current City of Atascadero (City) 2025 General Plan, which was adopted in 2002 and most recently amended in 2020 (City of Atascadero 2016) to reflect a 2045 horizon year (2045 General Plan Update). The project also includes updates to the Atascadero Municipal Code to ensure consistency with the 2045 General Plan Update (Zoning Code Update) to clarify existing standards and practices and incorporate current City policy (Zoning Code Update). This chapter of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) provides an overview of the Planning Area location and setting as well as the background, objectives, land use components, policies, and required approvals of the 2045 General Plan Update and subsequent Zoning Code Update (referred to herein collectively as the project or the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update). This EIR evaluates the physical changes associated with community buildout anticipated to occur under the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update, if adopted, as well as the physical effects that may result from the establishment and implementation of the goals and policies of the project.

2.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The City of Atascadero is in northern San Luis Obispo County, California, approximately 13 miles east of the Pacific Ocean (Figure 2-1). The project location—or Planning Area—encompasses all properties within the City of Atascadero incorporated City limits and its surrounding Sphere of Influence (SOI) (Figure 2-2). Atascadero is nestled between the Santa Lucia Mountains to the west and the Salinas River to the east. U.S. Route 101 (U.S. 101) bisects the City in a north-south alignment. California State Route 41 (SR 41) also bisects the City and provides east-west access for travelers to the Pacific Coast and California Central Valley. The City encompasses approximately 26 square miles of varied residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, park, and open space landscapes. The Planning Area, which includes the SOI, encompasses approximately 20,218 acres (32 square miles). The proposed General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs would apply to land within City limits.

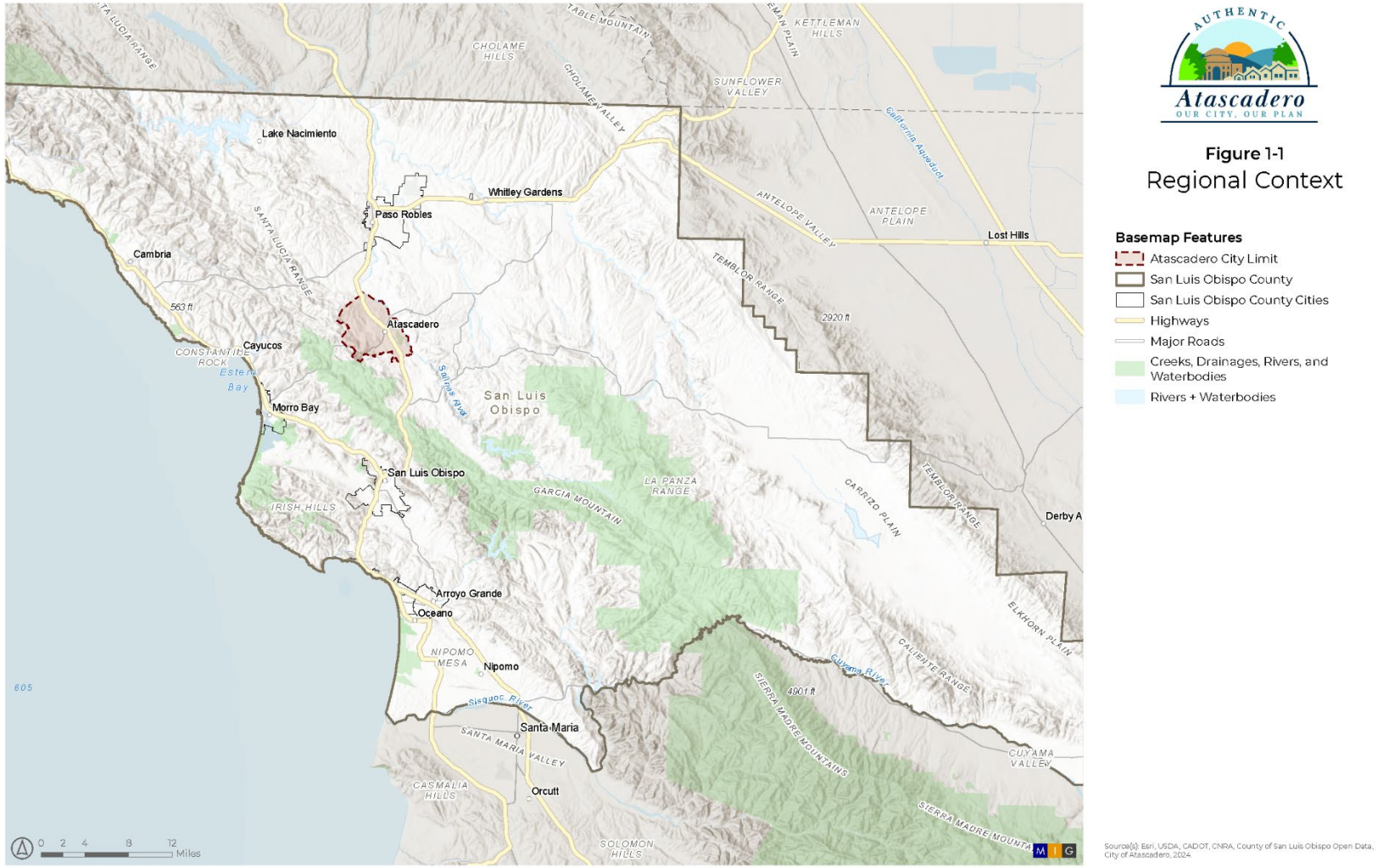
2.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

A City's general plan is the primary policy document that lays out the overarching vision and policies for how a city will develop and function in the future. All elements of the general plan have equal legal status, which means that one policy does not supersede another policy. It also means that any optional element or topic a City includes in its general plan has the same legal status as required elements.

The current City General Plan, which is referred to as the 2025 General Plan, was adopted in 2002. Although there have been minor amendments, the 2025 General Plan has not been comprehensively updated since 2002. Therefore, shifts in demographics, land use, transportation, economics, community character, and the housing market warrant a comprehensive update. A changing economic and fiscal landscape, along with the need to supply additional workforce housing and head-of-household jobs, further supports the need to ensure the City's visions, goals, policies, and programs are current and adequately address community needs.

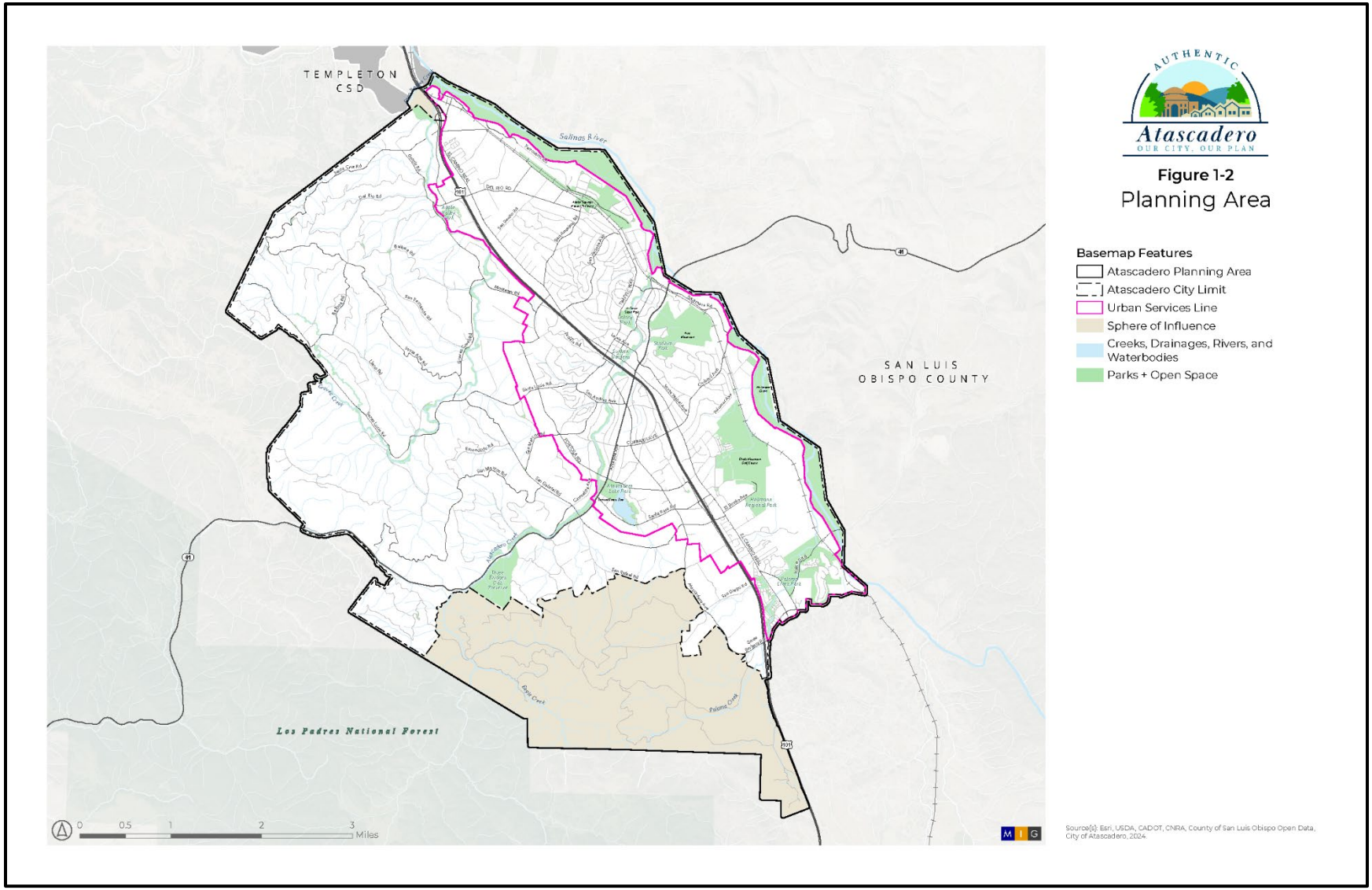
The General Plan Update process was initially authorized by the City Council in July 2021. The following is an overview of the General Plan Update phases:

- **Phase 1 – Scoping:** This phase included project process refinements and development of a community outreach strategy.
- **Phase 2 – Discovery:** This phase included development of the Existing Conditions Report, Vision, and Guiding Principles, and a range of community engagement meetings and activities to hear early feedback on the City's assets, challenges, and opportunities.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 2-1. City of Atascadero vicinity map.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 2-2. 2045 General Plan Update Planning Area.

- **Phase 3 – Exploring Alternatives:** This phase included the development of growth and policy alternatives for Atascadero's future. This phase includes the selection of a draft land use map, projected population and growth estimates, and general policy direction.
- **Phase 4 – A Plan for Atascadero 2045:** This phase includes the development of the draft General Plan document and Draft EIR.
- **Phase 5 – Celebrating our Future:** This phase will include final outreach on the draft plan, creation of the final General Plan document and Final EIR.

The first three phases of this process have been completed, and preparation and finalization of this EIR are a part of Phase 4 and Phase 5.

The Zoning Code Update process was initially authorized by the City Council in September 2024 and is intended to implement the General Plan to maintain policy consistency. Updates to the Zoning Code are informed by the General Plan. Once the draft 2045 General Plan was circulated for public comment, the identification and update of Zoning Code standards commenced, and final adoption of Zoning Code amendments are expected to follow adoption of the General Plan. The code update focuses on reformatting Title 9 for readability and accessibility while incorporating and refining the new General Plan Placetypes as zoning districts.

2.3 PROJECT VISION STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

The 2045 General Plan Update would be comprehensive and internally consistent, serving as the City's top-level planning document to guide the City's future growth and development. The Zoning Code Update will implement General Plan Placetypes and provide code consistency with this guiding document.

The Vision Statement serves as the foundation of the General Plan and reflects input from residents, local business and property owners, and elected and appointed officials. The statement expresses the vision for Atascadero, both as an end goal and as the lens through which long-term decisions will be made:

> Atascadero provides Opportunities for all residents and business owners to thrive. Our community-focused culture pursues investments and land use strategies that create a diversity of housing types, support local businesses, improve all mobility modes, and respect our natural environment. Collective community actions improve conditions for current and future generations.

The 2045 General Plan Update identifies a number of Guiding Principles that were developed based on the input of community members during initial engagement activities and the City Council's strategic planning initiatives. The Guiding Principles both guided preparation of the 2045 General Plan Update and will be used by City staff and decision-makers when implementing the 2045 General Plan Update. For the purposes of this EIR, the Guiding Principles serve as the project objectives which are clearly identified in each chapter of this EIR (e.g., Chapter 5, *Alternatives Analysis*). The Guiding Principles include the following:

Guiding Principles – Our Places

- Respect Atascadero's semi-rural character as the community evolves.
- Facilitate vibrant public spaces that encourage community connections. Support City parks, trails, and facilities that provide access to a variety of recreation experiences.
- Promote investments in downtown that support the needs of local businesses and residents and provide a quality experience for visitors.
- Encourage synergistic commercial and residential uses along the El Camino Real and Morro Road corridors to support long-term viability of commercial spaces.

Guiding Principles – Our People

- Support a culture that is welcoming, inclusive, and based on mutual respect.
- Create and maintain opportunities for people of all income levels and ages to live, work, raise families, and retire in Atascadero.
- Target growth to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life.

Guiding Principles – Our Economy

- Incentivize a mix of business and revenue streams that support a resilient economy.
- Diversify Atascadero's employment opportunities to address the needs of an evolving workforce and attract jobs for all skill levels and income ranges.

Guiding Principles – Our Infrastructure

- Facilitate safe, convenient, and comfortable connections for people of all abilities and in different stages of life.
- Support and maintain efficient and sustainable infrastructure systems.
- Organize public service systems so that all neighborhoods and business districts have access to public services and emergency response.
- Plan and prepare for community safety and resiliency from evolving climate threats, natural, and human-caused hazards.

Guiding Principles – Our Natural Environment

- Integrate Atascadero's natural, historical, and cultural landscapes and resources into planning decisions.

2.4 GENERAL PLAN "BIG MOVES," COMPONENTS, AND ORGANIZATION

2.4.1 2045 General Plan "Big Moves"

The 2045 General Plan process involved extensive community and decision-maker discussions regarding future growth and evolving community character. This engagement process informed the goals, policies, actions, and programs included in the 2045 General Plan Update. Each chapter of the General Plan discusses specific topics, but the overarching focus of the 2045 General Plan is a series of "Big Moves" identified by the community and City Council. These Big Moves represent key land use objectives and strategies that would help advance the Vision and Guiding Principles (defined above) and define how the community grows and evolves into the future. The 2045 General Plan Update Big Moves and the associated key policy considerations for each Big Move is provided below:

- **Big Move A: Create a Mix of Housing Types**
    - Allow higher-density residential and mixed-use projects within Downtown and along key stretches of El Camino Real and Morro Road that are accessible to a range of community services, amenities, and activities.
    - Consider development incentives for projects that provide needed workforce housing near areas of employment.
    - Encourage incremental infill housing in traditionally single-family areas that maintains the character and neighborhood scale (second units, duplexes, cottage clusters).

- **Big Move B: Attract New Industries and Higher Wage Jobs**
    - Encourage business investment through targeted regulatory incentives and infrastructure prioritization (on-site parking reductions, infrastructure upgrades).
    - Actively market Atascadero as a business-friendly City, and engage technology, research and development, and similar industries to locate in the City.
    - Provide opportunities for flexible building uses and conversion of spaces within key commercial and mixed-use areas.
- **Big Move C: Improve Mobility, Access, and Safety**
    - Enhance multimodal street design and amenities along El Camino Real and Morro Road to encourage and accommodate more walking and biking.
    - Create a network of emergency routes for wildfire-prone areas that provide safe evacuation for residents and efficient entry for first responders.
    - Prioritize key collector streets for multimodal improvements to enhance mobility options.
- **Big Move D: Address Public Infrastructure Needs**
    - Expand telecommunications infrastructure and public utilities to and within key employment areas.
    - Implement streetscape improvements along El Camino Real and Morro Road near major planned residential and employment nodes to incentivize new development.
    - Develop fiscal strategies for maintaining and expanding key infrastructure.
- **Big Move E: Ensure Fiscal Sustainability**
    - Prioritize public investments that have a positive influence on long-term economic growth, including focusing infrastructure improvements within employment-generating areas.
    - Use financing mechanisms that attract new development that contributes to near-term investment and long-term infrastructure maintenance.
    - Acknowledge the fiscal implications of different land use types and the necessity of maintaining a balanced land use mix to mitigate fiscal vulnerabilities during variable market cycles.

2.4.2 General Plan Components

According to state law, general plans are required to cover nine topics: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, air quality, safety, and, if applicable, environmental justice. (Note: including environmental justice is only required when a city has a state-identified disadvantaged community, which Atascadero does not.) Jurisdictions may include any other topics that are relevant to planning its future and may address the required topics in conjunction with these other topics.

The 2025 General Plan contained the following elements:

- Land Use, Conservation, and Open Space Element
- Circulation Element
- Safety and Noise Element
- Housing Element

The 2045 General Plan Update is a comprehensive update to the City's General Plan and includes the following chapters, which incorporate all required State specified elements:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Vision and Guiding Principles
- Chapter 3: Land Use and Community Form Element
- Chapter 4: Economic Development Element
- Chapter 6: Mobility Element
- Chapter 7: Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element
- Chapter 8: Public Services and Infrastructure Element
- Chapter 9: Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element

The City Housing Element (Chapter 5) was adopted in 2020 and is valid until 2028. Accordingly, the Housing Element will not be included in the 2045 General Plan Update process.

2.4.2.1 Land Use and Community Form Element

The Land Use and Community Form Element would fulfill the State requirements for the Land Use Element and identifies policies to preserve and foster community character when exploring opportunities for growth. The 2045 General Plan Update would include a combination of new and refined land uses and updated land use designations referred to as "Placetypes." Placetypes intend to create more clarity around the character of new development. Placetypes are similar to land use designations, as they set densities and intensities, but also include detail on the character of the various types of uses, including scale, design quality, and relationship to the street. Placetypes would be further refined by zoning districts, which provide more detailed distinction of allowed uses and development standards within each Placetype established in the 2045 General Plan Update (Figure 2-3). Placetypes, or updated land use designations, that would be included in the 2045 General Plan Update are as follows:

- **Rural Residential (0.1–1 dwelling units per acre [du/ac]):** This designation replaces the three existing rural residential designations and combines them into one. Rural Residential would be the prevalent Placetype outside of the Urban Services Line (USL). Within the USL, Rural Residential would be concentrated west of U.S. 101 and east of El Camino Real north of San Benito Road and east of the Southern Pacific Railroad corridor. Rural Residential neighborhoods would be well established and rural in nature. Development would be characterized by large lots (1.5–10+ acres) and large setbacks, single-unit detached homes, vacant land, and livestock.
- **Single-Family Residential (1–4 du/ac):** Single-Family Residential would be the prevalent Placetype within the USL but outside the urban core. This Placetype would act as a buffer between the Rural Residential Placetype and other, more intensive residential and commercial uses. Single-Family Residential neighborhoods would be well established and suburban in nature. Development would be characterized by medium to large lots (less than or equal to 1 acre) occupied by single-unit detached homes. Additional characteristics include irregular block shapes, curvilinear streets, absence of streetlights, and limited or no sidewalks. The smaller lot-size zone within this designation allows opportunities for missing middle- and gentle-density style infill development.
- **Low Density Multi-Family (5–12 du/ac):** Low Density Multi-Family Placetypes would be concentrated in areas adjacent to more urban uses, and positioned between the Mixed Use and Single-Family Residential Placetypes. Low Density Multi-Family neighborhoods continue to grow in Atascadero, providing a mix of housing types and affordability. Development in this Placetype would be urban in nature and characterized by detached and attached multiunit development (cottage cluster, duplex, triplex, fourplex, multiplex with 5+ units).

- **Medium Density Multi-Family (13–24 du/ac):** Medium Density Multi-Family would be concentrated along major corridors, including El Camino Real, Morro Road, and Traffic Way in addition to adjacent corridors. This Placetype would act as a buffer between nonresidential and lower-density residential uses. Medium Density Multi-Family neighborhoods continue to grow in Atascadero, providing a mix of housing types and affordability. Development in this Placetype would be urban in nature and characterized by detached and attached multiunit development (duplex, triplex, fourplex, and multiplex with 5+ units).
- **High Density Multi-Family (25–36 du/ac):** High Density Multi-Family would be concentrated along the southern segment of El Camino Real, between Paloma Park and Santa Rosa Road. Additional High Density Multi-Family areas would be located near the Downtown core. This Placetype would be characterized by moderate residential building heights of a more urban character, including apartments and condominiums with shared entrances and open spaces. Lower-scale structures would typically be found in areas transitioning to surrounding residential neighborhoods. Transitions between Placetypes is established with development standards in the Zoning Code.
- **Mixed Use (20–36 du/acre):** The City's current General Plan has a mixed-use designation; however, it was not put into action on the City's adopted zoning map and specific development standards were never created. Instead, Mixed Use is conditionally allowed within the existing General Commercial designation when all residential units are above the ground floor. The Mixed Use Placetype would generally be concentrated near major intersections, as well as along El Camino Real and Morro Road between El Camino Real and Atascadero Lake Park. This Placetype is intended to promote a flexible and compatible mix of residential and commercial uses in focused areas. Commercial (office or retail) uses would dominate the frontage or ground floor of a mixed-use project, whereas office and residential uses would dominate the upper floors or buildings that are set back from a public street. Each area that would include the Mixed Use Placetype is unique. The composition and mix of permitted uses are established by zoning district in the Zoning Code. Development may allow for a horizontal or vertical mix of commercial and residential uses, as defined in the Zoning Code. This Placetype would be characterized by moderate-scale residential and commercial building heights that promote urban character. Buildings would be oriented toward the street to encourage pedestrian activity.
- **Downtown Mixed Use (20–45 du/ac):** The Downtown area is north of Morro Road and south of Rosario Avenue along El Camino Real, Traffic Way, and adjacent cross streets. Downtown Mixed Use would encourage an eclectic and complementary mix of uses, pedestrian-scale development, and locally owned businesses, such as retailers and restaurants, with upper-story residential and office units. Ground-floor uses would consist of businesses with a weekday, evening, and weekend presence. The Downtown Mixed Use Placetype would be characterized by moderate to high building heights to promote urban character. This district would have the highest density and building height of any district. Current residential density Downtown is 24 units per acre.
- **Commercial:** Commercial Placetypes would be concentrated along El Camino Real adjacent to major intersections with San Ramon, Del Rio, San Anselmo, Morro Road, and Santa Rosa Road, particularly where these intersections have access to U.S. 101. Commercial uses would include retail, restaurants, office, tourist, and service businesses that serve both regional and local needs, with easy access to and from residential neighborhoods. Development would be characterized by single-use commercial buildings, multi-tenant shopping centers, and office buildings. Commercial tenants may include businesses targeted toward visitors to Atascadero, such as breweries, distilleries, and recreation hubs. Uses with outdoor storage are not typically permitted.

- **Innovation/Flex:** Innovation/Flex would be concentrated along El Camino Real between Santa Cruz Road and San Anselmo Road, Morro Road and Curbaril, and Palomar and Principal Avenue. This Placetype is intended to promote opportunities for startup businesses and head-of-household jobs. This Placetype should attract concentrations of production, design, and maker-space businesses. Development would be characterized by multi-tenant buildings, often with office or retail uses oriented toward the street and light industrial/manufacturing in the back. Scale varies greatly and would be dependent upon the surrounding context and character. Innovation/Flex has the potential to serve as a primary place for employment and commerce in the Central Coast region in support of emerging technologies and space innovations. Uses with outdoor storage would not be permitted except in appropriate locations and limited quantities would be subject to discretionary review.
- **Industrial:** Industrial would be limited to two areas within Atascadero: along Traffic Way/Sycamore Road and as part of the Woodlands Specific Plan (Las Lomas Neighborhood) at Halcon Road/the Southern Pacific Railroad corridor. Similar to the existing Industrial zones now in place along Traffic Way and Sycamore, this district would reflect the highest-intensity land uses that accommodate manufacturing and industrial land uses, with an emphasis on indoor and some outdoor land uses. Industrial uses would consist of moderate and heavy manufacturing, distribution, and vehicle-related uses. Development would consist of industrial buildings of various sizes, either as stand-alone businesses or as part of an integrated development.
- **Public/Quasi-Public:** Public/Quasi-Public parcels would be distributed throughout the City based on the location of existing facilities, mostly within the USL. Public/Quasi-Public parcels would be set aside for governmental or semipublic facilities, such as hospitals, schools, utilities, and government offices/facilities or related uses such as cemeteries. However, such public facilities may also be allowed in areas with other Placetypes, provided they comply with applicable Zoning Code standards.
- **Conservation/Parks/Open Space:** Most of the land designated Conservation/Parks/Open Space would occur along the Salinas River and Atascadero and Graves Creeks. The Three Bridges Oak Preserve is the largest Conservation/Open Space area outside the USL. Stadium Park and Pine Mountain, located near Downtown, also provide significant open space. Multiple City parks are located throughout the community to serve adjacent neighborhoods and citywide sports needs. The City also includes Heilman park, which is owned and maintained by the County of San Luis Obispo (County). Similar to current designations, Conservation/Parks/Open Space land would accommodate both formal parks, and natural trail areas.
- **Agriculture (0.1–0.4 du/ac):** The Agriculture Placetype would apply to two areas in Atascadero, including an approximately 44-acre area adjacent to Graves Creek south of Balboa Road and an approximately 27-acre area along the Salinas River east of the Las Lomas neighborhood (Woodlands Specific Plan area). This Placetype would designate lands to be used for agricultural activities, including field crops, orchards, and ranching and livestock raising, with the Zoning Code identifying specific permitted uses and operational standards. Allowed accessory uses would include single-unit detached homes and housing for agriculture employees, as permitted by the Zoning Code. Uses may also allow opportunities for public-facing commercial uses, such as event areas and bed and breakfasts.

The Land Use and Community Form Element identifies the following priorities:

- **Atascadero's Authentic Character:** Atascadero is a unique place. The community values Atascadero's special character, with a strong will to preserve these features while exploring opportunities for growth. The people make Atascadero the supportive, family-oriented community that it is, and the General Plan needs to promote areas to gather, recreate, socialize, and conduct business as the community grows and evolves.

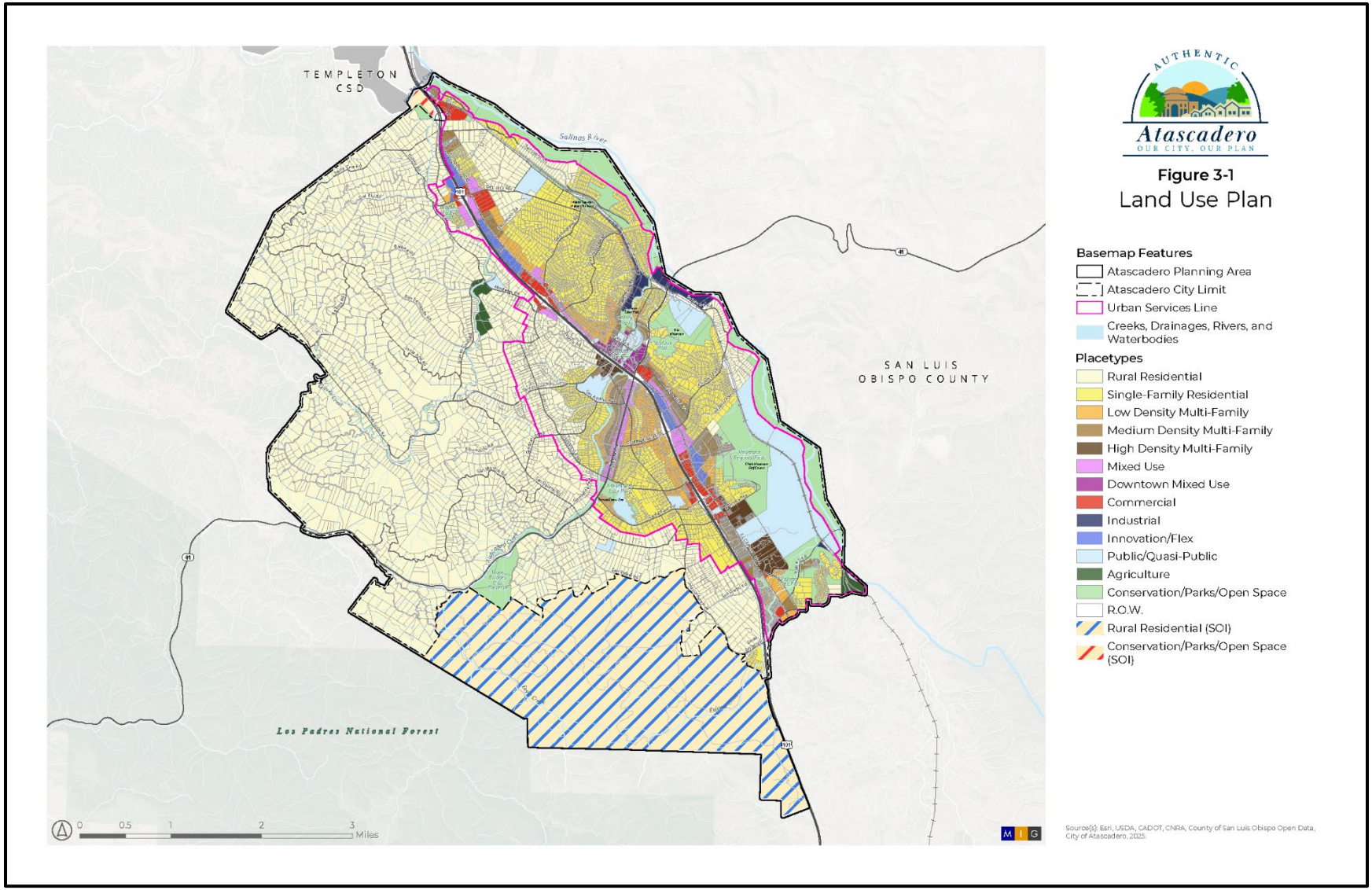
- **Rural Residential Focus:** Atascadero's predominant land use, in terms of total acreage, consists of large lot homesites with a rural character, encompassing over 9,000 acres (just over 41% of the City). Most of these homesites lie west of U.S. 101, beyond the USL, and extend to the northern and southern edges of the City limits. Terrain and the absence of sewer service will continue to limit growth west of U.S. 101.
- **Commercial Corridors:** Commercial businesses extend over 7 miles along El Camino Real and Morro Road south of El Camino. Industrial uses are concentrated along the northeastern fringe of the City, along Traffic Way and the Salinas River. No other areas of Atascadero are suitable for business activity based on topography and infrastructure limitations, so land use decisions will need to account for the City's strategic job growth objectives and provide space for desired local businesses.
- **Housing Affordability:** Housing affordability is a continuing concern voiced by the community, both locally and throughout the region. The type and size of housing has made it challenging for younger residents and first-time home buyers to find housing that they can afford. Regional desirability and the increasing ease of remote work resulted in people moving to Atascadero from the Los Angeles and Bay Area regions, tightening the housing market. Expanding the range of housing types and affordability in Atascadero has become more critical to meet the needs of long-time residents. Higher-density, multifamily, and accessory dwelling unit projects all represent ways to increase the supply of affordable housing for the local workforce.
- **Jobs-Housing Balance:** In 2024, Atascadero had a job-to-housing ratio of 0.77, indicating substantially more households than jobs in the City. Over 10,700 Atascadero residents were employed outside of the City in 2019, whereas 6,000 employees traveled to Atascadero for work. The jobs-to-housing imbalance has persisted over time, with one reason being that the land area available to support large-scale employment centers is limited; however, evolving technologies and the ways that business is conducted mean that limited space can be used more efficiently. The City's economic development strategy focuses on attracting a greater diversity of businesses that create new jobs for residents, as well as placemaking to support commercial synergy and vitality.

2.4.2.1.1 GENERAL PLAN POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH PROJECTIONS

The 2045 General Plan Update includes City population and employment growth projections based on land capacity, ability to expand infrastructure, and the anticipated growth rates for both residential and commercial sectors based on multiple factors. These projections were used to make assumptions about anticipated infrastructure and service needs over the planning period.

The City has the land use authority to approve or revise assumed growth as part of the General Plan Update process. The City's population as of 2024 was 29,365, with 1,318 group quarter residents at the Atascadero State Hospital, resulting in a total effective population of 30,683 for planning purposes, and the City's forecasted population for the General Plan Update planning period (through 2045) is 37,279, reflecting an overall increase of 6,596 over the 20-year planning period. Similarly, the number of dwelling units is projected to increase from 12,660 in 2024 to 15,550 by 2045. Employment is expected to increase from 9,729 employees in 2024 to 12,914 employees in 2045, improving the City's jobs/housing ratio from 0.77 to 0.83 (City of Atascadero 2025).

The growth rate assumptions for the plan year 2045 were developed by City staff based on historic City growth rates, anticipated trends, State housing goals, and input from members of the City Council.



Source: City of Atascadero 2025.

Figure 2-3. Proposed land use map.

2.4.2.2 Economic Development Element

In previous General Plan planning processes, the City addressed its economic development goals within the context of land use planning. The 2045 General Plan would elevate the discussion of economic development by dedicating a stand-alone element that would highlight specific goals, policies, and strategies that would be pursued to diversify the City's economic base and expand employment opportunities by attracting new business and supporting existing businesses.

The Economic Development Element identifies the following priorities:

- **City Revenue Sources:** The City's main general fund revenue sources in 2022 were property taxes (36.9%), sales taxes (33.6%), and transient occupancy taxes (4.2%). Combined, all types of taxes accounted for roughly 82.6% of the City's estimated revenue in 2023. Of these revenue sources, transient occupancy taxes (the tax on hotel rooms) were disproportionately affected by non-resident activity, underscoring the importance of commercial and visitor activity to the City's fiscal health.
- **Long-Term Fiscal Health:** Between 2007 and 2023, the City's overall general fund revenues decreased by 10%, limiting the ability to expand service levels or invest in new/upgraded infrastructure. When adjusted for inflation, the City's General Fund revenues (excluding Measure D-20) increased 2.0 percent per year, or 34.2 percent since FY 2007/08, slightly below inflation during the same period, resulting in a decrease in per capita revenues in constant dollar terms during the 15-year period. Creating long-term fiscal sustainability is a key objective. The lack of growth that outpaces inflation in general fund revenues will make it difficult for the City to improve public service levels going forward unless new funding sources are identified. Even maintaining existing service levels could be difficult, particularly for higher cost items—such as salaries and pension obligations—that increase faster than inflation. In planning for fiscal sustainability, the 2045 General Plan identifies ways to increase revenues primarily through the types and extent of new uses and businesses and by planning for efficient growth. Efficient growth is particularly important because it ensures the City is not overcommitted to providing, not overextending resources on, a sprawling infrastructure network and helps the City avoid costly overexpansion.
- **Visitor Activity Growth:** Visitor activity in Atascadero and surrounding communities and the general draw of the Central Coast contribute to vibrancy and generate revenue from overnight hotel stays and restaurant and retail spending that is critical to the City's fiscal health. Reported hotel data in 2022 indicated high occupancy rates and strong upward pressure on achievable room rates. However, Atascadero saw a decline in occupancy in the 2024-2025 fiscal year due to market saturation of new hotels in surrounding communities and the decline of the wine industry. Moving forward, the City will work to attract a range of hotel types with a focus on experience-based models, allowing for a diversity in price points and the ability to capture more visitors, which can be paired with initiatives to create places people want to visit and experience throughout the City—and for longer time periods. The Central Coast offers unparalleled weather, scenery, and outdoor recreation opportunities, and those visitors need places to eat, and shop, and stay.
- **Business Attraction, Retention, and Growth:** Supporting local businesses and attracting desired new businesses are important components of a general plan. An increase in employment-supporting uses that draw head-of-household jobs allows opportunities for more employment that directly serves residents—while generally leading to higher annual general fund revenues through increased property taxes, sales taxes, and business license revenue.
- **Capital Improvements:** An important component of fiscal sustainability is the City's ability to appropriately plan for and deliver needed capital improvements. As of 2022, the City was not collecting sufficient revenues through impact fees (which were subsidized and based on 2006 assumed infrastructure costs) to cover the cost of needed capital improvements. This deficit requires that the City further subsidize the improvements with money from the general fund. To be

fiscally sustainable, the City will need to recalibrate impact fees to address contemporary infrastructure costs and market conditions, while keeping an eye on sustainable long-term infrastructure maintenance.

2.4.2.3 Mobility Element

The Mobility Element would fulfill state requirements for the Circulation Element and would outline policies to balance all modes of transportation throughout Atascadero, with an emphasis on multimodal transportation along major corridors, strategies to improve circulation at key intersections and freeway overpasses, and opportunities for expanded bicycle routes and pedestrian connections and trails.

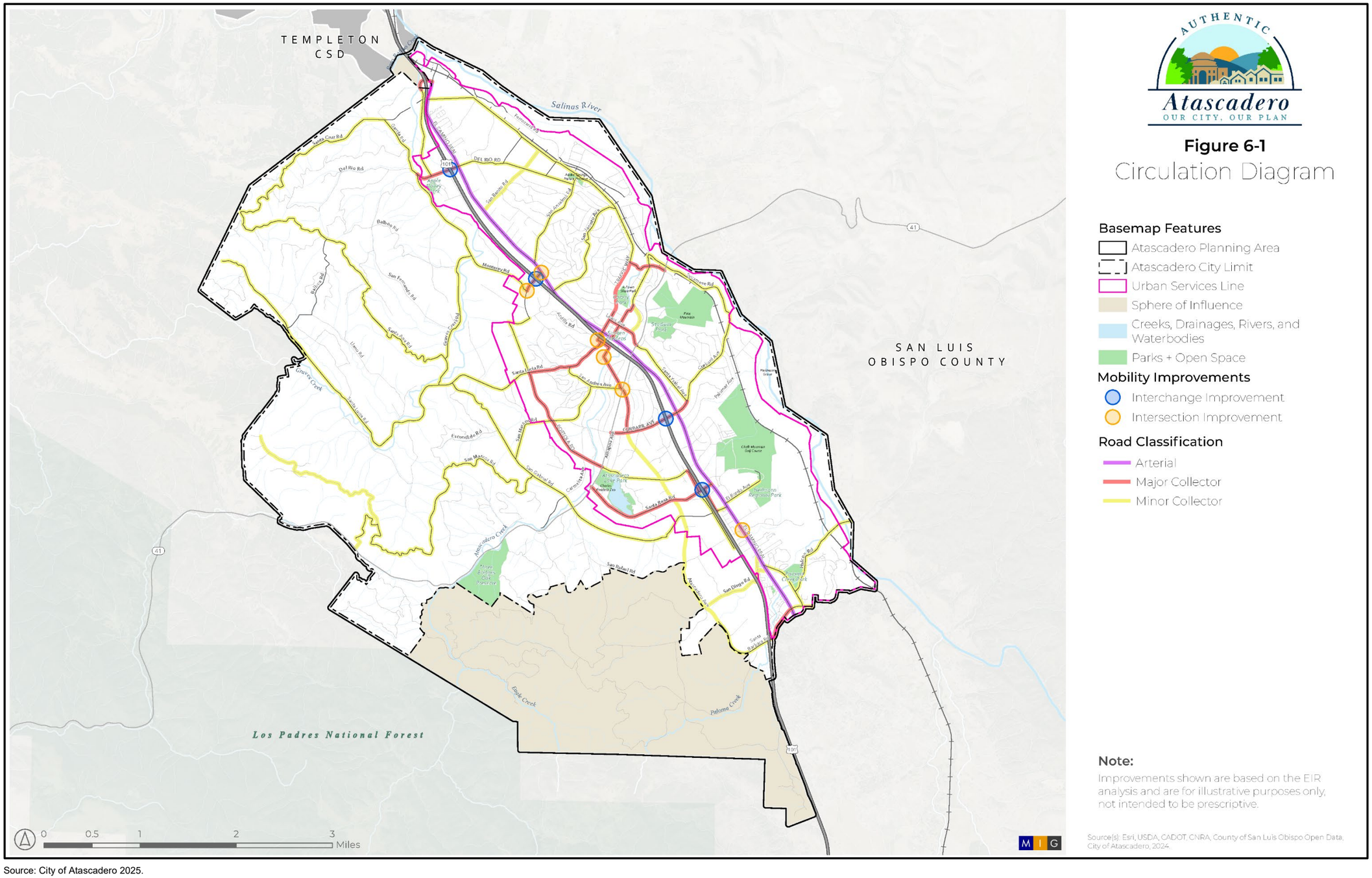
A key goal of the 2045 General Plan Mobility Element is to improve these connections and capitalize on opportunities for safe and efficient multimodal use. To support Atascadero's mobility needs today and well into the future, the Mobility Element identifies the following priorities:

- **Impacts of U.S. 101:** The freeway bisects Atascadero and limits east-west access. Of the eight freeway interchanges, most were constructed in the late 1950s and are undersized or outdated, creating congestion and barriers for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Future interchange upgrades will be costly and will need to be prioritized in consultation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).
- **Transit:** Atascadero is served by a fixed-route bus transit service along the El Camino Real corridor through the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLO RTA), and Amtrak provides bus services that link to its rail routes. Bus transit stops are largely concentrated along El Camino Real, with limited access to western residential neighborhoods and infrequent bus service, which hinders residents' ability to fully rely on public transit. SLO RTA also provides dial-a-ride services.
- **Bicycle Mobility:** Atascadero's climate, east-side topography, and development patterns in mixed-use areas are conducive to recreational and commute bicycle trips; however, the bicycle commute mode share in the City is lower than the statewide average (1.6% versus 3.1%) due to a limited and incomplete bicycle network and a rural street system with significant topography. With a growing interest in outdoor recreation and the desire to support local and regional emissions reduction goals, the City sees opportunities to expand the bicycle network and create improved connections to schools, commercial areas, and other destinations.
- **Pedestrian Mobility:** Approximately 4.5% of local commute trips are made by walking, substantially higher than the statewide average of 2.7%. The City's steep topography and low-density land uses on the west side and east-side periphery discourage destination walking, but the higher densities and mix of uses along and adjacent to the El Camino Real and Morro Road corridors generally support walking. Walking is hindered in more residential and rural neighborhoods due to topography, physical constraints, sidewalk gaps, and limited east-west crossings.
- **Parking:** Community members have identified parking as an important issue. Parking surveys show that the overall peak parking demand in downtown Atascadero is less than half the available parking supply; however, many parking spaces are privately controlled, inefficiently allocated, or located away from key destinations. Sufficient and convenient parking will contribute to the economic success of Downtown. Parking management techniques such as limited hours and shared parking could be used to maximize resources.
- **Traffic Collisions:** Between 2015 and 2019, more than one-third of the collisions in Atascadero resulted from vehicles traveling at unsafe speeds. Between 2013 and 2023, 145 reported collisions involving cyclists or pedestrians occurred, the majority along El Camino Real and Morro Road/SR 41. Residents have highlighted roadway and traffic safety as a major concern.

- **Street Maintenance:** Atascadero has 145 miles of roadways, more than any other city in the county. The City uses several funding sources to maintain its extensive roadway network, including local, state, and federal funding measures (including the City's General Fund), Senate Bill (SB-1) (Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program), and San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) local transportation funds. Voters approved a 0.5% sales tax in 2014 (Measure F-14) that the City has used to fund roadway maintenance, with a 12-year term that has generated over $20 million. Measure L-24 in 2024 extended this sales tax until it is canceled by voters and is projected to generate $3 million annually. SLOCOG is pursuing a similar 0.5% sales tax measure for the 2026 election.
- **Roadway Capacities and Managing Congestion through New Metrics:** Few improvements have been made to the City's road network to increase capacity as growth has not warranted substantial investments other than the needed—but unrealized—state investments to improve freeway bridges. Congestion is typically localized near undersized U.S. 101 interchanges and around schools during pick-up and drop-off times. Generally, congestion is short lived, and most drivers experience low levels of delay outside of peak periods. Consistent with State law, project transportation impact analyses focus on vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Historically, the City considered level of service (LOS) to identify road system impacts associated with new development projects, but this approach focuses on driver delay during a short period of time and often results in undesirable outcomes for connectivity, fiscal responsibility, commercial synergy, and land development. Vehicle operations continue to be evaluated for planning roadway improvements, but multimodal connectivity and safety are higher priorities than reducing vehicle delay.

  The City requires project applicants to submit traffic information to evaluate VMT, vehicular LOS and queuing, project trip generation, site access and circulation, bicycle and pedestrian conditions, access to public transit, and transportation safety. These documents are critical for understanding how all transportation modes may interact with one another on and near a proposed development site and ensure that project impacts are mitigated to improve connectivity and address safety.

The Mobility Element classifies roadways based on their intended function and projected traffic levels, which determine the appropriate type of design and number of lanes for the route. The different classes of roads proposed under the 2045 General Plan are shown in Figure 2-4 and described in Table 2-1.



Source: City of Atascadero 2025.

Figure 2-4. 2045 General Plan Update circulation diagram.

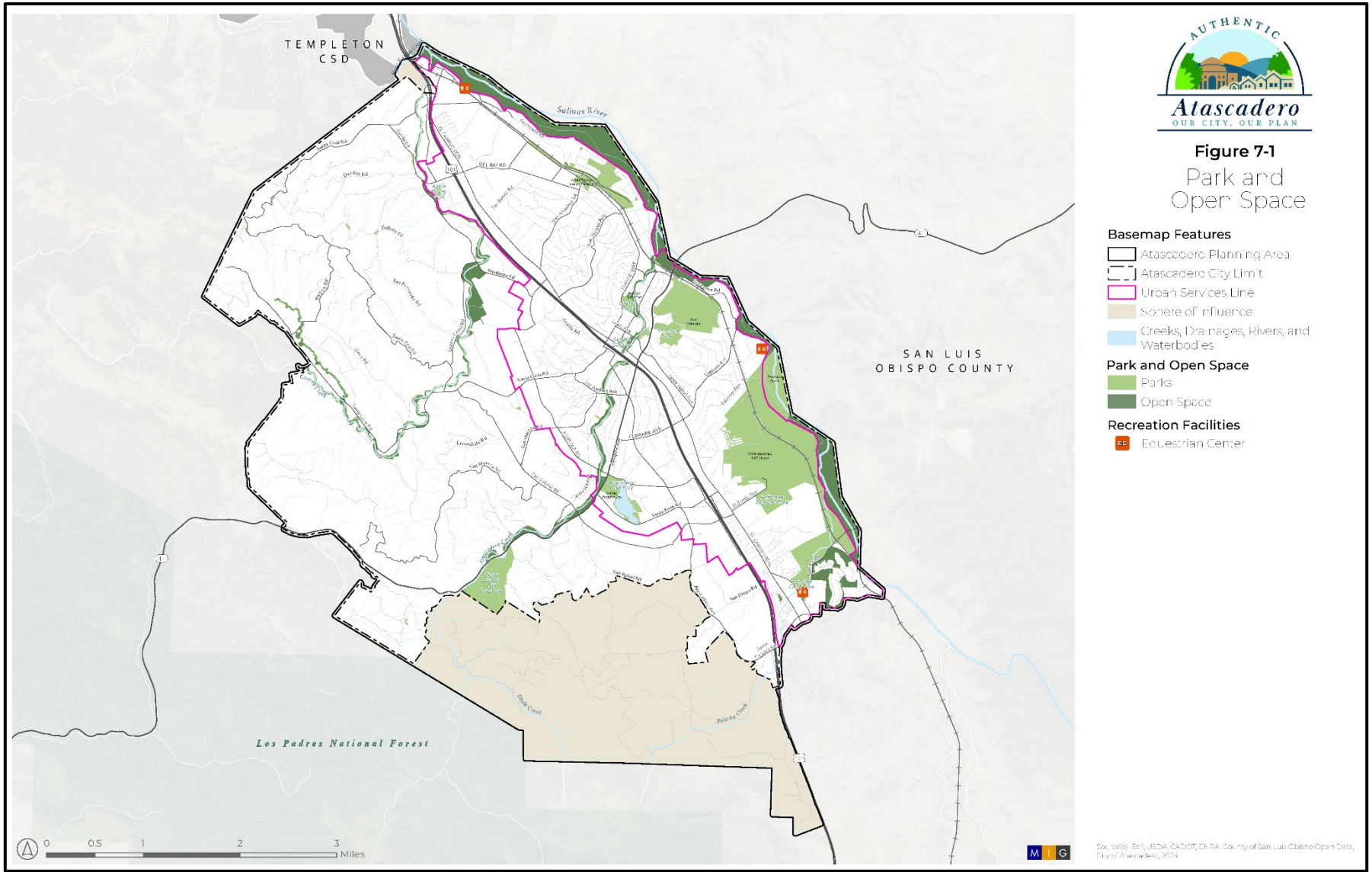
Table 2-1. 2045 General Plan Roadway Classifications

Type	Purpose and Function	Streets Designated
Freeway	Freeways are high-capacity and high-speed limited access facilities that serve intercity and regional travel.	U.S. 101
Arterial Streets	Arterial streets provide for circulation between major activity centers and residential areas within the City and beyond. They are also the main point of access to freeways and serve as major corridors supporting growth. Arterials should be designed to safely move all modes of travel while efficiently moving vehicles throughout the City. Access points to arterials should be minimized to the extent feasible to reduce conflict points and maintain steady flows. Arterials near schools should be enhanced to provide Safe Routes to School for pedestrians and bicyclists. Arterial street rights-of-way (ROWs) typically range from 80–100 feet.	• El Camino Real • Morro Road (SR 41) • Atascadero Avenue • Halcon Road • Portola Road • Santa Barbara Road • Santa Rosa Road • Traffic Way Portions of: • Curbaril Avenue • Del Rio Road • San Anselmo Road • Santa Cruz Road • Santa Lucia Avenue
Collector Streets	Collector streets channel traffic from residential or commercial areas to arterials. Residential, office and commercial, and public activities typically front on to them. They are usually two-lane streets, with maximum acceptable volumes often dictated by residents' concerns about intrusion rather than traffic capacity considerations. Collector street ROWs typically range from 40–60 feet. Collectors are divided into two categories, depending on the area and type of topography. • **Urban collectors** serve commercial and higher-density areas. Urban roads generally provide on-street parking, as well as sidewalks and bike lanes. • **Rural collectors** serve areas that typically have larger parcels. They are generally narrower in width due to lower volumes and limited need to accommodate on-street parking. Rural roadway cross-sections vary depending on topography but may have walkable shoulders, bike lanes, and/or multiuse pathways to provide multimodal connections to other destinations.	See Figure 2-4 (City of Atascadero 2025)
Local Streets	Local streets provide access to adjoining land uses. All streets not otherwise depicted on the circulation plan are local streets. Local streets typically provide narrower travel lanes and may or may not have dedicated bike lanes. They typically serve rural residential and single-family residential land uses. Local street ROWs typically range from 36–40 feet.	See Figure 2-4 (City of Atascadero 2025)

2.4.2.4 Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element

The Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element would fulfill the State requirement for the Conservation and Open Space Elements. The 2045 General Plan Update makes recreation, open space, and natural resources a central focus by introducing strategies to conserve Atascadero's diverse natural habitats, including oak woodlands, chaparral, and riparian corridors, while expanding recreational opportunities that enhance the City's rural character and quality of life. The Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element identifies the following priorities:

- **Parks and Open Spaces:** As of 2024, the City owns and operates seven public parks (totaling approximately 226 acres) and several recreational facilities (Colony Park Community Center, Pavilion on the Lake) that provide space for residents to enjoy passive and active forms of recreation, including opportunities to hike, bike, and ride horses (Figure 2-5). The City also owns and operates the 5-acre Central Coast Zoo, allowing visitors to view hundreds of animal species from around the world.



Source: City of Atascadero 2025.

Figure 2-5. 2045 General Plan Update park and trails system diagram.

Whereas the overall acreage of parks and open spaces is relatively high, not all Atascadero residents have the same level of access to park and recreational opportunities, as most of the City is rural in nature with large distances between larger lots and the urban core. Opportunities to improve existing linkages and create new linkages to parks and recreational amenities would improve the quality of life for residents and visitors.

- **Trails:** Atascadero contains approximately 17 miles of public trails (as of 2024) either owned and managed by the City, County, or Atascadero Land Preservation Society. This trail system is a community amenity and benefit. The opportunities to enhance pedestrian and bike connections to existing and new trails would better link residents and visitors to recreational destinations, including the Salinas River and Atascadero Lake Park. In addition to providing residents with better access, the City envisions these improvements as a draw for visitors looking to experience Atascadero's natural environment.
- **Oak Woodlands:** Atascadero contains a diversity of habitats and ecosystems. At least four types of oak woodlands are represented in the City, including Blue Oak Woodlands, Coastal Oak Woodlands, Valley Oak Woodlands, and Blue Oak–Foothill Pines. Oak woodlands provide important wildlife habitat and are an integral part of the City's aesthetic appeal and historic character. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has mapped approximately 10,822 acres of oak woodlands within the Planning Area (City of Atascadero 2025). Approximately 7,600 acres of oak woodland habitat occur on parcels zoned for residential use, largely within the rural areas beyond the Urban Limit Line (City of Atascadero 2025).
- **Slope and Topography:** Nearly half of Atascadero consists of hilly or steep mountainous topography. Steep slopes, while providing dramatic views, can also pose development challenges. Typically, hillsides are much harder to serve with infrastructure due to the need to pump water uphill and build roads on challenging slopes. Hillside areas also make emergency service support and evacuations from natural disasters—wildfires, landslides, earthquakes, and floods—more challenging.
- **Creeks, Rivers, and Other Habitat:** Atascadero contains approximately 27 miles of creeks and rivers, including Atascadero, Boulder, Graves, and Paloma Creeks and the Salinas River. In addition, there are over 54 miles of mapped, unidentified "blue-line" drainages, which range from simple land depressions to jurisdictional waterways. The waterways provide important wildlife corridors connecting the Salinas River to the Santa Lucia Mountains and are designated critical habitat areas for South-Central California Coast steelhead trout. Additionally, approximately 3,000 acres of critical habitat for California red-legged frog include the upper watershed areas of Morro and Atascadero Creeks. Historically, creeks in Atascadero have sustained degraded habitat quality due to encroachment from development, sedimentation and erosion, off-road vehicle use, and urban pollution. Protecting and enhancing the effected watersheds will support the local ecosystem, help improve water flow to reduce localized flooding risks, and enhance the recreational quality of the City's waterways. The local creeks and rivers also provide recreational opportunities for many residents. The Salinas River has been recognized by residents as an asset to be protected and bolstered as a regional attraction for tourism, recreation, and education. Potential amenities and activities include trails, fishing, interpretative signage, and wildlife observation areas.

The Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element contains sections including goals, supporting policies, and implementation actions, related to the following topics:

- Parks and Recreation
- Trails
- Open Space Conservation
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Reduction

2.4.2.5 Public Services and Infrastructure Element

The 2045 General Plan Update makes high-quality public services and infrastructure a central focus by introducing strategies to ensure reliable, flexible, and cost-effective service delivery that supports Atascadero's community character and growth objectives. The City is committed to ensuring that all residents benefit from quality services that reflect community character and growth objectives. The City Public Works Department manages key infrastructure systems, including street maintenance, stormwater management, flood control, sewage treatment, and upkeep of City-owned parks, trails, and facilities. Water service is provided by the historic Atascadero Mutual Water Company (AMWC), which sources local groundwater and distributes it through an extensive pipeline network.

Additional public services include law enforcement, fire protection, development review, building permitting, recreation, and community events, and the Atascadero Library and public schools are operated by County and independent agencies, respectively. Solid waste is managed by a private contractor, and utilities such as natural gas and electricity are supplied by regional providers, with alternative energy options and telecommunications services continually evolving to meet the community's needs.

The Public Services and Infrastructure Element provides a comprehensive overview of the City's essential services and infrastructure systems and sets forth goals, policies, and actions to ensure their thoughtful management and enhancement. The Public Services and Infrastructure Element identifies the following priorities:

- **Water Supply:** The AMWC 2020 Urban Water Management Plan projected future groundwater budget period (2020–2042) identifies an average annual increase in groundwater storage of 800-acre feet per year.[1] Looking forward, areas for aboveground or belowground storage (such as tanks) or groundwater recharge areas may be identified to expand water storage. This increase in capacity will address concerns related to future multiyear drought events that could potentially impact seasonal groundwater capacity.
- **Wastewater:** The City owns, operates, and maintains local sanitary sewer collection facilities and the local water reclamation facility, which as of 2024, had a treatment capacity of 1.4 million gallons per day. Approximately 50% of properties in Atascadero rely on individual on-site septic systems and are not connected to the sanitary sewer system, with the majority outside the USL. Two factors affect the need for a significant upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant: 1) compliance with new water quality standards for effluent and 2) demands associated with planned growth.
- **Flood Control Facilities:** The Salinas River and several creeks traverse the City, providing some measure of natural flood control. Installed flood control improvements, both private and public, consist of catch basins, culverts, and pipes designed to manage runoff. In 2023, a major 100-year storm resulted in significant flooding citywide, highlighting the need to evaluate opportunities to incorporate flood control facilities where possible and maintain the capacity of natural creeks and waterways to respond to potentially significant weather patterns and events in addition to the need to respond to aging infrastructure conditions.
- **Infrastructure Undergrounding:** Most electric power lines extend across Atascadero via overhead lines. The threat of extreme wind and heat present wildfire risks associated with sparking from these overhead lines. Undergrounding utilities for new development can reduce fire risk, offer more reliable electrical and communications service during and after storms, and reduced visual clutter.

[1] An acre-foot of water is 325,821 gallons, or roughly the amount sufficient to meet the needs of a household of four for 1 year.

- **High-Speed Communications Services:** Reliable, convenient, and affordable access to high-speed internet and cell phone coverage throughout the community promotes commerce and connectivity. The east side of Atascadero generally has good access to broadband technology, but the steep terrain and low-intensity development on Atascadero's west side pose challenges for providers to offer reliable service. Recently, Astound has entered the City to provide service to the area. They have expanded broadband to the west side of Atascadero within rural neighborhoods. This has prompted Spectrum to expand services as well. Provision of reliable, high-speed communications services allows residents to stay connected to the world and businesses to operate at their optimum.

2.4.2.6 Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element

The Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element would establish goals, policies, and actions designed to safeguard the community, provide for dependable emergency preparedness planning, and build in resilience. To help plan for, respond to, and recover from natural and human-caused disasters, the 2045 General Plan addresses safety and emergency response issues related to flooding, wildfires, crime, and public service facilities.

The Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element identifies the following priorities:

- **Wildfires:** Atascadero has a considerable wildfire risk, with approximately half of the community included within a Very High or High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, as designated by CAL FIRE. The region has suffered from high fire risk, experiencing several large-scale wildfires recorded between 1985 and 2025.

  Responsibility for fire protective services in the region falls under several agencies. On the local level, the Atascadero Fire Department is a City-funded department that oversees emergency fire response within City limits. CAL FIRE is responsible for protecting natural resources from fire on land designated by the State Board of Forestry as State Responsibility Area, which includes most land directly outside of Atascadero's boundary. CAL FIRE has a Mutual Threat Zone (where wildfires pose a shared threat to multiple jurisdictions) within City boundaries and provides a full wildland response. The U.S. Department of Forestry is responsible for fire protective services on federally owned land, such as national forests and parks. Nearby federal land includes Los Padres National Forest, which abuts Eagle Ranch, about 10 miles west of the City boundary.

  Reducing the potential for loss of life and property in the event of a fire requires providing infrastructure that supports rapid response and reducing flammable materials that fuel wildland fires. Necessary infrastructure includes sufficient evacuation routes, adequate water supply and pressure (managed by the AMWC), and strategic placement of new water tanks/reservoirs. Having more a compact development pattern and requiring defensible space in areas at risk for wildfires can also help better protect new residents and businesses.

  The City has adopted the 2025 State Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map (City of Atascadero 2025b). Based on local conditions and known fire risks, the City may elect to adopt a more stringent map to address building and fire code requirements for future developments. The City has established clear building and defensible space standards in these areas to reduce wildfire risk. The City has identified fire prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery programs to help make fire prone areas more resilient to the wildfire threat.

- **Flooding:** Areas along Atascadero, Graves, Boulder, and Paloma Creeks and the Salinas River have the potential to flood and are identified as 100-year flood zones by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Some properties fall within high-risk areas, known as Special Flood Zone Areas. These areas—largely located adjacent to the creeks and the Salinas River—have at least a 1% annual chance of flooding. If a property owner has a federally backed loan within these

areas, Federal regulations dictate that the owner maintain flood insurance. Even outside of these FEMA-designated zones, smaller drainage channels and culverts can become clogged or fail, creating the threat of localized flooding.

Flood-prone areas along Atascadero Creek could provide multi-benefit functions, such as passive park space, places to recharge the groundwater basin, and areas to naturally filter urban runoff pollutants; however, because Atascadero Creek and other creeks transverse private property, creating dual public benefit uses presents challenges.

- **Hazardous Materials:** Simply defined, a hazardous material is any item or agent (biological, chemical, physical) that has the potential to cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment, either by itself or through interaction with other factors. We encounter hazardous materials as part of our everyday lives: batteries, light bulbs, and household chemicals—such as pesticides, motor oil, cleaners, and paints. The many electrical devices we use contain materials that become "e-waste" when those devices fail or become obsolete. Almost all commercial and industrial businesses use or produce hazardous materials as part of their processes.

  The use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials—including management of contaminated soils and groundwater—are regulated by a myriad of federal, state, and local laws. In Atascadero, the Fire Department has responsibility to ensure businesses properly store hazardous materials to avoid accidental release and to allow firefighters to respond appropriately should a spill occur. The San Luis Obispo Environmental Health Services Division oversees reporting and inspections.

- **Seismic and Geologic Hazards:** California straddles the boundary between the Pacific Plate and the North American Plate, which is primarily defined by the San Andreas Fault. The earthquakes we experience locally result from the grinding and shifting of the plates along a myriad of fault lines, some close by and others quite some distance away. For example, during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake that significantly shook the Bay Area and downed part of the Bay Bridge, Atascadero residents experienced light shaking.

  The fault zones closest to Atascadero are the Rinconada and the Nacimiento Faults. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the Rinconada Fault is considered active, with the potential to generate a maximum 7.5 magnitude earthquake (City of Atascadero 2025). An earthquake of this scale would produce significant ground shaking and could trigger the seismic-related effects including landslides and liquefaction. The degree of hazard depends on the location of the seismic epicenter, the magnitude and duration of ground shaking, topography, groundwater conditions, and type of building construction. The Nacimiento Fault is considered inactive. Of regional significance is the San Andreas Fault, which extends from San Francisco Bay through central California to the Gulf of California. A major earthquake along the San Andreas Fault would have the potential to result significant ground shaking and, depending on the location of the earthquake, cause catastrophic damage.

- **Noise:** Noise typically is defined as unwanted sound. Exposure to excessive noise can impact the health and quality of life of people who reside in, work in, or visit Atascadero. Although people may not agree as to what constitutes particularly irksome noise, science does show that certain defined noise levels can cause ill health effects. Excessive noise can cause hearing loss, stress, hypertension, sleep disturbance, and fatigue. The following describes noise sources within the City:
  - Roadways and freeways are the primary noise sources in the City. Primary transportation noise sources include vehicular traffic along U.S. 101 and SR 41.
  - Freight and Amtrak train traffic along the Union Pacific Railroad corridor result in localized and intermittent noise events.
  - Non-transportation-related noise sources are predominantly associated with industrial and commercial operations and mechanical equipment within buildings. Other noise sources

can result in intermittent increases in ambient noise levels, such as short-term construction activities, schools, and events.

- **Police Services:** The Atascadero Police Department prides itself in safeguarding the community. Part of its stated mission is "to work toward being the premier law enforcement agency on the central coast." The U.S. Department of Justice reports the rate of crime in Atascadero to be 23.73 per 1,000 residents during a standard year (City of Atascadero 2025). The most frequent crimes are drug crimes (5.6%), vandalism (5.4%), vehicle theft (3.4%), theft (2.8%), and assault (1.6%). Although Atascadero is a relatively safe community, the realities and perceptions around crime affect how current and prospective residents and business owners view the community.
- **New Public Safety Facilities:** The City's Police and Fire Departments have identified needs for critical upgrades to existing facilities. Fire Station #1 will be rebuilt at its existing site and will include an Emergency Operations Center. Fire Station #2 will have a complete renovation of the living quarters. The Police Department will include major renovations and a new dispatch building. All three projects are expected to be completed in 2027. The Fire Department also envisions a third fire station in the U.S. 101/Del Rio region to ensure appropriate response times throughout the City. Whereas capital projects are expensive and require consideration to the cost of additional staff, the one-time expense often helps improve efficiencies and reduce other operations and maintenance expenses.

2.4.3 2045 General Plan Goals

The goals of the 2045 General Plan Update are shown below in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2. 2045 General Plan Update Goals

General Plan Chapter	Goals	
Land Use and Community Form Element	LU-1	Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
	LU-2	Enhanced major corridors that serve regional and local needs by creating focused, distinct, and economically viable nodes
	LU-3	A new professional office, retail, and employment area focused on (but not limited to) the medical industry, including research and development uses
	LU-4	A dedicated, focused area for industrial activity that minimizes impact on nearby residential neighborhoods and protected open space areas
	LU-5	A Downtown core celebrated by the community, with places to shop, be entertained, live, gather outside, learn, and engage in civic discourse
Economic Development Element	ED-1	A sound economic base to sustain the City's unique character through a range of employment and business opportunities and generation of sufficient revenue to support adequate levels of public services, as well as environmental and social quality
	ED-2	Retention and expansion of existing businesses and attraction of new businesses and industries to increase economic growth, improve the availability of goods and services, and increase opportunities for higher-wage jobs in Atascadero
	ED-3	Leveraging the impact of the City's resources and investments in economic development through effective public-private partnerships
	ED-4	Long-term fiscal strength that reinforces Atascadero's desire to grow and attract businesses

General Plan Chapter	Goals	
Mobility Element	MO-1	A safe, multimodal, interconnected, and efficient circulation system that serves all community members
	MO-2	Accessible, right-sized, well-designed, and convenient public and private parking facilities
	MO-3	Rebuilt and/or upgraded Highway 101 interchanges that enhance safety, improve functionalities for all users, and promote continued economic growth and prosperity in Atascadero
	MO-4	Safe, functional, and appealing bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian (in rural areas) facilities that allow convenient multimodal mobility
	MO-5	Reliable alternative travel modes that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality
	MO-6	Anticipating and addressing emerging mobility technology proactively to allow new systems and industries to operate in Atascadero on the City's terms
Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element	REC-1	Diverse parks, recreational activities, and leisure experiences for people of all ages
	REC-2	A network of public trails that provide opportunities to engage with nature, move through the City, and connect to key destinations
	REC-3	Dedicated system of open space that upholds the community's rural character, local biodiversity, natural landscape, and enjoyment of recreation
	REC-4	Consideration of biological and watershed resources within the urban areas to provide multiple benefits, with resource areas including oak woodlands, riparian corridors, native trees and plants, and creeks and rivers
	REC-5	
	REC-6	Protection and celebration of Atascadero's rich prehistory and history
	REC-7	Improve air quality and reduced health risks
Public Service and Infrastructure Element	PSI-1	Continued reliable public infrastructure and services that support orderly and desired growth
	PSI-2	Continued high-quality water services
	PSI-3	A comprehensive wastewater collection system and wastewater treatment plant capacity that support growth and economic development goals
	PSI-4	Minimized flood risks via a well-functioning stormwater management system
	PSI-5	Reduced waste volumes entering regional landfills and increased consumer commitment to minimizing waste production
	PSI-5.2	Efficient, effective, safe, and orderly waste collection services
	PSI-6	Increased development and use of clean, renewable energy systems
	PSI-7	Increased access to modern and affordable telecommunications infrastructure and service throughout Atascadero
Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element	SEP-1	A high level of protection from and minimized risk to life in the event of a fire
	SEP-2	Flood prevention and reduction strategies that limit damage to natural areas while safeguarding property and lives
	SEP-3	Reduced potential for harm to individuals and the environment due to the presence of hazardous materials
	SEP-4	Minimized exposure geologic and seismic hazards and the associated risks to life and property
	SEP-5	Neighborhoods that maintain a strong quality of life while supporting a vibrant and thriving economy
	SEP-6	A community well prepared to respond to and recover from natural and human-caused disasters
	SEP-7	Responsive police services that deter and respond to crime and support a safe and secure community
	SEP-8	A robust, well-trained, and highly capable fire protection and emergency response system

2.5 ZONING CODE UPDATE

The Zoning Code Update will:

1. Update zoning to be consistent with the new General Plan Placetypes
2. Reorganize the chapters for increased accessibility
3. Make minor changes to certain administrative processes

The Zoning Code Update focuses on reorganization of Title 9 for readability and accessibility while incorporating new zoning districts to correspond to updated General Plan Placetypes. This ensures that the City can provide for consistent implementation following adoption of the 2045 General Plan.

The revised organization consolidates the zoning topics into eight chapters. Existing standards or policies, including, but not limited to, processes and review authority for legislative actions (General Plan Amendments, Development Agreements and Planned Development), precise plans, variances, use permits, design review and other permits, building permits, alcohol licenses, specific plans, and annexations, will be reorganized accordingly to improve the utility and readability of the Zoning Code. The chapters include:

- Ch 1: Enactment And Applicability
- Ch 2: Zoning Districts, Allowable Uses, and Development Standards
- Ch 3: Regulations Applicable to All Zoning Districts
- Ch 4: Standards for Specific Uses
- Ch 5: Nonconformities
- Ch 6: Entitlement Processing Procedures
- Ch 7: Zoning Code Administration
- Ch 8: Definitions

The Zoning Code Update will include new land use definitions that are intended to match and implement the General Plan Placetypes. These redefined uses will be used to update specific zoning district use tables to ensure that zoning aligns with General Plan vision, policies and goals. To further implement the General Plan, the Zoning Code Update will include objective development standards for mixed-use sites and the innovation/flex zone as well as special use standards, lighting standards, and temporary and mobile event regulations in alignment with the General Plan goals and policies. The Zoning Code Update also includes any standards or regulations identified as required mitigation through this EIR.

With respect to zoning code administration, the Zoning Code Update will make the following minor administrative process changes: amending the requirement for a hearing on an Administrative Use Permit to require a hearing upon request of the applicant or an interested party, rather than automatically; expanding the notification radius for general plan and zoning amendments; establishing a 2-year duration for all entitlements; clarifying the requirements for temporary use permits; and other minor text changes to clarify existing City processes.

2.6 REQUESTED ACTIONS AND REQUIRED APPROVALS

Following review of the proposed General Plan Update, Zoning Code Update, and Draft EIR, the City Planning Commission would make recommendations to the City Council. Following review of these components by the Planning Commission, the City Council would review the project and decide whether to certify the Final EIR and adopt the proposed General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update. If the 2045 General Plan Update is not adopted at that time, the City would continue using the zoning and policy framework established under the currently adopted 2025 General Plan until an updated general plan is adopted by City Council.

Implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would also require consultation and/or coordination with several other agencies, including Caltrans, which would be responsible for approving future improvement to the state highway system (e.g., U.S. 101 and SR 41), and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which has a responsibility for issuing take permits and streambed alteration agreements for any projects with the potential to affect plant or animal species listed by the State of California as rare, threatened, or endangered or that would affect waters of the State.

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CHAPTER 3. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This chapter of the environmental impact report (EIR) describes the 2045 General Plan Update and subsequent Atascadero Code of Ordinances (Municipal Code) update (collectively referred to as the project) environmental setting, including the physical conditions of the project vicinity, an overview of relevant plans and policies applicable to the proposed project, and a discussion of the cumulative development scenario and cumulative study area for the project. More detailed descriptions of the environmental setting for each environmental issue area are in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.

3.1 PHYSICAL SETTING

3.1.1 Regional Setting

Situated between the Salinas River to the east and the oak-covered Santa Lucia Mountains to the west, Atascadero is a suburban community that blends modern amenities with a strong sense of history and natural beauty. The City's Downtown features two federally recognized historic buildings: the Atascadero Administration Building (1918) and the Atascadero Printery (1914), both of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Park Service 2024).

Atascadero is inland in northern San Luis Obispo County, approximately 10 miles north of the City of San Luis Obispo and about 4 miles south of the City of Paso Robles. Situated in California's Central Coast region, the City is boarded by rural areas, which are primarily used for grazing, vineyards, and watershed protection, and the unincorporated communities of Templeton to the north and Santa Margarita to the southwest. Regional connectivity is provided by U.S. Route 101, which runs in north-south alignment through Atascadero and links the City to the broader Central Coast and regional employment centers. State Route 41 bisects the City, offering direct access to the coastal city of Morro Bay and extending east to the Central Valley. The City's location makes it a gateway between the inland valleys and coastal communities. Atascadero's regional setting is further influenced by its proximity to major tourism and employment centers, including the Paso Robles wine country, City of San Luis Obispo, and Pacific coast.

3.1.2 Local Setting

As of 2025, Atascadero's corporate limits encompass approximately 26 square miles. The 2045 General Plan includes areas beyond the City within its Sphere of Influence, which generally aligns with the historic Atascadero Colony boundary. The original Atascadero Colony map was recorded in 1914. It was the largest single subdivision map in San Luis Obispo County history and the first master planned community in California. The original Colony map generally followed the 23,000-acre Atascadero Rancho, which was owned by J.H. Henry of San Jose. Its boundaries extend to the west to the top of the Coastal ridge near San Marcos Road and Frog Pond Mountain, to the north at the edge of Paso Robles Creek, to the south to near the community of Garden Farms, and to the east to the Salinas River. The Atascadero Colony focused on large lot residential parcels that provided opportunities for homesteading and cooperative crop production. The Colony was established with a small downtown and a focus on civic buildings and spaces designed to embody the City Beautiful movement.

Today, the civic core of Atascadero is a hub featuring a mix of shops, restaurants, and community spaces, with commercial activity concentrated along the El Camino Real, Traffic Way, and Morro Road corridors. Residential neighborhoods near these corridors tend to have smaller lots and higher densities, with lot sizes increasing and housing density decreasing farther from the City center. Sewer service is limited within the City, resulting in larger, rural lots outside of the service area.

As of 2024, Atascadero has a population of approximately 30,683 people, which includes a 29,365 base population with 1,318 group quarter residents, with around 12,506 homes and an average household size of 2.43 people (Department of Finance 2025). In 2023, the median age of residents was 40.5 years, slightly older than the California median of 38.2 years (U.S. Census Bureau 2023). About 75% of the adopted 2022-2023 General Fund revenue came from property tax, sales tax, and transient occupancy tax (TOT), with most property tax revenue stemming from residential development and nearly all TOT revenue from visitor activities.

The local workforce is supported by a mix of local businesses, public services, and nearby regional employers in San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles. The largest employment sector in the City is Health Care and Social Assistance, accounting for over 30% of jobs, largely due to the Atascadero State Hospital. Other significant industries include Construction, comprising 12% of employment, and Retail, making up 11% (City of Atascadero 2024). This blend of land uses, economic activity, and community amenities helps define Atascadero's unique local character.

3.2 REGULATORY SETTING

The City of Atascadero is guided by a legal and policy framework that governs land use, development, and environmental consideration. This framework ensures that the General Plan aligns with state and local regulations.

3.2.1 State Regulations

3.2.1.1 California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires local government agencies to inform decision-makers and the public about potentially significant environmental impacts of proposed projects and ways to minimize these effects and indicate alternatives (California State Lands Commission 2025). In compliance with CEQA, Atascadero's 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update must be evaluated for potential environmental impacts to ensure informed decision-making. This process involves preparing an EIR that identifies significant environmental effects and outlines strategies for mitigation.

3.2.2 Local Regulations

3.2.2.1 City of Atascadero General Plan 2025

Adopted in 2002 with its most recent revision in 2016, the Atascadero General Plan 2025 serves as a comprehensive blueprint for the City's long-term growth and development, directing land use decisions and informing policymaking vision (City of Atascadero 2016). This plan articulates goals and objectives that resonate with community priorities, ensuring that future development aligns with the City's overarching goals. The 2045 General Plan builds upon this foundation by reinforcing and expanding these goals, incorporating contemporary trends and challenges. It emphasizes fiscally sustainable development, enhanced community connectivity, and environmental stewardship, aligning with the evolving needs and aspirations of Atascadero's residents while maintaining the core values established in the 2025 plan.

3.2.2.2 City of Atascadero Code of Ordinances

The City's Code of Ordinances (Municipal Code) provides the legal framework for land use, zoning, and development standards. This code outlines regulations that guide growth, ensure safety, and maintain community character (City of Atascadero 2025). By adhering to these local ordinances, the City ensures orderly development that aligns with community goals and legal requirements. The 2045 General Plan directs this framework by integrating forward-thinking strategies and policies that address emerging trends and challenges.

3.2.2.3 Atascadero Bicycle Transportation Plan

The *Atascadero Bicycle Transportation Plan* was developed in 2010 as a 15-year blueprint for development of a comprehensive bicycling system. The plan aims to enhance opportunities for recreational bicycling while making Atascadero an attractive destination for tourists (City of Atascadero 2010). The 2045 General Plan aligns with and supports this vision by integrating policies and infrastructure improvements that promote safe and accessible cycling routes.

3.2.2.4 The El Camino Plan

The El Camino Plan was completed in 2020 and provides guidance for development along the El Camino Real corridor, a key commercial and transportation artery in Atascadero. It outlines possible policy, regulatory, and design strategies across several key areas. The plan envisions opportunities to enhance multi-modal infrastructure, public spaces, and enhanced aesthetics to support economic vitality (City of Atascadero 2020).

3.2.2.5 The Downtown Safety and Parking Enhancement Plan

Completion of the *Downtown Safety and Parking Enhancement Plan* occurred in 2025. This plan, and subsequent infrastructure project, was envisioned in 2017. Construction commenced in 2024 and was completed in 2025. In accordance with the Plan, the 0.6-mile portion of El Camino Real within the Downtown was transformed from a five-lane arterial roadway to a two lane street that includes a parking plaza in the center of the right-of-way and enhanced landscape and streetscape features that increased pedestrian safety and created a strong sense of place in support of continued economic development and investment.

3.2.2.6 Local Area Management Plan

In California, the regulation of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) falls under the authority of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), with implementation by Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCB). The SWRCB's 2013 policy introduced a tiered management strategy, ranging from properly functioning systems to those needing corrective action. Under the OWTS Policy, local agencies must either regulate septic systems according to Policy requirements or develop a Local Agency Management Program (LAMP) that aligns with the Policy to ensure OWTS are managed to protect groundwater quality and public health. The City adopted an agency-specific LAMP in 2018 that sets standards for the design, installation, and maintenance of OWTS. The LAMP excludes systems with wastewater flows over a certain threshold, surface discharges, or certain high-strength wastewaters, which require separate authorization from the RWQCB (Monsoon Consultants 2018).

By assessing the suitability of OWTS in various locations, the LAMP identifies regions where increased density is feasible without compromising groundwater quality or public health. Additionally, the LAMP informs decisions on where the public sewer system is advisable, ensuring that infrastructure improvements align with growth patterns and community needs (Monsoon Consultants 2018).

3.3 CUMULATIVE STUDY AREA

3.3.1 CEQA Requirements

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 defines "cumulative impact" as two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of the development of the proposed project and all other nearby "related" projects. For example, the traffic impacts of two projects in close proximity may be insignificant when analyzed separately but could have a significant impact when the projects are analyzed together.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 indicates that cumulative impacts shall be discussed when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable, or if the project's incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable, the lead agency shall identify facts and analyses supporting that conclusion. The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as much detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone. The discussion should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 states the following:

> The following elements are necessary to an adequate discussion of significant cumulative impacts:
>
> (1) Either:
>
> (A) A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency, or
>
> (B) A summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. Such plans may include: a general plan, regional transportation plan, or plans for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A summary of projections may also be contained in an adopted or certified prior environmental document for such a plan. Such projections may be supplemented with additional information such as a regional modeling program. Any such document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the lead agency.

3.3.2 Cumulative Development Scenario

The cumulative impact assessment in this Draft EIR uses method (B). The project under consideration is the City's 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update. Consistent with the requirements outlined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b)(1)(B), this Draft EIR evaluates the potential environmental effects of citywide development anticipated by the land use plan through the General Plan's buildout year. As a result, the analysis considers the combined impacts of all growth expected under the 2045 General Plan Update, both within Atascadero and the surrounding region, when appropriate.

For most environmental topics, the analysis of cumulative impacts is focused on the City Planning Area. Each cumulative impact discussion in Sections 4.1 through 4.16 of this Draft EIR defines the appropriate geographic area affected by the cumulative impact, with the scale of analysis determined by the nature of the resource and impact. Additional details on the cumulative impacts associated with anticipated growth and development in Atascadero and the surrounding area are provided in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, for each resource topic. The parameters for assessing each topic are:

- **Aesthetics:** The cumulative setting for visual impacts includes citywide growth.
- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources:** The cumulative analysis for agricultural and forestry resources considers a geographic scope that extends throughout San Luis Obispo County, including all lands within the county that are designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance, as well as areas identified as forestland or natural community types.
- **Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy:** Cumulative air quality impacts are analyzed at the regional level, using the boundaries of the San Luis Obispo County Air Basin. Greenhouse gas emissions impacts are inherently cumulative; therefore, Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy* evaluates the project's cumulative contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. The cumulative analysis for energy resources is based on the service areas of the local energy provider, Pacific Gas & Electric.
- **Biological Resources:** Cumulative impacts to sensitive habitats, protected species, and jurisdictional resources are assessed at the citywide, regional, and statewide levels.
- **Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources:** Cumulative impacts on cultural resources are evaluated citywide. Cumulative impacts related to Tribal Cultural Resources in Atascadero are evaluated based on areas of cultural significance to local Native American Tribes. These areas may include cultural landscapes, heritage sites, and other places important to Tribal history and traditions.
- **Geology and Soils:** Geology and soils impacts are typically site specific and are not expected to result in cumulative impacts.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Material:** Cumulative hazardous materials impacts are assessed at the citywide level.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality:** Cumulative water quality impacts are evaluated within the jurisdiction of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, which oversees Atascadero.
- **Land Use and Planning:** Cumulative impacts are evaluated based on relevant jurisdictional boundaries and applicable plans, including the general plans of incorporated cities and regional land use plans.
- **Mineral Resources:** The cumulative analysis for mineral resources encompasses all regionally significant mineral resource areas and recovery sites within the City.
- **Noise:** Cumulative impacts consider how construction and new development throughout Atascadero together may create more noise than individual projects alone, including both short-term construction noise and long-term increases from sources like equipment and traffic. As part of the 2045 General Plan Update, consideration is given as to whether future citywide growth could noticeably raise noise levels and whether the changes proposed in the General Plan would significantly contribute to that increase.
- **Population and Housing:** Cumulative impacts in Atascadero are evaluated by considering citywide growth patterns and planning documents in combination with broader regional trends.
- **Public Services and Recreation:** Cumulative impacts are based on cumulative development within each service provider's boundaries.
- **Transportation:** The vehicle miles traveled (VMT) analysis evaluates how projected development in Atascadero, as outlined in the proposed project, would contribute to overall VMT in San Luis Obispo County. This analysis uses the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments' regional travel demand model and local growth projections to assess cumulative transportation impacts.

- **Utilities and Service Systems:** Cumulative impacts related to utilities and service systems are assessed by considering the combined effects of development throughout the service areas of each utility provider.
- **Wildfire:** Cumulative impacts are evaluated by considering potential development in and near designated fire hazard severity zones.

CHAPTER 4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update and subsequent Atascadero Code of Ordinances (Municipal Code) update (collectively referred to as the project), and identifies mitigation measures for impacts found to be potentially significant.

Table 4-1. Summary of Environmental Impact Analysis

Environmental Resource	Significant, Unavoidable Adverse Impacts	Less than Significant Impacts with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impacts
Aesthetics			X
Agriculture and Forestry Resources			X
Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy	X		
Biological Resources			X
Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources			X
Geology and Soils		X	
Hazards and Hazardous Materials			X
Hydrology and Water Quality			X
Land Use and Planning			X
Mineral Resources			X
Noise			X
Population and Housing			X
Public Services and Recreation			X
Transportation	X		
Utilities and Service Systems		X	
Wildfire			X

Each environmental issue area discussed in Chapter 4 of this EIR has been divided into subsections, as follows:

Existing Conditions: The description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time of the established baseline physical conditions.

Regulatory Setting: The regulations in effect at the time the Notice of Preparation was published. These are the applicable regulations governing each environmental topic, such as the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and its requirements for protecting rare and endangered species. This is not an exhaustive analysis of the regulations, but rather information to assist the reader in understanding the potential impacts of the project from a regulatory perspective.

Thresholds of Significance: The thresholds used to evaluate each environmental topic based on Appendix G of the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

Impact Assessment Methodology: Methodology used to determine the impacts associated with the project, such as measurements or field investigative processes.

Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures: The statement of the level of significance of potential environmental effects of the project. These include the significant environmental effects

of the Revised Project, as further defined below. The impacts are identified and then are followed by the mitigation measures that can minimize significant impacts; mitigation measures must be enforceable and feasible. In addition, there must be an essential nexus between the mitigation measure and a legitimate governmental interest, and the mitigation measure also must be "roughly proportional" to the impacts of the project.

Residual Impacts: The statement of the level of impact, significant or insignificant, that would remain after the implementation of identified mitigation.

Cumulative Impacts: The cumulative effects of the project when the project's incremental effect is considered in combination with other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects.

Secondary Impacts: If implementation of an identified mitigation measure would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the Revised Project, the effects of the mitigation measure are discussed but in less detail than the significant effects of the project.

All residual impacts in the EIR have been classified according to the following criteria (note: CEQA does not recognize a beneficial effect as an impact):

A *significant and unavoidable impact* would cause a substantial adverse effect on the environment that meets or exceeds the applicable significance criteria thresholds for a particular resource, and no feasible mitigation measures would be available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level.

A *less-than-significant impact with mitigation* is an adverse impact that would cause a substantial adverse effect that meets or exceeds the applicable significance criteria thresholds for a particular resource, but can be reduced to a less-than-significant level through successful implementation of identified mitigation measures.

A *less-than-significant impact* is an adverse impact that does not meet or exceed the applicable significance criteria thresholds for a particular resource. Generally, no mitigation measures are required for less-than-significant impacts; only compliance with standard regulatory conditions would be required. However, mitigation may still be recommended should the lead or responsible agencies deem it appropriate to reduce the impact to the maximum extent feasible, as long as there is rough proportionality between the environmental impacts caused by the project and the mitigation measures imposed on the project.

The term "significance" is used throughout the EIR to characterize the magnitude of the projected impact. For the purpose of this EIR, a significant impact is a substantial or potentially substantial change to resources in the project area or the area adjacent to the project. In the discussions of each issue area, thresholds are identified that are used to distinguish between significant and insignificant impacts. To the extent feasible, distinctions are also made between regional and local significance and short-term versus long-term duration.

Where possible, measures have been identified to reduce project impacts to less-than-significant levels. CEQA states that public agencies should not approve projects as proposed if there are feasible mitigation measures available that would substantially lessen the environmental effects of such projects (Public Resources Code Section 21002). Included with each mitigation measure are the requirements related to the required timing of the action (e.g., prior to development of final construction plans, prior to commencement of construction, prior to operation, etc.) and the party responsible for verifying implementation of the mitigation measures.

4.1 AESTHETICS

This section summarizes the aesthetic resources in the Planning Area and evaluates the potential impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update's (project's) potential impacts related to aesthetics and visual resources. It incorporates information regarding the regulatory setting and analysis of viewsheds and visual resources in and around the City. A primary purpose of this analysis is to determine whether a change in the visual environment would occur, whether that change would be viewed as a positive or negative one, and the degree of any change relative to the existing setting. If the project has the potential to cause visual impacts, this section specifically defines those impacts.

4.1.1 Existing Conditions

4.1.1.1 Overview of Existing Visual Conditions

Atascadero is characterized by its scenic setting, framed by the rolling Santa Lucia Mountains to the west and the Salinas River to the east. The City's landscape includes a mix of residential neighborhoods, agricultural and open space lands, commercial centers, industrial areas, and parks, creating a visually diverse environment. Tree-lined streets, expansive oak woodlands, and gently sloping hills contribute to the City's distinctive natural backdrop. The blend of developed areas and preserved open spaces provides a balance of urban amenities and rural charm. Historically, Atascadero's land use pattern was designed to conform to the 1913 Colony Plan (Colony). Over the course of more than one hundred years of development, evolving community needs and external influences—most notably the construction of U.S. Route 101 (U.S. 101) through the middle of the City—have resulted in a community largely organized around two major corridors: El Camino Real and Morro Road. These corridors act as the "spines" of the community, connecting residential neighborhoods to employment centers, schools, civic uses, parks, highways and freeways, and adjacent cities.

The predominant land use in Atascadero, in terms of total acreage, consists of low-density rural residential land uses. Large residential parcels exceeding 2.5 acres are predominantly west of U.S. 101, outside the Urban Services Line (USL), where lower-density development and rural land use patterns are prevalent. Commercial uses are primarily distributed along the 7-mile corridor of El Camino Real and are further concentrated along Morro Road, which intersects El Camino Real and serves as a secondary commercial axis within the City. Industrial uses are concentrated along the northeastern fringe of the City, along Traffic Way and the Salinas River.

Visually, Atascadero combines city and country elements in a woodland setting with rugged hillsides, abundant vegetation, and creeks. Throughout the City, trees such as live oak, valley oak, and blue oak define the character of Atascadero, with pines found on the higher ridges that top 2,000 feet above mean sea level at the southwestern City limit. South-facing slopes are home to chaparral vegetation, whereas willows, sycamores, bay laurel and cottonwoods line the creeks.

4.1.1.2 Scenic Vistas and Resources

A scenic vista provides views from a public vantage point of an aesthetically valued landscape. The term "vista" generally implies an expansive view, usually from an elevated point or open area, but can also refer to a roadway with a longer-range view of the landscape. The principal scenic vista in Atascadero is Pine Mountain, which rises 1,332 feet above mean sea level and is near the eastern boundary of the City south of Morro Road. The topography of the surrounding area provides numerous scenic vistas of the natural landscape.

Scenic resources typically refer to natural features, such as trees, rock formations, or waterways, but can also refer to human-made features, including historic buildings, civic gateways, and landmarks. The City of Atascadero 2025 General Plan (2025 General Plan) specifically identifies open and undeveloped spaces and civic gateways as having scenic value and contains policies protecting hill contours, creeks, riparian corridors, woodlands, natural flora and fauna, scenic lands, sensitive natural areas, historic buildings, and cultural resources (City of Atascadero 2016).

GATEWAYS

The 2025 General Plan identifies four civic gateways as primary entryways into the City. Gateways are a point along a roadway entering a city or county at which a visitor, resident, or local worker gains a sense of having left the previous environment and entered a new place. These major gateways into Atascadero are along U.S. 101 and Morro Road at the following intersections:

- U.S. 101 and City limit (north)
- U.S. 101 and City limit (south)
- Morro Road and City limit (east)
- Morro Road and USL (west)

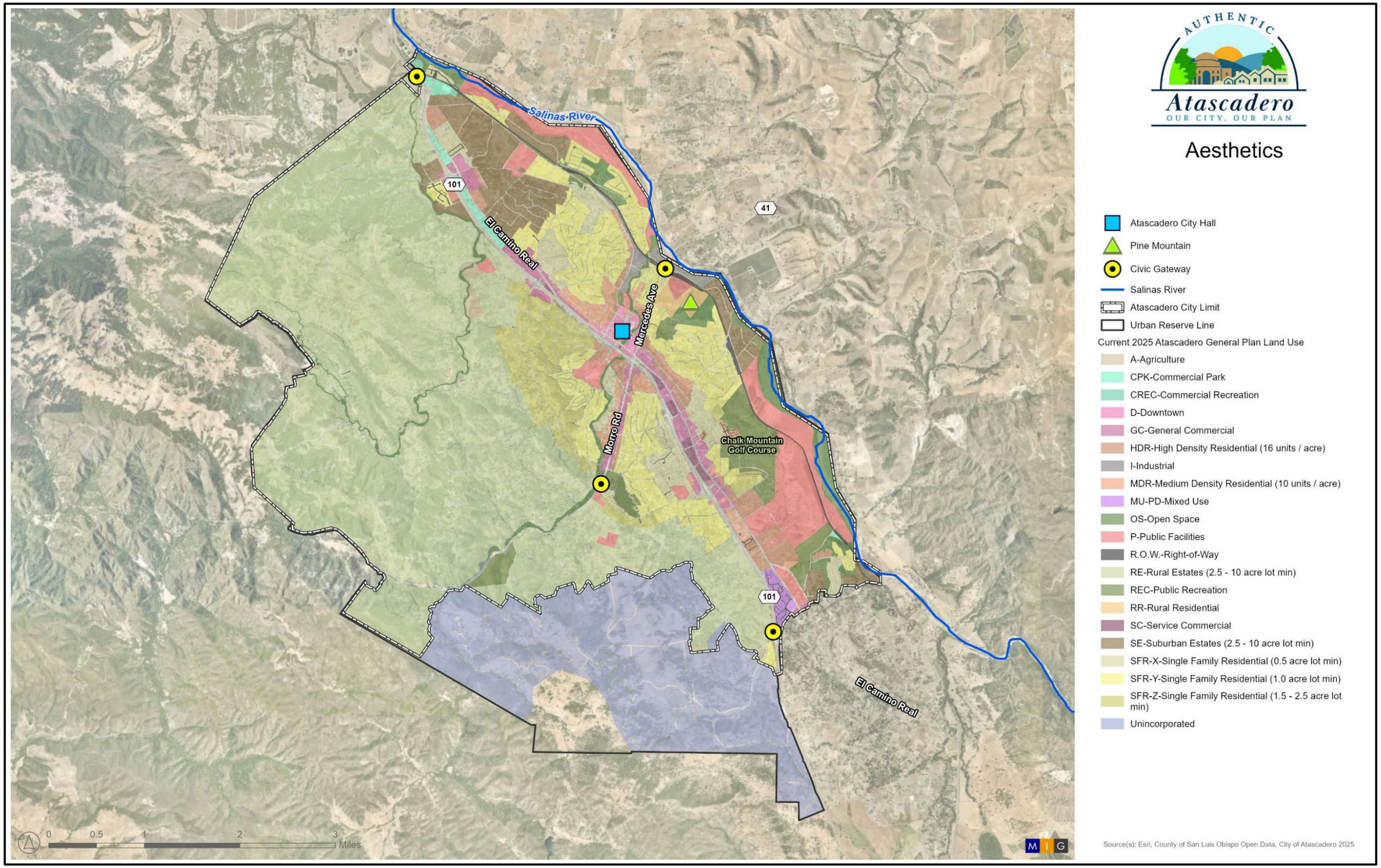
The north, south, and east gateways lie along the City's boundary. The west gateway marks a change from rural residential land uses to a more urban environment (within the USL), at the intersection of Santa Rosa Road and Morro Road (City of Atascadero 2016).

LANDMARKS

Landmarks include any site (including significant trees or other significant permanent landscaping on a site), place, building, structure, street, improvement, street furniture, sign, work of art, natural feature, or other object representative of the historical, archaeological, cultural, architectural, community, aesthetic, or artistic heritage of the City. Some representative examples include:

- Atascadero City Hall (Figure 4.1-2)
- Atascadero Lake and Atascadero Lake Park
- Centennial Bridge and Plaza
- Sunken Gardens and Statuary (Figure 4.1-3)
- Central Coast Zoo (Figure 4.1-4)
- Pine Mountain
- Three Bridges Oak Preserve
- Chalk Mountain Golf Course
- Faces of Freedom Veterans Memorial (Figure 4.1-5)
- Atascadero Printery (Figure 4.1-6)
- Salinas River

Photos showcasing views from key scenic vistas and various scenic resources throughout the City are shown on Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-6.



Source: City of Atascadero (2016).

Figure 4.1-1. Existing land uses, major roadways, and landmarks.

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Figure 4.1-2. Photograph of Atascadero City Hall (June 20, 2025).

Figure 4.1-3. Photograph of Deodar Cedars at Sunken Gardens Park (June 20, 2025).

Figure 4.1-4. Photograph of Central Coast Zoo (June 20, 2025).

Figure 4.1-5. Photograph of Faces of Freedom Veterans Memorial (June 20, 2025).

Figure 4.1-6. Photograph of Atascadero Printery (June 20, 2025).

The City maintains a list of Heritage Trees in Atascadero (City of Atascadero 2019). Heritage trees are those trees that have historical significance and are identified by Council resolution. These listed trees required a greater level of oversight prior to removal. Some examples include:

- Large sycamores along Atascadero Avenue
- Valley oaks along northern El Camino Real, North of Del Rio
- Valley oaks in Paloma Park
- Deodar cedars and magnolia trees at Sunken Gardens Park (see Figure 4.1-3)
- Live oaks on East and West Mall Parkways

4.1.1.3 State Scenic Highways

The California Scenic Highway Program was created by the State Legislature in 1963 with the intention of protecting and enhancing the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. There are currently no designated State Scenic Highways in Atascadero.

Both State Route (SR) 41 between U.S. Route 101 (U.S. 101) and SR 1 and U.S. 101 between SR 27 and SR 46 are designated as eligible State Scenic Highways (California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] 2025). An eligible State Scenic Highway can become officially designated through a process in which the local governing body applies to Caltrans for Scenic Highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a State Scenic Highway by the Caltrans Director (Caltrans 2025).

4.1.1.4 Visual Character

The Planning Area encompasses approximately 32 square miles and includes all properties within the incorporated City limits and Sphere of Influence. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the proposed 2045 General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs, as well as the Zoning Code Update, would apply to land within City limits. Atascadero's USL designates land within the City limits for infill development where services can be provided in a cost-efficient manner. Areas outside of the USL are predominantly rural residential in nature. The visual character of areas within and outside the USL are distinct and discussed separately below.

AREAS WITHIN THE URBAN SERVICES LINE

Within the USL, Atascadero's urban core is defined by a mix of downtown, major commercial corridors such as North and South El Camino Real and Morro Road, and a range of residential neighborhoods characterized by varied densities and parcel sizes. Residential land uses inside the USL include Single-Family Residential (SFR) designations with minimum lot sizes ranging from 0.5 acre in SFR-X zones (with a maximum density of 4 dwelling units per acre) to 1.0 acre in SFR-Y zones and 1.5 to 2.5 acres in SFR-Z zones. Suburban Estates parcels within the USL are typically 2.5 to 10 acres, though most are at the lower end of this range. Medium Density Residential areas allow up to 10 dwelling units per acre, generally on lots of 0.5 acre or larger, whereas High Density Residential areas support multifamily development at densities of 20 to 24 dwelling units per acre. Commercial activity is primarily concentrated along the 7-mile corridor of El Camino Real and along Morro Road, which intersects this main thoroughfare. The USL also includes public facilities, parks and recreation areas, open space, mixed-use districts, and limited industrial and service commercial zones, all of which contribute to the City's visually diverse urban and suburban landscape.

Downtown Atascadero

Downtown Atascadero is composed of a grid street network organized around City Hall and Sunken Gardens. This dense and compact development pattern encourages pedestrian activity, with 7- to 12-foot-wide sidewalks, street trees, and pedestrian bulb-outs at many intersections. Height limits in the Downtown Commercial district are the highest in the City, with a maximum allowable height of 45 feet, not to exceed three stories. Building setbacks are not permitted except where the building is designed to accommodate outdoor eating and seating areas. This development pattern and pedestrian-oriented design are exemplified at key locations such as the intersection of El Camino Real and East Mall, as illustrated in Figure 4.1-7.

Figure 4.1-7. Photograph of downtown intersection at El Camino Real and East Mall (June 30, 2025)

Morro Road (SR 41)

Morro Road within the City limits extends from the Salinas River in the west to just east of Santa Rosa Road, intersecting both U.S. 101 and El Camino Real. The segment east of El Camino Real contains commercial uses concentrated near the City core and is predominantly undeveloped further east, resulting in an open landscape with minimal built form. West of El Camino Real, the corridor is characterized by elongated blocks composed of small parcels, with concentrations of medical and professional offices. The visual environment along this stretch is defined by small-scale attached office buildings that are set back from the street with intervening parking areas and landscaped setbacks. Service and retail uses—including stand-alone restaurants, drive-through facilities, and gas stations—are the primary land uses elsewhere in the corridor, contributing to a varied commercial streetscape. Morro Road is designated as SR 41 and is maintained by Caltrans. In 2021, Caltrans completed corridor improvements that included the installation of new sidewalks, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle pathways, and upgrades to traffic signal infrastructure, resulting in a more cohesive and accessible visual environment. The land use and development patterns along Morro Road and El Camino Real are depicted in Figure 4.1-1.

El Camino Real Commercial Corridor

El Camino Real serves as Atascadero's principal commercial corridor, reflecting a diverse mix of existing and planned land uses, parcel sizes, and development patterns. The corridor encompasses retail, restaurant, lodging, automotive-related, office, residential, and vacant properties, with commercial uses comprising most of the area. According to Table 2.1 of *The El Camino Plan*, approximately 33% of the corridor is classified as other commercial uses, 22% as retail, and 15% as a commercial mix that includes retail and restaurants (City of Atascadero 2020). The distribution of parcel sizes varies significantly along El Camino Real, influencing both the character and development potential of the corridor. On the north end, parcels are generally smaller—over 60% are 10,000 square feet or less, but larger parcels—some up to 2.75 acres—

in that area offer opportunities for more intensive development. The south end features a broader range of parcel sizes, with most parcels between 10,000 and 30,000 square feet (City of Atascadero 2020).

The corridor's urban form is defined by a combination of narrow, deep parcels and more expansive lots, creating a varied streetscape. Architectural character along El Camino Real is diverse, spanning several decades and styles, with newer development interspersed among older commercial centers and automotive-related structures. Sidewalks and bicycle facilities are intermittently present, with some segments lacking pedestrian infrastructure, especially in more rural sections.

Residential Neighborhoods within the Urban Services Line

In accordance with the original Colony design, the urban core is surrounded by high-density residential areas that transition into lower-density rural residential areas. Atascadero does not have formally defined residential neighborhoods; instead, residential development both within and outside the USL primarily consists of custom single-family homes with a variety of architectural characteristics, many dating to the 1970s and exhibiting styles such as ranch, craftsman, and split-level designs. Residential areas within the USL include Suburban Estates and Rural, Multi-Family, and Single-Family Residential zones, with parcel sizes typically ranging from approximately 0.5 to 2.5 acres. Densities generally decrease with distance from the urban core, supporting a rural atmosphere and preserving the large lots that are a hallmark of Atascadero's community character. In addition to these traditional residential patterns, the City includes Planned Development Overlay Zones, which identify areas where development standards or processing procedures may differ from those established by the underlying zoning district. These overlay zones allow for modifications to minimum lot sizes, permitted densities, setbacks, building heights, parking, landscaping, and other requirements, as specified in Section 9-3 of the Atascadero Municipal Code, to promote orderly and harmonious development and to best use the unique characteristics of each area (City of Atascadero 2025).

AREAS OUTSIDE THE URBAN SERVICES LINE

Visually, the areas outside of the USL are dominated by natural, undeveloped landscapes and hills. Existing development outside of the USL is almost entirely rural residential in nature, with an average parcel size of 3.5 acres (City of Atascadero 2024a). Public recreational facilities and parks are also present. There is no single, definitive architectural style that characterizes residential development within the City. Atascadero's housing stock exhibits a diverse range of architectural styles. Common residential styles include Ranch, Mediterranean, Colonial, and Southwest Territorial. In addition to these prevalent styles, the City also includes numerous custom home developments, with designs inspired by Santa Barbara, Tuscany, and contemporary architecture.

4.1.1.5 Light and Glare

Light conditions within the City's USL are typical for suburban areas, and light sources primarily consist of roadway and building illumination and motor vehicle headlights. Outside the USL, nighttime light is substantially reduced and consists almost entirely of residential and roadway lighting and motor vehicle headlights.

Sources of daytime glare include reflections from windows, architectural coatings, glass, and other shiny reflective surfaces. Glare is much more common within the USL, due to a higher density of development and greater vehicle traffic. The primary source of nighttime glare is caused by motor vehicle headlights.

4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

4.1.2.1 Federal Regulations

No existing federal regulations currently apply to visual resources in the City.

4.1.2.2 State Regulations

CALIFORNIA BUILDING ENERGY EFFICIENT STANDARDS

The California Energy Commission (CEC) maintains the Building Energy Efficiency Standards (Energy Code) to reduce energy and water consumption in buildings while supporting flexibility in building design and construction. Although the Department of Housing and Community Development adopted early energy conservation standards under State Housing Law authority in 1975, the Warren-Alquist Act directed the CEC to adopt and implement comprehensive standards with specific statutory authority and guidance. The Energy Code applies to newly constructed buildings, additions, and alterations, and establishes mandatory requirements, performance standards, and prescriptive compliance options. Performance standards are structured as energy budgets that vary by building type and California's 16 climate zones, allowing designers flexibility provided overall efficiency targets are met, while prescriptive packages offer a checklist-based compliance pathway. The CEC supports implementation through reference appendices, compliance tools, and publicly available building energy modeling software developed under the Alternative Calculation Method Approval Manual, which also enables private compliance software approval. The most recent update to the Energy Code was adopted in 2025 and went into effect on January 1, 2026 (CEC 2025).

CALIFORNIA SOLAR SHADE CONTROL ACT

The Solar Shade Control Act, enacted in 1978, last amended in 2009, and codified at California Public Resources Code Section 25980 et seq., establishes state policy to promote energy conservation and the use of alternative energy sources while balancing the benefits of trees and vegetation. The Act limits the placement and growth of trees and shrubs that would significantly shade solar collectors installed on buildings or, where roof installation is infeasible, on the ground. Under the Act, a solar collector is defined as a fixed device used to convert solar energy into thermal, chemical, or electrical energy for water heating, space conditioning, or power generation, subject to local setback and height requirements. Following installation of a solar collector, adjacent property owners may not allow trees or shrubs to cast a shadow exceeding 10% of the collector's absorption area between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. local standard time. The Act provides a notice procedure for proposed solar collector installations, establishes that vegetation maintained in violation of the shading standard may constitute a private nuisance, and identifies specific exemptions, including vegetation planted prior to installation, agricultural and timber uses, and trees regulated under local ordinances. Cities and counties may adopt ordinances exempting their jurisdictions from the Act or establishing their own tree preservation or solar shade control requirements, which then govern locally (California Legislative Information 2009).

STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY PROGRAM

Caltrans maintains the California Scenic Highway Program, enacted in 1963, to protect Scenic Highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to those highways. The Caltrans Scenic Highway Program allows local jurisdictions to officially designate a Scenic Highway to ensure protection of the visual resources along its corridor. Caltrans identifies highways as eligible for the program, and the local jurisdiction applies to be officially designated. The status of a proposed State Scenic Highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the local governing body applies to Caltrans

for Scenic Highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway. Protection of visual resources for the designated corridor includes regulating land use and development, outdoor advertising, landscaping, and building design (Caltrans 2025).

4.1.2.3 Local Regulations

CITY OF ATASCADERO GENERAL PLAN 2025

Adopted in June 2002 and most recently revised in July 2016, the 2025 General Plan sets the course of all planning efforts both City-initiated and developer-proposed, and includes four chapters—Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation (LOC); Circulation; Safety and Noise; and Housing Elements (City of Atascadero 2016).

Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element

The LOC Element is intended to guide development and revitalization projects consistent with community values. Three mandatory elements have been consolidated to ensure internal consistency and to address the importance of Open Space and Conservation issues within the community. The LOC Element designates the general distribution and intensity of land uses, including housing, commercial, business, industry, open space, conservation areas, recreation areas, and public facilities. The guiding principle of the LOC Element was to retain the historic Colony land use pattern and rural character of the City.

Goals pertinent to aesthetics and visual resources included within the LOC Element are listed here:

- **Goal LOC 1:** Protect and preserve the rural atmosphere of the community by assuring "elbow room" for residents by means of maintenance of large lot sizes which increase in proportion to distance beyond the Urban Core.
- **Goal LOC 2:** Preserve residential neighborhoods and the winding tree-lined nature of the street and road system.
- **Goal LOC 3:** Transform the existing El Camino Real "strip" into a distinctive, attractive and efficient commercial, office and industrial park area which can provide for the long-term economic viability of the community.
- **Goal LOC 4:** Provide for a strong and distinctive Downtown area.
- **Goal LOC 5:** Preserve the contours of the hills. Buildings built on hillsides shall conform to the topography using the slope of the land as the basis for the design of the structure.
- **Goal LOC 6:** Preserve natural flora and fauna and protect scenic lands, sensitive natural areas, historic buildings and cultural resources.
- **Goal LOC 7:** Tree-covered hills shall be preserved to retain the distinctive scenic quality of the community.
- **Goal LOC 8:** Watershed areas of Atascadero shall be protected.

CITY OF ATASCADERO MUNICIPAL CODE

Zoning is the primary tool to implement a community's general plan and regulate development. The general plan sets the policy direction, and the zoning ordinance gives detailed development and use standards for each parcel of land, divides the community into zoning districts, and specifies the uses that are permitted, conditionally permitted, and prohibited within each district. Title 9 (Planning and Zoning) and Title 11 (Subdivisions) of the existing Municipal Code set permitting processes for discretionary project review and

establish how properties can be used, developed, and subdivided. Title 9 (Planning and Zoning) divides Atascadero into zoning districts that correlate with the 2025 General Plan land use categories.

Title 9 Chapter 4 of the Municipal Code prescribes standards governing the visual and aesthetic aspects of land use and building development within the City (City of Atascadero 2025). The chapter defines requirements for building setbacks and height limitations to ensure appropriate massing and spatial relationships between structures. It establishes landscaping, screening, and fencing standards to promote site enhancement, visual privacy, and compatibility with surrounding properties. Exterior lighting regulations are included to control illumination levels, reduce glare, and maintain dark-sky compliance. Design standards for multifamily and mixed-use buildings specify architectural articulation, material selection, and façade treatments to achieve high-quality, context-sensitive development. Additional provisions address the visual integration of parking areas, driveway design, street frontage improvements, and signage. Historic-era resources protection standards ensure that alterations, relocations, and demolitions maintain the integrity and character-defining features of designated properties.

The City's Building Code is included in Title 8 of the Municipal Code, which incorporates the California Building Code and California Residential Code by reference and establishes local amendments applicable to both residential and nonresidential development, including provisions that affect building form, scale, and exterior features. Title 8 modifies the State codes by deleting or adopting specific chapters and appendices, establishing permit exemptions for certain structures and exterior elements such as fences, accessory structures, retaining walls, window awnings, and finish work. The City's amendments to the California Residential Code further regulate building features through standards for replacement windows, including minimum opening sizes, sill heights, and egress requirements based on the age of the structure. Additionally, Title 11 of the Municipal Code establishes standards and procedures for the subdivision of land, which includes standards regulating the visual and aesthetic aspects of development within the City (City of Atascadero 2025). These regulations govern the design, improvement, and arrangement of building sites. This helps to enhance the visual character of the community and aligns with the 2025 General Plan and zoning requirements. Title 11 encourages innovative and environmentally sensitive site layouts. Its provisions address map requirements, lot line adjustments and mergers, subdivision design criteria, infrastructure improvements, and enforcement aimed at facilitating orderly and sustainable land development.

CITY OF ATASCADERO OBJECTIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES

In compliance with Senate Bill (SB) 330, the City developed multifamily and mixed-use building design standards to provide clear guidance to project applicants regarding site design and architecture for by-right multifamily projects permitted by state law, including affordable housing projects and ministerially approved residential projects. Adopted in June 2024, the objective design standards facilitate high-quality design for these residential developments and ensure compliance with state objectives (City of Atascadero 2024b). The objective design standards also ensure the provision of adequate private open space, parking, and architectural features, consistent with state law. Part of the objective design standard creation process includes assessing how the standards can be used to encourage a variety of housing types. Important features addressed include private open space, quality design features, density, unit size, parking, and ensuring quality and neighborhood compatibility in architecture and site design. The objective design standards replaced the City's Appearance Review Manual, adopted in 1987, as well as the Downtown Design Guidelines, adopted in 2001.

SPECIFIC PLANS

Specific plans are used to establish concrete standards and development criteria for designated areas of the City. Atascadero has adopted two Specific Plans: the Woodland Specific Plan, adopted in 2003, and the Del Rio Road Commercial Area Specific Plan, adopted in 2012 and recently amended in 2025 (City of Atascadero 2024a).

Additionally, the Eagle Ranch Specific Plan was originally considered in 2017 but has since been withdrawn; however, the area—consisting of approximately 400 undeveloped Colony lots with water service entitlements through the Atascadero Mutual Water Company—remains eligible for future annexation (City of Atascadero 2024a). Annexation of Eagle Ranch is contingent on the approval of a specific plan prior to the property's incorporation into the City. Should annexation occur, development within City jurisdiction would be subject to Atascadero's established aesthetic and design standards, ensuring that new construction aligns with the City's visual character and quality objectives. This regulatory framework would allow the City to effectively manage the visual integration of Eagle Ranch, promoting cohesive and context-sensitive development consistent with municipal goals.

4.1.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the City. In addition to comparing the project to relevant policies and standards, the aesthetic resources assessment identified which specific criteria contribute most to the existing quality of each view and whether change would occur to those criteria as a result of the project. If a change in visual criteria was identified, this change was analyzed for its potential effect on the existing scenic character. This analysis was combined with the potential number of viewers, their sensitivities, and viewing duration to determine the overall level of impacts. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on visual/aesthetic resources if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below.

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway.

c) In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings, or in an urbanized area, conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.1.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.1.4 Impact Assessment Methodology

The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective in nature. The analysis is inherently subjective because viewers react to views and aesthetic conditions differently. This evaluation measures the existing visual environment of the Planning Area against implementation of the proposed project, analyzing the nature of the anticipated change. The proposed project does not contain specific development proposals. This analysis therefore focuses on land use changes envisioned under the proposed project and the aesthetic impacts on the community in terms of arrangement of built to open space, density and intensity of development, and height, according to the thresholds of significance discussed below.

4.1.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

IMPACT AES-1: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECT ON A SCENIC VISTA. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The project does not include any specific development proposals therefore would not directly cause any adverse effects on scenic vistas; however, as discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description of this Environmental Impact Report, the project would replace land use designations with "Placetypes," which would identify allowable land uses by parcel throughout the Planning Area. Each Placetype category would define both the primary uses of land allowed and the character of those uses. Although most of the Placetypes would reflect existing and long-established development types, such as Rural Residential, Commercial, and Industrial, three new Placetypes would be established as part of the project that would apply to parcels within the USL—High Density Multi-Family, Mixed Use, and Innovation/Flex. The Zoning Code Update would implement these Placetypes with corresponding zoning districts.

Pine Mountain, as identified above, provides scenic vistas of the City and surrounding areas and is accessible to the public. The 2045 General Plan maintains this area as open space, and surrounding areas remain unchanged from the 2025 General Plan, with the exception of changing portions of the Atascadero Cemetery from the Rural Residential land use designation to the Public/Quasi-Public Placetype to ensure adequate protection of the cemetery grounds from development.

Public views from scenic vistas would be potentially affected by changes to Atascadero's visual character caused by new development within the USL, especially by future development allowed by the proposed Placetypes. Views from public vantage points, including roadways, within the USL of scenic resources may also be affected by larger and/or taller building envelopes; however, changes would occur gradually throughout the lifetime of the project as specific development proposals are brought forward. Future proposals would be subject to the City's objective design standards through the design review and entitlement process, and undergo design review and environmental review on a project-by-project basis to identify and address project-specific impacts to scenic vistas. Even ministerial (nondiscretionary) projects carried out in the City would be subject to the City's ministerial development review procedures. Additionally, the 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policies and associated actions that would avoid or minimize the visual impacts of future development:

- **Policy LU-1.1: Rural Character.** Safeguard the rural character of Atascadero including the concept of "elbow room," which calls for maintaining larger minimum lot sizes and lower density and intensity standards proportionate to distance from the Downtown core and major corridors.
    - **Action A:** Maintain performance standards for determining minimum residential lot size in the Rural Residential Placetype.
    - **Action B:** Maintain "dark sky" requirements to minimize light pollution.
    - **Action C:** Maintain allowances for where livestock may be owned and kept within the Rural Residential and Agriculture Placetypes.
    - **Action D:** Continue to require undergrounding of utilities for new development.
- **Policy LU-1.2: Ensure "Elbow Room."** Limit subdivision of land to maintain a positive correlation between minimum lot size and distance from the Downtown core and major corridors.

- **Policy LU-1.3: Urban Services Line.** Concentrate new and infill development within the Urban Services Line in areas where utilities and public services exist or are planned. Beyond the Urban Services Line, maintain Rural Residential as the predominant use.
- **Policy LU-1.4: Character and Scale.** Ensure new development complements the character and scale of existing neighborhoods, cultural resources, historic structures, and natural landscapes.
    - **Action A:** Maintain design standards that address the transitions between new multi-family and mixed-use development and adjacent lower-density residential zones.
    - **Action B:** Update or replace the Appearance Review Manual for non-residential development.
- **Policy LU-1.5: Activity Nodes.** Promote walkability and public transit by developing focused, distinct, and economically viable nodes along major corridors, creating focal points of interest and activity.
    - **Action A:** Concentrate the highest density and intensity development within the Downtown core and key nodes along El Camino Real and Morro Road.
    - **Action B:** Focus commercial retail development at key nodes to support commercial synergy and create destinations for shopping and entertainment.
    - **Action C:** Provide parking/loading from secondary streets, wherever possible, to maintain an active frontage along major corridors.
    - **Action D:** Enhance entries to Atascadero and key nodes along El Camino Real with gateway design elements (e.g., signage, entry monuments, landscaping, lighting, etc.).
    - **Action G:** Locate high density residential areas around primary nodes to support commercial viability and vitality.
- **Policy LU-1.6: Historic Resources.** Encourage the conservation and preservation of structures and houses that have historical and architectural significance.
    - **Action A:** Maintain a comprehensive Historic Resources Inventory.
    - **Action B:** Continue to implement the California Historical Building Code in review, approval, and design of projects involving historic resources.
    - **Action C:** Utilize the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Properties to assess proposed improvements to historic properties.
    - **Action D:** Develop incentives for retaining and rehabilitating Atascadero's historic resources, which may include exceptions to development regulations, conservation districts, staff technical assistance, programs to facilitate relocation instead of demolition, and Mill's Act contracts.

The 2045 General Plan Update was developed to minimize substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas by concentrating future development within already developed areas, where visual impacts are least discernable. This focused development would ensure that new growth is integrated into the existing urban fabric, thereby preserving scenic views of the area. Additionally, the location of the proposed Placetypes and their associated design and height guidelines are intended to complement surrounding areas and existing land uses, which would help maintain visual character. Therefore, based on the required design review process for future proposed development, the 2045 General Plan Update goals and policies associated with preservation of visual character, and proposed Placetypes designations and development standards implemented with the Zoning Code Update, the project would have a *less than significant* impact on scenic vistas.

Impact AES-1
The project would potentially result in an adverse effect on scenic vistas.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to adverse effects on a scenic vista would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway?

IMPACT AES-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY DAMAGE ANY SCENIC RESOURCES WITHIN A STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY. *(NO IMPACT)*

This CEQA threshold does not apply because the Planning Area is not within the view corridor of any officially designated State Scenic Highway. Although U.S. 101 and Morro Road (SR 41) are identified as eligible in the State Scenic Highway Program, this CEQA threshold applies only to State of California officially designated routes.

Impact AES-2
The project would not substantially damage any scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts related to damage to scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway would occur.

c) In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings, or in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

IMPACT AES-3: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER OR QUALITY OF PUBLIC VIEWS WITHIN NONURBANIZED AREAS OR CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE ZONING AND OTHER REGULATIONS GOVERNING SCENIC QUALITY. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development under the project could have a significant impact if it changes nonurbanized areas in ways that substantially degrade their visual quality. The significance of these changes is determined based community values and on how well they meet people's expectations for the look of an area. Visual contrast

and compatibility are also useful ways to measure potential impacts. If future projects create a strong contrast and dominate the landscape, they may be considered to have potentially significant impact on visual character or quality of public views.

As discussed above in Section 4.1.1.4, *Visual Character*, the USL divides the urbanized and nonurbanized areas of Atascadero. Under the project's proposed Placetypes map and Policy LU-1.3 (see Impact AES-1), rural residential development would remain the predominant land use outside of the USL. Placetypes assigned to parcels outside of the USL carry design and height guidelines that are intended to complement the existing rural nature of these areas, thus maintaining visual harmony. All future development would also be subject to a design review process to ensure consistency with the City's objective design standards, ensuring compatibility in architecture and site design. Further, as identified under Impact AES-1, the project incorporates specific policies and actions dedicated to preserving the existing character of views. Collectively, these elements would ensure that future development under the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views in nonurbanized areas.

Within the urbanized area inside of the USL, future development could have a significant impact if it conflicted with regulations governing scenic quality. Although the project does replace previous land use designations with Placetypes, most of the Placetypes reflect existing and long-established development types, with the exception of the High Density Multi-Family, Mixed Use, and Innovation/Flex. These new Placetypes would only apply to parcels within the urban core, where changes in scenic character would be least discernable. Further, as discussed in in Chapter 2, Project Description, the Placetypes (including new Placetypes) were designed to maintain Atascadero's historic Colony pattern and character and as such do not represent a substantial deviation from existing regulations governing scenic quality. Future development's consistency with existing regulations governing scenic quality, such as those prescribed in the Municipal Code (including the objective design guidelines) and the new regulations proposed by the project, would be enforced through the City's design review and entitlement process. Future development would undergo design review and environmental review (as applicable) on a project-by-project basis to identify and address any conflicts with regulations governing scenic quality. Even ministerial (nondiscretionary) projects carried out in the City would be subject to the City's ministerial development review procedures. Accordingly, the project would not result in any conflicts with regulations governing scenic quality.

For the reasons described above, the project's potential impacts associated with degradation of visual character, quality of public views, and conflicts with regulations governing scenic quality would be *less than significant*.

Impact AES-3
The project would potentially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views within nonurbanized areas or conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to visual character, public views, and regulations governing scenic quality would be less than significant (Class III).

d) Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

IMPACT AES-4: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY CREATE A NEW SOURCE OF SUBSTANTIAL LIGHT OR GLARE THAT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT DAY OR NIGHTTIME VIEWS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Although the project does not include any specific development proposals and therefore would not directly create new sources of light, implementation of the project could allow for increased nighttime lighting in areas where increased density would be allowed in comparison to the current 2025 General Plan. Under the existing 2025 General Plan, similar development-related lighting is already anticipated within the USL. A significant impact would occur only if implementation of the project subjected viewers from public areas or residences to a substantial amount of new nighttime lighting or if the collective illumination from project buildout created a discernable spillover effect into the nighttime sky, increasing the ambient light over the region.

As discussed previously in the discussion of Impact AES-3, the location and intensification of development under the project would be focused within the USL—particularly in the urban core where there is already substantial nighttime lighting. New lighting from future development would be subject to existing Municipal Code regulations, as well as State and Local CalGreen standards included in the California Building Code, and the project explicitly addresses potential light impacts through new policies and actions, specifically:

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
    - **Policy LU-1.1: Rural Character.** Safeguard the rural character of Atascadero including the concept of "elbow room," which calls for maintaining larger minimum lot sizes and lower density and lower intensity standards proportionate to the distance from the Downtown core and major corridors.
        - **Action B:** Maintain dark sky requirements to minimize light pollution.

The effect of new light sources on existing development would also be indirectly controlled through the project's proposed policies and actions that ensure adequate buffers and transitions between new and existing development. These policies and actions include:

- **Policy LU-1.2: Urban Services Line (USL).** Concentrate new and infill development within the Urban Services Line in areas where utilities and public services exist or are planned.
- **Policy LU-1.3: Character and Scale.** Ensure new and infill development complements the character and scale of existing neighborhoods, cultural resources, historic structures, and natural landscapes.
    - **Action A:** Maintain design standards that address the transitions between multi-family and mixed-use development and adjacent lower-density residential zones.
    - **Action D:** Update or replace the Appearance Review Manual for nonresidential development.
    - **Action E:** Undertake a comprehensive Zoning Code update.
- **Policy LU-1.4. Gentle Density Infill.** Allow opportunities for missing middle and gentle density style infill development surrounding mixed-use and commercial corridors.

Adherence with existing regulations, and the new regulations described herein would ensure that buildout of the project does not create new sources of light affecting daytime or nighttime views.

Implementation of the project would result in future development that may also introduce new sources of glare, such as glass and exterior materials, that could reflect direct beam sunlight or vehicle headlights; however, similar to potential light impacts, glare would be controlled through adherence with existing and new regulations. Policy LU-1.4 and the associated actions ensure that new development meets design standards and complements existing development by providing adequate buffers and transitions. The design review process that applies to both discretionary and ministerial projects would ensure consistency with Municipal Code and other regulations prescribing window and exterior material coatings that reduce glare. Therefore, buildout of the project does not create new sources of glare affecting daytime or nighttime views.

For the reasons described above, new sources of light and glare created either directly or indirectly by the project would have a *less than significant* impact on daytime and nighttime views.

Impact AES-4
The project would potentially create a new source of light or glare that could adversely affect day or nighttime views.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts associated with light and glare would be less than significant (Class III).

4.1.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT AES-5: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY CONTRIBUTE TO A CUMULATIVE SOURCE OF SUBSTANTIAL LIGHT OR GLARE THAT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT DAYTIME OR NIGHTTIME VIEWS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The discussion of project impacts in Section 4.1.5, above, is inherently cumulative, as it evaluates the potential impact of all future development within the City on aesthetics at a programmatic level. All future development that is consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update Policies and Actions and existing regulations, such as the Municipal Code's objective design guidelines, together with implementing standards in the Zoning Code Update, would have a less-than-significant individual impact on aesthetics. Although future development could collectively increase the impression of urbanization and development in the Planning Area, this development would be within the USL—and specifically in the urban core—in accordance with community feedback and where aesthetic impacts would be least discernable and in line with the historic character of Atascadero. Consequently, the collective effect of future development carried out under the proposed project that is consistent with the analysis herein would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts to aesthetics.

Separate from the analysis above, there may be future developments proposed that deviate fully or partially from those permitted under the project or existing regulations. Such projects requiring discretionary approvals would be subject to a project-specific evaluation of impacts under CEQA, including potential impacts to aesthetics, and would be subject to necessary mitigation measures where appropriate. Even ministerial (i.e., nondiscretionary) projects carried out in the City would be subject to the City's ministerial development review procedures. Accordingly, adherence to the City's new and existing regulations regarding aesthetics would ensure that any development under the project and any development proposed in the future that is inconsistent with applicable regulations would not combine and result in a cumulatively considerable impact.

Although the project does not propose specific development at this time and would not directly introduce new sources of illumination, future buildout under the project could result in additional nighttime lighting or glare if not properly regulated; however, the location and intensification of future development is anticipated to occur primarily within the USL, with a focus on the urban core where existing nighttime lighting is already prevalent. Any new lighting or reflective materials associated with future development would be subject to existing Municipal Code requirements retained in the Zoning Code Update and newly proposed 2045 General Plan Update policies and actions, such as the maintenance of dark-sky standards to minimize light pollution and implementation of design standards that address transitions between different land uses. These regulations and policies ensure that new sources of light and glare would be effectively managed, with adequate buffers and context-sensitive design to prevent adverse spillover effects into surrounding areas or the nighttime sky. Both discretionary and ministerial projects would be reviewed for consistency with these standards. Therefore, compliance with existing and proposed regulations would ensure that future development under the project does not create or contribute to a cumulatively considerable source of substantial light or glare that could adversely affect daytime or nighttime views, and cumulative impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact AES-5
The project would potentially contribute to a cumulative source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual cumulative impacts associated with light and glare would be less than significant (Class III).

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4.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section evaluates the potential impacts to agricultural and forestry resources associated with the adoption and implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update. It examines possible conversion of Prime Farmland and forest land to nonagricultural or non-forest uses via direct conversion or other indirect impacts, conflicts with existing zoning for agriculture/forestry uses, and other potential losses of important agricultural or forestry areas. The analysis also summarizes relevant regulations, existing conditions, criteria for significance, and proposed policies to minimize potentially significant impacts.

4.2.1 Existing Conditions

Atascadero has a limited amount of agricultural land due to the lack of historic agricultural uses, the extent of developed uses, and the unique geography and environmental factors that contribute to low agricultural productivity in the City.

4.2.1.1 Agricultural Uses and Williamson Act Contract

The City's current General Plan Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element identifies agricultural designations within the planning area on several parcels along Graves Creek in the northeast corner of the City. Under the 2025 General Plan, approximately 43.82 acres are designated for agriculture, consisting of five separate parcels under a single ownership, representing 0.2% of the City's total acreage (City of Atascadero 2016). According to the California Department of Conservation (CDOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, most of Atascadero is classified as Urban and Built-Up Land, Grazing Land, Farmland of Local Potential, or Other Land, with only a small area along the northern border identified as Unique Farmland; however, the parcels under this designation have already been developed for residential use (CDOC 2022). Atascadero does not contain any Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The only land within the City subject to a Williamson Act contract is limited to the few agricultural parcels along Graves Creek.

The City zoning regulations currently allow for certain agricultural uses within most rural and single-family residential land use designations, in addition to the Agriculture land use designation. Residential land use designations such as Rural Residential, Rural Estate, and Suburban Estate allow for agricultural activities in association with large-lot single-family homes, subject to specific standards (City of Atascadero 2016).

4.2.1.2 Forest Land and Timberland

Forest land, as defined by the California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 12220(g), includes areas capable of supporting at least 10% native tree cover under natural conditions and are suitable for the management of resources such as aesthetics, biodiversity, and recreation. Portions of Atascadero—particularly the extensive native oak woodlands on the west side of the City—meet this definition because they support substantial native tree canopy and provide important ecological, scenic, and recreational resources. Outside the urban core, Atascadero's landscape is characterized by a diverse mix of trees, hillsides, and valleys that define the region. These woodlands are a defining feature of Atascadero, shaping its visual character, ecological identity, and historic character.

The City contains a diversity of habitats and ecosystems, including at least four types of oak woodlands: Blue Oak Woodlands, Coast Live Oak Woodlands, Valley Oak Woodlands, and Blue Oak–Foothill Pine. These oak woodlands provide vital wildlife habitat and are integral to the City's aesthetic appeal. According to the California Department of Forestry, approximately 10,822 acres of oak woodlands are mapped within the Urban Reserve Area, with about 7,600 acres on parcels zoned for residential use (City of Atascadero 2024).

Several significant oak woodland areas are protected and managed by the Atascadero Land Preservation Society (ALPS). These preserves include the 103-acre Three Bridges Oak Preserve on the west side, 5-acre Stadium Park property near Pine Mountain, 5-acre Adobe Springs along Traffic Way, and 12-acre Atascadero Creek Reservation east of City Hall (ALPS 2025).

In addition to its oak woodlands, Atascadero contains timberland, defined by PRC Section 4526 as the following:

> "Timberland" means land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the board as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial species shall be determined by the board on a district basis.

Atascadero contains two businesses specializing in commercially managed timberland for Christmas tree production: Hidden Springs Tree Farm, an approximately 44-acre area adjacent to Graves Creek on Monterey Road, and Salinas River Ranch, an approximately 27-acre area along the Salinas River, east of the Las Lomas neighborhood on Santa Barbara Road (City of Atascadero 2025).

4.2.2 Regulatory Setting

4.2.2.1 Federal

FARMLAND PROTECTION POLICY ACT

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) is governed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and is intended to minimize the impact that federal programs have on the permanent conversion of farmland to nonagricultural land uses. The policy ensures that—to the extent feasible—federal programs are administered to be compatible with state and local governments, as well as private programs and policies, to protect farmland (NRCS 2022). For the purposes of the FPPA, Farmland includes Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Land of Statewide or Local Importance. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland. It can be forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land but not water or urban built-up land (NRCS 2022).

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM

The NRCS created the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program to help landowners and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and/or working farms and ranches through conservation easements (NRCS 2021). The NRCS provides financial assistance for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements to protect and conserve agricultural land and help keep working farms in agriculture.

4.2.2.2 State

FARMLAND MAPPING AND MONITORING PROGRAM

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) is authorized by the CDOC Division of Land Resource Protection. The purpose of the FMMP is to produce maps and statistical data to be used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. Through this program, agricultural land is rated according to soil quality, irrigation status, and land use. Maps are updated every 2 years using a computer mapping system, aerial imagery, public review, and field reconnaissance.

The FMMP has several land designations based on the criteria identified above. FMMP designations include, but are not limited to, Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Grazing Land, Farmland of Local Importance, Farmland of Local Potential, and Urban and Built-Up Land. The highest-rated soil is Prime Farmland. The designations for Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland are defined together under the terms Agricultural Land and Farmland in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) PRC Section 21060.1 and California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et seq. Appendix G:

- **Prime Farmland (P):** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance (S):** Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland (U):** Farmland of lesser-quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance (L):** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. In San Luis Obispo County, Farmland of Local Importance includes areas of soils that meet all the characteristics of Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, with the exception of irrigation. Additional farmlands include dryland field crops of wheat, barley, oats, and safflower.
- **Farmland of Local Potential (LP):** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. In San Luis Obispo County, Farmland of Local Potential includes lands having the potential for farmland, which have Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance characteristics and are not cultivated.
- **Grazing Land (G):** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, the University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land (D):** Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.
- **Other Land (X):** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and waterbodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and non-agricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

WILLIAMSON ACT

The Williamson Act, also known as the Land Conservation Act of 1965, allows local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners to restrict specific parcels of land to agricultural or open space uses. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based on farming and open space uses rather than full market value (CDOC 2024). The CDOC assists all levels of governments and landowners in the interpretation of the Williamson Act.

SENATE BILL 618 (2011)

In 2011, California passed Senate Bill (SB) 618 (Chapter 596, Statutes of 2011) authorizing property owners under Williamson Act or Farmland Security Zone contracts to rescind the contract and simultaneously enter into a solar-use easement. Solar-use easements require the land to be used for solar photovoltaic facilities for a term of 20 years.

FOREST LAND AND TIMBERLAND PROTECTION

The Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973, also known as the California Forest Practice Act, forms the foundation for the regulation of timber-harvesting activities in California. This act requires that timber operations be conducted in a manner that maintains the productivity and ecological integrity of forest lands. The regulations established under this law specify the allowable dimensions and placement of timber harvest areas. They also address critical considerations such as safeguarding riparian corridors and archaeological resources, scheduling harvest activities to avoid sensitive wildlife nesting periods, and determining the appropriate placement of roads and operational activities during seasons when soils are particularly vulnerable to disturbance (Morrisson and Valachovic 2007). The Forest Taxation Reform Act of 1976 was established to encourage the continued use of forest lands for timber production by providing property tax incentives for landowners who commit to long-term forest management (Valachovic et al. 2015).

Within this regulatory framework, CEQA incorporates definitions of forest land and timberland to guide land use planning and environmental review. According to PRC Section 12220(g), forest land is defined as land capable of supporting at least 10% native tree cover under natural conditions that can be managed for various forest resources such as timber, wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreation. The 1976 Act was amended and replaced by the Timberland Productivity Act of 1982, which further supports timber production by allowing for the designation of Timberland Production Zones (TPZs), which are areas zoned specifically for the growing and harvesting of timber. These zones are subject to long-term use restrictions and benefit from reduced property taxes (California Department of Tax and Fee Administration 2025). County governments have the authority to establish TPZs.

4.2.2.3 Local

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

A City's general plan is the primary policy document that lays out the overarching vision and policies for how a city will develop and function in the future. The 2025 General Plan was adopted in 2002 and has not been comprehensively updated since.

Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element

The Land Use, Open Space and Conservation (LOC) Element identifies goals and policies for open space and agricultural land within the City (City of Atascadero 2016). The following goals and policies are aimed at preservation of agricultural and open space land. Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to agriculture and forestry resources included within the LOC Element are listed here:

- **Goal LOC 1.** Protect and preserve the rural atmosphere of the community by assuring "elbow room" for residents by means of maintenance of large-lot sizes which increase in proportion to distance beyond the Urban Core.
    - **LOC Policy 1.2:** Ensure the rural character of Atascadero is preserved by respecting the historic Colony boundaries and cooperate with the County on regional planning issues surrounding the Colony.
        - **Program 2:** Develop agreements with the County to maintain rural residential, agricultural and open space uses beyond the Urban Reserve Line, including continuation of existing agricultural uses.
        - **Program 3:** Work with the County to maintain a greenbelt and rural land use patterns outside the Urban Reserve Line and to create an agricultural buffer around the original Colony boundary.
- **Goal LOC 6.** Preserve natural flora and fauna and protect scenic lands, sensitive natural areas, historic buildings and cultural resources.
    - **LOC Policy 6.1:** Ensure that development does not degrade scenic and sensitive areas, including historic sites, creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, woodlands, hillsides and other valuable habitats.
        - **Program 1.** Encourage use of planned developments to cluster projects around open space easements, parks, open space dedication and minimize impacts to natural resources.
        - **Program 2.** Seek funding to purchase or require dedication of areas of unique habitats or scenic value, especially in areas lacking adequate park facilities and open space.
        - **Program 4.** Scenic and sensitive lands including creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands and other areas of significant habitat value shall be protected from destruction, overuse, and misuse by the use of zoning, tax incentives, easements, or fee acquisition.
        - **Program 5.** Public and private development in close proximity to scenic and sensitive lands, including creek reservations, wooded areas, flood plains, prominent view sheds and historic sites shall be designed to minimize impacts.
        - **Program 6.** Scenic and open space easements, parklands and open space dedications shall be required as mitigation for subdivisions and development projects that impact, floodplains, creek reservations, wooded areas, scenic backdrops, sensitive areas, historic sites, cultural sites, and similar areas.
        - **Program 7.** The City shall carefully evaluate both public and private projects to require the preservation of trees, watersheds, natural slopes, and other natural features.
        - **Program 9.** Attention shall be paid to the aesthetic result of land division. Building sites shall minimize disruption of natural slopes, native vegetation and watersheds by the careful selection of building sites, leach fields and driveways. Building designs inappropriate for hillside locations shall not be approved.
- **Goal LOC 7.** Tree-covered hills shall be preserved to retain the distinctive scenic quality of the community.
    - **LOC Policy 7.1:** Ensure that the native trees of Atascadero are protected from new development in order to retain the natural character of the community.
        - **Program 1.** Enforce all provisions of the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance as a high priority.

  - **Program 2.** Maintain a current geographic information system (GIS) based inventory map of all native woodlands, plant communities, sensitive habitats, connective habitat and wildlife corridors. Require lot line adjustments, subdivision maps, and development permits to minimize impacts on mapped resources that are identified as sensitive, and provide mitigation as requirement by the Native Tree Ordinance. Responsibility: Community Development Department / Environmental Consultant Timeframe: 2003-04.
  - **Program 3.** Update and maintain the Appearance Review Manual to include standards requiring building siting, mass and scale to be compatible with surrounding natural features.
  - **Program 4.** Require lot line adjustments and tentative subdivision maps on sites with 25 percent or greater native tree canopy cover to establish locations of building sites, driveways, and leach fields that will minimize native tree impacts.
- **LOC Policy 7.2:** Protect and replenish native tree populations, including saplings.
  - **Program 1.** Continue to implement and enforce the Native Tree Ordinance to protect and replenish native tree species within the City. Construction permits for both residential and non-residential development shall be required to preserve as many native trees as possible. Buildings shall be designed to utilize existing trees in the landscaping pattern. Any trees removed shall either (1) be replaced with like species, (2) in-lieu contributions made to the City's tree replacement fund or (3) have Planning Commission approved conservation easements created depending on the characteristics of the affected site.
  - **Program 2.** Augment the City Geographic Information System to include a native tree GIS database to assist decision-makers with analyzing development proposals.

- **Goal LOC 9.** Designate areas where livestock can be owned and maintained.
  - **LOC Policy 9.1:** Allow agricultural practices, including keeping livestock and farm animals, on parcels of appropriate size in Rural Estate, Suburban Estate, and Single-Family Residential areas, provided that natural features and residential neighbors will not be adversely impacted.
  - **LOC Policy 9.2:** Adequately regulate allowed agricultural practices and keeping of domestic animals on rural and agricultural lands consistent with the farm animal regulations of the City Zoning Ordinance.

CITY OF ATASCADERO MUNICIPAL CODE OF ORDINANCES AND NATIVE TREE ORDINANCE

Atascadero Municipal Code Section 9-3 establishes the land uses permitted within the agriculture and residential zoning districts. This section also outlines the types of planning permits or approvals required for each use and sets forth the basic lot size and development standards for specific zones. Additionally, specialized agricultural uses beyond crop production are subject to the requirements of Section 9-6.

Municipal Code Section 9-11 describes the City's native tree regulations. The Native Tree Ordinance and the associated Native Tree Guidelines were adopted in 1988 to help enforce the preservation, maintenance, and regeneration of Atascadero's native trees and woodlands. These regulations require permits for removing specific native tree species, as well as additional protective measures when performing work near native trees.

SAN LUIS OBISPO LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION AGRICULTURAL GOALS, POLICIES, AND GUIDELINES

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act establishes the framework for local agency boundary changes in California and strongly encourages the preservation of prime agricultural land and open space while promoting orderly development and efficient public services. Under this Act, the San Luis Obispo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) is an independent county agency responsible for reviewing and approving changes in local government organization, including city annexations, detachments, new formations, and incorporations. As such, LAFCO approval is required for any changes to the City of Atascadero's municipal boundaries or Sphere of Influence.

San Luis Obispo County LAFCO has adopted standards and procedures for evaluating annexation proposals through its Policies and Procedures Manual. These policies guide development toward existing urban areas and discourage the premature conversion of agricultural and open space lands. Through the review and approval of annexation applications, LAFCO considers the potential effects of boundary changes on agricultural resources and open space lands while balancing the need for orderly urban development and efficient service provision (San Luis Obispo LAFCO 2023).

4.2.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on agriculture and forestry resources if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below, as specified in CEQA PRC Section 21060.1 and California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et seq.:

a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)).

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

4.2.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

For purposes of this analysis, relevant database information found in the CDOC FMMP was reviewed to identify designated Farmland, including Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance within the project region. Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance are protected under PRC Section 21060.1. Projects that would result in the conversion of designated Farmland would have a significant impact on the environment. In addition, relevant policies were examined to evaluate the project's consistency with preservation of agricultural resources within the City.

4.2.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

IMPACT AG-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONVERT PRIME FARMLAND, UNIQUE FARMLAND, OR FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE TO NON-AGRICULTURAL USE. *(NO IMPACT)*

The City contains a limited area of Unique Farmland; however, this area has already been subdivided and developed for residential use. The 2045 General Plan Update does not include policies or actions that would directly convert these agricultural lands to nonagricultural uses. As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the proposed 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update introduces new land use designations known as Placetypes to guide future growth and development in the City. Among these, the Agriculture Placetype is proposed for two areas, an expansion from the current Agricultural designation: an approximately 44-acre area adjacent to Graves Creek south of Balboa Road (existing) and an approximately 27-acre area along the Salinas River east of the Las Lomas neighborhood (expanded). Under the currently adopted 2025 General Plan, the 44-acre area along Graves Creek is designated under the City's Agriculture land use category, whereas the 27-acre area along the Salinas River is classified as Suburban Estate (SE), with a zoning designation of Residential Suburban (RS). This 27-acre area is classified as Other Land, Grazing Land, and Farmland of Local Potential according to the FMMP, and the proposed change to an Agriculture Placetype would result in the City adding agriculturally designated land within its limits (CDOC 2022). This 27-acre area is bisected by a railroad and floodplain, making it less conducive to residential development, and currently supports agricultural uses.

The Agriculture Placetype is intended to support a variety of agricultural activities, including field crops, orchards, ranching, tree farms, and livestock raising. It also permits one primary residence per parcel and housing for agricultural employees, as required by State law and as specified in the Municipal Code. Additionally, accessory and public-facing commercial uses—such as event venues and bed and breakfasts—may be allowed. Incidental uses would be accessory to the primary agricultural use and would have a negligible impact on farmland areas.

Other land use designations that support open space and conservation include Conservation/Parks/Open Space, which is primarily along the Salinas River and Atascadero and Graves Creeks. These areas are intended to preserve natural resources or provide recreational opportunities while accommodating low-intensity uses compatible with environmental protection. The following proposed policies and implementation actions in the Land Use Element address the preservation of agricultural activities in the City and regionally.

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic.
    - **Policy LU-1.1: Rural Character.** Safeguard the rural character of Atascadero including the concept of "elbow room," which calls for maintaining larger minimum lot sizes and lower density and intensity standards proportionate to the distance from the Downtown core and major corridors.
        - **Action C:** Maintain allowances for where livestock may be owned and kept within the Rural Residential and Agriculture Placetypes.

- **Policy LU-1.7: Regional Impacts.** Coordinate with neighboring cities and community services districts, the County of San Luis Obispo, and regional transportation agencies to plan for growth and minimize regional impacts.
  - **Action A:** Continue to coordinate with the County to maintain rural land use patterns, agriculture, and open space uses beyond the City limit.

The 2045 General Plan Update and implementing Zoning Code Update also preserves the City's agricultural zones and allows activities in residential zones as stated in the following goal, policy, and action provided in the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element:

- **Goal REC-4:** Consideration of biological and watershed resources within the urban areas to provide multiple benefits, with resource areas including oak woodlands, riparian corridors, native trees and plants, and creeks and rivers.
  - **Policy REC-4.5: Agricultural Practices.** Allow agricultural practices, including keeping livestock and farm animals, on parcels designated as Rural Residential and Agriculture, with consideration for the natural environment and residential character.
    - **Action A:** Regulate allowed agricultural practices and the keeping of domestic animals on rural and agricultural lands consistent with the farm animal regulations of the Zoning Ordinance.

The 2045 General Plan Update does not include policies or actions that would directly or indirectly convert existing Unique Farmland to nonagricultural uses. As a result, *no impacts* related to conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance would occur.

Impact AG-1
The project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts related to conversion of Farmland would occur.

b) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

IMPACT AG-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH EXISTING ZONING FOR AGRICULTURAL USE OR A WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT. *(NO IMPACT)*

Land within the Williamson Act in Atascadero is limited to agriculturally zoned parcels along Graves Creek. These areas are designated for agricultural use, and the 2045 General Plan does not propose any policies, actions, or land use designation changes that would alter their zoning or conflict with existing Williamson Act contracts. The process for entering into or exiting a Williamson Act contract would remain owner-initiated and subject to the existing 10-year annual renewal process.

Lands currently under Williamson Act contracts continue to be designated for agricultural uses in the proposed land use map. The 2045 General Plan maintains designations that support ongoing agricultural

operations and does not introduce any provisions that would conflict with existing or new zoning for agriculture or Williamson Act contracts.

Accordingly, the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not alter the Williamson Act program or its administration, and the procedures for contract renewal or nonrenewal remain unchanged, and *no impacts* related to conflicts with existing agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contracts would occur.

Impact AG-2
The project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts related to conflicts with agricultural zoning or a Williamson Act contract would occur.

c) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

IMPACT AG-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH EXISTING ZONING FOR OR CAUSE REZONING OF FOREST LAND, TIMBERLAND, OR TIMBERLAND PRODUCTION ZONES. *(NO IMPACT)*

The City contains areas that meet the definitions of forest land and timberland under PRC Sections 12220(g) and 4526, respectively. These areas include extensive oak woodlands and permanent tree farms managed for Christmas tree production. As discussed in Section 4.2.1.2, *Forest Land and Timberland*, Hidden Springs Tree Farm, an approximately 44-acre area on Monterey Road, is currently designated as Agriculture in the 2025 General Plan and existing Municipal Code, and Salinas River Ranch, an approximately 27-acre area on Santa Barbara Road, will change its designation from Suburban Estate to Agriculture (City of Atascadero 2016, 2025). Several forested areas are protected by the ALPS, which manages the 103-acre Three Bridges Oak Preserve on the City's west side, 5-acre Stadium Park property near Pine Mountain, 5-acre Adobe Springs along Traffic Way, and 12-acre Atascadero Creek Reservation east of City Hall. The Three Bridges Oak Preserve and Stadium Park are currently designated as Public Recreation (REC) and zoned Recreation (L), and Adobe Springs is currently designated and zoned Open Space (OS). These designations are reserved for public park and recreational facilities available for public use and owned by a public entity. The creek preserve is designated as Open Space, which covers areas with environmentally sensitive natural or cultural resources, areas to be used for the managed production of natural resources, and areas subject to natural hazards such as floods or landslides (City of Atascadero 2016). All four of these areas would be redesignated as Conservation/Parks/Open Space under the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoned Open Space in the Zoning Code Update. The Conservation/Parks/Open Space Placetype and corresponding zoning district(s) are intended to be used for parks and recreation and community-serving uses, habitat preserves, rivers and creeks, and other protected lands. This change in land use designation does not include new development or land use changes that would directly rezone or otherwise conflict with the zoning of these lands. The properties identified are currently used for these purposes.

The City Municipal Code allows for agricultural and limited forestry uses within appropriate zones and does not anticipate expansion of the Agriculture designation or introduction of incompatible uses into protected woodland or timberland areas. Only the expanded Salinas are parcels will be rezoned as Agriculture, consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in environmental changes that could conflict with existing zoning of or cause rezoning of forest land, timberland, or TPZs, and *no impacts would occur*.

Impact AG-3
The project would not result in a conflict with existing zoning of or cause rezoning of forest land, timberland, or Timberland Production Zones.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts related to conflicts with existing zoning of or rezoning of forest land or timberland would occur.

d) Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

IMPACT AG-4: THE PROJECT WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF FOREST LAND OR THE CONVERSION OF FOREST LAND TO NON-FOREST USE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Comprehensive land use policies provided in the 2045 General Plan would minimize future conversion of forested land to non-forest. The 2045 General Plan does not propose any amendments or policies that would encourage or permit activities leading to the direct or indirect loss of these resources. Instead, the 2045 General Plan Update's framework supports the long-term stewardship of forest land within the City. The Zoning Code Update will follow the framework of the 2045 General Plan. The 2045 General Plan specifically focuses future growth and development within the urban core, which serves to minimize the conversion of existing forest land to other land uses. The 2045 General Plan policies, the existing Zoning ordinance, and implementing standards in the Zoning Code Update are intended to prevent significant impacts to areas that may fall into the definition of forest land; however, some areas of the City, particularly the west side, contain oak woodlands that may meet the definition of forest land under PRC Section 12220(g), and implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would allow limited residential development within these areas. These areas are within the Rural Residential Placetype and are proposed to be zoned Rural residential under the Zoning Code Update. Therefore, development of single-family residences, utilities, and associated infrastructure would be permitted and could require the removal of native trees. Furthermore, State policies require allowances for Accessory Dwelling Units on each parcel. Although future development may occur on land classified as forest land due to the rural, large-lot single-family nature of the west side of Atascadero, it would be subject to careful review to ensure that the overall loss or conversion of forest land is minimized, consistent with the 2045 General Plan and City ordinances. Specifically, large-lot single-family development allows for one residence per each 1.5 to 10 acres, depending on site characteristics. All tree removals are reviewed in accordance with the Native Tree Ordinance which requires findings be made to limit any native tree removal to only those absolutely necessary to accommodate development. In addition, the Native Tree Ordinance requires review of development plans to ensure that development is sited in a way which minimizes impacts to native trees, and thus, reduces woodland impacts. Newly adopted hillside grading standards also limit the overall number

of tree removals based on an overall percentage of the site and any removals beyond that are deemed excessive and require additional review and Planning Commission approval

The proposed General Plan's Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element also contains the following goal, policies, and actions related to forest land conservation.

- **Goal REC-4:** Consideration of biological and watershed resources within the urban areas to provide multiple benefits, with resource areas including oak woodlands, riparian corridors, native trees and plants, and creeks and rivers.
    - **Policy REC-4.1: Natural Resources Protection.** Protect natural and sensitive resource areas to the maximum extent practicable.
        - **Action A:** Enforce all provisions of the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance.
        - **Action B:** Maintain a GIS-based inventory of sensitive habitats and resources, including native trees, watercourse- and wetland-adjacent areas, archaeological resources, and historic sites.
        - **Action C:** Work with non-profits and community organizations to preserve biologically sensitive areas to increase community resiliency and public access to recreational areas.
        - **Action D:** Require identification of scenic and sensitive lands (creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, critical habitats, etc.) on development applications. Develop and work with applicants to implement avoidance and mitigation measures to minimize impacts.
        - **Action E:** Carefully evaluate public and private projects to require the consideration of trees, watersheds, natural slopes, and other natural features.
    - **Policy REC-4.2: Tree Protection and Replenishment.** Protect and replenish street and native trees.
        - **Action A:** Implement and enforce the Native Tree Ordinance to protect and replenish native tree species.
        - **Action E:** Update the Zoning Ordinance to require native trees and plant species be incorporated into landscaping plans, as appropriate.
        - **Action F:** Require lot line adjustments and tentative subdivision maps on sites with 25 percent or greater native tree canopy cover to establish locations of building sites, driveways, and leach fields that will minimize impacts to oak woodlands.

Therefore, despite the potential for residential development to occur in areas of the City where forest land may exist, any such development would be low density, at one residence per each 1.5 to 10 acres, depending on site characteristics. The City's tree ordinance, hillside grading ordinance, and 2045 General Plan policies would protect oak woodlands from significant impacts, as discussed above. Accordingly, adoption of the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would not result in the loss or conversion of forest land. The impact would be *less than significant*.

Impact AG-4
The project would result in the loss of forest land or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to loss or conversion of forest land to non-forest use would be less than significant (Class III).

e) Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

IMPACT AG-5: THE PROJECT WOULD RESULT IN OTHER CHANGES THAT COULD RESULT IN THE CONVERSION OF FARMLAND TO NONAGRICULTURAL USES OR CONVERSION OF FOREST LAND TO NON-FOREST USE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Agricultural land within the City is extremely limited, with only a few parcels designated by the City for agriculture along Graves Creek. The City contains a small area of Unique Farmland, which is defined as Farmland of lesser-quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This area has already been subdivided and developed with residential uses.

The 2045 General Plan maintains existing agricultural zoning, includes a new Agriculture Placetype, and includes goals, policies, and actions that encourage the preservation of these agricultural and forest uses, including the following.

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic.
    - **Policy LU-1.1: Rural Character.** Safeguard the rural character of Atascadero including the concept of "elbow room," which calls for maintaining larger minimum lot sizes and lower density and intensity standards proportionate to distance from the Downtown core and major corridors.
        - **Action C:** Maintain allowances for where livestock may be owned and kept within the Rural Residential and Agriculture Placetypes.
- **Goal REC-4:** Consideration of biological and watershed resources within the urban areas to provide multiple benefits, with resource areas including oak woodlands, riparian corridors, native trees and plants, and creeks and rivers.
    - **Policy REC-4.1: Natural Resources Protection.** Protect natural and sensitive resource areas to the maximum extent practicable.
        - **Action A:** Enforce all provisions of the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance.
        - **Action B:** Maintain a GIS-based inventory of sensitive habitats and resources, including native trees, watercourse- and wetland-adjacent areas, archaeological resources, and historic sites.

  - **Action C:** Work with non-profits and community organizations to preserve biologically sensitive areas to increase community resiliency and public access to recreational areas.
  - **Action D:** Require identification of scenic and sensitive lands (creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, critical habitats, etc.) on development applications. Develop and work with applicants to implement avoidance and mitigation measures to minimize impacts.
  - **Action E:** Carefully evaluate public and private projects to require the consideration of trees, watersheds, natural slopes, and other natural features.
- **Policy REC-4.2:** Tree Protection and Replenishment. Protect and replenish street and native trees.
  - **Action A:** Implement and enforce the Native Tree Ordinance to protect and replenish native tree species.
  - **Action C:** Implement a comprehensive street tree planting and maintenance program, specifically within the Downtown core and along major corridors.
  - **Action D:** Require planting of shade trees in new projects, in part to provide shade for adjacent buildings to conserve energy use.
  - **Action E:** Update the Zoning Ordinance to require native trees and plant species be incorporated into landscaping plans, as appropriate.
  - **Action F:** Require lot line adjustments and tentative subdivision maps on sites with 25 percent or greater native tree canopy cover to establish locations of building sites, driveways, and leach fields that will minimize impacts to oak woodlands.
- **Policy REC-4.5: Agricultural Practices.** Allow agricultural practices, including keeping livestock and farm animals, on parcels designated as Rural Residential and Agriculture, with consideration for the natural environment and residential character.
  - **Action A:** Regulate allowed agricultural practices and the keeping of domestic animals on rural and agricultural lands consistent with the farm animal regulations of the Zoning Ordinance.

Future development proposals would be subject to review for consistency with these policies, which encourage preservation of existing agricultural land uses, allow for agricultural uses in multiple Placetypes, and outline policies for protection and preservation of native trees and forests.

Agricultural uses in the City rely on a mixture of groundwater and water supplies from Atascadero Mutual Water Company. Water supply for agricultural operations will remain adequate, as discussed in Section 4.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, and residential zones will continue to allow compatible agricultural activities. The 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would not alter the administration of Williamson Act contracts, which are designed to help offset development pressure on agricultural lands by providing a financial incentive.

Atascadero's oak woodlands and timberland areas are protected by local and state regulations, as described above under Impact AG-4. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would generally not result in any other impacts that could result in conversion of forestland to non-forest use beyond the impacts described above under Impact AG-4. Although future development may occur on land classified as forest land due to the rural, large-lot single-family nature of the west side of Atascadero, it would be subject to careful review to ensure that the overall loss or conversion of forest land is minimized, consistent with the 2045 General Plan and City ordinances. In addition, the City's tree ordinance protects oak woodlands from significant impacts due to proposed development.

The 2045 General Plan maintains existing agricultural land, introduces a new Agriculture Placetype, and includes policies to preserve agricultural and forest uses and protect native trees. The Zoning Code Update will maintain and expand the Agriculture zoning district consistent with the 2045 General Plan. The 2045 General Plan does not envision significantly increased density or development in areas proximate to existing agricultural uses or Farmland that could affect those resources through dust, water usage, traffic, risk of nuisance complaints, etc. Although future development may encroach into these forested areas as many of these areas are designated as rural, large-lot single-family parcels that may still have limited development potential, including Accessory Dwelling Units required by State law, the 2045 General Plan includes policies and actions to minimize those impacts. Therefore, the project would not result in other changes that could result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses or conversion of forest land to non-forest use, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact AG-5
The project would involve other changes that could result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses or conversion of forest land to non-forest use would be less than significant (Class III).

4.2.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT AG-6: THE PROJECT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A CUMULATIVE SOURCE OF SUBSTANTIAL LOSS OR CONVERSION OF AGRICULTURAL OR FOREST LAND. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III.])*

The analysis provided above is already cumulative in nature, as it evaluates impacts to agricultural and forestry resources across the entirety of the City rather than being limited to a specific parcel or project site. By considering citywide trends and patterns, this approach inherently accounts for the collective effects of both existing and future development on these resources. Regional trends show that increased residential and commercial development can place economic pressure on nearby agricultural and forest lands to be converted to other uses. In addition, development of nonagricultural uses adjacent to agricultural lands can lead to the increase in potential land use conflicts, such as those related to dust emissions, noise, water supply, and pesticide use, which may lead to indirect conversion of these lands to nonagricultural uses; however, within Atascadero, designated agricultural land is extremely limited, comprising less than 1% of the City's total acreage, with no Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance present. The small area identified as Unique Farmland within the City has already been subdivided and developed for residential use, and the parcels currently under Williamson Act contracts would continue to be maintained for agricultural purposes. The 2045 General Plan preserves and slightly expands agricultural designations within the City and introduces policies and actions that directly and indirectly preserve agricultural and forest land as described in the previous impact discussions. The Zoning Code Update implements this expansion and maintains standards for the preservation of agricultural od forest land consistent with the General Plan.

Similarly, Atascadero's forest resources, including extensive oak woodlands and timberland, are recognized for their ecological, aesthetic, and historical value. Although significant areas of tree cover benefit from local ordinances, much of the forest land within the City is not formally protected. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update maintains existing protections for designated forest and timberland areas, continues to support stewardship and conservation through ongoing policies and programs, such as the City's Native Tree Ordinance, and further supports the long-term stewardship of these resources, particularly through Policy REC-4.2, Action F.

When considered alongside other regional projects and anticipated growth throughout the County, the 2045 General Plan's policies and land use designations, together with Zoning Code standards and regulations, would protect these resources in the City and would not contribute to significant adverse effects on agricultural or forestry resources. Therefore, impacts to farmland and forest land would not be cumulatively considerable, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact AG-6
The project would contribute to a cumulative loss or conversion of agricultural or forest land.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to a cumulative loss or conversion of agricultural or forest land would be less than significant (Class III).

4.3 AIR QUALITY, GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, AND ENERGY

The following setting and impact discussion is based, in part, on the *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment* prepared for the project (EIR Appendix C) (AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting [AMBIENT] 2026a) and the *Energy Impact Analysis* prepared for the project (AMBIENT 2026b; EIR Appendix D). This section includes an in-depth assessment of existing conditions related to air quality, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, energy, pertinent regulatory framework, and potential air quality, GHG, and energy impacts associated with the proposed project.

4.3.1 Existing Conditions

4.3.1.1 Air Quality

REGIONAL CLIMATE AND METEOROLOGY

The Planning Area is within the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB), and within the jurisdiction of the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD). Air quality in the SCCAB is influenced by a variety of factors, including topography, and local and regional meteorology.

Atascadero sits on the rolling hills of the east side of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range and within the upper reaches of the Salinas River Basin. It is bounded from the northwest by the Santa Lucia Mountain Range, which extends almost the entire length of San Luis Obispo County. Rising sharply to about 3,000 feet at its northern boundary, the Santa Lucia Range gradually winds southward away from the coast, finally merging into a mass of rugged features on the north side of Cuyama Canyon. Point Buchon juts into the Pacific just south of Morro Bay to form the protective harbor of San Luis Obispo Bay. The Irish Hills are the dominant feature on this knob of land, rising abruptly from the shore to form steep cliffs and generally complex terrain from the Los Osos/Montana de Oro State Park area to Pismo Beach. These headlands have a pronounced influence on local wind flow patterns.

The climate of the county can generally be characterized as Mediterranean, with warm, dry summers and cooler, relatively damp winters. Along the coast, mild temperatures are the rule throughout the year due to the moderating influence of the Pacific Ocean. This effect is diminished inland in proportion to the distance from the ocean or by major intervening terrain features, such as the coastal mountain ranges. As a result, inland areas are characterized by a considerably wider range of temperature conditions. Maximum summer temperatures average about 70ºF near the coast, while inland valleys are often in the high 90s. Minimum winter temperatures average from the low 30s along the coast to the low 20s inland (AMBIENT 2026a).

Regional meteorology is largely dominated by a persistent high-pressure area that commonly resides over the eastern Pacific Ocean. Seasonal variations in the strength and position of this pressure cell cause seasonal changes in the weather patterns of the area. The Pacific High remains generally fixed several hundred miles offshore from May to September, enhancing onshore winds and opposing offshore winds. During spring and early summer, as the onshore breezes pass over the cool water of the ocean, fog and low clouds often form in the marine air layer along the coast. Surface heating in the interior valleys dissipates the marine layer as it moves inland.

From November to April, the Pacific High tends to migrate southward, allowing northern storms to move across the county. About 90% of the total annual rainfall is received during this period. Winter conditions are usually mild, with intermittent periods of precipitation followed by mostly clear days. Rainfall amounts can vary considerably among different regions in the county. In the Coastal Plain, annual rainfall averages 16 to 28 inches, while the Upper Salinas River Valley generally receives about 12 to 20 inches of rain.

The Carrizo Plain is the driest area of the county with less than 12 inches of rain in a typical year (AMBIENT 2026a).

Airflow around the county plays an important role in the movement and dispersion of pollutants. The speed and direction of local winds are controlled by the location and strength of the Pacific high-pressure system and other global patterns, topographical factors, and circulation patterns resulting from temperature differences between the land and sea. In spring and summer months, when the Pacific High attains its greatest strength, onshore winds from the northwest generally prevail during the day. At night, as the sea breeze dies, weak drainage winds flow down the coastal mountains and valleys to form a light, easterly land breeze (AMBIENT 2026a).

In the fall, onshore surface winds decline and the marine layer grows shallow, allowing an occasional reversal to a weak offshore flow. This, along with the diurnal alternation of land–sea breeze circulation, can sometimes produce a "sloshing" effect. Under these conditions, pollutants may accumulate over the ocean for a period of 1 or more days and are subsequently carried back onshore with the return of the sea breeze. Strong inversions can form at this time, "trapping" pollutants near the surface (AMBIENT 2026a).

This effect is intensified when the Pacific High weakens or moves inland to the east. This may produce a "Santa Ana" condition, in which air, often pollutant-laden, is transported into the county from the east and southeast. This can occur over a period of several days until the high-pressure system returns to its normal location, breaking the pattern. The breakup of a Santa Ana condition may result in relatively stagnant conditions and a buildup of pollutants offshore. The onset of the typical daytime sea breeze can bring these pollutants back onshore, where they combine with local emissions to cause high pollutant concentrations. Not all occurrences of the "post-Santa Ana" condition leads to high ambient pollutant levels, but it does play an important role in the air pollution meteorology of the county (AMBIENT 2026a).

ATMOSPHERIC STABILITY AND DISPERSION

Air pollutant concentrations are primarily determined by the amount of pollutant emissions in an area and the degree to which these pollutants are dispersed into the atmosphere. The stability of the atmosphere is one of the key factors affecting pollutant dispersion. Atmospheric stability regulates the amount of vertical and horizontal air exchange or mixing that can occur within a given air basin. Restricted mixing and low wind speeds are generally associated with a high degree of stability in the atmosphere. These conditions are characteristic of temperature inversions (AMBIENT 2026a).

In the atmosphere, air temperatures normally decrease as altitude increases. At varying distances above the earth's surface, however, a reversal of this gradient can occur. This condition, termed an inversion, is simply a warm layer of air above a layer of cooler air, and it has the effect of limiting the vertical dispersion of pollutants. The height of the inversion determines the size of the mixing volume trapped below. Inversion strength or intensity is measured by the thickness of the layer and the difference in temperature between the base and the top of the inversion. The strength of the inversion determines how easily it can be broken by wind or solar heating (AMBIENT 2026a).

Several types of inversions are common in this area. Weak, surface inversions are caused by radiational cooling of air in contact with the cold surface of the earth at night. In valleys and low-lying areas, this condition is intensified by the addition of cold air flowing downslope from the hills and pooling on the valley floor. Surface inversions are a common occurrence throughout the county during the winter, particularly on cold mornings when the inversion is strongest. As the morning sun warms the earth and the air near the ground, the inversion lifts, gradually dissipating as the day progresses. During the late spring and early summer months, cool air over the ocean can intrude under the relatively warmer air over land, causing a marine inversion. These inversions can restrict dispersion along the coast, but they are typically shallow and will dissipate with surface heating (AMBIENT 2026a).

In contrast, in the summertime, the presence of the Pacific high-pressure cell can cause the air mass aloft to sink. As the air descends, compressional heating warms it to a temperature higher than the air below. This highly stable atmospheric condition, termed a subsidence inversion, is common to all coastal California and can act as a nearly impenetrable lid to the vertical mixing of pollutants. The base of the inversion typically ranges from 1,000 to 2,500 feet above mean sea level; however, levels as low as 250 feet, among the lowest anywhere in the state, have been recorded on the coastal plateau in San Luis Obispo County. The strength of these inversions makes them difficult to disrupt. Consequently, they can persist for one or more days, causing air stagnation and the buildup of pollutants. Highest or worst-case ozone levels are often associated with the presence of this type of inversion (AMBIENT 2026a).

CRITERIA AIR POLLUTANTS

For the protection of public health and welfare, the federal Clean Air Act (FCAA) required that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) establish National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for various pollutants. These pollutants are referred to as "criteria" pollutants because the USEPA publishes criteria documents to justify the choice of standards. These standards define the maximum amount of an air pollutant that can be present in ambient air without harm to the public's health. An ambient air quality standard is generally specified as a concentration averaged over a specific time period, such as 1 hour, 8 hours, 24 hours, or 1 year. The different averaging times and concentrations are meant to protect against different exposure effects. The FCAA allows states to adopt additional or more health-protective standards. The air quality regulatory framework and ambient air quality standards (both state and federal) are discussed in greater detail in Section 4.3.2, *Regulatory Setting*.

A summary of San Luis Obispo County's attainment status for State and Federal ambient air quality standards is provided in Figure 4.3-1.

HUMAN HEALTH AND WELFARE EFFECTS

Common air pollutants and their associated adverse health and welfare effects are summarized in Table 4.3-1. Within the SCCAB, the air pollutants of primary concern for human health are ozone and particulate matter (PM). As shown in Table 4.3-1, exposure to elevated concentrations of ozone and PM is associated with a range of adverse health outcomes, including respiratory and cardiovascular effects, nervous system impairment, and, in severe cases, premature mortality.

Table 4.3-1. Common Pollutants and Adverse Effects

Pollutant	Human Health and Welfare Effects
Particulate Matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$)	Increased respiratory symptoms, such as irritation of the airways, coughing, or difficulty breathing; aggravated asthma; development of chronic bronchitis; irregular heartbeat; nonfatal heart attacks; and premature death in people with heart or lung disease. Impairs visibility (haze).
Ozone (O_3)	Irritates and causes inflammation of the mucous membranes and lung airways; causes wheezing, coughing, and pain when inhaling deeply; decreases lung capacity; aggravates lung and heart problems. Damages plants; reduces crop yield. Damages rubber, some textiles, and dyes.
Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)	Respiratory irritant. Aggravates lung and heart problems. In the presence of moisture and oxygen, sulfur dioxide converts to sulfuric acid which can damage marble, iron, and steel; damage crops and natural vegetation. Impairs visibility. A precursor to acid rain.
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	Reduces the ability of blood to deliver oxygen to vital tissues, effecting the cardiovascular and nervous system. Impairs vision, causes dizziness, and can lead to unconsciousness or death.
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	Respiratory irritant; aggravates lung and heart problems. A precursor to ozone and acid rain. Contributes to global warming, and nutrient overloading which deteriorates water quality. Causes brown discoloration of the atmosphere.
Lead (Pb)	Anemia, high blood pressure, brain and kidney damage, neurological disorders, cancer, lowered IQ. Affects animals, plants, and aquatic ecosystems.

Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

San Luis Obispo County Attainment Status

Pollutant	Averaging Time	California Standards*		Federal Standards†		
		Concentration	Attainment Status	Primary	Secondary	Attainment Status
Ozone (O_3)	1 Hour	0.09 ppm	Non-Attainment	–	Same as Primary Standard	Non-Attainment Eastern SLO County - Attainment Western SLO County‡
	8 Hour	0.070 ppm		0.070 ppm		
Respirable Particulate Matter (PM10)	24 Hour	50 µg/m³	Non-Attainment	150 µg/m³	Same as Primary Standard	Unclassified
	Annual Arithmetic Mean	20 µg/m³		–		
Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5)	24 Hour	No State Standard	Attainment	35 µg/m³	Same as Primary Standard	Unclassified/ Attainment
	Annual Arithmetic Mean	12 µg/m³		9.0 µg/m³	15.0 µg/m³	No Attainment Information§
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	8 Hour	9.0 ppm	Attainment	9 ppm	–	Unclassified/ Attainment
	1 Hour	20 ppm		35 ppm	–	
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	Annual Arithmetic Mean	0.030 ppm	Attainment	0.053 ppm	–	Unclassified/ Attainment
	1 Hour	0.18 ppm		100 ppb	Same as Primary Standard	
Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)	Annual Arithmetic Mean	–	Attainment	0.030 ppm	–	Unclassified/ Attainment
	24 Hour	0.04 ppm		0.14 ppm	–	
	3 Hour	–		–	0.5 ppm	
	1 Hour	0.25 ppm		75 ppb	–	
Lead	30 Day Average	1.5 µg/m³	Attainment	–	-	Unclassified/ Attainment
	Calendar Quarter	–		1.5 µg/m³	Same as Primary Standard	
	Rolling 3-Month Average*	–		0.15 µg/m³		
Visibility Reducing Particles	8 Hour	Extinction coefficient of 0.23 per kilometer – visibility of ten miles or more (0.07-30 miles or more for Lake Tahoe) due to particles when relative humidity is less than 70 percent.	Unclassified	**No Federal Standards**		
Sulfates	24 Hour	25 µg/m³	Attainment			
Hydrogen Sulfide	1 Hour	0.03 ppm	Attainment			
Vinyl Chloride*	24 Hour	0.01 ppm	No Attainment Information			

* For more information on California standards visit: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/california-ambient-air-quality-standards
† For more information on Federal standards visit: https://www.epa.gov/criteria-air-pollutants
‡ San Luis Obispo County has been designated non-attainment east of the -120.4 deg Longitude line in areas of SLO County that are south of latitude 35.45 degrees, and east of the -120.3 degrees longitude line in areas of SLO County that are north of latitude 35.45 degrees. Map of non-attainment area is available upon request from the APCD.
§ On February 7, 2024, the national annual $PM_{2.5}$ primary standard was lowered from 12.0 µg/m³ to 9.0 µg/m³. The existing national 24- hour $PM_{2.5}$ standards (primary and secondary) were retained at 35 µg/m³, as was the annual secondary standard of 15.0 µg/m³. The existing 24-hour PM10 standards (primary and secondary) of 150 µg/m³ also were retained. Area designations for the new standard are expected to be promulgated Feb. 2026. The county is designated as Unclassifiable/Attainment for the 2012 Annual $PM_{2.5}$ standard of 12.0 µg/m³.

Revised January 13, 2025

Source: ABMIENT (2026a).

Figure 4.3-1. Summary of Ambient Air Quality Standards and Attainment Designations.

Ozone is a secondary pollutant, which is formed by the combination of oxides of nitrogen (NO_X) and reactive organic gases (ROG), also commonly referred to as volatile organic compounds. Ozone is not a directly emitted pollutant. NO_X and ROG are not criteria air pollutants but, when in the presence of sunlight, they can form ozone and also contribute to the formation of secondary $PM_{2.5}$. Because ozone is not a directly emitted pollutant and is created under specific meteorological conditions over a wide transport area, ozone concentrations are typically evaluated at a regional level using complex photochemical models. These models are capable of predicting concentrations that take into account variations in amounts of precursor emissions (e.g., ROG, NO_X), temperature, inversions, sunlight, hourly variations, ambient conditions, and wind flow over long distances (e.g., miles). At the project level of analysis, evaluation of ozone concentrations is "not practicable and not likely [to] yield valid information" (AMBIENT 2026a).

It is important to note that the health effects of criteria air pollutants are taken into consideration when the USEPA establishes the NAAQS for individual pollutants. The health effects of a particular pollutant are analyzed on a regional basis based on the area's attainment of the NAAQS. As discussed later in this report, the Air Quality Index (AQI) is one common method of evaluating public health impacts for criteria air pollutants of primary concern. In addition, local air districts establish significance thresholds that are based on the evaluation of an individual project's contribution to regional air quality conditions and associated health effects.

ODORS

Typically, odors are generally regarded as an annoyance rather than a health hazard. However, manifestations of a person's reaction to foul odors can range from psychological (i.e. irritation, anger, or anxiety) to physiological, including circulatory and respiratory effects, nausea, vomiting, and headache.

Neither the state nor federal governments have adopted rules or regulations for the control of odor sources. The SLOAPCD does not have an individual rule or regulation that specifically addresses odors; however, odors would be applicable to SLOAPCD's Rule 402, Nuisance. Any actions related to odors would be based on citizen complaints to local governments and the SLOAPCD. The SLOAPCD recommends that odor impacts be addressed in a qualitative manner. Such analysis shall determine if the project results in excessive nuisance odors, as defined under the California Code of Regulations, Health and Safety Code Section 41700, air quality public nuisance.

Existing Sources of Odors

Land uses that typically produce objectionable odors with the potential of affecting a substantial number of people include landfills, rendering plants, chemical plants, agricultural uses, wastewater treatment plants, refineries, fast food restaurants, bakeries, and coffee roasting facilities. Within the Planning Area, major sources of potential odors include the Atascadero Water Reclamation Facility, east of the Chalk Mountain Golf Course; as well as fast food restaurants, bakeries, and coffee roasting facilities (AMBIENT 2026a).

TOXIC AIR CONTAMINANTS

Toxic air contaminants (TACs) are air pollutants that may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or serious illness, or which may pose a hazard to human health. TACs are usually present in minute quantities in the ambient air, but due to their high toxicity, they may pose a threat to public health even at very low concentrations. Because there is no threshold level below which adverse health impacts are not expected to occur, TACs differ from criteria pollutants for which acceptable levels of exposure can be determined and for which federal and state governments have set ambient air quality standards. TACs, therefore, are not considered "criteria pollutants" under either the FCAA or the California Clean Air Act (CCAA) and are thus not subject to the NAAQS or California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS). Instead, the USEPA and California Air Resources Board (CARB) regulate Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs) and TACs,

respectively, through statutes and regulations that generally require the use of the maximum or best available control technology (BACT) to limit emissions. In conjunction with SLOAPCD rules, these federal and state statutes and regulations establish the regulatory framework for TACs. At the national levels, the USEPA has established National Emission Standards for HAPs (NESHAPs), in accordance with the requirements of the FCAA and subsequent amendments. These are technology-based source-specific regulations that limit allowable emissions of HAPs.

Within California, TACs are regulated primarily through the Tanner Air Toxics Act and the Air Toxics Hot Spots Information and Assessment Act of 1987 (AMBIENT 2026a). The Tanner Act sets forth a formal procedure for the CARB to designate substances as TACs. This includes research, public participation, and scientific peer review before the CARB designates a substance as a TAC. Existing sources of TACs that are subject to the Air Toxics Hot Spots Act are required to (1) prepare a toxic emissions inventory, (2) prepare a risk assessment if emissions are significant, (3) notify the public of significant risk levels, and (4) prepare and implement risk reduction measures.

At the state level, the CARB has authority for the regulation of emissions from motor vehicles, fuels, and consumer products. Most recently, diesel particulate matter (DPM) was added to the CARB list of TACs. DPM is the primary TAC of concern for mobile sources. Of all controlled TACs, emissions of DPM are estimated to be responsible for about 70% of the total ambient TAC risk. The CARB has made the reduction of the public's exposure to DPM one of its highest priorities, with an aggressive plan to require cleaner diesel fuel and cleaner diesel engines and vehicles (AMBIENT 2026a).

At the local level, air districts have authority over stationary or industrial sources. All projects that require air quality permits from the SLOAPCD are evaluated for TAC emissions. The SLOAPCD limits emissions and public exposure to TACs through a number of programs. The SLOAPCD prioritizes TAC-emitting stationary sources, based on the quantity and toxicity of the TAC emissions and the proximity of the facilities to sensitive receptors. The SLOAPCD requires a comprehensive health risk assessment for facilities that are classified in the significant-risk category, pursuant to Assembly Bill (AB) 2588 (AMBIENT 2026a).

Existing Sources of TACs

Within the Planning Area, major sources of TACs are largely associated with on-road motor vehicles traveling along U.S. Route 101 (U.S. 101) and SR-41. No major TAC-emitting facilities were identified in the City of Atascadero or surrounding areas (AMBIENT 2026a). To a lesser extent, stationary sources permitted by SLOAPCD, such as emergency-use generators and gasoline dispensing facilities, may also result in emissions of TACs. However, these stationary sources would be subject to SLOAPCD emissions limitations and permitting requirements.

Land Use Compatibility with TAC Emission Sources

The CARB published an informational guide entitled: *Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective* (Handbook) in 2005 (CARB 2005). The purpose of this guide is to provide information to aid local jurisdictions in addressing issues and concerns related to the placement of sensitive land uses near major sources of air pollution. The CARB's Handbook includes recommended separation distances for various land uses that are based on relatively conservative estimations of emissions based on source-specific information. However, these recommendations are not site specific and should not be interpreted as defined "buffer zones". It is also important to note that the recommendations of the Handbook are advisory and need to be balanced with other State and local policies (AMBIENT 2026a). Depending on site- and project-specific conditions, an assessment of potential increases in exposure to TACs may be warranted for proposed development projects located within the distances identified. CARB-recommended separation distances for various sources of emissions are summarized in Table 4.3-2.

Table 4.3-2. State Recommendations on Siting New Sensitive Land Uses Near Air Pollutant Sources

Source Category	Advisory Recommendations
Freeways and High-Traffic Roads	Avoid siting new sensitive land uses within 500 feet of a freeway, urban roads with 100,000 vehicles/day, or rural roads with 50,000 vehicles/day.
Distribution Centers	Avoid siting new sensitive land uses within 1,000 feet of a distribution center (that accommodates more than 100 trucks per day, more than 40 trucks with operating transport refrigeration units (TRUs) per day, or where TRU unit operations exceed 300 hours per week). Take into account the configuration of existing distribution centers and avoid locating residences and other new sensitive land uses near entry and exit points.
Rail Yards	Avoid siting new sensitive land uses within 1,000 feet of a major service and maintenance rail yard. Within one mile of a rail yard, consider possible siting limitations and mitigation approaches.
Ports	Avoid siting of new sensitive land uses immediately downwind of ports in the most heavily impacted zones. Consult local air districts or the CARB on the status of pending analyses of health risks.
Refineries	Avoid siting new sensitive land uses immediately downwind of petroleum refineries. Consult with local air districts and other local agencies to determine an appropriate separation.
Chrome Platers	Avoid siting new sensitive land uses within 1,000 feet of a chrome plater.
Dry Cleaners Using Perchloroethylene	Avoid siting new sensitive land uses within 300 feet of any dry cleaning operation. For operations with two or more machines, provide 500 feet. For operations with three or more machines, consult with the local air district. Do not site new sensitive land uses in the same building with perchloroethylene dry cleaning operations.
Gasoline Dispensing Facilities	Avoid siting new sensitive land uses within 300 feet of a large gas station (defined as a facility with a throughput of 3.6 million gallons per year or greater). A 50-foot separation is recommended for typical gas dispensing facilities.

Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Note: Recommendations are advisory, are not site specific, and may not fully account for future reductions in emissions, including those resulting from compliance with existing/future regulatory requirements.

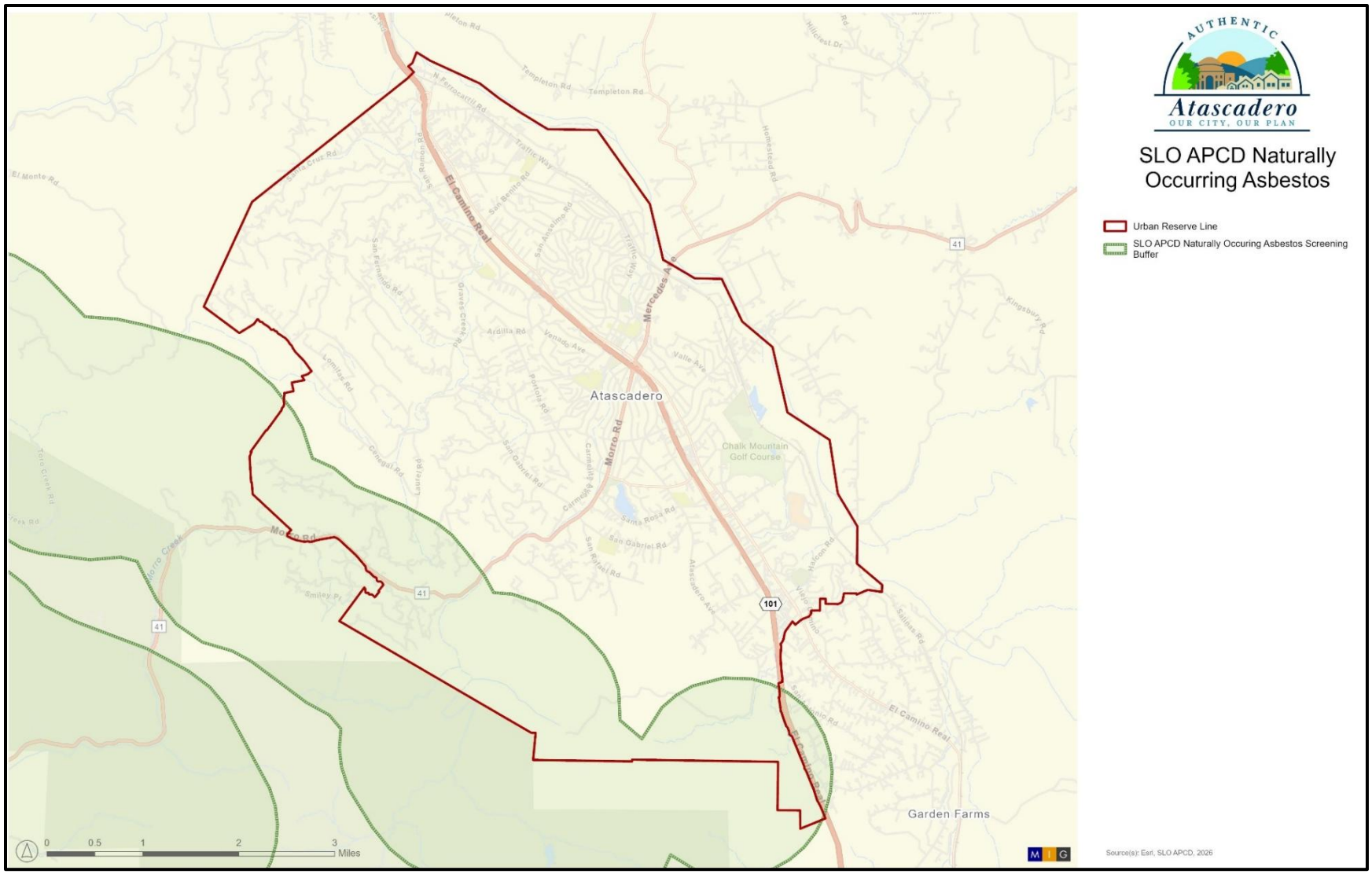
NATURALLY OCCURRING ASBESTOS

Asbestos is the common name for a group of naturally occurring fibrous silicate minerals that can separate into thin but strong and durable fibers. Naturally occurring asbestos (NOA), which was identified as a TAC in 1986 by CARB, is found in many parts of California and is commonly associated with ultramafic rock. The western and southern areas of the City of Atascadero have been identified as having potential for naturally occurring ultramafic rock and serpentine soils (Figure 4.3-2) (AMBIENT 2026a).

Asbestos-Containing Materials

Asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) are regulated under the federal National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) regulation. The NESHAP regulation requires a thorough inspection of regulated structures for the identification of NOA prior to demolition or renovation. Notification requirements may also apply. Regulated structures include institutional, commercial, and industrial buildings; as well as residential buildings that are demolished or renovated as part of a commercial or public project (AMBIENT 2026a).

Within San Luis Obispo County, the SLOAPCD implements the asbestos NESHAP regulation. ACMs are typically more prevalent in older structures, generally considered to be 1970's era and earlier. However, it is important to note that the use of asbestos in building materials has not been banned and may also be present, to some extent, in newer construction. As a result, for structures subject to NESHAP requirements, a thorough inspection is required prior to demolition or renovation (AMBIENT 2026a).



Source: SLOAPCD (2018).

Figure 4.3-2. Areas with Potential for NOA.

SENSITIVE RECEPTORS

One of the most important reasons for air quality standards is the protection of those members of the population who are most sensitive to the adverse health effects of air pollution, termed "sensitive receptors." The term “sensitive receptors” refers to specific population groups, as well as the land uses where individuals would reside for long periods. Commonly identified sensitive population groups are children, the elderly, the acutely ill, and the chronically ill. Commonly identified sensitive land uses would include facilities that house or attract children, the elderly, people with illnesses, or others who are especially sensitive to the effects of air pollutants. Residential dwellings, schools, parks, playgrounds, childcare centers, assisted living facilities, and hospitals are examples of sensitive land uses.

Existing Sensitive Land Uses

Sensitive land uses within the City of Atascadero and surrounding areas consist predominantly of residential land uses; as well as schools, daycare facilities, assisted living facilities, and the Atascadero State Hospital. Sensitive receptor locations are generally found throughout the City, as described below:

- **Residential uses** are distributed throughout the City of Atascadero, with the highest concentrations in established neighborhoods across the central and western portions of the City and additional housing areas extending along major residential corridors.

- **Nursing homes and assisted living facilities** in Atascadero are limited in number and are generally within developed areas near major roadways and medical or community services.

- **Hospitals** serving Atascadero are within the central portion of the City, along major transportation routes to provide accessible medical services to the surrounding community.

- **Playgrounds** are dispersed throughout the City within public parks and recreational areas, primarily within residential neighborhoods to provide convenient access for local residents.

- **Schools** are distributed across the City within and adjacent to residential neighborhoods, typically along collector or arterial roadways to serve surrounding student populations.

- **Daycare facilities** are scattered throughout Atascadero and are commonly located within residential neighborhoods and along commercial corridors to serve local families.

AMBIENT AIR QUALITY

Air pollutant concentrations are measured at several monitoring stations in the SCCAB. The Atascadero-Lift Station #5 monitoring station is the closest representative monitoring station with sufficient data to meet USEPA and/or CARB criteria for quality assurance. Ambient monitoring data was obtained for the last three years of available measurement data (i.e., 2022 through 2024) and is summarized in Table 4.3-3. As depicted, the national and state $PM_{2.5}$ standards were exceeded on multiple days over the last three years of available data. Measured 24-hour PM_{10}, 8-hour ozone, 1-hour ozone, and NO_2 concentrations did not exceed the state and federal ambient air quality standards during the last three years of available data (AMBIENT 2026a).

Table 4.3-3. Summary of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Data

Pollutant	Monitoring Year		
	2022	2023	2024
Ozone (O_3)			
Maximum concentration (1-hour/8-hour average; ppm)	0.069/0.060	0.073/0.059	0.071/0.062
Number of days state/national 1-hour standard exceeded	0/0	0/0	0/0
Number of days state/national 8-hour standard exceeded	0/0	0/0	0/0
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)			
Maximum 1-hour concentration (state/national; ppb)	26/26.0	50/50.7	32/32.4
Number of days state/national standard exceeded	0/0	0/0	0/0
Suspended Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$)			
Maximum 24-hour concentration (national/state; µg/m^3)	19.1/19.1	24.3/24.3	28.7/28.7
Number of days national standard exceeded (measured/calculated)	0/0	0/0	0/0
Suspended Particulate Matter (PM_{10})			
Maximum 24-hour concentration (national/state; µg/m^3)	39.7/38.8	49.5/48.7	39.3/39.3
Number of days state standard exceeded (measured/calculated)	0/NA	0/NA	0/NA
Number of days national standard exceeded (measured/calculated)	0/0	0/0	0/0

Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Notes:

ppm = parts per million by volume, µg/m^3 = micrograms per cubic meter, NA=Not Available

Based on ambient concentrations obtained from the Atascadero-Lift Station #5 Monitoring Station.

Measured days are those days when an actual measurement was greater than the standard. Calculated days are estimated days that measurement would have exceeded the standard had measurements been collected every day.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

The health effects of ambient air pollutant concentrations can be evaluated and presented in various ways. The most common method is the use of the AQI. The USEPA developed the AQI as an easy-to-understand measure of health impacts based on measured ambient air quality in comparison to established ambient air quality standards. Tables 4.3-4 and 4.3-5 present a summary of the health impacts for ozone and fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), respectively, based on the USEPA's AQI.

Table 4.3-4. Air Quality Index Summary for Ozone and Related Health Effects

Air Quality Index/ 8-hour Ozone Concentration	Health Effects Description
AQI 51 –100: Moderate Ambient Ozone Concentrations: 55–70 ppb	*Sensitive Groups*: Children and people with asthma are the groups at most risk. *Health Effects Statements*: Unusually sensitive individuals may experience respiratory symptoms. *Cautionary Statements*: Unusually sensitive people should consider limiting prolonged outdoor exertion.
AQI 101 –150: Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups Ambient Ozone Concentrations: 71 –85 ppb	*Sensitive Groups*: Children and people with asthma are the groups at most risk. *Health Effects Statements*: Increasing likelihood of respiratory symptoms and breathing discomfort in active children and adults and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma. *Cautionary Statements*: Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.

Air Quality Index/ 8-hour Ozone Concentration	Health Effects Description
AQI 151–200: Unhealthy Ambient Ozone Concentrations: 86 –105 ppb	*Sensitive Groups*: Children and people with asthma are the groups at most risk. *Health Effects Statements*: Greater likelihood of respiratory symptoms and breathing difficulty in active children and adults and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma; possible respiratory effects in general population. *Cautionary Statements*: Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion; everyone else, especially children, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.
AQI 201 –300: Very Unhealthy Ambient Ozone Concentrations: 106 –200 ppb	*Sensitive Groups*: Children and people with asthma are the groups at most risk. *Health Effects Statements*: Increasingly severe symptoms and impaired breathing likely in active children and adults and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma; increasing likelihood of respiratory effects in general population. *Cautionary Statements*: Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid outdoor exertion; everyone else, especially children, should limit outdoor exertion.

Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Notes: AQI = Air Quality Index, ppb = parts per billion.

An AQI of 50 and below is categorized as "Good" and air quality is satisfactory and poses little or no risk. An AQI of 301 or higher is categorized as "Hazardous" having a health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected. Outdoor activities should be avoided for all individuals.

Table 4.3-5. Air Quality Index Summary for Fine Particulate Matter and Related Health Effects

Air Quality Index	Related Health Effects
AQI 51-100: Moderate Ambient Concentrations: 12.1-35.4 µg/m^3	*Sensitive Groups*: Some people who may be unusually sensitive to particulate. *Health Effects Statements*: Unusually sensitive people should consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion. *Cautionary Statements*: Unusually sensitive people: Consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. These are signs to take it easier.
AQI 101-150: Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups Ambient Concentrations: 35.5-55.4 µg/m^3	*Sensitive Groups*: People with heart or lung disease, older adults, children, and teenagers. *Health Effects Statements*: Increasing likelihood of respiratory symptoms for sensitive individuals, aggravation of heart or lung disease, and premature mortality in persons with cardiopulmonary disease, and the elderly. *Cautionary Statements*: If you have heart disease: Symptoms such as palpations, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue may indicate a serious problem. If you have any of these, contact a health care provider.
AQI 151–200: Unhealthy Ambient Concentrations: 55.5-150.4 µg/m^3	*Sensitive Groups*: Everyone. *Health Effects Statements*: Increased aggravation of heart or lung disease and premature mortality in persons with cardiopulmonary disease, and the elderly; increased respiratory effects in general population. *Cautionary Statements*: Sensitive groups: Avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Consider moving activities indoors or rescheduling. Everyone else: Reduce prolonged or heavy exertion. Take more breaks during outdoor activities.
AQI 201-300: Very Unhealthy Ambient Concentrations: 150.5-250.4 µg/m^3	*Sensitive Groups*: Everyone. *Health Effects Statements*: Significant aggravation of heart or lung disease and premature mortality in persons with cardiopulmonary disease, and the elderly; significant increase in respiratory effects in general population. *Cautionary Statements*: Sensitive groups: Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Move activities indoors or reschedule to a time when air quality is better. Everyone else: Avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Consider moving activities indoors or reschedule to a time when air quality is better.

Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Notes: AQI = Air Quality Index; µg/m^3 = micrograms per cubic meter.

An AQI of 50 and below is categorized as "Good" and air quality is satisfactory and poses little or no risk. An AQI of 301 or higher is categorized as "Hazardous" having a health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected. Outdoor activities should be avoided for all individuals.

A summary of the annual AQI for San Luis Obispo County for the last 3 years of available data is provided in Table 4.3-6. As depicted in Table 4.3-6, the County typically experiences "good" air quality with the total number of days ranging from 117 to 207 days per year. Days classified as "moderate" AQI ranged from 152 to 245 days per year. Over the last three years of available data, the County has experienced a total of 19 days classified as "Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups". Over the past 3 years, the County has not experienced air quality conditions within the "Unhealthy," "Very Unhealthy," or "Hazardous" range (AMBIENT 2026a).

Table 4.3-6. Air Quality Index Annual Historical Summary

	Air Quality Index (Number of Days)					
Year	Good	Moderate	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Unhealthy	Very Unhealthy	Hazardous
2024	193	163	10	0	0	0
2023	207	152	6	0	0	0
2022	117	245	3	0	0	0

Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Note:

Represents overall air quality considering all criteria pollutants measured.

4.3.1.2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

OVERVIEW OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

To fully understand global climate change, it is important to recognize the naturally occurring "greenhouse effect" and to define the GHGs that contribute to this phenomenon. Various gases in the earth's atmosphere, classified as atmospheric GHG emissions, play a critical role in determining the earth's surface temperature. Solar radiation enters the earth's atmosphere from space and a portion of the radiation is absorbed by the earth's surface. The earth emits this radiation back toward space, but the properties of the radiation change from high-frequency solar radiation to lower-frequency infrared radiation. GHGs, which are transparent to solar radiation, are effective in absorbing infrared radiation. As a result, this radiation that otherwise would have escaped back into space is now retained, resulting in a warming of the atmosphere. This phenomenon is known as the greenhouse effect. Among the prominent GHGs contributing to the greenhouse effect are carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6). Primary GHGs attributed to global climate change are discussed as follows:

- **Carbon Dioxide.** CO_2 is a colorless, odorless gas that is emitted in a number of ways, both naturally and through human activities. The largest source of CO_2 emissions globally is the combustion of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and gas in power plants, automobiles, industrial facilities, and other sources. A number of specialized industrial production processes and product uses, such as mineral production, metal production, and the use of petroleum-based products, can also lead to CO_2 emissions. The atmospheric lifetime of CO_2 is variable because it is so readily exchanged in the atmosphere.
- **Methane.** CH_4 is a colorless, odorless gas that is not flammable under most circumstances. CH_4 is the major component of natural gas, about 87% by volume. It is also formed and released to the atmosphere by biological processes occurring in anaerobic environments. CH_4 is emitted from a variety of both human-related and natural sources. Human-related sources include fossil fuel production, animal husbandry (enteric fermentation in livestock and manure management), rice

cultivation, biomass burning, and waste management. These activities release significant quantities of CH_4 to the atmosphere. Natural sources of CH_4 include wetlands, gas hydrates, permafrost, termites, oceans, freshwater bodies, non-wetland soils, and other sources, such as wildfires. The atmospheric lifetime of CH_4 is approximately 12 years.

- **Nitrous Oxide.** N_2O is a clear, colorless gas with a slightly sweet odor that is produced by both natural and human-related sources. Primary human-related sources of N_2O are agricultural soil management, animal manure management, sewage treatment, mobile and stationary combustion of fossil fuels, adipic acid production, and nitric acid production. N_2O is also produced naturally from a wide variety of biological sources in soil and water, particularly microbial action in wet tropical forests. The atmospheric lifetime of N_2O is approximately 120 years.
- **Hydrofluorocarbons.** HFCs are man-made chemicals, many of which have been developed as alternatives to ozone-depleting substances for industrial, commercial, and consumer products. The only significant emissions of HFCs before 1990 were of the chemical HFC-23, which is generated as a byproduct of the production of HCFC-22 (or Freon 22, used in air-conditioning applications). The atmospheric lifetime for HFCs varies from just over 1 year for HFC-152a to 270 years for HFC-23. Most of the commercially used HFCs have atmospheric lifetimes of less than 15 years (e.g., HFC-134a, which is used in automobile air conditioning and refrigeration, has an atmospheric life of 14 years).
- **Perfluorocarbons.** PFCs are colorless, highly dense, chemically inert, and nontoxic. There are seven PFC gases: perfluoromethane (CF_4), perfluoroethane (C_2F_6), perfluoropropane (C_3F_8), perfluorobutane (C_4F_{10}), perfluorocyclobutane (C_4F_8), perfluoropentane (C_5F_{12}), and perfluorohexane (C_6F_{14}). Natural geological emissions have been responsible for the PFCs that have accumulated in the atmosphere in the past; however, the largest current source is aluminum production, which releases CF_4 and C_2F_6 as byproducts. The estimated atmospheric lifetimes for PFCs range from 2,600 to 50,000 years.
- **Nitrogen Trifluoride.** Nitrogen trifluoride (NF_3) is an inorganic, colorless, odorless, toxic, nonflammable gas that is used as an etchant in microelectronics. NF_3 is predominantly employed in the cleaning of the plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition chambers in the production of liquid crystal displays and silicon-based thin-film solar cells. It has a global warming potential (GWP) of 16,100 carbon dioxide equivalents (CO_2e). While NF_3 may have a lower GWP than other chemical etchants, it is still a potent GHG. In 2009 NF_3 was listed by California as a high-GWP GHG to be listed and regulated under AB 32 (Section 38505 Health and Safety Code).
- **Sulfur Hexafluoride.** SF_6 is an inorganic compound that is colorless, odorless, nontoxic, and generally nonflammable. SF_6 is primarily used as an electrical insulator in high-voltage equipment. The electric power industry uses roughly 80% of all SF_6 produced worldwide. Leaks of SF_6 occur from aging equipment and during equipment maintenance and servicing. the atmospheric life of SF_6 is approximately 3,200 years.
- **Black Carbon.** Black carbon is the strongest light-absorbing component of PM emitted from burning fuels, such as coal, diesel, and biomass. Black carbon contributes to climate change both directly by absorbing sunlight and indirectly by depositing on snow and by interacting with clouds and affecting cloud formation. Black carbon is considered a short-lived species, which can vary spatially and, consequently, is very difficult to quantify associated GWPs. The main sources of black carbon in California are wildfires, off-road vehicles (e.g., locomotives, marine vessels, tractors, excavators, dozers, etc.), on-road vehicles (cars, trucks, and buses), fireplaces, agricultural waste burning, and prescribed burning (planned burns of forest or wildlands).

Each GHG differs in its ability to absorb heat in the atmosphere based on the lifetime, or persistence, of the gas molecule in the atmosphere. Often, estimates of GHG emissions are presented in CO_2e, which weighs each gas by its GWP. Expressing GHG emissions in CO_2e takes the contribution of all GHG emissions to the greenhouse effect and converts them to a single unit equivalent to the effect that would occur if only CO_2 were being emitted. Table 4.3-7 provides a summary of the GWP for GHG emissions of typical concern with regard to community development projects, based on a 100-year time horizon. As indicated, CH_4 traps over 25 times more heat per molecule than CO_2, and N_2O absorbs roughly 298 times more heat per molecule than CO_2. Additional GHGs with high GWP include NF_3, SF_6, PFCs, and black carbon.

Table 4.3-7. Global Warming Potential for Greenhouse Gases

Greenhouse Gas	Global Warming Potential (100-year)*
Carbon dioxide (CO_2)	1
Methane (CH_4)	25
Nitrous dioxide (N_2O)	298

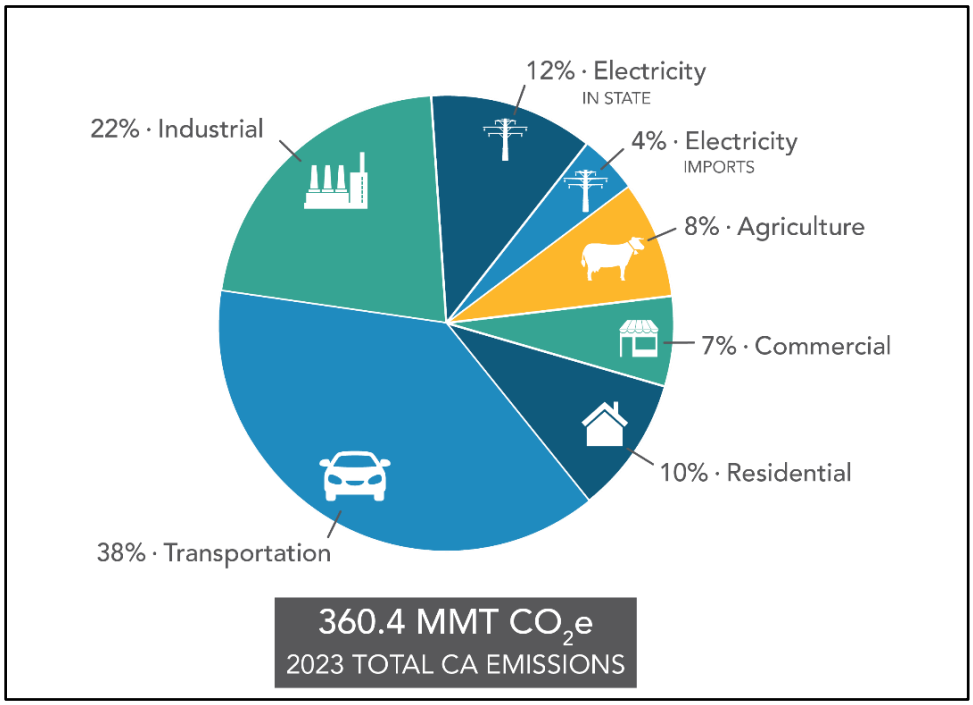
Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Note:

*Based on Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change GWP values for 100-year time horizon.

SOURCES OF GHG EMISSIONS

In 2023, GHG emissions within California totaled 360.4 million metric tons of CO_2e (MMT CO_2e). GHG emissions, by sector, are summarized in Figure 4.3-3. Within California, the transportation sector is the largest contributor, accounting for approximately 38% of the total statewide GHG emissions. Emissions associated with industrial uses are the second-largest contributor, totaling roughly 22%. Electricity generation totaled roughly 16%. Other major emission sources included commercial uses, residential uses, agriculture, and refrigerants (AMBIENT 2026a).



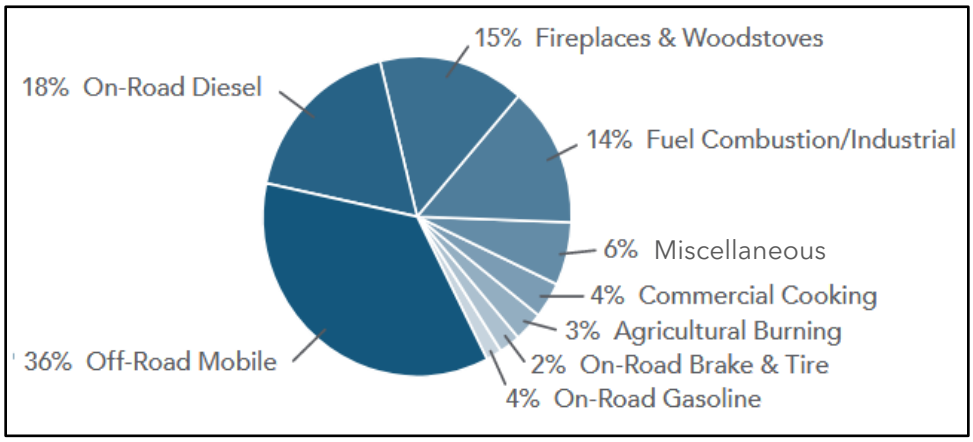
Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Figure 4.3-3. California GHG emissions inventory by sector and subsector.

SHORT-LIVED CLIMATE POLLUTANTS

Short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs), such as black carbon, fluorinated gases, and CH_4 also have a dramatic effect on climate change. Though short-lived, these pollutants create a warming influence on the climate that is many times more potent than that of carbon dioxide.

As part of the CARB's efforts to address SLCPs, the CARB has developed a statewide emission inventory for black carbon. The black carbon inventory will help support the implementation of the SLCP Strategy, but it is not part of the State's GHG Inventory that tracks progress toward the State's climate targets. The most recent inventory for year 2013 conditions is depicted in Figure 4.3-4. As depicted, off-road mobile sources account for a majority of black carbon emissions totaling roughly 36% of the inventory. Other major anthropogenic sources of black carbon include on-road transportation, residential wood burning, fuel combustion, and industrial processes (AMBIENT 2026a).



Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Figure 4.3-4. California Black Carbon Emissions Inventory (Year 2013).

EFFECTS OF GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

There are uncertainties as to exactly what climate changes will be in various local areas of the earth. There are also uncertainties associated with the magnitude and timing of other consequences of a warmer planet: sea level rise, spread of certain diseases out of their usual geographic range, the effect on agricultural production, water supply, sustainability of ecosystems, increased strength and frequency of storms, extreme heat events, increased air pollution episodes, and the consequence of these effects on the economy.

Within California, climate changes would likely alter the ecological characteristics of many ecosystems throughout the state. Such alterations would likely include increases in surface temperatures and changes in the form, timing, and intensity of the precipitation. For instance, historical records depict an increasing trend toward earlier snowmelt in the Sierra Nevada. This snowpack is a principal supply of water for the state, providing roughly 50% of the state's annual runoff. If this trend continues, some areas of the state may experience an increased danger of floods during the winter months and possible exhaustion of the snowpack during spring and summer months. Earlier snowmelt would also impact the State's energy resources. Currently, approximately 20% of California's electricity comes from hydropower. Early exhaustion of the Sierra snowpack may force electricity producers to switch to more costly or nonrenewable forms of electricity generation during the spring and summer months. A changing climate may also impact agricultural crop yields, coastal structures, and biodiversity. As a result, changes in climate will likely have detrimental effects on some of California's largest industries, including agriculture, wine, tourism, skiing, recreational and commercial fishing, and forestry.

4.3.1.3 Energy

ENERGY FUNDAMENTALS

Energy use is typically associated with transportation, construction, and the operation of land uses. Transportation energy use is generally categorized as direct and indirect energy. Direct energy relates to energy consumption by vehicle propulsion. Indirect energy relates to the long-term energy consumption of equipment, such as maintenance activities. Energy is also consumed by construction, routine operation, and maintenance of land use. Construction energy relates to a direct one-time energy expenditure primarily associated with the consumption of fuel to operate construction equipment. Energy consumption related to land use is normally associated with direct energy consumption for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning of buildings.

ENERGY RESOURCES

Energy sources for the Planning Area primarily include electricity provided by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and Central Coast Community Energy (3CE) and natural gas provided by the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas). Energy resources consist largely of natural gas, nuclear, fossil fuels, hydropower, solar, and wind. The primary use of energy sources is for electricity to operate buildings.

Electricity

State of California

In 2024, total system electric generation (TSEG) for California was 278,338 gigawatt-hours (GWh), down 1% (2,802 GWh) from 2023. TSEG is the sum of all utility-scale in-state generation plus net electricity imports from power plants with a nameplate capacity of at least 1 megawatt (MW). Clean energy resources accounted for 62% of California's power mix, a 4% increase from 58% in 2023. In-state generation was 216,181 GWh in 2024, virtually unchanged from the 2023 value of 216,047 GWh. Imported energy decreased to 62,157 GWh, down 5% (3,361 GWh) from 2023 (AMBIENT 2026b).

City of Atascadero

Electric services within the City of Atascadero are provided through a partnership between PG&E and 3CE. 3CE is committed to providing energy from 100-percent renewable sources by 2030. Participation in the 3CE program is voluntary and PG&E continues to provide electrical service and maintains electrical infrastructure (AMBIENT 2026b).

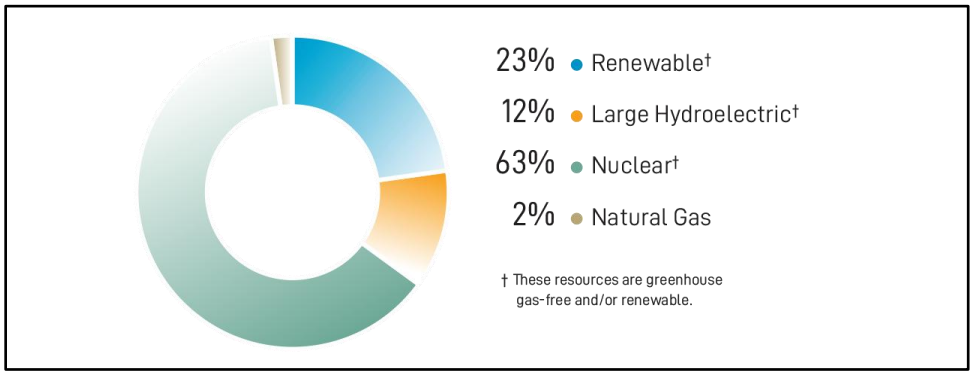
In 2024, PG&E supplied 98% GHG-free electricity to residential and business customers to whom we directly sell power, including from renewables, nuclear and large hydroelectric power. The power mix delivered to PG&E's bundled-service customers in 2024 included the following GHG-free technologies. The breakdown of PG&E's power mix is shown in Figure 4.3-5 (AMBIENT 2026b):

- Eligible renewable resources, such as wind, geothermal, biomass, solar and small hydro (23%)
- Non-emitting nuclear generation (63%)
- Large hydroelectric facilities (12%)
- Natural gas–fueled facilities (2%)

Based on the most recent year with complete data from PG&E (2024), the City of Atascadero consumed an estimated 154,793,992 kWh of electricity annually (AMBIENT 2026b). This estimate is based on aggregated data for ZIP code 93422 and may not represent all electricity consumption within the City. For context, San Luis Obispo County consumed approximately 1,681.4 GWh of electricity in 2024 (AMBIENT 2026b).

Pacific Gas and Electric Company

PG&E offers two programs that allow consumers to purchase electricity from renewable sources: the Solar Choice program and the Regional Renewable Choice program. Currently, enrollment in the Solar Choice program is on hold per a directive from the California Public Utility Commission (Decision 21-12-036). Customers interested in participating will be placed on a waitlist for future enrollment if capacity becomes available. Through Solar Choice, customers can elect to purchase solar energy to match either 50% or 100% of their energy use while remaining on their existing electric rate plan and paying an additional fee per kilowatt-hour (kWh) based on service type, rate plan, and enrollment level. If a customer was previously enrolled and believes they have been unenrolled in error, they are encouraged to contact PG&E for assistance (PG&E 2026). The Regional Renewable Choice program enables customers to subscribe to renewable energy from specific community-based projects within PG&E's service territory, allowing them to purchase between 25% and 100% of their annual usage from renewable sources.



Source: AMBIENT (2026b).

Figure 4.3-5. PG&E 2024 Power Mix.

Central Coast Community Energy

3CE is a locally controlled public agency supplying clean and renewable electricity for residents and businesses in Monterey, San Benito, parts of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz Counties. 3CE is based on a local energy model called Community Choice Energy that partners with the local utility (i.e., PG&E), which continues to provide consolidated billing, electricity transmission and distribution, customer service, and grid maintenance services. 3CE provides customers with a choice for clean and renewable energy and community reinvestment through rate benefits and local GHG-reducing energy programs for residential, commercial, and agricultural customers. Participation in 3CE as an electricity provider is voluntary; Atascadero opted into 3CE in February 2022 (3CE 2025). In 2024, 3CE energy generation was supplied from approximately 56% of renewable energy sources (i.e., biomass and waste, geothermal, small hydroelectric, solar, and wind) and 44% of unspecified power sources (primarily fossil fuels) (3CE 2024). The breakdown of 3CE's power mix in 2024 is shown in Figure 4.3-6. 3CE is currently on a pathway to achieving 100% clean and renewable energy by 2030, which is 15 years ahead of California's mandate for zero emissions (3CE 2024).

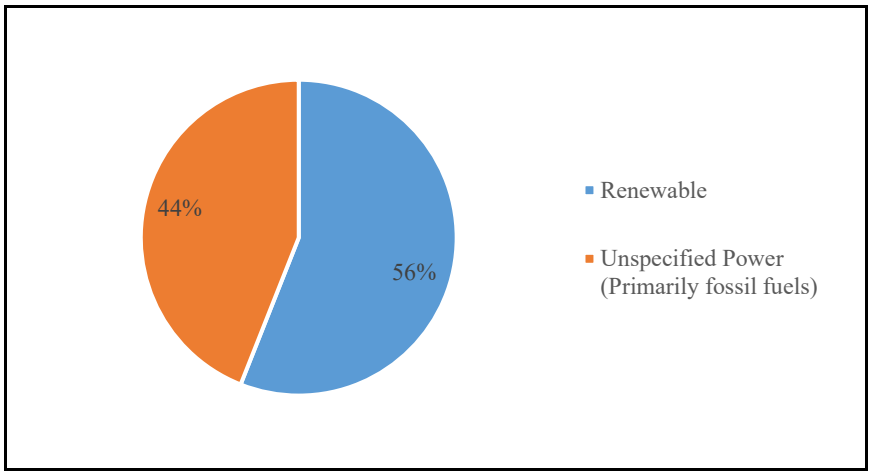


Figure 4.3-6. PG&E 2024 power mix.
Source: 3CE (2024).

Natural Gas

California

Natural gas continues to play an important and varied role in California. Nearly 45% of the natural gas burned in California was used for electricity generation, and much of the remainder consumed in the residential (21%), industrial (25%), and commercial (9%) sectors. California continues to depend upon out-of-state imports for nearly 90% of its natural gas supply, underscoring the importance of monitoring and evaluating ongoing market trends and outlook. Natural gas has become an increasingly important source of energy since the state's power plants rely on this fuel (AMBIENT 2026b).

City of Atascadero

Natural gas services in the City of Atascadero are provided by SoCalGas. SoCalGas's natural gas system encompasses approximately 20,000 square miles in Southern California. Natural gas throughput provided by SoCalGas totals approximately 2.8 billion cubic feet per day (AMBIENT 2026b).

Based on the most current year for which complete usage data is available from SoCalGas (2025), the City of Atascadero consumed an estimated annual total of 4,745,395 therms of natural gas (AMBIENT 2026b). This data is based on aggregated information provided by SoCalGas for zip code 93422, which may not represent all consumption within the City of Atascadero. In 2024, the County of San Luis Obispo consumed an estimated total of 84.2 million therms of natural gas (AMBIENT 2026b).

Petroleum Fuels

Gasoline

Gasoline is the most used transportation fuel in California, with 97% of all gasoline being consumed by light-duty cars, pickup trucks, and sport utility vehicles. In 2024, 11.681 billion gallons of gasoline were sold. Existing and historical gasoline consumption rates for the City of Atascadero are not available; however, in 2024, the County of San Luis Obispo consumed an estimated 118 million gallons of gasoline (AMBIENT 2026b).

Diesel

Diesel is the second-largest transportation fuel used in California, representing 17% of total fuel sales behind gasoline. In 2024, 2.968 billion gallons of diesel were sold (AMBIENT 2026b). Existing and historical diesel consumption rates for the City are not available; however, in 2024, San Luis Obispo County consumed an estimated 21 million gallons of diesel (AMBIENT 2026b).

4.3.2 Regulatory Setting

4.3.2.1 Federal

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

At the federal level, the USEPA has been charged with implementing national air quality programs. The USEPA's air quality mandates are drawn primarily from the FCAA, which was signed into law in 1970 and amended in 1977 and 1990 (USEPA 2025a).

FEDERAL CLEAN AIR ACT

The FCAA is the federal law passed in 1970, which forms the basis for the national air pollution control effort. The FCAA includes NAAQS for major air pollutants, hazardous air pollutant standards, state attainment plans, motor vehicle emissions standards, stationary source emissions standards and permits, acid rain control measures, stratospheric ozone protection, and enforcement provisions (USEPA 2025a).

2009 GREENHOUSE GAS ENDANGERMENT FINDING

The 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding, issued by the USEPA on December 7, 2009, determined that six key GHGs (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, HFCs, PFCs, and SF6) threaten the public health and welfare of current and future generations. It established that emissions from new motor vehicles contribute to this pollution. This finding, rooted in the Massachusetts v. EPA (2007) ruling, required the USEPA to regulate GHGs under the Clean Air Act. The 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding served as a prerequisite for regulating emissions from new motor vehicles and new motor vehicle engines. This finding provided authority for the USEPA to prescribe standards for GHG emissions.

On February 12, 2026, the USEPA finalized its rescission of the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding, which served as a prerequisite for regulating emissions from new motor vehicles and new motor vehicle engines; as well as all subsequent federal GHG emissions standards promulgated pursuant to the Endangerment Finding. Absent this finding, USEPA lacks statutory authority under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act to prescribe standards for GHG emissions. This final action is only related to GHG emissions and does not affect vehicle regulations related to traditional criteria air pollutants (AMBIENT 2026a).

REGULATIONS FOR GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM PASSENGER CARS AND TRUCKS AND CORPORATE AVERAGE FUEL ECONOMY STANDARDS

In October 2012, the USEPA and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHSTA), on behalf of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), issued final rules to further reduce GHG emissions and improve corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards for light-duty vehicles for model years 2017 and beyond. NHTSA's CAFE standards have been enacted under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act since 1978. This national program requires automobile manufacturers to build a single light-duty national fleet that meets all requirements under both federal programs and the standards of California and other states. This program would increase fuel economy to the equivalent of 54.5 miles per gallon (mpg), limiting

vehicle emissions to 163 grams of carbon dioxide (CO_2) per mile for the fleet of cars and light-duty trucks by the model year 2025.

In January 2017, USEPA Administrator Gina McCarthy signed a Final Determination to maintain the current GHG emissions standards for the model year 2022 to 2025 vehicles. However, on March 15, 2017, USEPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and USDOT Secretary Elaine Chao announced that the USEPA intends to reconsider the Final Determination. On April 2, 2018, USEPA Administrator Pruitt officially withdrew the January 2017 Final Determination, citing information that suggests that these current standards may be too stringent due to changes in key assumptions since the January 2017 Determination. According to the USEPA, these key assumptions include gasoline prices and overly optimistic consumer acceptance of advanced technology vehicles. The April 2, 2018, notice is not USEPA's final agency action. The USEPA intends to initiate rulemaking to adopt new standards. Until that rulemaking has been completed, the current standards remain in effect.

On March 20, 2024, the USEPA announced new, more protective final standards to further reduce harmful air pollutant emissions from light-duty and medium-duty vehicles, starting with model year 2027. These new standards build upon the USEPA's federal GHG emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks for model years 2023 through 2026, which were established in 2021. The updated rule leverages advances in clean car technology to deliver a range of benefits, including improved public health through reduced smog- and soot-forming pollution, decreased climate pollution, and cost savings for drivers through reduced fuel and maintenance expenses. The new standards will phase in over model years 2027 through 2032 (AMBIENT 2026a).

ENERGY POLICY AND CONSERVATION ACT

The Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 sought to ensure that all vehicles sold in the United States would meet certain fuel economy goals. Through this act, U.S. Congress established the first fuel economy standards for on-road motor vehicles in the United States. Pursuant to the act, the NHSTA, which is part of the USDOT, is responsible for establishing additional vehicle standards and for revising existing standards. Since 1990, the fuel economy standard for new passenger cars has been 27.5 mpg. Since 1996, the fuel economy standard for new light trucks (gross vehicle weight of 8,500 pounds or less) has been 20.7 mpg. Heavy-duty vehicles (i.e., vehicles and trucks over 8,500 pounds gross vehicle weight) are not currently subject to fuel economy standards. Compliance with federal fuel economy standards is determined based on each manufacturer's average fuel economy for the portion of its vehicles produced for sale in the United States. The CAFE program, administered by the USEPA, was created to determine vehicle manufacturers' compliance with the fuel economy standards. The USEPA calculates a CAFE value for each manufacturer based on city and highway fuel economy test results and vehicle sales. Based on the information generated under the CAFE program, the USDOT is authorized to assess penalties for noncompliance.

ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 1992

The Energy Policy Act (EPAct) of 1992 was passed to reduce the country's dependence on foreign petroleum and improve air quality. EPAct includes several parts intended to build an inventory of alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) in large, centrally fueled fleets in metropolitan areas. EPAct requires certain federal, state, and local government and private fleets to purchase a percentage of light-duty AFVs capable of running on alternative fuels each year. In addition, financial incentives are included in EPAct. Federal tax deductions will be allowed for businesses and individuals to cover the incremental cost of AFVs. States are also required by the act to consider a variety of incentive programs to help promote AFVs.

ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2005

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 was signed into law on August 8, 2005. Generally, this act provides for renewed and expanded tax credits for electricity generated by qualified energy sources, such as landfill gas; provides bond financing, tax incentives, grants, and loan guarantees for clean renewable energy and rural community electrification; and establishes a federal purchase requirement for renewable energy.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY ACT OF 2007

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 is intended to improve vehicle fuel economy and help reduce the United States' dependence on foreign oil. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 also set energy efficiency standards for lighting and appliances.

4.3.2.2 State

This section identifies and describes relevant state laws, policies, and regulatory programs related to air quality, GHG emissions, and energy. The regulations are organized by implementing regulatory authority and topic for clarity.

CALIFORNIA AIR RESOURCES BOARD

CARB is the agency responsible for coordination and oversight of state and local air pollution control programs in California and for implementing the CCAA. Other duties include monitoring air quality (in conjunction with air monitoring networks maintained by air pollution control districts and air quality management districts); establishing CAAQS, which in many cases are more stringent than the NAAQS; and setting emissions standards for new motor vehicles. The emission standards established for motor vehicles differ depending on various factors, including the model year and the type of vehicle, fuel, and engine used. CARB rules with applicability to the project evaluated in this EIR include, but are not limited to:

- **CARB Rule 2485 (13 CCR 2485):** Airborne Toxic Control Measure to Limit Diesel-Fuel Commercial Vehicle Idling, which limits nonessential idling to five minutes or less for commercial trucks.
- **CARB Rule 2449 (13 CCR 2449):** In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Fleets, which limits nonessential idling to five minutes or less for diesel-powered off-road equipment.

Foundational Statutes and Programs

California Clean Air Act

The CCAA requires that all air districts in the state endeavor to achieve and maintain CAAQS for ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) by the earliest practicable date. The CCAA specifies that districts focus particular attention on reducing emissions from transportation and area-wide emission sources, and the act provides districts with authority to regulate indirect sources. Each district plan is required to either 1) achieve a 5% annual reduction, averaged over consecutive 3-year periods, in district-wide emissions of each nonattainment pollutant or its precursors or 2) provide for the implementation of all feasible measures to reduce emissions. Any planning effort for air quality attainment would thus need to consider both state and federal planning requirements (AMBIENT 2026a).

Assembly Bill 32: California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006

In 2006, the Legislature passed the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32), which created a comprehensive, multiyear program to reduce GHG emissions in California. In October 2008, CARB published its first Climate Change Scoping Plan (2008 Scoping Plan). The 2008 Scoping Plan contained the main strategies to be implemented to achieve the year 2020 target emission levels identified in AB 32. The 2008 Scoping Plan included CARB-recommended GHG reductions for each emissions sector of the state's GHG inventory. The largest proposed GHG-reduction recommendations were associated with improving emissions standards for light-duty vehicles, implementing the Low Carbon Fuel Standard program, implementation of energy efficiency measures in buildings and appliances, the widespread development of combined heat and power systems, and developing a renewable portfolio standard for electricity production (AMBIENT 2026b).

The CARB's Scoping Plan is updated every five years. The First Update to the Climate Change Scoping Plan was approved by the CARB on May 22, 2014, which looked past the year 2020 targets to set mid-term goals (2030–2035) on the road to reaching the 2050 goals (CARB 2013). The 2017 Scoping Plan identified how the State established a path to reduce GHG emissions by 40% from 1990 levels by 2030 and substantially advance toward the 2050 climate goal of reducing GHG emissions by 80% below 1990 levels (AMBIENT 2026b). The most recent Scoping Plan update is the 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality (2022 Scoping Plan) (CARB 2022). The 2022 Scoping Plan lays out a path to achieve targets for carbon neutrality and reduce anthropogenic GHG emissions by 85% below 1990 levels no later than 2045, as directed by AB 1279 (AMBIENT 2026b).

Senate Bill 32 and Assembly Bill 197 of 2016

Senate Bill (SB) 32 was signed by Governor Brown on September 8, 2016. SB 32 effectively extends California's GHG-reduction goals from the year 2020 to the year 2030. This new emission-reduction target of 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 is intended to promote further GHG reductions in support of the State's ultimate goal of reducing GHG emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. SB 32 also directs the CARB to update the Climate Change Scoping Plan to address this interim 2030 emission-reduction target. Achievement of these goals will have the co-benefit of increasing energy efficiency and reducing California's dependency on fossil fuels.

Assembly Bill 1279

AB 1279 establishes the policy of the state to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible, but no later than 2045; to maintain net negative GHG emissions thereafter; and to ensure that by 2045 statewide anthropogenic GHG emissions are reduced by at least 85% below 1990 levels. The bill requires CARB to ensure that Scoping Plan updates identify and recommend measures to achieve carbon neutrality, and to identify and implement policies and strategies that enable CO_2 removal solutions and carbon capture, utilization, and storage technologies.

Climate Change Scoping Plan

In October 2008, the CARB published its *Climate Change Proposed Scoping Plan*, which is the state's plan to achieve GHG reductions in California required by AB 32. This initial Scoping Plan contained the main strategies to be implemented to achieve the target emission levels identified in AB 32. The Scoping Plan included CARB-recommended GHG reductions for each emissions sector of the state's GHG inventory. The largest proposed GHG-reduction recommendations were associated with improving emissions standards for light-duty vehicles, implementing the Low Carbon Fuel Standard program, implementation of energy efficiency measures in buildings and appliances, and the widespread development of combined heat and power systems, and developing a renewable portfolio standard for electricity production.

The Scoping Plan states that land use planning and urban growth decisions will play important roles in the state's GHG reductions because local governments have primary authority to plan, zone, approve, and permit how land is developed to accommodate population growth and the changing needs of their jurisdictions. The CARB further acknowledges that decisions on how land is used will have large impacts on the GHG emissions that will result from the transportation, housing, industry, forestry, water, agriculture, electricity, and natural gas emissions sectors. With regard to land use planning, the Scoping Plan expects approximately 5.0 $MMTCO_2e$ will be achieved associated with the implementation of SB 375, which is discussed further below.

The initial Scoping Plan was first approved by the CARB on December 11, 2008, and is updated every 5 years. The first update of the Proposed Scoping Plan was approved by the CARB on May 22, 2014, which looked past 2020 to set mid-term goals (2030–2035) on the road to reaching the 2050 goals. The *2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan* was released in November 2017. The 2017 Scoping Plan incorporates strategies for achieving the 2030 GHG-reduction target established in SB 32 and Executive Order (EO) B-30-15. Most notably, the 2017 Scoping Plan encourages zero net increases in GHG emissions. However, the 2017 Scoping Plan recognizes that achieving net-zero increases in GHG emissions may not be possible or appropriate for all projects and that the inability of a project to mitigate its GHG emissions to zero would not imply the project results in a substantial contribution to the cumulatively significant environmental impact of climate change under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The *2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality* update (2022 Scoping Plan) was approved by the CARB on November 16, 2022. The 2022 Scoping Plan identifies the state's strategies to reduce GHG emissions by 85% and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. The 2022 Scoping Plan reflects an accelerated target of an 85% reduction in GHG emissions compared to 1990 levels by 2045. This third update relies on key programs in place, including the Climate Action Plan-and-Trade Regulation and the low carbon fuel standard, while stressing the need to increase their pace and scale.

Greenhouse Gas Reporting and Market Programs

Mandatory Reporting of GHG Emissions

The California Global Warming Solutions Act, otherwise known as AB 32, requires the reporting of GHGs by major sources to the CARB. Major sources required to report GHG emissions include industrial facilities, suppliers of transportation fuels, natural gas, natural gas liquids, liquefied petroleum gas, and CO_2, operators of petroleum and natural gas systems, and electricity retail providers and marketers.

Cap-and-Trade Regulation

The cap-and-trade regulation is a key element in California's climate plan. It sets a statewide limit on sources responsible for 85% of California's GHG emissions and establishes a price signal needed to drive long-term investment in cleaner fuels and more efficient use of energy. The cap-and-trade rules came into effect on January 1, 2013, and apply to large electric power plants and large industrial plants. In 2015, fuel distributors, including distributors of heating and transportation fuels, also became subject to the cap-and-trade rules. At that stage, the program will encompass around 360 businesses throughout California and nearly 85% of the state's total GHG emissions.

Under the cap-and-trade regulation, companies must hold enough emission allowances to cover their emissions and are free to buy and sell allowances on the open market. California held its first auction of GHG allowances on November 14, 2012. California's GHG cap-and-trade system is projected to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020 and would achieve an approximate 80% reduction from 1990 levels by 2050.

Mobile Source and Equipment Regulations

Advanced Clean Cars Program

In January 2012, CARB approved the Advanced Clean Cars program which combines the control of GHG emissions and criteria air pollutants, as well as requirements for greater numbers of zero-emission vehicles, into a single package of standards for vehicle model years 2017 through 2025. The new rules strengthen the GHG standard for 2017 models and beyond. This will be achieved through existing technologies, the use of stronger and lighter materials, and more efficient drivetrains and engines. The program's zero-emission vehicle regulation requires a battery, fuel cell, and/or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) to account for up to 15% of California's new vehicle sales by 2025. The program also includes a clean fuels outlet regulation designed to support the commercialization of zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell vehicles planned by vehicle manufacturers by 2015 by requiring increased numbers of hydrogen fueling stations throughout the state. The number of stations will grow as vehicle manufacturers sell more fuel cell vehicles. By 2025, when the rules will be fully implemented, the statewide fleet of new cars and light trucks will emit 34% fewer global warming gases and 75% fewer smog-forming emissions than the statewide fleet in 2016 (AMBIENT 2026b).

Advanced Clean Cars II

In August 2022, CARB approved the Advanced Clean Cars II program. The rule establishes a year-by-year roadmap so that by 2035 100% of new cars and light trucks sold in California will be zero-emission vehicles, including PHEVs. Beginning in model year 2026 automakers sales of new vehicles will be required to be made up of 35% ZEVs and PHEVs. The regulation applies to automakers and covers only new vehicle sales. It does not impact existing vehicles on the road today, which will still be legal to own and drive (AMBIENT 2026b).

Small Off-Road Engines

In December 2021, CARB approved the Small Off-Road Engines regulation. This will require most newly manufactured small off-road engines such as those found in leaf blowers, lawn mowers and other equipment be zero emission starting in 2024. Portable generators, including those in recreational vehicles, would be required to meet more stringent standards in 2024 and meet zero-emission standards starting in 2028. Despite their small size, these engines are highly polluting. The volume of smog-forming emissions from this type of equipment has surpassed emissions from light-duty passenger cars and is projected to be nearly twice those of passenger cars by 2031. Older equipment can continue to be used and resold as this rule only impacts new equipment (AMBIENT 2026b).

Assembly Bills 1807 and 2588: Toxic Air Contaminants

Within California, TACs are regulated primarily through AB 1807 (Tanner Air Toxics Act) and AB 2588 (Air Toxics Hot Spots Information and Assessment Act). The Tanner Air Toxics Act sets forth a formal procedure for the CARB to designate substances as TACs. This includes research, public participation, and scientific peer review before the CARB designates a substance as a TAC. Existing sources of TACs that are subject to the Air Toxics Hot Spots Information and Assessment Act are required to: 1) prepare a toxic emissions inventory; 2) prepare a risk assessment if emissions are significant; 3) notify the public of significant risk levels; and 4) prepare and implement risk reduction measures.

Senate Bill 1383 and Senate Bill 1206

SB 1383 requires California to reduce hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) emissions associated with the use of refrigerants to 40% below 2013 levels by 2030. Starting in 2022, new facilities will be required to use refrigerants that can reduce their emissions by up to 90%. The intent of the new rules is to eliminate the use of very high–GWP refrigerants in every sector that uses nonresidential refrigeration systems. Compliance begins for most home air-conditioning equipment in 2025. SB 1206, signed into law in September 2022, prohibits the sale or distribution of HFCs that exceed a specified GWP. Under this new law, refrigerants would not be allowed to exceed 2,200 GWP beginning January 1, 2025; 1,500 GWP beginning January 1, 2030; and 750 GWP beginning January 1, 2030.

Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy

In March 2017, the CARB adopted the Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy (SLCP Strategy) establishing a path to decrease GHG emissions and displace fossil-based natural gas use. Strategies include avoiding landfill methane emissions by reducing the disposal of organics through edible food recovery, composting, in-vessel digestion, and other processes; and recovering methane from wastewater treatment facilities, and manure methane at dairies, and using the methane as a renewable source of natural gas to fuel vehicles or generate electricity. The SLCP Strategy also identifies steps to reduce natural gas leaks from oil and gas wells, pipelines, valves, and pumps to improve safety, avoid energy losses, and reduce methane emissions associated with natural gas use. Lastly, the SLCP Strategy also identifies measures that can reduce HFC emissions at national and international levels, in addition to State-level action that includes an incentive program to encourage the use of low-GWP refrigerants and limitations on the use of high-GWP refrigerants in new refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment (AMBIENT 2026a).

Transportation Decarbonization Policies

Executive Order N-79-20

Governor Newsom signed EO N-79-20 in September 2020 to establish targets for the transportation sector to support the state in its goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. The targets established in this EO are:

- 100% of in-state sales of new passenger cars and trucks will be zero-emission by 2035.
- 100% of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles will be zero-emission by 2045 for all operations where feasible, and by 2035 for drayage trucks.
- 100% of off-road vehicles and equipment will be zero-emission by 2035 where feasible.

California Executive Order B-48-18: Zero Emission Vehicles

In January 2018, Governor Brown signed EO B-48-18, which required all state entities to work with the private sector to put at least 5 million zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) on the road by 2030, as well as install 200 hydrogen fueling stations and 250,000 zero-emissions chargers by 2025. In addition, state entities are also required to continue to partner with local and regional governments to streamline the installation of ZEV infrastructure. Additionally, all state entities are to support and recommend policies and actions to expand infrastructure in homes, through the Low-Carbon Fuel Standard.

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

The California Energy Commission (CEC) is responsible for statewide energy policy, energy efficiency standards, and long-term energy planning.

Foundational Energy Policy

Warren-Alquist Act

The 1975 Warren-Alquist Act established the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission, now known as the CEC). The Act established a state policy to reduce wasteful, uneconomical, and unnecessary uses of energy by employing a range of measures.

State Energy Plans and Programs

Energy Action Plan

The first Energy Action Plan (EAP) emerged in 2003 from a crisis atmosphere in California's energy markets. The state's three major energy policy agencies (CEC, California Public Utilities Commission [CPUC], and the Consumer Power and Conservation Financing Authority [established under deregulation and now defunct]) came together to develop one high-level, coherent approach to meeting California's electricity and natural gas needs. It was the first time that energy policy agencies formally collaborated to define a common vision and set of strategies to address California's future energy needs and emphasize the importance of the impacts of energy policy on the California environment.

In the October 2005 EAP II, CEC and CPUC updated their energy policy vision by adding some important dimensions to the policy areas included in the original EAP, such as the emerging importance of climate change, transportation-related energy issues, and research and development activities. The CEC adopted an update to the EAP II in February 2008 that supplements the earlier EAPs and examines the state's ongoing actions in the context of global climate change.

Alternative Fuel and Petroleum Reduction Programs

California Assembly Bill 1007: State Alternative Fuels Plan

AB 1007 (Chapter 371, Statutes of 2005) required CEC to prepare a state plan to increase the use of alternative fuels in California. CEC prepared the State Alternative Fuels (SAF) Plan in partnership with CARB and consultation with other state, federal, and local agencies. The SAF Plan presents strategies and actions California must take to increase the use of alternative non-petroleum fuels in a manner that minimizes the costs to California and maximizes the economic benefits of in-state production. The SAF Plan assessed various alternative fuels and developed fuel portfolios to meet California's goals to reduce petroleum consumption, increase alternative fuel use, reduce GHG emissions, and increase in-state production of biofuels without causing significant degradation of public health and environmental quality.

California Assembly Bill 2076: Reducing Dependence On Petroleum

Pursuant to AB 2076 (Chapter 936, Statutes of 2000), the CEC and the CARB prepared and adopted a joint agency report in 2003, Reducing California's Petroleum Dependence. Included in this report are recommendations to increase the use of alternative fuels to 20% of on-road transportation fuel use by 2020 and 30% by 2030, significantly increase the efficiency of motor vehicles, and reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) (AMBIENT 2026b). Further, a performance-based goal of AB 2076 was to reduce petroleum demand to 15% below 2003 demand by 2020.

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

The CPUC regulates utilities, ensures reliable access to utility infrastructure, and protects the environment and consumers. In relation to energy, the CPUC specifically regulates investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities operating in California, including Pacific Gas & Electric and Sonoma Clean Power, which serve the City of Atascadero. Some initiatives and mandates addressed by the CPUC relate to consumer electric costs, electric power procurement and generation, infrastructure, customer energy resources, energy efficiency, and energy rates.

Renewable Energy Portfolio Policies

SB 1078 and Governor's Order S-14-08

SB 1078 (Public Utilities Code Sections 387, 390.1, 399.25, and Article 16) addresses electricity supply and requires that retail sellers of electricity, including investor-owned utilities and community choice aggregators, provide a minimum of 20% of their supply from renewable sources by 2017. This senate bill will affect statewide GHG emissions associated with electricity generation. In 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger signed EO S-14-08, which set the Renewables Portfolio Standard target to 33% by 2020. It directed state government agencies and retail sellers of electricity to take all appropriate actions to implement this target. EO S-14-08 was later superseded by EO S-21-09 on September 15, 2009. EO S-21-09 directed the CARB to adopt regulations requiring 33% of electricity sold in the State to come from renewable energy by 2020. Statute SB X1-2 superseded this EO in 2011, which obligated all California electricity providers, including investor-owned utilities and publicly owned utilities, to obtain at least 33% of their energy from renewable electrical generation facilities by 2020.

CARB is required by current law, AB 32 of 2006, to regulate sources of GHGs to meet a state goal of reducing GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and an 80% reduction of 1990 levels by 2050. The CEC and CPUC serve in advisory roles to help CARB develop the regulations to administer the 33% by 2020 requirement. CARB is also authorized to increase the target and accelerate and expand the time frame.

CALIFORNIA BUILDING STANDARDS COMMISSION / BUILDING ENERGY STANDARDS

These regulations govern building construction and energy efficiency standards statewide.

Building Standards

California Building Code

The California Building Code (CBC) contains standards that regulate the method of use, properties, performance, or types of materials used in the construction, alteration, improvement, repair, or rehabilitation of a building or other improvements to real property. The CBC is adopted every three years by the State's Building Standards Commission (BSC). In the interim, the BSC also adopts annual updates to make necessary mid-term corrections. The CBC standards apply statewide; however, a local jurisdiction may amend a CBC standard if it makes a finding that the amendment is reasonably necessary due to local climatic, geological, or topographical conditions.

California Green Building Standards

In essence, green building standards are indistinguishable from any other building standards, are contained in the CBC, and regulate the construction of new buildings and improvements. Whereas the focus of traditional building standards has been protecting public health and safety, the focus of green building standards is to improve environmental performance.

The 2019 Building Energy Efficiency Standards (2019 Standards), adopted in May 2018, addressed four key areas: smart residential photovoltaic systems, updated thermal envelope standards (preventing heat transfer from the interior to the exterior and vice versa), residential and nonresidential ventilation requirements, and nonresidential lighting requirements. The 2019 Standards required new residential and nonresidential construction; as well as major alterations to existing structures, to include electric vehicle (EV)–capable parking spaces which have electrical panel capacity and conduit to accommodate the future installation. In addition, the 2019 Standards also required the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems for low-rise residential dwellings, defined as single-family dwellings and multifamily dwellings up to three stories in height. These requirements are based on various factors, including the floor area of the home, sun exposure, and climate zone. Under the 2019 Standards, nonresidential buildings will use about 30% less energy due mainly to lighting upgrades (AMBIENT 2026a).

The 2022 Building Energy Efficiency Standards (2022 Standards), which were approved in December 2021, encourage efficient electric heat pumps, establish electric-ready requirements when natural gas is installed, support the future installation of battery storage, further expand solar photovoltaic and battery storage standards. The 2022 Standards extend solar PV system requirements, as well as battery storage capabilities for select land uses, including high-rise multifamily and nonresidential land uses, such as office buildings, schools, restaurants, warehouses, theaters, grocery stores, and more. Depending on the land use and other factors, solar systems should be sized to meet targets of up to 60% of the structure's loads. These solar requirements became effective on January 1, 2023, and contribute to California's goal of reaching a net-zero carbon footprint by 2045 (AMBIENT 2026a).

The most current standards are the 2025 Standards, which became effective January 1, 2026. The 2025 Standards build upon the previous standards by expanding the use of heat pumps in newly constructed residential buildings, encouraging electric readiness, strengthening ventilation standards, and more (AMBIENT 2026a).

Appliance Standards

2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations

The 2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations provide standards and requirements for the 21 different categories of appliances that are sold in California. They include Federally regulated appliances as well as non–Federally regulated appliances.

STATEWIDE CLIMATE POLICY AND EXECUTIVE ORDERS

These EOs establish statewide climate targets and policy direction across multiple state agencies.

Executive Order S-3-05 – Statewide GHG-Reduction Targets

EO S-3-05 (State of California) proclaims that California is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The order declares that increased temperatures could reduce the Sierra Nevada snowpack, further exacerbate California's air quality problems, and potentially cause a rise in sea levels. To combat those concerns, the EO established total GHG emission targets. Specifically, emissions are to be reduced to the 2000 level by 2010, to the 1990 level by 2020, and to 80% below the 1990 level by 2050.

EO S-3-05 directed the Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency to coordinate a multiagency effort to reduce GHG emissions to the target levels. The secretary will also submit biannual reports to the governor and state legislature describing 1) progress made toward reaching the emission targets, 2) impacts of global warming on California's resources, and 3) mitigation and adaptation plans to combat these impacts. To comply with isthis EO, the Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency created a Climate Action Team made up of members from various state agencies and commissions. The Climate Action Team released its first report in March 2006 and continues to release periodic reports on progress. The report proposed to achieve the targets by building on voluntary actions of California businesses, local government, and community actions, as well as through state incentives and regulatory programs.

Executive Order S-06-06 – Bioenergy and Biofuels Targets

EO S-06-06, signed on April 25, 2006, establishes targets for the use and production of biofuels and biopower and directs state agencies to work together to advance biomass programs in California while providing environmental protection and mitigation. The EO establishes the following target to increase the production and use of bioenergy, including ethanol and biodiesel fuels made from renewable resources: produce a minimum of 20% of its biofuels within California by 2010, 40% by 2020, and 75% by 2050. The EO also calls for the State to meet a target for use of biomass electricity. The Bioenergy Action Plans developed by the CEC to identify those barriers and recommend actions to address them so that the State can meet its clean energy, waste reduction, and climate protection goals. The 2012 Bioenergy Action Plan provides a detailed action plan to achieve the following goals:

- Increase environmentally- and economically-sustainable energy production from organic waste;
- Encourage the development of diverse bioenergy technologies that increase local electricity generation, combined heat and power facilities, renewable natural gas, and renewable liquid fuels for transportation and fuel cell applications;
- Create jobs and stimulate economic development, especially in rural regions of the state; and
- Reduce fire danger, improve air, and water quality, and reduce waste.

In 2019, 2.87% of the total electrical system power in California was derived from biomass (AMBIENT 2026b).

Executive Order B-55-18 – Carbon Neutrality by 2045

Establishes a new statewide goal "to achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible, and no later than 2045, and achieve and maintain net negative emissions thereafter.

LAND USE AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW POLICIES

These policies guide how climate change and energy are addressed in environmental review and land use planning.

CEQA and Climate Change

Senate Bill 97

SB 97 was enacted in 2007. SB 97 required the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (formerly the Office of Planning and Research) to develop—and the Natural Resources Agency to adopt—amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines addressing the analysis and mitigation of GHG emissions. Those State CEQA Guidelines amendments clarified several points, including the following:

- Lead agencies must analyze the GHG emissions of proposed projects and must reach a conclusion regarding the significance of those emissions.
- When a project's GHG emissions may be significant, lead agencies must consider a range of potential mitigation measures to reduce those emissions.
- Lead agencies must analyze potentially significant impacts associated with placing projects in hazardous locations, including locations potentially affected by climate change.
- Lead agencies may significantly streamline the analysis of GHGs on a project level by using a programmatic GHG emissions-reduction plan meeting certain criteria.
- CEQA mandates analysis of a proposed project's potential energy use (including transportation-related energy), sources of energy supply, and ways to reduce energy demand, including through the use of efficient transportation alternatives.

As part of the administrative rulemaking process, the California Natural Resources Agency developed a Final Statement of Reasons explaining the legal and factual bases, intent, and purpose of the State CEQA Guidelines amendments. The amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines implementing SB 97 became effective on March 18, 2010.

Regional Transportation and Land Use Planning

Senate Bill 375: Sustainable Communities Strategy Adoption

SB 375 requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to adopt a sustainable communities strategy (SCS) or alternative planning strategy (APS) that will address land use allocation in that MPOs regional transportation plan (RTP). CARB, in consultation with MPOs, establishes regional reduction targets for GHGs emitted by passenger cars and light trucks for the years 2020 and 2035. These reduction targets will be updated every eight years but can be updated every four years if advancements in emissions technologies affect the reduction strategies to achieve the targets. CARB is also charged with reviewing each MPO's SCS or APS for consistency with its assigned targets. If MPOs do not meet the GHG-reduction targets, funding for transportation projects may be withheld.

STATE RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CLEAN ENERGY TARGETS

California Senate Bill 350: Clean Energy and Pollution Prevention Reduction Act of 2015

The Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015 (SB 350) requires the amount of electricity generated and sold to retail customers per year from eligible renewable energy resources to be increased to 50% by December 31, 2030. This act also requires a doubling of the energy efficiency savings in electricity and natural gas for retail customers through energy efficiency and conservation by December 31, 2030.

Senate Bill 1020

SB 1020 adds interim renewable energy and zero carbon energy retail sales of electricity targets to California end-use customers set at 90% in 2035 and 95% in 2040. It accelerates the timeline required to have 100% renewable energy and zero carbon energy procured to serve state agencies from the original target year of 2045 to 2035. This bill requires each state agency to individually achieve the 100% goal by 2035 with specified requirements.

Senate Bill 100

SB 100 was signed by Governor Jerry Brown on September 10, 2018. SB 100 sets a goal of phasing out all fossil fuels from the state's electricity sector by 2045. SB 100 increases to 60%, from 50%, how much of California's electricity portfolio must come from renewables by 2030. It establishes a further goal to have an electric grid that is entirely powered by clean energy by 2045, which could include other carbon-free sources, like nuclear power, that are not renewable.

4.3.2.3 Local

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

The SLOAPCD is the agency primarily responsible for ensuring that the NAAQS and CAAQS are not exceeded and that air quality conditions within the region are maintained. Responsibilities of the SLOAPCD include, but are not limited to, preparing plans for the attainment of ambient air quality standards, adopting and enforcing rules and regulations concerning sources of air pollution, issuing permits for stationary sources of air pollution, inspecting stationary sources of air pollution and responding to citizen complaints, monitoring ambient air quality and meteorological conditions, and implementing programs and regulations required by the FCAA and CCAA.

2001 Clean Air Plan

The SLOAPCD *2001 Clean Air Plan San Luis Obispo County* (2001 CAP) is a comprehensive planning document intended to evaluate long-term air pollutant emissions and cumulative effects and provide guidance to the SLOAPCD and other local agencies on how to attain and maintain the state standards for O_3 and PM_{10} (SLOAPCD 2001) The 2001 CAP presents a detailed description of the sources and pollutants that impact the jurisdiction's attainment of state standards, future air quality impacts to be expected under current growth trends, and an appropriate control strategy for reducing ozone-precursor emissions, thereby improving air quality.

CEQA Air Quality Handbook

The SLOAPCD has developed and updated their *CEQA Air Quality Handbook* (SLOAPCD 2012) (most recently updated with the *2023 Administrative Update* [SLOAPCD 2023]) to help local agencies evaluate project-specific impacts and determine if air quality mitigation measures are needed, or if potentially significant impacts could result. This handbook includes established thresholds for both short-term construction emissions and long-term operational emissions.

Use of heavy equipment and earth-moving operations during project construction can generate fugitive dust and engine combustion emissions that may have substantial temporary impacts on local air quality and climate change. Combustion emissions, such as NO_X, ROG, GHGs, and DPM, are most significant when using large, diesel-fueled scrapers, loaders, bulldozers, haul trucks, compressors, generators, and other heavy equipment. The SLOAPCD has established thresholds of significance for each of these contaminants.

Operational impacts are focused primarily on the indirect emissions (i.e., motor vehicles) associated with residential, commercial, and industrial development. Certain types of projects can also include components that generate direct emissions, such as power plants, gasoline stations, dry cleaners, and refineries (referred to as stationary source emissions). General screening criteria are used by the SLOAPCD to determine the type and scope of air quality assessment required for a particular project (Table 1-1 in the *CEQA Air Quality Handbook*). These criteria are based on project size in an urban setting and are designed to identify those projects with the potential to exceed the SLOAPCD's significance thresholds. A more refined analysis of

air quality impacts specific to a given project is necessary for projects that exceed the screening criteria below or are within 10% of exceeding the screening criteria.

CITY OF ATASCADERO

2025 General Plan

The 2025 General Plan is composed of several elements, including the Land Use, Open Space and Conservation (LOC), Circulation, Safety and Noise, and Housing Elements. Each includes specific goals, policies, and programs that inform short and long-term decision-making in the community.

Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element

Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to energy included within the LOC Element are listed here:

- **Goal LOC 10:** Conserve energy and resources by preventing or correcting the degradation of the environment.
    - **Policy 10.3:** Support regional efforts to maintain clean air.
        - **Program 1.** Require dust control and emissions limitations during project construction.
        - **Program 2.** Adopt circulation policies that encourage vehicle trip reductions.
        - **Program 3.** Concentrate new intensive development at identified nodes to help reduce vehicle trips.
        - **Program 4.** Support regional programs to maintain clean air by adopting transportation and land use policies which encourage vehicular trip reductions.
        - **Program 5.** Support the development of park and ride locations in appropriate locations.

Circulation Element

Goals pertinent to energy included within the Conservation Element are listed here:

- **Goal CIR 3:** Provide and promote alternative modes of travel to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by providing viable transit alternatives.

City of Atascadero Climate Action Plan

The City of Atascadero Climate Action Plan is a long-range policy document intended to cost-effectively reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from City government operations and community activities within Atascadero. The City's Climate Action Plan provided a baseline year 2005 inventory of GHG emissions and projected year 2020 emissions relative to the State's GHG emissions-reduction target for year 2020 of 15% below 2005 levels by the year 2020, as established under AB 32. According to the City's 2005 GHG emissions inventory, the City of Atascadero emitted approximately 141,428 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent GHG emissions (MTCO2e). Major emissions sectors included transportation, residential energy use, commercial and industrial energy use, off-road vehicles and equipment, solid waste, and wastewater sectors. The City's Climate Action Plan has not been updated to address the State's more recent GHG-reduction targets for future years, including the 2030–2035 GHG-reduction targets and carbon-neutrality goals (AMBIENT 2026a).

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

2023 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The 2023 RTP was adopted by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Board in June 2023. The 2023 RTP includes the region's SCS, which outlines how the region will meet or exceed its GHG-reduction targets as required by SB 375 through the promotion of a variety of transportation demand management and system management tools and techniques to maximize the efficiency of the transportation network. Consistency with the requirement of SB 375 ensures consistency with the GHG-reduction targets set by the CARB. The 2023 SCS was found to be consistent with the requirement of SB 375 and is also consistent with the general plans of the region's jurisdictions (SLOCOG 2023).

4.3.3 Thresholds of Significance

4.3.3.1 Air Quality

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on air quality if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

Would the project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.

b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in nonattainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.

c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.3.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, specifically Section 4.3.5.1, *Air Quality*, below.

4.3.3.2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on GHG emissions if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment.

b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.3.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, specifically Section 4.3.5.2, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, below.

4.3.3.3 Energy

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on energy if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation.

b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.3.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, specifically Section 4.3.5.3, *Energy*, below.

4.3.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

4.3.4.1 Air Quality

The following impact evaluation is also based on the *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment* prepared for the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update (AMBIENT 2026a; Appendix C). The *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment* relies on SLOAPCD's CEQA Air Quality Handbook (2023), which assists San Luis Obispo County public agencies in the evaluation of air quality impacts through the development of recommended project-level significance thresholds. However, at a programmatic level of environmental review, such as for the proposed 2045 General Plan, a quantitative project-level emissions analysis is not required. At the program-level of analysis, a finding of significant impact would be determined qualitatively by comparing consistency of the project with the Transportation and Land Use Planning Strategies outlined in the SLOAPCD CAP. Projects determined to be inconsistent with the SLOAPCD CAP would be considered to have a potentially significant impact. Although not always applicable at a programmatic level, some project-level significance thresholds, such as exposure to odorous emissions, can be used to help inform of potentially significant impacts at a programmatic level of analysis. The SLOAPCD's project-level significance thresholds are identified as follows:

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

The threshold criteria established by the SLOAPCD to determine the significance and appropriate mitigation level for a project's short-term construction emissions are presented in Table 4.3-8 and discussed below (SLOAPCD 2023):

Table 4.3-8. SLOAPCD Thresholds of Significance for Project-Level Construction Impacts

	Threshold*		
Pollutant	**Daily (lbs/day)**	**Quarterly Tier 1 (tons)**	**Quarterly Tier 2 (tons)**
Ozone Precursors (ROG + NOX)	137	2.5	6.3
DPM	7	0.13	0.32
Fugitive Particulate Matter (PM10), Dust†	--	2.5	--

Source: SLOAPCD (2023).

Notes:

* Daily and quarterly emissions thresholds are based on the California Health & Safety Code and the CARB Carl Moyer Guidelines.

† Any project with a grading area greater than 4.0 acres of a worked area can exceed the 2.5 tons PM10 quarterly threshold.

ROG and NO_x Emissions

Daily: For construction projects exceeding the 137 lbs/day threshold require Standard Mitigation Measures.

Quarterly – Tier 1: For construction projects exceeding the 2.5 tons/quarter threshold, require Standard Mitigation Measures and BACT for construction equipment. Off-site mitigation may be required if feasible mitigation measures are not implemented, or if no mitigation measures are feasible for the project.

Quarterly – Tier 2: For construction projects exceeding the 6.3 tons/quarter threshold, Standard Mitigation Measures, BACT, implementation of a Construction Activity Management Plan (CAMP), and off-site mitigation are required.

DPM Emissions

Daily: For construction projects exceeding the 7 lbs/day threshold, require Standard Mitigation Measures.

Quarterly – Tier 1: For construction projects lasting more than one quarter, exceedance of the 0.13 tons/quarter threshold requires Standard Mitigation Measures, BACT for construction equipment.

Quarterly – Tier 2: For construction projects exceeding the 0.32 tons/quarter threshold, require Standard Mitigation Measures, BACT, implementation of a CAMP, and off-site mitigation.

Fugitive Particulate Matter (PM_{10}), Dust Emissions

Quarterly – Tier 1: Construction projects exceeding the 2.5 tons/quarter threshold require Fugitive PM_{10} dust mitigation measures and may require the implementation of a CAMP. In addition, any project with a grading area greater than 4.0 acres of worked area can exceed the 2.5-ton PM_{10} quarterly threshold.

OPERATIONAL IMPACTS

Criteria Air Pollutants

The threshold criteria established by the SLOAPCD to determine the significance and appropriate mitigation level for long-term operational emissions from a project are presented in Table 4.3-9.

Table 4.3-9. SLOAPCD Thresholds of Significance for Project-Level Operational Impacts

	Threshold*	
Pollutant	**Daily (lbs/day)**	**Annual (tons/year)**
Ozone Precursors (ROG + NO_X)	25	25
DPM†	1.25	--
Fugitive Particulate Matter (PM_{10}), Dust	25	25
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	550	--

Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Notes:

* Daily and annual emissions thresholds are based on the California Health & Safety Code Division 26, Part 3, Chapter 10, Section 40918 and the CARB Carl Moyer Guidelines for DPM.

† Applies to on-site emissions. DPM is seldom emitted from individual projects in quantities which lead to local or regional air quality attainment violations.

For projects exceeding the 25 lbs/day operational ozone-precursor threshold but not the corresponding 25 tons/year annual threshold, the project shall implement all applicable SLOAPCD-recommended mitigation measures. Off-site mitigation may be required for projects (exceeding the 25 lbs/day threshold) if all applicable SLOAPCD-recommended mitigation measures are not implemented, or if no mitigation measures are feasible for the project. Off-site mitigation is required for projects exceeding the 25 tons/year threshold (AMBIENT 2026a).

Toxic Air Contaminants

If a project has the potential to emit toxic or HAPs or is in close proximity to sensitive receptors, impacts may be considered significant due to increased cancer risk for the affected population, even at a very low level of emissions. For the evaluation of new proposed land use projects that generate TACs, such as diesel-fueled engines, the SLOAPCD has defined the excess cancer risk significance threshold at 10 in 1 million.

Localized CO Concentrations

Localized CO concentrations associated with the proposed project would be considered a less-than-significant impact if: (1) Traffic generated by the proposed project would not result in deterioration of signalized intersection level of service (LOS) to LOS E or F; or (2) the project would not contribute additional traffic to a signalized intersection that already operates at LOS of E or F (AMBIENT 2026a).

Odors

Screening of potential odor impacts is typically recommended for the following two situations:

- Projects that would potentially generate odorous emissions proposed to locate near existing sensitive receptors or other land uses where people may congregate; and
- Residential or other sensitive receptor projects or other projects that may attract people locating near existing odor sources.

If the proposed project would locate receptors and known odor sources within one mile of each other, a full analysis of odor impacts is recommended. Known odor sources of primary concern, as identified by the SLOAPCD include landfills, transfer stations, asphalt batch plants, rendering plants, petroleum refineries, and painting/coating operations, as well as composting, food processing, wastewater treatment, chemical manufacturing, and feedlot/dairy facilities (AMBIENT 2026a).

Methodology

Short-term emissions associated with construction activities are largely dependent on the type of development proposed, area of ground disturbance, number of buildings to be demolished, equipment required, and construction schedules. Long-term operational emissions are typically associated with the operational of mobile sources, stationary sources (e.g., boilers, generators), and area sources (e.g., landscape maintenance, and energy use). However, because much of this information for specific future development projects and the timing of such development is unknown at this time, the City would be required to speculate regarding such potential future project-level environmental impacts. In the absence of the necessary information required to provide an informative and meaningful quantitative analysis, net increases in future construction, operational emissions, and associated air quality impacts resulting from implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update are qualitatively discussed in this EIR.

4.3.4.2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The methodology for evaluating the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update's impacts related to GHG emissions focuses on consistency with statewide, regional, and local goals, targets, and plans that have been adopted for the purposes of reducing and mitigating GHG emissions. This approach has been deemed appropriate for analyzing GHG impacts by the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LUCI) (formerly the Office of Planning and Research), as provided in the *CEQA and Climate Change Advisory* and State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15064.4 and 15183.5, and has been upheld in court (*Center for Biological Diversity v. California Department of Fish and Wildlife* [2015] 361 P.3d 342) (AMBIENT 2026a). The evaluation of consistency with such plans serves as the sole basis for determining the significance of the project's GHG-related impacts to the environment given the programmatic nature of the project and the corresponding lack of sufficient information about project-specific details, which prevent quantification of precise levels of GHG emissions for the project. As described in the Regulatory Setting, applicable plans, policies and regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions include: AB 32, SB 32, AB 197, AB 1279, SB 375, the CARB 2022 Scoping Plan, EO S-3-05, EO S-06-06, and EO B-5-18. Estimated net increases of GHG emissions associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is provided for informational purposes.

The State's current GHG-reduction goals for future years include reducing GHG emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, per SB 32 and EO B-30-15; as well as, achieving carbon neutrality by 2045, consistent with EO B-55-18. Current plans supporting the achievement of these goals and targets include CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality and SLOCOG's RTP/SCS. As previously noted, the City's CAP was developed with the primary purpose of demonstrating consistency with the State's GHG-reduction target for year 2020 conditions, consistent with AB 32. The City's CAP has not been updated to address the State's more recent GHG-reduction targets for future years, to include the 2030-2050 GHG-reduction targets and carbon-neutrality goals. For this reason, projected increases in development-related GHG emissions attributable to the proposed 2045 General Plan and/or associated increases in VMT that would conflict with CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality or SLOCOG's RTP/SCS would be considered to have a potentially significant impact.

Short-term GHG emissions associated with construction activities are largely dependent on the type of development proposed, off-road equipment and on-road vehicles required, and construction schedules. Because much of this information for specific future development projects is unknown at this time, project-level construction-related impacts cannot be quantified at this time due to a lack of project-specific data; however, it is expected that multiple development projects would occur throughout the planning period. In the absence of the necessary information required to provide an informative and meaningful analysis, construction-related impacts resulting from implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update are qualitatively discussed.

Long-term operational increases in GHG emissions were calculated using the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod), version 2022.1.1.37. Emissions were quantified based on the net increase in land uses attributable to the proposed 2045 General Plan and associated increases in VMT derived from the traffic analysis prepared for this project (AMBIENT 2026a). CARB's Emission Factor 2021 (EMFAC 2021) Off-Model Greenhouse Gas Adjustment Factors to Remove the Impact of Advanced Clean Trucks, Zero-Emission Airport Shuttle, Heavy-Duty Omnibus and Warranty Phase I Regulations were applied to mobile-source emissions (AMBIENT 2026a). To be conservative, EMFAC 2021 off-model adjustment factors were based on the highest adjustment factors noted taking into account various vehicle classifications and fuel sources. Estimated GHG emissions attributable to the 2045 General Plan are provided for information purposes. Emissions modeling files are provided in EIR Appendix C.

As noted above, evaluation of impact significance is based on consistency with applicable plans supporting the State's future GHG-reduction targets of 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, consistent with SB 32, and the State's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045, consistent with EO B-55-18. Current plans supporting the achievement of these goals include CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality and SLOCOG's RTP/SCS.

4.3.4.3 Energy

The following impact evaluation is also based on the *Energy Impact Assessment* prepared for the 2045 General Plan (see EIR Appendix D) (AMBIENT 2026b). As provided in State CEQA Guidelines Appendix F, environmental considerations in the assessment of energy consumption impacts may include the following considerations: (1) the project's energy requirements and its energy use efficiencies by amount and fuel type for each stage of the project; (2) the effects of the project on local and regional energy supplies and on requirements for additional capacity; (3) the effects of the project on peak and base period demands for electricity and other forms of energy; (4) the degree to which the project complies with existing energy standards; (5) the effects of the project on energy resources; (6) the project's proposed transportation energy use requirements and its overall use of efficient transportation alternatives. A significant impact related to energy would occur if the proposed project would result in short- or long-term wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources or conflict with a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

4.3.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

4.3.5.1 Air Quality

a) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

IMPACT AQ-1: THE PROJECT WOULD CONFLICT WITH OR OBSTRUCT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE APPLICABLE AIR QUALITY PLAN. ***(SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE [CLASS I])***

SLOAPCD Clean Air Plan

As part of the CCAA, the SLOAPCD is required to develop a plan to achieve and maintain the state ozone standard by the earliest practicable date. The SLOAPCD's 2001 CAP was adopted by SLOAPCD on March 26, 2002. This CAP addresses the attainment and maintenance of state and federal ambient air quality standards. The SLOAPCD's CAP outlines their strategies to reduce ozone-precursor pollutants [i.e., ROG and NO_X] from a wide variety of sources. The SLOAPCD's CAP includes a stationary-source control program, which includes control measures for permitted stationary sources; as well as transportation and land use management strategies to reduce motor vehicle emissions and use. The stationary-source control program is administered by SLOAPCD. Transportation and land use control measures are implemented at the local or regional level, by promoting and facilitating the use of alternative transportation options, increased pedestrian access and accessibility to community services and local destinations, reductions in VMT, and promotion of congestion management efforts. In addition, local jurisdictions also prepare population forecasts, which are used by SLOAPCD to forecast population-related emissions and air quality attainment, including those contained in the SLOAPCD's CAP. The 2001 CAP emissions forecasts and control strategies were built using regional growth assumptions, specifically the population, housing, and employment projections provided by SLOCOG. Therefore, if a project is consistent with current SLOCOG growth forecasts, it is generally considered part of the expected growth scenario that the air quality plan

anticipated. For these reasons, consistency with the SLOAPCD's CAP has been evaluated based on the following questions:

1. Are the population and employment projections attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update equal to or less than those identified in the most recent growth forecasts adopted by SLOCOG and would implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update result in an improved jobs/housing ratio?
2. Is projected VMT growth attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update equal to or less than the corresponding projected rate of population growth attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update?
3. Is the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update consistent with the land use and transportation control measures (TCMs) identified in the SLOAPCD's CAP?
4. Is projected VMT growth attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update equal to or less than applicable VMT thresholds established by the LUCI for the evaluation of VMT impacts associated with land use plans? Mobile sources are a significant source of air pollutant emissions, and consistency with the State recommended VMT thresholds would indicate that the project is aligned with State and local air quality pollution reduction efforts, including those of the SLOAPCD's CAP.

If the answer to all the above questions is yes, then the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be considered to be consistent with the SLOAPCD's CAP. If the answer to any one of the above questions is no, then the emissions reductions projected in the SLOAPCD's CAP may not be achieved, which could delay or preclude attainment of the state ozone standard and the 2045 General Plan would be considered inconsistent with the SLOAPCD's CAP.

PROJECTED POPULATION & EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is anticipated to guide sustainable population growth throughout the planning period and includes City population and employment growth projections based on land capacity, ability to expand infrastructure, and anticipated growth rates for both residential and commercial sectors. The City's forecasted population for the 2045 General Plan is 37,279. In comparison to year 2024 conditions, the proposed 2045 General Plan would increase the City's population by 6,596 residents, an approximate 21.5% increase. Employment is expected to increase from 9,729 jobs in 2024 to 12,914 jobs in 2045, improving the City's jobs/housing ratio from 0.77 to 0.83.

According to the SLOCOG 2060 Regional Growth Forecast, the population of the City of Atascadero is projected to increase to 31,841 residents by 2040 and to 32,342 residents by 2050. Employment is projected to increase to 12,307 jobs in 2040 and 12,988 jobs in 2050 (AMBIENT 2026a). Overall, the anticipated growth in the City through 2045 is similar to the SLOCOG growth projections for the City; however, projected increases in population attributable to the proposed 2045 General Plan (i.e., 37,279) would be higher than the SLOCOG's projections of 31,841 residents by 2040 and to 32,342 residents by 2050 (AMBIENT 2026a).

According to SLOCOG's 2019 Regional Housing Needs Assessment, the City has more housing units than jobs, indicative of a "jobs-poor" community. The City's jobs-to-housing ratio was projected to worsen from a year 2015 ratio of 0.77 to a 0.71 jobs-housing ratio by the year 2030 (AMBIENT 2026a). With implementation of the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, the number of housing units would total approximately 15,550 and the number of jobs would total approximately 12,914, which would result in a jobs/housing ratio of 0.83 for year 2045. Because the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would result in increased development, population, and employment over the course of the planning period,

the jobs/housing ratio for the City would be projected to improve with implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update (AMBIENT 2026a).

VMT GROWTH

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be more VMT-efficient on a regional basis than the current General Plan as it would focus growth in areas with a mix of uses, more travel options, and at levels that are more supportive of transit use. The City's large geographic area and existing low-density development patterns require longer vehicle trips and reduce non-auto travel options. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update focuses on growth in more VMT-efficient areas at higher densities and with more travel options. In addition, projected improvements in the jobs/housing ratio with implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would help to further reduce VMT by providing more jobs locally, thereby, reducing VMT travel and to out-of-City locations. As a result, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would produce less VMT per capita and per employee than the current General Plan (AMBIENT 2026a).

Daily VMT within the City's sphere of influence is projected to increase from 556,552 daily miles in the year 2024 to 602,702 daily miles in 2045, an approximate 8.3% increase in VMT. As noted above, the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would increase the City's population by approximately 21.5% in 2045. The percentage increase in VMT attributable to the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update (8.3%) would not exceed the percentage increase in population (21.5%).

Accordingly, the projected VMT attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is less than the corresponding projected rate of population growth. Therefore, the project is consistent with the applicable air quality plan and impacts would be considered *less than significant* with respect to VMT growth as it relates to projected rate of population growth.

TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE CONTROL MEASURES AND CONSISTENCY WITH LUCI VMT THRESHOLDS

The SLOAPCD's CAP includes multiple transportation and land use control measures intended to reduce emissions through reductions in VMT and the promotion of alternative forms of transportation. A summary of the more relevant control measures and the 2045 General Plan's potential consistency with these measures is provided in Table 4.3-10; however, the ultimate determination of whether the project is consistent with applicable plans and policies is a policy decision reserved for the lead agency's decision-making body (i.e., City Council). As shown in Table 4.3-10, the 2045 General Plan uses a designator system consisting of "Placetypes". Each Placetype category defines both the primary uses of land allowed and the character of those uses. For instance, the Mixed-Use Placetype is intended to promote a flexible and compatible mix of residential and commercial uses in focused areas. The Downtown Mixed-Use Placetype encourages an eclectic and complementary mix of uses, pedestrian-scale development, and locally owned retail and restaurant businesses with upper-story residential and office units.

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is expected to result in reductions in vehicle trips/trip lengths, improved accessibility to alternative means of transportation (e.g., transit), and overall reductions in VMT. In addition, the City's jobs-housing ratio would improve from 0.77 to 0.83. Numerous other goals and policies in the Mobility Element have been included in the 2045 General Plan that would support regional air quality and transportation planning efforts, including policies to improve accessibility to transit, bicycle and public transit improvements, park and ride lots, traffic flow improvements, and various other policies intended to reduce vehicle use. However, even with implementation of the proposed goals and policies, the 2045 General Plan would generate residential and employment-based VMT at levels that are above LUCI's recommended thresholds (AMBIENT 2026a). As a result, increases in VMT attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be inconsistent with statewide planning and climate

change policies and efforts, such as CARB's Climate Change Scoping Plan. Increases in VMT may result in long-term increases of mobile-source air pollutants not accounted for in the CAP. As a result, long-term increases of regional pollutants and consistency with the SLOAPCD's CAP would be considered a potentially significant impact.

Table 4.3-10. Consistency with SLOAPCD Clean Air Plan Control Measures

SLOAPCD's Clean Air Plan Control Measures	2045 General Plan Consistency
L-1 Planning Compact Communities. Dwelling units for those who prefer higher density living should be clustered in urban core areas and village centers, thus creating a market for convenience retailing and services that contribute to the richness of an urban life-style. As commercial facilities become integrated into residential areas in a mixed-use development pattern, the need to use an automobile for routine trips diminishes.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan uses a designator system consisting of "Placetypes." Each Placetype category defines both the primary uses of land allowed and the character of those uses. For instance, the Mixed-Use Placetype is intended to promote a flexible and compatible mix of residential and commercial uses in focused areas. The Downtown Mixed-Use Placetype encourages a mix of uses, pedestrian-scale development, and locally owned retail and restaurant businesses. In comparison to the existing 2025 General Plan, the 2045 General Plan would result in reductions in vehicle trips/trip lengths, improved accessibility to alternative means of transportation (e.g., transit), and overall reductions in VMT on a per capita basis.
L-2 Providing for Mixed Land Use. The mixing of compatible commercial and residential land uses should be encouraged when it will reduce dependence on the automobile or will improve the balance between jobs and housing.	
L-3 Balancing Jobs and Housing. An imbalance between jobs and housing results in longer travel distances between home and work and, consequently, more air pollution from cars.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is expected to result in reductions in vehicle trips/trip lengths, improved accessibility to alternative means of transportation (e.g., transit), and overall reductions in VMT. With implementation of the 2045 General Plan, the City's jobs-housing ratio would improve from 0.77 to 0.83.
L-4 Circulation Management. The primary goal of the recommended Circulation Management Policies and Programs is to encourage the design and construction of the County's transportation system in a manner that supports alternative travel modes and decreases reliance on single occupant motor vehicles. To this end, improving accessibility for all travelers, not just drivers, is the primary transportation objective.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan incorporates various goals and policies to support regional transportation planning and management efforts, including numerous measures intended to encourage the design and construction of alternative travel modes. Such policies include: Policies MO-1.1–MO-1.6, MO-3.1, MO-3.2, MO-4.1–MO-4.5, and MO-5.1–MO-5.3.
L-5 Communication, Coordination and Monitoring. Changes in land use and circulation planning will be necessary to maintain clean air in the county over the long term. These same changes, however, will also provide benefits in reduced traffic congestion. It is very important to the long-term success of the Clean Air Plan that local and regional jurisdictions and the District work together to achieve these mutual goals.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan incorporates various goals and policies to support regional air quality and transportation planning efforts, including policies to maintain and improve coordination with other regional agencies. Such policies include: Policies MO-1.1, MO-1.2, MO-1.3, MO-3.1, MO-3.2, MO-4.1, MO-4.3, MO-4.4, MO-5.2, MO-5.3, and MO-6.3.
T-2A Local Transit System Improvements. The focus of this measure is on improving local transit service and infrastructure to increase ridership by enhancing the convenience and overall viability of the system. Key elements of the measure include an ongoing improvements to bus boarding areas, development of multimodal centers, service expansion, and replacement of older diesel transit buses with new diesel-powered vehicles meeting CARB's October 31, 2002 emission certification standards or compressed natural gas vehicles meeting one of CARB's optional emission credit standards.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan incorporates various goals and policies to support regional air quality and transportation planning efforts, including policies to improve accessibility to transit, bicycle and public transit improvements, park and ride lots, traffic flow improvements, and various other policies intended to reduce vehicle use. Such policies include: Policies MO-1.1–MO-1.5 and MO-5.1–MO-5.3.
T-2B Regional Public Transit Improvements. The focus of this measure is to improve regional transit service and infrastructure with the goal of increasing ridership rates in excess of countywide population growth rates. Central Coast Area Transit's ridership has risen by over 95% from 143,871 in 1991 to 281,504 in 2000.	

SLOAPCD's Clean Air Plan Control Measures	2045 General Plan Consistency
T-3 Bicycling and Bikeway Enhancements. The goal of this measure is to achieve a countywide average bicycle mode share of 5% by 2005.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan incorporates various goals and policies to support regional air quality and transportation planning efforts, including policies to improve accessibility to transit, bicycle and public transit improvements, park and ride lots, traffic flow improvements, and various other policies intended to reduce vehicle use. Such policies include: Policies REC-7.1, MO-1.1–MO-1.6, MO-4.1–MO-4.5, MO-5.1, MO-5.3, and LU-2.5.
T-4 Park and Ride Lots. Park and Ride (P&R) lots provide a staging area for ridesharing activities. The most common use of P&R lots in San Luis Obispo County is as a meeting point for car- and vanpoolers. Transit connections are available at some lots within a short walk, and bike lockers are available at most lots; however, the primary use is for automobile parking. In San Luis Obispo County, P&R lots are administered by Caltrans and SLOCOG.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan incorporates various goals and policies to support regional air quality and transportation planning efforts, including policies to improve accessibility to P&R lots. Such policies include: Policies MO-5.1–MO-5.3. Specifically, Policy 5.2 includes "Action C, Support and encourage the use and expansion of P&R facilities and other rideshare infrastructure."
T-6 Traffic Flow Improvements. This control measure focuses on traffic flow improvements and "traffic-calming" to improve the flow of all transportation modes. Traffic-calming refers to a full range of methods designed to improve the flow of nonmotorized transportation by slowing down the speed of motorized traffic. Traffic-calming is generally used in residential areas on non-arterial local streets and roads. The goal of this measure is to improve the road system and infrastructure in a way that increases its efficiency, reduces emissions, and supports the other TCMs in this Plan.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan incorporates numerous policies to improve accessibility traffic flow to increase efficiency, reduce emissions, and support other measures, such as the use of alternative means of transportation. Such policies include: Policies MO-1.1–MO-1.6, MO-2.2, MO-4.1–MO-4.5, MO-5.1–MO-5.3, MO-6.1, MO-6.2, MO-6.3, and LU-2.3–LU-2.5.
T-8 Teleworking, Teleconferencing, and Telelearning. Rapid advances in personal computer capability and the advent of video and online services have made these technologies ideal trip reduction strategies.	***Potentially Consistent.*** The 2045 General Plan incorporates various goals and policies to support regional air quality and transportation planning efforts, including policies to support emerging mobile technology. Such policies include: Policies MO-6.1–MO-6.3 and PSI-7.1.

The 2045 General Plan includes numerous goals, policies, and action items that would help to reduce criteria pollutant emissions, energy demands, and VMT. These include the following from various elements of the 2045 General Plan:

- **Goal REC-7:** Improve air quality and reduced health risks
    - **Policy REC-7.1: Clean Air.** Support regional efforts to maintain clean air.
        - **Action A:** Require dust control and emissions limitations during project construction.
- **Goal PSI-6:** Increased development and use of clean, renewable energy systems
    - **Policy PSI-6.1: Onsite Renewable Energy.** Facilitate the installation of onsite renewable energy systems for residences and places of business.
    - **Policy PSI-6.2: Energy Efficient Planning and Building Design.** Encourage energy-efficient site planning and building design/construction.
- **Goal MO-1:** A safe, multimodal, interconnected, and efficient circulation system that serves all community members
    - **Policy MO-1.2: Multimodal Options.** Increase pedestrian and bicycle connections and safety between residential areas and commercial areas along major corridors, parks and recreation opportunities, and neighboring communities.

  - **Policy MO-1.3: Regional Facilities.** Provide regional roadway facilities that minimize through traffic intrusion on local streets and mitigate impacts on local traffic.
  - **Policy MO-1.4: Congestion Management and Trip Reduction.** Encourage mixed-use and jobs focused infill development that is served by multimodal facilities to support reductions in regional and local VMT.
  - **Policy MO-1.5: Hillside Area Street Character.** Preserve the winding, tree-lined nature of the City street system in hillside areas.
  - **Policy MO-1.6: Truck Routes.** Ensure the new and existing business that use large trucks as a core part of their operations, more than just routine delivery, minimize maintenance impacts on City infrastructure and noise impacts on residents.

- **Goal MO-4:** Safe, functional, and appealing bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian (in rural areas) facilities that allow convenient multimodal mobility
  - **Policy MO-4.1: Coordination and Planning.** Provide "backbone" pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian systems that link residential, commercial, recreational, and regional areas.
  - **Policy MO-4.2: Pedestrian Mobility.** Ensure pedestrian safety, enhance pedestrian comfort, and promote walking as an alternative to vehicle travel, with priority in retail districts and multifamily neighborhoods.
  - **Policy MO-4.3: Bicycle Mobility.** Promote bicycle mobility and increase bicyclist safety with new/upgraded facilities and amenities.
  - **Policy MO-4.4: Rural Trails.** Provide for walkways, bikeways, and horse trails without curbs and sidewalks in rural areas.
  - **Policy MO-4.5: School and Park Connections.** Provide a comprehensive system of routes to schools and parks.
- **Goal MO-5:** Reliable alternative travel modes that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality
  - **Policy MO-5.1: Single-Occupancy Vehicle Alternatives.** Promote alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel, particularly for commute trips.
  - **Policy MO-5.2: Public Transit.** Support the evolution of public transit to meet the changing needs for local and regional access, including fixed route and demand responsive service.
  - **Policy MO-5.3: County TDM Requirements.** Seek alternatives that bring Atascadero closer to compliance with Transportation Demand Management program requirements of the San Luis Obispo County Clean Air Plan to reduce peak period trip generation.
- **Goal MO-6:** Anticipating and addressing emerging mobility technology proactively to allow new systems and industries to operate in Atascadero on the City's terms
  - **Policy MO-6.1: Changing Mobile Technology.** Encourage the use of mobile or other electronic devices with similar on-demand hailing functions, particularly for seniors, persons with disabilities, and other mobility challenged people.
  - **Policy MO-6.2: Autonomous Vehicles.** Update, when warranted, transportation systems and policies as autonomous and automated vehicles and their attendant facilities are developed locally and regionally.
  - **Policy LU-2.3: Mid-block Infill.** Promote flexible land use patterns in areas between activity nodes along El Camino Real and support increased residential densities adjacent to and along commercial corridors to support commercial business activity and growth.

- **Policy LU-2.4: Mixed-Use Areas.** Create mixed-use districts in locations that benefit from the synergy of commercial and residential uses.
- **Policy LU-2.5: Multi-Modal Corridors.** Improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities along El Camino Real and Morro Road. Major corridors should be safe, comfortable, and enjoyable for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike.

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update are consistent with the land use and TCMs identified in SLOAPCD's CAP. In addition, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update focuses growth in more VMT-efficient areas at higher densities and with more travel options, so it produces fewer VMT per capita and per employee than the existing 2025 General Plan. However, even with this focus on VMT-reducing development and implementation of 2045 General Plan policies, estimated increases in VMT would exceed LUCI's recommended thresholds (AMBIENT 2026a). No feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would further reduce this impact, due to unmitigable contributing factors such as the existing development pattern and geography of the City. As a result, the project would not be consistent with the applicable air quality plan as it relates to VMT thresholds; this impact would be considered *significant and unavoidable*.

Although the project would result in an improved jobs/housing ratio, it is consistent with the land use and TCMs identified in the SLOAPCD's CAP, and the projected VMT attributable to the project is less than the corresponding projected rate of population growth, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is inconsistent with the SLOAPCD's CAP because the growth attributable to the project would result in VMT that would exceed LUCI's recommended significance thresholds. As discussed above, no feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would further reduce this impact. As a result, the project would be inconsistent with the applicable air quality plan and impacts would be considered *significant and unavoidable.*

Impact AQ-1
The project would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.
Mitigation Measures
No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

b) Would the project result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

IMPACT AQ-2: THE PROJECT COULD RESULT IN A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE NET INCREASE OF CRITERIA POLLUTANTS FOR WHICH THE PROJECT REGION IS NON-ATTAINMENT. *(SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE [CLASS I])*

Long-Term Operational Emissions

As discussed under Impact AQ-1, the SLOAPCD's CAP addresses the attainment and maintenance of state and federal ambient air quality standards and consistency, including a stationary-source control program, the consistency with which indicates a project's long-term air quality impacts. The 2045 General Plan includes various goals and policies that would reduce long-term operational emissions, including measures to reduce VMT, and promote alternative means of transportation. The promotion of alternatives to automotive transportation can help to reduce local and regional mobile-source emissions and energy consumption. Refer to Impact AQ-1 for a discussion of consistency with the SLOAPCD's CAP and long-term air quality impacts attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update.

Short-Term Construction Emissions

In comparison to existing conditions, the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would result in a projected net increase of approximately 205 single-family dwelling units, 2,688 multifamily dwelling units, 481,454 square feet of commercial retail use, 595,666 square feet of commercial office use, and 467,501 square feet of industrial use over the course of the planning period. Construction activity associated with these land uses would cause temporary emissions of various air pollutants associated with project construction, such as demolition, grading, construction worker travel, hauling of construction supplies, fuel combustion by equipment, and architectural coating would generate pollutant emissions. These construction activities would temporarily create emissions of dust, fumes, equipment exhaust, and other air contaminants. The extent of daily emissions, particularly ROGs and NO_X emissions generated by construction equipment, would depend on the equipment used and the hours of operation for each project. The extent of $PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10} emissions would depend upon the amount of disturbed soil, the length of disturbance time, whether existing structures are demolished, whether excavation is involved, and whether transporting excavated materials off-site is necessary. Dust emissions can lead to both nuisance and health impacts.

The SLOAPCD has not established plan-level significance thresholds for construction air pollutant emissions. By its nature as a general plan and zoning code update, the project does not propose any specific development. Construction of developments permitted by the project would occur intermittently within the Planning Area over the course of its 2045 buildout period. As the timing and intensity of future development is not known at this time, there is not sufficient detail to allow for a project-level analysis for most projects facilitated by the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update. It is assumed that implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could result in the development of approximately 2,893 dwelling units, as well as additional retail, office and industrial uses. As such, it is anticipated that in any given year, multiple land use development projects would be constructed within the Planning Area.

As noted above, SLOAPCD's project-level thresholds were designed to analyze emissions generated by a single project. Depending on the size and scale of individual development projects, along with their construction schedule, concurrent construction along with other individual development projects, and other

parameters, the short-term construction emissions generated by a single development project and/or multiple development projects within the Planning Area could exceed SLOAPCD criteria pollutant thresholds. As a result, short-term air quality impacts would be considered potentially significant.

The 2045 General Plan includes numerous goals, policies, and action items that would help to reduce criteria pollutant emissions commonly associated with construction and operational activities. These include the goals, policies, and associated actions identified under Impact AQ-1 (specifically Policy REC-7.1, and associated Action A, Policies PSI-6.1, PSI-6.2, MO-1.2 through MO-1.6, MO-4.1 through MO-4.5, MO-5.1 through MO-5.3, MO-6.1, MO-6.2, and LU-2.3 through LU-2.5).

The City of Atascadero development review process requires a review of consistency with local and state policies, including SLOAPCD regulations and CEQA. Consistent with existing practices, each new discretionary development project associated with community buildout pursuant with the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be required to be reviewed for consistency with these policies to help reduce local and regional impacts. Potentially significant impacts would require implementation of additional project-specific mitigation measures to further reduce project-generated emissions and associated air quality impacts; however, given the region's current nonattainment status (see Figure 4.3-1) and uncertainty regarding the timing and intensity of development activities, the need for project-specific mitigation measures for individual development projects and the effectiveness of future mitigation for individual development projects, short-term and long-term air quality impacts would be *significant and unavoidable*.

Impact AQ-2
The project would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants for which the project region is non-attainment.
Mitigation Measures
No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

c) Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

IMPACT AQ-3: THE PROJECT COULD EXPOSE SENSITIVE RECEPTORS TO SUBSTANTIAL POLLUTANT CONCENTRATIONS. *(SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE [CLASS I])*

Sensitive receptors include schools, parks and playgrounds, day care facilities, nursing homes, hospitals, and residential dwelling units. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would include facilitation of the development of land uses considered to be sensitive receptors, as well as new development near existing sensitive receptors. Whereas much of the land uses are remaining the same as exist today, the 2045 General Plan includes increased residential densities within the urban core and supports redevelopment of existing underutilized parcels across all land use types. Activities associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could potentially include short-term, construction sources of TACs and long-term, operational sources of TACs, including stationary and mobile sources. As noted

earlier in this report, TACs are a defined set of airborne pollutants that may pose a present or potential hazard to human health and $PM_{2.5}$ can cause a wide range of health effects.

Short-Term Construction Emissions

Construction projects can result in short-term increases of TACs, as well as emissions of airborne fugitive dust. Emissions of DPM emitted from construction vehicles is of particular concern. Exposure to DPM results in a greater incidence of chronic non-cancer health effects, such as cough, labored breathing, chest tightness, wheezing, and bronchitis; however, various other TACs from diesel exhaust also contribute to both cancer and non-cancer health risks. Construction-generated emissions of $PM_{2.5}$ can also contribute to significant health impacts, particularly among the more sensitive population groups (i.e., children, elderly, etc.).

In addition to emissions of DPM, other pollutants of potential localized concern include, but are not limited to, fugitive dust, airborne asbestos; as well as, airborne *Coccidioides* fungus spores, which may contribute to increased occurrences of Valley Fever (also called coccidioidomycosis or "cocci"). Emissions of fugitive dust are largely dependent on the area of potential disturbance and environmental conditions at the site, such as wind speeds, wind direction, soil moisture content. Airborne concentrations of asbestos can occur during demolition of older structures that contain ACMs; as well as the disturbance of asbestos-containing soils. Some areas identified by the SLOAPCD as having potential to contain NOA have been generally identified within the western areas of the Planning Area (see Figure 4.3-1). Valley Fever is a disease caused by the *Coccidioides* fungus that grows in the soil and dirt in some areas of California and tends to be more prevalent in drier, previously undisturbed soils. The disturbance of such soils may result in increases in occurrences of Valley Fever (AMBIENT 2026a).

The amount of emissions generated during construction of individual projects and potential to result in increased exposure of individuals to airborne pollutants would vary depending on numerous factors, including the size of the development, the type, age and number of pieces of equipment required, and hours of use, site conditions, and environmental conditions. Furthermore, it is anticipated that multiple construction projects could occur simultaneously within a given year and within a given area. Without detailed construction information (i.e., construction schedules, demolition, grading, excavation, and construction requirements), construction-generated emissions of TACs and other airborne pollutants of local concern associated with individual development projects cannot be quantified at this time. The City complies with all state and local regulations through the entitlement and permitting process. Current regulations mitigate some level of exposure; however, mitigation for larger-scale developments are project specific and, for the purpose of the General Plan Update and implementing Zoning Code amendments, those mitigation measures are identified at the time of entitlement review. Although site-specific details of future projects in the Planning Area are not known at this time, it is reasonable to assume that construction TAC emissions associated with one or more projects developed under implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update have the potential to expose sensitive receptors to substantial TAC concentrations. For example, several sites that are currently undeveloped or underutilized could be redeveloped with higher-intensity projects. While most land uses would remain the same as those that exist today, the 2045 General Plan encourages infill development in proximity to existing residences. As a result, exposing these existing sensitive receptors to DPM emissions could have the potential to exceed the SLOAPCD's thresholds of significance, and exposure of sensitive receptors to short-term construction emissions would be considered potentially significant (AMBIENT 2026a).

Long-Term Operational Emissions

TOXIC AIR CONTAMINANTS

Development of future land uses may include potential stationary sources of TACs, such as diesel-powered emergency-use power generators. The type and level of TAC emissions emitted would depend upon the nature of the land use and the specific methods and operations that involve toxic air emissions. Pursuant to SLOAPCD rules and regulations, such as SLOAPCD Rule 219 (Toxics New Source Review Rule), new and modified stationary sources of emissions are required to mitigate emissions using BACT and to offset emissions when above thresholds.

In addition to the long-term exposure to stationary emission sources, new land uses may also be exposed to emissions from mobile sources. Major roadways of potential concern with regard to mobile-source TACs typically include roadways with average daily traffic (ADT) volumes of 100,000 or more. Within the Planning Area, U.S. 101 is considered the primary source of mobile-source TAC emissions. ADT volumes along U.S. 101 within the City range from approximately 55,000 to approximately 65,000 (AMBIENT 2026a).

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could include opportunities for new development and redevelopment near sources of TACs, including U.S. 101, industrial land uses, or dry cleaners. In addition, depending on the type of future development, some projects contribute substantially to existing vehicle traffic on area roadways, particularly diesel-fueled heavy-duty trucks associated with industrial development. The development pattern in the 2045 General Plan generally follows similar land use patterns as the existing 2025 General Plan with an increased emphasis on infill development and increased residential density within the urban core. Some multifamily and mixed-use areas have been expanded to accommodate housing needs in areas adjacent to existing residential development. While land use patterns remain similar to today, additional development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan could result in the exposure of sensitive receptors to mobile-sources of TACs. Given that future development could potentially result in increased long-term exposure of sensitive land uses to TACs, this impact would be considered potentially significant (AMBIENT 2026a).

MOBILE-SOURCE CARBON MONOXIDE

Community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would result in new development or redevelopment that would generate additional vehicle trips on area roadways. Areas with high vehicle density, such as congested intersections, have the potential to create concentrations of CO ("CO hotspots") and could potentially expose sensitive receptors to harmful levels of pollution. Localized CO concentrations are the result of the volume of cars along the road and the level of emissions generated by vehicles, rather than the flow of traffic. Vehicle CO emissions have declined over time due to stringent State standards for vehicle emissions and would continue to decline as more stringent standards are put in place. However, CO hotspots can occur if large numbers of vehicles are concentrated on a roadway. This becomes a concern when the LOS of a given roadway is negatively affected by a project. Of particular concern are major signalized intersections that operate at unacceptable levels of service (i.e., LOS E, or worse). According to the *CEQA Transportation Memorandum for the Atascadero General Plan Update* and the *2045 General Plan Existing Conditions Report – Chapter 4: Transportation and Mobility* (EIR Appendix J), the signalized intersection of El Camino Real/San Anselmo Road is projected to operate at LOS F under future cumulative conditions. Therefore, long-term exposure to localized CO concentrations would be considered potentially significant.

2045 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES THAT PROVIDE MITIGATION

The 2045 General Plan focuses on infill development of existing parcels, and areas within the urban core are designated for higher density residential uses but generally remain within the same land use pattern as the existing 2025 General Plan. No changes are proposed to areas that are currently zoned for industrial uses; however, the 2045 General Plan acknowledges and supports compatibility between residential and nonresidential uses. The 2045 General Plan includes policies pertaining to short-term and long-term exposure to localize pollutant concentrations. These include Policy REC-7.1, and associated Action A identified under Impact AQ-1, As well as the following policies from the 2045 General Plan:

- **Policy LU-4.3: Buffer Industrial Uses.** Provide buffers between industrial and residential uses. Focus heavy industrial sites away from residential uses.
- **Policy REC-3.3: Grading.** Prevent unnecessary intensive grading of development sites.

The 2045 General Plan policies REC-7.1, and Action Item A, and REC-3.3 would help to minimize construction-generated fugitive dust associated with future land use development projects. In addition, Policy LU-4.3 would provide buffer areas between industrial and residential land uses that would help to minimize potential exposure to operational TACs. The City complies with all permitting requirements and state laws related to construction-level impacts. Consistent with the City's current practices, future discretionary development projects associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be evaluated for consistency with SLOAPCD's recommended guidance. In accordance with the SLOAPCD's guidance, future development projects would be evaluated for potential short-term, as well as long-term exposure to localized pollutants, including emissions of TACs and other airborne pollutants, such as asbestos, CO, and *Coccidioides* fungus spores. The 2045 General Plan policies minimize short- and long-term exposure to localized pollution, and no additional mitigation measures beyond those included in the 2045 General Plan were identified as necessary to comply with state and local regulations. Even with consistency with SLOAPCD guidance, it is conceivable that some development projects may be large enough or close enough to a sensitive receptor that applicable project-level significance thresholds would be exceeded. In the event that a significant impact is identified for an individual project, the SLOAPCD-recommended mitigation measures would be recorded in individual project's CEQA analysis and would be required to reduce project-related impacts; however, even with mitigation, it may not be possible to reduce potential emissions of TACs or exposure to localized airborne pollutants and all health-related risks to nearby receptors to levels below the SLOAPCD-recommended significance thresholds. As a result, this impact would be considered *significant and unavoidable*.

Impact AQ-3
The project could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.
Mitigation Measures
No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

d) Would the project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

IMPACT AQ-4: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN OTHER EMISSIONS (SUCH AS THOSE LEADING TO ODORS) ADVERSELY AFFECTING A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT [CLASS III])*

The occurrence and severity of odor impacts depend on numerous factors, including the nature, frequency, and intensity of the source, wind speed and direction, and the sensitivity of the receptors. While offensive odors rarely cause any physical harm, they still can be very unpleasant, leading to considerable distress among the public and often generating citizen complaints to local governments and regulatory agencies. Projects with the potential to frequently expose members of the public to objectionable odors would be deemed to have a significant impact.

Due to the subjective nature of odor impacts, the number of variables that can influence the potential for an odor impact, and the variety of odor sources, there are no quantitative or formulaic methodologies to determine if potential odors would have a significant impact. Project-specific analysis would be assessed for new development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update.

The intensity of an odor source's operations and its proximity to sensitive receptors influences the potential significance of odor emissions. Land uses that typically produce objectionable odors with the potential to affect a substantial number of people include landfills, rendering plants, chemical plants, agricultural uses, wastewater treatment plants, refineries, fast food restaurants, bakeries, and coffee roasting facilities. California Health and Safety Code Section 41700 states that "a person shall not discharge from any source whatsoever air contaminants . . . that cause injury, detriment, nuisance or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or the public, or that endanger the comfort, repose, health or safety of any of those persons or the public." This is supported by SLOAPCD Rule 402, *Nuisance*, which prohibits the discharge of air contaminants or other materials, including odors, that would cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to a considerable number of individuals. Additionally, the 2045 General Plan includes policies to discourage the siting of residential uses and sensitive receptors in close proximity to industrial sites, which are often associated with odors, and vice versa (Policy LU-4.3). As a result, with compliance with SLOAPCD Rule 402 and proposed project policies, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not result in the exposure of a substantial number of people to objectionable odors. This impact would be considered *less than significant*.

Impact AQ-4
The project would not result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.3.5.2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

a) Would the project generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

b) Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

IMPACT GHG-1: THE PROJECT COULD GENERATE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, THAT MAY RESULT IN A SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND COULD CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE PLANS, POLICIES, OR REGULATIONS ADOPTED TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS. *(SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE [CLASS I])*

To evaluate whether the project's GHG emissions would result in a potentially significant environmental impact, the applicable regulatory framework and the project's consistency with relevant state, regional, and local plans, policies, and regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions were considered. Because these considerations collectively inform whether GHG emissions would conflict with established reduction strategies, the analysis addressing both State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G GHG checklist questions is presented in a single, consolidated discussion.

Annual operational emissions associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update are summarized in Table 4.3-11. As noted in Table 4.3-11, estimated increases in GHG emissions attributable to the 2045 General Plan would total approximately 145,588 $MTCO_2e$/year, with the inclusion of natural gas use. On a service-population (SP) basis, net increases in GHG emissions would be approximately 14.9 $MTCO_2e$/SP. This analysis is based on the information available at the time of preparation of this EIR, including projected net increases in population, development, and VMT associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update. Which were used to calculate associated net increases in GHG emissions. It does not include a community-wide analysis of emissions under 2045 conditions; therefore, a comparative analysis of community-wide emissions for baseline vs. future General Plan Update conditions was not conducted.

Estimated increases in GHG emissions were predominantly associated with increases in motor vehicle use. To a lesser extent, energy consumption, waste generation, water use, and area sources also contribute to overall increases in projected future community-wide GHG emissions. It is important to note that estimated year 2045 GHG emissions are conservative and do not fully account for future GHG reductions associated with existing and future building standards and/or regulations related to motor vehicle emission standards. In addition, the recent rescission of the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding by the USEPA, which was issued on February 12, 2026, has resulted in significant increases in projected future-year mobile-source GHG emissions. As noted earlier in this report, the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding served as a prerequisite for regulating emissions from new motor vehicles and new motor vehicle engines; as well as all subsequent federal GHG emissions standards promulgated pursuant to the Endangerment Finding. In response to the rescission of the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding by the USEPA, the CARB has released EMFAC adjustment factors that are to be applied to on-road mobiles sources, which consider various vehicle classifications and fuel sources (AMBIENT 2026a). To be conservative, EMFAC adjustment factors were based on the highest values noted for the various vehicle classifications and fuel sources. As a result, actual future-year GHG emissions may be lower than estimated depending on future changes related to GHG-emission reduction efforts and associated state and federal regulatory requirements.

Table 4.3-11. Annual Operational GHG Emissions at Buildout

Source	Annual Emissions ($MTCO_2e$/Year)[1]
Mobile[3]	133,857.1
Energy Use[2,4]	8,746.6
Area[4]	1,213.8
Water[4,5]	582.3
Waste[4]	1,163.7
Refrigerants[4]	24.4
Total	**145,588**
Service Population (Residents + Employees)	9,781
$MTCO_2e$/SP	14.9

Source: AMBIENT (2026a).

Notes:

[1] Emissions were quantified using the CalEEMod computer program based on projected future development associated with implementation of the General Plan Update.

[2] Includes natural gas use. Excludes wood burning hearths per SLOAPCD Rule 4901.

[3] Emissions quantified based on trip-generation rates derived from the traffic analysis prepared for this project (CCTC 2025). Includes EMFAC2021 off-model adjustment factors (CARB 2025).

[4] Emissions associated with area sources, water use, energy use, refrigerants, and waste generation were quantified based on projected increases in future development, by land use type, and default usage/generation rates identified in the CalEEMod computer program for San Luis Obispo County.

[5] Includes the use of low-flow water fixtures per current building standards.

Totals may not sum due to rounding. Refer to EIR Appendix C for emissions modeling assumptions and results.

Consistency with CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality

The 2022 Climate Change Scoping Plan is the most comprehensive and far-reaching Scoping Plan developed to date. It identifies a technologically feasible and cost-effective path to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 while also assessing the progress California is making toward meeting the State's year 2030 GHG-reduction goals. The 2030 target is an important but interim step toward achieving the State's future-year GHG-reduction and carbon-neutrality goals.

To achieve the State's future-year GHG-reduction goals, including carbon neutrality by 2045, the State will need to reduce emissions from carbon-based sources commonly associated with community development. The 2022 Scoping Plan identifies numerous action items in support of the State's future-year GHG-reduction goals. Such action items include, to the extent possible, the installation of all-electric appliances for new residential and commercial development, replacement of residential and commercial-use natural gas appliances with electric appliances at end of life, prevention of conversion of natural land, provision of lower income affordable housing, and incorporation of smart-growth measures that would support reductions in VMT and associated mobile-source emissions. The 2022 Scoping Plan also emphasizes reducing transportation-sector emissions through strategies such as promoting compact land use patterns, expanding ZEVs, improving transit, and reducing VMT through multimodal transportation planning.

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update incorporates smart-growth measures that support reductions in VMT and associated mobile-source emissions. The 2045 General Plan uses a designator system consisting of "Placetypes." Each Placetype category defines both the primary uses of land allowed and the character of those uses. For instance, the Mixed-Use Placetype is intended to promote a flexible and compatible mix of residential and commercial uses in focused areas. The Downtown Mixed-Use Placetype encourages an eclectic and complementary mix of uses, pedestrian-scale development, and locally owned retail and restaurant businesses with upper-story residential and office units. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update are expected to result in reductions in vehicle trips/trip lengths, improved accessibility

to alternative means of transportation (e.g., transit), and overall reductions in VMT due to encouragement of development in and around the Urban Reserve Line. For a comprehensive discussion of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update's reductions in VMT, see Section 4-14, *Transportation*. In addition, the City's jobs-housing ratio would improve from 0.77 to 0.83. Numerous other goals and policies have been included in the 2045 General Plan that would support regional transportation planning efforts, including policies to improve accessibility to transit, bicycle and public transit improvements, Park and Ride lots, traffic flow improvements, and various other policies intended to reduce vehicle use and VMT (Policies MO 1.2–1.4 and 1.6; MO-4.1–4.5; MO-5.1–5.3; and LU-2.3–2.5). In addition, the 2045 General Plan includes policies that would encourage energy-efficient site planning and building design/construction and incorporation of on-site renewable energy systems. Accordingly, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update incorporate smart-growth measures that support reductions in VMT and associated mobile-source emissions.

However, even with implementation of the 2045 General Plan goals and policies, the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would generate residential and employment-based VMT at levels that are above LUCI's recommended thresholds. In addition, the 2045 General Plan does not include policies for encouraging all-electric development of future residential and commercial land uses. As a result, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be inconsistent with the 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality; resulting in a *potentially significant impact*.

Consistency with SLOCOG's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The RTP includes the region's SCS, which outlines how the region will exceed its GHG-reduction targets as required by SB 375 through the promotion of a variety of transportation demand management & system management tools and techniques to maximize the efficiency of the transportation network. Consistency with the requirement of SB 375 ensures consistency with the GHG-reduction targets set by CARB. The 2023 SCS was found to be consistent with the requirement of SB 375 and is also consistent with the existing general plans of the region's jurisdictions (AMBIENT 2026a).

As noted above, the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is expected to result in reductions in vehicle trips/trip lengths and improved accessibility to alternative means of transportation (e.g., transit). In addition, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not be anticipated to result in a wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy associated with future development, as discussed in further detail in the section below. As outlined in Section 4.9, *Land Use and Planning*, the goals, policies, and actions included in the 2045 General Plan Update are generally consistent with the goals and policies established within SLOCOG's RTP/SCS.

Consistency with the City of Atascadero Climate Action Plan

The City of Atascadero Climate Action Plan is a long-range policy document intended to cost-effectively reduce GHG emissions from City government operations and community activities within Atascadero. Appendix C of the City's Climate Action Plan contains a Climate Action Plan Consistency Worksheet. The CAP worksheet includes various mandatory and voluntary GHG-reduction measures that projects can implement to demonstrate consistency with the City's Climate Action Plan. These project-level mandatory measures include the following (City of Atascadero 2014):

- **Measure TL-1:** Bicycle Network.
    - Incorporation of bicycle lanes, routes, and/or shared use paths into street system, as currently required by the General Plan and Municipal Code, to provide a continuous network or routes, facilitated with markings, signage, and bicycle parking.

- **Measure TL-2:** Pedestrian Network.
    - Provide a pedestrian access network that internally links all uses and connects all existing or planned external streets and pedestrian facilities contiguous with the project site, as currently required by the General Plan and Municipal Code.
    - Minimize barriers to pedestrian access and interconnectivity, as currently required by the General Plan and Municipal Code.
    - Implement traffic-calming improvements as appropriate (e.g., marked crosswalks, count-down signal timers, curb extensions, speed tables, raised crosswalks, median islands, mini-circles, tight corner radii, etc.), as currently required by the General Plan and Municipal Code.
- **Measure TL-3:** Expand Transit Network.
    - Provide safe and convenient access to public transit within and/or contiguous to the project area, as currently required by the General Plan and Municipal Code
- **Measure TL-8:** Atascadero General Plan.
    - Consistent with the City's land use and zoning code.
- **Measure S-1:** Solid Waste Diversion Rate.
    - If the project involves demolition, divert 70 percent of non-hazardous debris.

The mandatory measures identified above must be incorporated as binding and enforceable components of a project for it to be found consistent with the Climate Action Plan. If the project cannot meet one or more of the mandatory measures, voluntary or other City-approved measures may be substituted provided the measures would achieve equivalent GHG reductions. Additional voluntary measures include those related to reducing GHG emissions from the energy, transportation, and land use sectors.

The 2045 General Plan includes numerous goals and policies that would reduce GHG emissions, specifically those associated with the energy, transportation, and land use sectors, consistent with the Climate Action Plan worksheet. As noted earlier in this report, these goals and policies include the promotion of emerging mobility technologies; promotion of alternative means of transportation; providing safe, functional, and appealing multimodal mobility alternatives; promoting clean, renewable energy systems; and various measures to reduce regional and local VMT.

It is important to note that the City's Climate Action Plan was developed to address the State's year 2020 GHG emissions-reduction target, as established under AB 32. The City's Climate Action Plan has not been updated to address the State's more recent GHG-reduction targets for future years, including the 2030-2035 GHG-reduction targets and carbon-neutrality goals. The goals and policies contained in the 2045 GPU/ZCU would facilitate future project consistency with the City's current Climate Action Plan, as well as GHG reductions in support of the State's current GHG-reduction targets for future years, including the 2030-2035 GHG-reduction targets and carbon-neutrality goals. As a result, the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update would be considered consistent with the City's Climate Action Plan (AMBIENT 2026a).

Consistency with Other State Regulations

As discussed above, systemic changes will be required at the state level to achieve California's future GHG-reduction goals. Regulations, such as future amendments and updates to the State's low-carbon and renewable energy, energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction regulations will be necessary to attain the magnitude of reductions required for the State's goals. Implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be required to comply with these regulations. In addition, Mitigation

Measure (MM) GHG-1.1 would incorporate a policy in to the 2045 General Plan requiring the update of the City's Climate Action Plan to identify ways to achieve GHG reductions in support of the State's future GHG-reduction efforts. Thus, for the foreseeable future, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not conflict with any other applicable State-level regulations pertaining to GHG emissions.

Conclusion

Because the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would conflict with CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan, this impact would be considered potentially significant. The 2045 General Plan includes numerous goals, policies, and action items that would help to reduce criteria pollutant emissions, energy demands, and VMT. These include those goals, policies and associated action item list in the previous discussion of Impact AQ-1.

Implementation of GHG-1.1 would incorporate a policy in to the 2045 General Plan requiring the update of the City's Climate Action Plan to identify ways to achieve GHG reductions in support of the State's future GHG-reduction efforts. MM GHG-1.2 would incorporate a policy into the 2045 General Plan to require implementation of additional measures for land use development projects in support of the State's 2045 carbon-neutrality goal. MM GHG-1.3 would incorporate a policy into the 2045 General Plan requiring that the City participate in SLOCOG's Sustainable Communities Strategy/Regional Blueprint Planning effort to ensure that local development plans and associated population and employment growth are consistent with the RTP/SCS; however, although policies contained in the 2045 General Plan, proposed Mitigation Measures, and implementation of future regulatory requirements would reduce the GHG emissions at buildout, the extent of GHG reductions attributable to these measures cannot be accurately quantified at this time and projected future-year GHG emissions could potentially exceed applicable thresholds given uncertainties in the timing and effectiveness of these measures. In addition, projected increases in VMT attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would still exceed applicable LUCI thresholds as discussed in Section 4-14, Transportation. Therefore, this impact would be considered *significant and unavoidable*.

Impact GHG-1	
The project could generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may result in a significant environmental impact and could conflict with applicable plans, policies, or regulations adopted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	
Mitigation Measures	
MM GHG-1.1	*The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption:* *Update the City of Atascadero Climate Action Plan to identify ways to reduce GHG emissions and limit climate change impacts on the residents to the extent possible. The Climate Action Plan shall integrate the State's future GHG-reduction goals, such as the State's goal of attaining carbon neutrality by 2045.*
MM GHG-1.2	*The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption:* *Until the City adopts a qualified Climate Action Plan consistent with MM GHG-1, the City shall incorporate development standards into the Municipal Code for new development projects located along existing or planned public transit routes that require features that promote the use of public transit. Examples include the installation of sidewalks or pathways that facilitate ease of access from on-site locations to nearby transit stops, installation of transit improvements (e.g., benches, bus turnouts) for future planned transit stops located adjacent to the development site.*

Impact GHG-1	
MM GHG-1.3	*The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption:* *The City shall participate in SLOCOG's Sustainable Communities Strategy/Regional Blueprint Planning effort to help increase consistency between local development plans and associated population and employment growth and the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy.*
Residual Impacts	
Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).	

4.3.5.3 Energy

a) Would the project result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

IMPACT EN-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN A POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT DUE TO WASTEFUL, INEFFICIENT, OR UNNECESSARY CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY RESOURCES, DURING PROJECT CONSTRUCTION OR OPERATION. (*LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III]*)

As discussed below, implementation of the proposed project would increase electricity, diesel, gasoline, and natural gas consumption associated with construction activities, as well as long-term operational activities.

Construction-Related Energy Consumption

Energy consumption associated with construction of projects resulting from implementation of the 2045 General Plan would include fuel use associated with the on-site operation of off-road equipment and vehicles traveling to and from the construction site. The CBC includes specific requirements related to recycling, construction materials, and energy efficiency standards that would apply to construction of future development envisioned by the 2045 General Plan and would minimize wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary energy consumption. Construction and operation of projects facilitated by the implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be required to comply with relevant provisions of CBC and Title 24 of the California Energy Code, which would avoid wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary energy consumption. Title 8 of the Atascadero Municipal code would ensure that construction and operation of developments facilitated by the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be required to comply with relevant provisions of CalGreen and Energy Code, as well as the City's Water Efficient Landscapes Ordinance, which would further avoid wasteful, inefficient or unnecessary energy consumption. As a result, the construction of proposed facilities and improvements would not result in an inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy.

Operational Mobile-Source Energy Consumption

Operational mobile-source energy consumption would be primarily associated with fuel use associated with vehicle trips attributable to the proposed land uses. Table 4.3-12 summarizes annual fuel use for the County; as well as net increases in fuel use associated with the 2045 General Plan. As noted in Table 4.3-12, the County consumed an estimated 14,943,147 million metric British thermal units (MMBTU) of gasoline fuel and 10,420,451 MMBTU of diesel fuel in 2024. Net increases in fuel use associated with the 2045 General

Plan would total approximately 147,833 MMBTU of gasoline and 103,090 MMBTU of diesel fuel. On an SP basis, the County's fuel usage equates to 36.6 MMBTU/SP for gasoline and 25.5 MMBTU/SP for diesel. By comparison, fuel usage associated with the 2045 General Plan would be 15.1 MMBTU/SP for gasoline and 10.5 MMBTU/SP for diesel fuel. While the overall fuel consumption would increase with the adoption of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, the efficiency of the fuel usage would improve when compared to the County average. The development of increasingly efficient automobile engines would further increase energy efficiency and energy conservation. In addition, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update focuses future development in and around the Urban Reserve Line, consolidating services and amenities close to where people live and work. By doing so, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would minimize the need to drive and could reduce per capita energy consumption and GHGs. Moreover, the following General Plan policies support efficient mobile-source energy consumption and align with State policies:MO-1.2, MO-1.4, MO-4.1 through 4.4, MO-5.1 through MO-5.3 and LU 2.3 through LU-2.5. As a result, operational mobile-source energy consumption associated with the project would not result in inefficient, wasteful or unnecessary consumption of energy.

Table 4.3-12. Operational Fuel Consumption

Jurisdiction/Scenario	Gasoline (MMBTU/Year)	Diesel (MMBTU/Year)
San Luis Obispo County (Year 2024)[1]	14,943,147	10,420,451
2045 General Plan Update[2]	147,833	103,090
Annual Usage Rates/Service Population		
San Luis Obispo County (Year 2024)	36.6	25.5
2045 General Plan Update	15.1	10.5

Source: AMBIENT (2026b); see Appendix D for modeling assumptions and results.

Notes:

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

[1] Based on County of San Luis Obispo year 2024 population of 281,843 individuals and 126,927 employees (U.S. Census Bureau 2024).

[2] Based on City of Atascadero 2045 General Plan net increase in population of 6,596 individuals and 3,185 employees.

Operational Building-Use Energy Consumption

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would result in increased electricity and natural gas consumption associated with the long-term operation of the proposed land uses. It is important to note that buildings included in the 2045 General Plan would be required to comply with Title 24 standards for energy efficiency, which would include increased building insulation and energy-efficiency requirements, including the use of energy-efficient lighting, energy-efficient appliances, and use of low-flow water fixtures.

Table 4.3-13 summarizes annual electricity and natural gas use for the County; as well as net increases in energy use attributable to the 2045 General Plan. Because comprehensive City-wide electricity and natural gas consumption data is not currently available, County electricity consumption was used for this analysis. As noted in Table 4.3-13, the County consumed an estimated 1,681,400,000 kWh per year (kWh/year) of electricity and 84,200,000 therms/year of natural gas in 2024. Net increases in energy use associated with the 2045 General Plan would total approximately 35,374,663 kWh/year of electricity and 1,022,265 therms/year of natural gas. On an SP basis, the County's energy usage equates to 4,113 kWh/SP for electricity use and 206 therms/SP for natural gas use. By comparison, energy use associated with the 2045 General Plan would be 3,617 kWh/SP for electricity use and 105 therms/SP for natural gas. While overall energy consumption would increase with the adoption of the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, the efficiency of energy usage on an SP basis would improve when compared to the

County average. The 2045 General Plan includes various goals and policies that would reduce energy consumption attributable to new land uses, as well as goals and policies that would promote the use of alternative means of transportation and reductions in VMT (Policies PSI-6.1–6.2; REC-7.1; MO-1.2–1.4 and 1.6, MO-4.1–4.5; MO-5.1–5.3; and MO-6.1 and 6.2). As this EIR is a programmatic EIR and does not analyze impacts at the project-specific level, it would be speculative to analyze project-level impacts on energy consumption. Each future project will need to be analyzed for its energy consumption and its potential environmental impact along with its consistency with both General Plan, zoning, and energy policies adopted in the State Building Code. The General Plan includes multiple policies as stated above to reduce energy consumption, both during the construction of potential new projects and operationally, thus, the impacts associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update would be *less than significant*.

Table 4.3-13. Operational Electricity and Natural Gas Consumption

Jurisdiction/Scenario	Gasoline (MMBTU/Year)	Diesel (MMBTU/Year)
San Luis Obispo County (Year 2024)[1]	1,681,400,000	84,200,000
2045 General Plan Update[2]	35,374,663	1,022,265
Annual Usage Rates/Service Population		
San Luis Obispo County (Year 2024)	4,113 kWh/SP	206 therms/SP
2045 General Plan Update	3,617 kWh/SP	105 therms/SP

Source: AMBIENT (2026b); see Appendix D for modeling assumptions and results.

Notes: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

[1] Based on County of San Luis Obispo year 2024 population of 281,843 individuals and 126,927 employees (U.S. Census 2024).

[2] Based on City of Atascadero 2045 General Plan net increase in population of 6,596 individuals and 3,185 employees.

Impact EN-1
The project would not result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation would be considered less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

IMPACT EN-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH OR OBSTRUCT A STATE OR LOCAL PLAN FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY OR ENERGY EFFICIENCY. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Proposed land uses associated with the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be required to be in full compliance with the CBC, including applicable green building standards and building energy efficiency standards. At the federal level, vehicle fuel economy and emissions standards established under the Clean Air Act, the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, and the CAFE program require increasingly efficient vehicle fleets and reduced fuel consumption, which would reduce operational transportation energy use associated with future development. At the state level, development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan would be required to comply with the CBC and Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, including CalGreen requirements that promote energy-efficient building design, solar photovoltaic systems for many building types, electric-ready infrastructure, and efficient lighting and appliances. In addition, statewide climate and energy policies such as AB 32, SB 32, SB 350, SB 100, and the CARB Climate Change Scoping Plan promote increased renewable energy generation, energy efficiency improvements, electrification of buildings and vehicles, and reductions in VMT. Because future development under the 2045 General Plan would be required to adhere to these federal and state standards and programs, the project would support broader efforts to improve energy efficiency and transition to cleaner energy sources.

The 2045 General Plan itself provides policies that are designed specifically to reduce energy consumption or to reduce other types of pollutants that have the co-benefit of reducing energy consumption. Policies PSI-6.1 and PSI-6.2 promote the efficient use of utilities and infrastructure and support energy-efficient building practices; Policy REC-7.1 encourages sustainable community design and development practices that reduce resource and energy consumption; and transportation and land use policies such as MO-1.2 through MO-1.6, MO-4.1 through MO-4.5, MO-5.1 through MO-5.3, MO-6.1 and MO-6.2, and LU-2.3 through LU-2.5 promote compact development patterns, multimodal transportation, and reductions in vehicle trips and VMT, which would reduce transportation-related energy demand. For these reasons, implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not be anticipated to conflict with or obstruct state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency. This impact would be considered *less than significant*.

Impact EN-2
The project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to conflict with or obstruction of a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency would be considered less than significant (Class III).

4.3.6 Cumulative Impacts

4.3.6.1 Air Quality

IMPACT AQ-5: THE PROJECT WOULD RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS ASSOCIATED PROJECTED LONG-TERM INCREASES IN VMT AND MOBILE-SOURCE EMISSIONS. *(SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT [CLASS I])*

The geographic area of cumulative air quality analysis includes the City of Atascadero and the broader San Luis Obispo County air basin. This geographic scope is appropriate because air pollutants, including ozone precursors and fine PM, disperse beyond individual project boundaries and contribute to regional air quality conditions that are evaluated and regulated at the air basin level. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would apply only to land located within the Planning Area; however, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would incrementally contribute to cumulative air pollutant emissions within the regional air basin in combination with growth occurring elsewhere in the County.

Implementation of the 2045 General Plan would incorporate numerous goals, policies, and actions that are generally consistent with the SLOAPCD CAP, including compact development patterns, mixed-use land uses, improved multimodal transportation, and an improved jobs-housing ratio, all of which would reduce VMT on a per capita basis relative to the existing 2025 General Plan. However, build-out under the 2045 General Plan would result in population levels exceeding those assumed in the most recent SLOCOG regional growth forecasts, and total VMT would exceed LUCI-recommended thresholds. Because these thresholds are intended to support statewide air quality and GHG-reduction goals, exceedance of the thresholds indicates that mobile-source emission reductions assumed in the SLOACPD's CAP may not be fully achieved. As a result, implementation of the 2045 General Plan would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan, and this impact would be cumulatively considerable and *significant and unavoidable*.

San Luis Obispo County is in nonattainment for ozone under the state standard. Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would result in increased construction and long-term operational emissions of criteria pollutants. Construction emissions would be temporary but potentially cumulatively considerable due to overlapping development activity and the absence of plan-level construction thresholds. Long-term operational emissions would increase due to additional vehicle trips and stationary sources and, despite VMT-reducing policies, total VMT would exceed applicable thresholds. Future discretionary development projects would be evaluated for short-term construction and long-term operational air quality impacts in accordance with SLOAPCD-recommended guidance and would be required to implement project-specific mitigation, as feasible; however, given the region's nonattainment status and uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of future project-level mitigation, cumulative criteria pollutant impacts would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

Implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would also increase the potential for cumulative exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations from both short-term construction activity and long-term mobile and stationary sources, including areas near U.S. 101 and congested intersections. General Plan policies related to dust control, grading limitations and land use buffering, together with current discretionary project review practices, would help to minimize exposure to localized pollutants through project-level evaluation and implementation of SLOAPCD-recommended measures; however, even with these policies and mitigation requirements, it may not be feasible to reduce all cumulative exposures below applicable significance thresholds. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to exposure of sensitive receptors would be *significant and unavoidable*.

Impact AQ-5
The project would result in cumulatively considerable impacts associated projected long-term increases in VMT and mobile-source emissions.
Mitigation Measures
No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

4.3.6.2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

IMPACT GHG-2: THE PROJECT WOULD RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH PROJECTED INCREASES IN VMT AND MOBILE-SOURCE EMISSIONS AND WOULD CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE STATE AND REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION PLANS. *(SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT [CLASS I])*

The geographic area of cumulative GHG emissions analysis includes the Planning Area and the broader San Luis Obispo County region, as well as the statewide context in which GHG-reduction goals are established and implemented. This geographic scope is appropriate because GHG emissions contribute to global climate change regardless of their point of origin, and their significance is evaluated relative to state and regional reduction targets. Although the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would apply only to land located within the City, development facilitated by the General Plan would incrementally contribute to cumulative GHG emissions in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable development occurring throughout the region and statewide.

Implementation of the 2045 General Plan would include numerous goals, policies, and actions that support reductions in GHG emissions, including compact development patterns, mixed-use land uses, improved multimodal transportation options, energy-efficient site planning and building design, and an improved jobs-housing ratio, all of which would reduce VMT on a per capita basis relative to the existing 2025 General Plan. In addition, implementation of MM GHG-1.1 would require the City to update its Climate Action Plan to identify additional strategies to achieve GHG reductions in support of the State's long-term climate goals. MM GHG-1.2 would require implementation of additional measures for future land use development projects to further reduce GHG emissions, and MM GHG-1.3 would require the City to participate in SLOCOG's RTP/SCS planning effort to improve consistency between local growth and regional transportation and GHG-reduction planning.

Implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would result in population levels exceeding those assumed in the most recent SLOCOG regional growth forecasts, and total residential and employment-based VMT would exceed LUCI-recommended thresholds. Because these thresholds are intended to support statewide GHG-reduction goals, exceedance of the thresholds indicates that projected reductions in mobile-source GHG emissions would not be fully achieved. As a result, long-term increases in VMT and associated mobile-source emissions would remain the primary contributor to cumulative GHG emissions.

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would result in long-term increases in operational GHG emissions, primarily from mobile sources, with additional contributions from energy use, waste generation, water use, and area sources.

Although the 2045 General Plan policies and mitigation measures identified would reduce GHG emissions relative to existing conditions, the magnitude and timing of reductions attributable to these measures cannot be accurately quantified at this time. In addition, the 2045 General Plan does not require all-electric development and would generate VMT at levels that are inconsistent with the assumptions underlying the State's 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality and SLOCOG's RTP/SCS.

Therefore, even with implementation of 2045 General Plan policies and MM GHG-1.1 through MM GHG-1.3, cumulative GHG emissions associated with long-term increases in VMT and mobile-source emissions would remain cumulatively considerable. Accordingly, cumulative impacts related to GHG emissions would be *significant and unavoidable*.

Impact GHG-2
The project would result in cumulatively considerable greenhouse gas emissions associated with projected increases in VMT and mobile-source emissions and would conflict with applicable state and regional greenhouse gas reduction plans.
Mitigation Measures
Implement Mitigation Measures GHG-1.1 through GHG-1.3.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

4.3.6.3 Energy

IMPACT EN-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN A CUMULATIVE IMPACT DUE TO WASTEFUL, INEFFICIENT, OR UNNECESSARY CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY RESOURCES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The discussion of project impacts in Section 4.3, above, is inherently cumulative, as it evaluates the potential effects of all future development within the City on energy consumption at a programmatic level. All future development that is consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update policies and actions and existing regulatory requirements, including the CBC and Title 24 of the California Energy Code, would be required to meet applicable energy efficiency standards and would not result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Although future development would collectively increase overall energy demand within the Planning Area, such increases are anticipated under both the existing General Plan and the 2045 General Plan Update and would occur at improved efficiency levels when evaluated on a service-population basis. Consequently, the collective effect of future development carried out under the proposed project, as analyzed herein, would not result in cumulatively considerable energy impacts.

Separate from the analysis above, future discretionary development projects in the City would be subject to project-specific environmental review under CEQA, including evaluation of potential energy impacts, and would be required to implement mitigation measures where appropriate. Even ministerial (i.e., nondiscretionary) projects would be subject to applicable state and local energy efficiency requirements through the City's development review and building permit processes. Accordingly, adherence to existing and future energy efficiency regulations would ensure that development under the project and any other future development in the City would not combine to result in cumulatively considerable energy impacts.

Although the project does not propose specific development at this time and would not directly consume energy, implementation of the project would result in increased construction-related and operational energy use. However, such energy consumption would be regulated through compliance with Title 24 energy efficiency standards, increasingly efficient building technologies, and 2045 General Plan policies that promote compact development patterns, reduced VMT, alternative transportation modes, and the use of renewable energy sources. These requirements and policies would promote efficient energy use and help avoid wasteful or unnecessary cumulative energy consumption. Therefore, the project would not create or contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact related to energy consumption, and cumulative energy impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact EN-3
The project would not result in a cumulative impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual cumulative impacts associated with cumulative impacts due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources would be less than significant (Class III).

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4.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section addresses the existing environmental conditions in the Planning Area and provides an assessment of the potential for direct and indirect impacts to sensitive natural communities, special-status species, regulated waterways and wetlands, sensitive habitat and mature native trees, and wildlife movement corridors. A summary of the relevant regulatory framework and existing conditions is provided, followed by an analysis of potential impacts and cumulative impacts associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan and the Zoning Code Update. Information in this section is based, in part, on the Existing Conditions Report (Chapter 5 – Biological Resources) that was prepared in support of the evaluation of impacts for biological resources for the project (Appendix E) (MIG, Inc.[MIG] 2024).

4.4.1 Existing Conditions

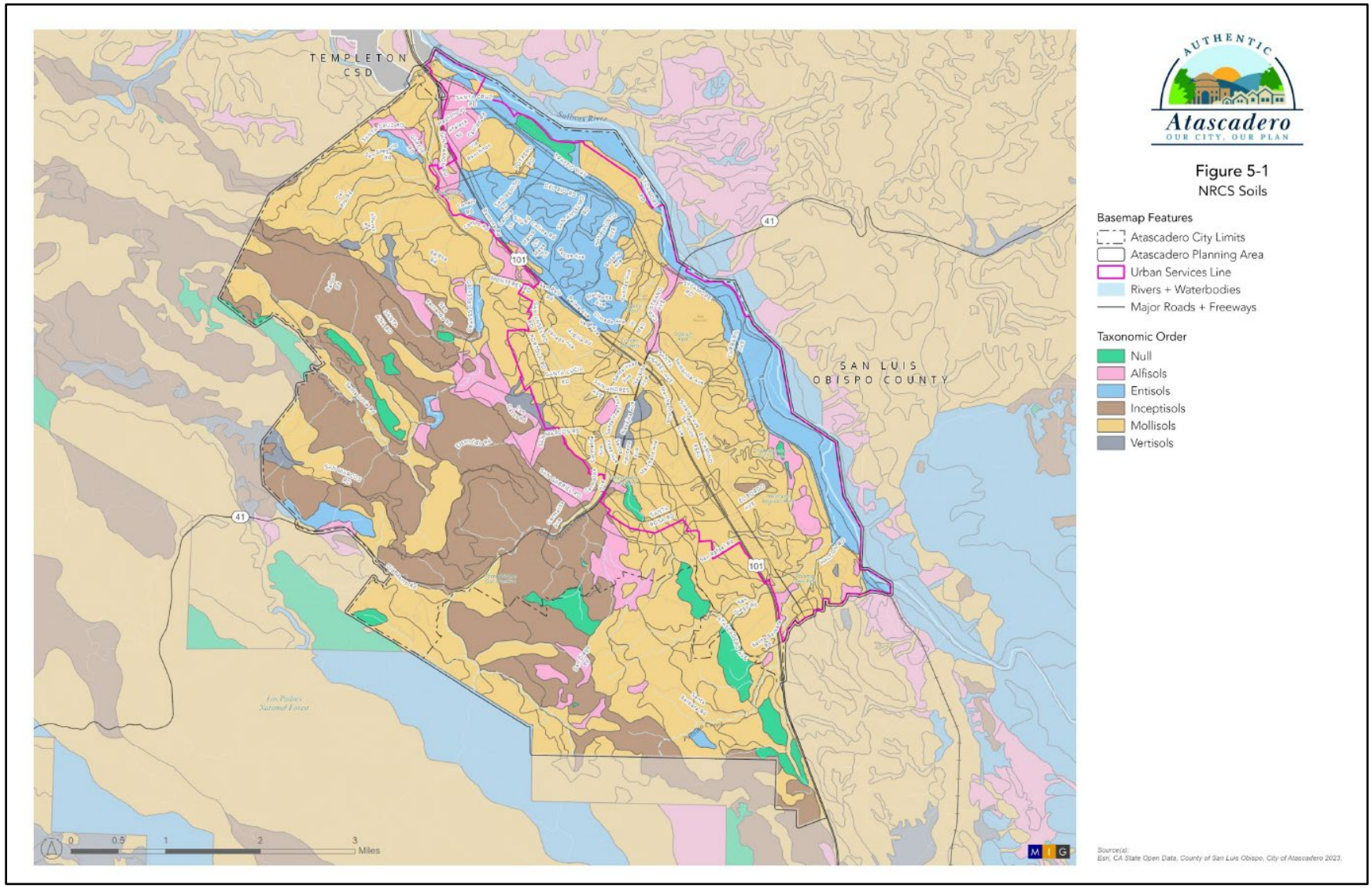
The Planning Area is in northern San Luis Obispo County, California, approximately 13 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. Atascadero is in the upper watershed of the Salinas River and is bordered by the Salinas River to the east and Santa Lucia Mountain Range to the west. Elevations within the study area range from 760 to 2,305 feet above mean sea level. The City is within the Interior Santa Lucia Range of the Central California Foothills and Coastal Mountains Ecoregion. The Interior Santa Lucia Range stretches southeast from near Greenfield in the Salinas Valley to near the Sisquoc River, east of the Santa Maria Valley. Dominant vegetation types include oak woodlands, mixed chaparral shrublands, and annual grasslands.

4.4.1.1 Climate

The climate in the Planning Area can be characterized as a typical Mediterranean climate of hot, dry summers and cool, moist winters. The average amount of annual precipitation is 15.3 inches (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA] 2021). Most of the precipitation occurs between November and March, with January being on average the wettest month with 3.44 inches of precipitation. Maximum average summer (May–September) temperatures range between 86 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) to 92°F, but there are often multiple days with temperatures reaching over 100°F. Minimum average summer temperatures range between 61°F and 80°F. Maximum average winter (October–April) temperatures range between 49°F and 52°F, with minimum average winter temperatures ranging between 32°F and 41°F (NOAA 2021).

4.4.1.2 Soils

The geology of the region consists mostly of Cretaceous sedimentary rocks and Miocene marine sediments. There are 49 soil types within the Planning Area, encompassing five taxonomic orders: Alfisols, Entisols, Inceptisols, Mollisols, and Vertisols (Figure 4.4-1) (Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) 2025a). Only one—Clear Lake clay, drained—is classified as hydric (NRCS 2025b). The soil types are listed below by taxonomic order, including their total area and percentage of the Planning Area; soil taxonomy information is based on the Second Edition of *Soil Taxonomy A Basic System of Soil Classification for Making and Interpreting Soil Surveys* (NRCS 1999). The Mollisols dominate (52%) the Planning Area and are mostly centered along U.S. Route (U.S.) 101 and El Camino Real running north to south. Their associations range from alluvial fans, flats, and plains, to terraces and mountains and hillslopes and are characterized as soft, deep, dark fertile soil formed in grasslands. Inceptisols, young soils, comprise the second largest group (25%) of soils in the Planning Area. These soils are primarily along the western edge of the Planning Area and comprise the foothills of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range, where they are mainly associated with hills and mountains. The Entisols primarily occur in alluvial fans, floodplains, stream terraces, and valleys or on the terraces of hills and mountains. Entisols are recently formed soils that lack well-developed horizons and are commonly found on river and beach sediments of sand and clay or volcanic ash.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.4-1. NRCS soils map.

One of the main soil types in this group is the Corducci and Typic Xerofluvents, which primarily occurs in the streambed of the Salinas River. The Alfisols, soils with aluminum and iron, primarily occur on terraces adjacent to the Salinas River. The smallest group (only 1.1%) includes Vertisols, which are clay-rich and contain the only hydric soil in the study area—Clear Lake clay.

4.4.1.3 Watersheds

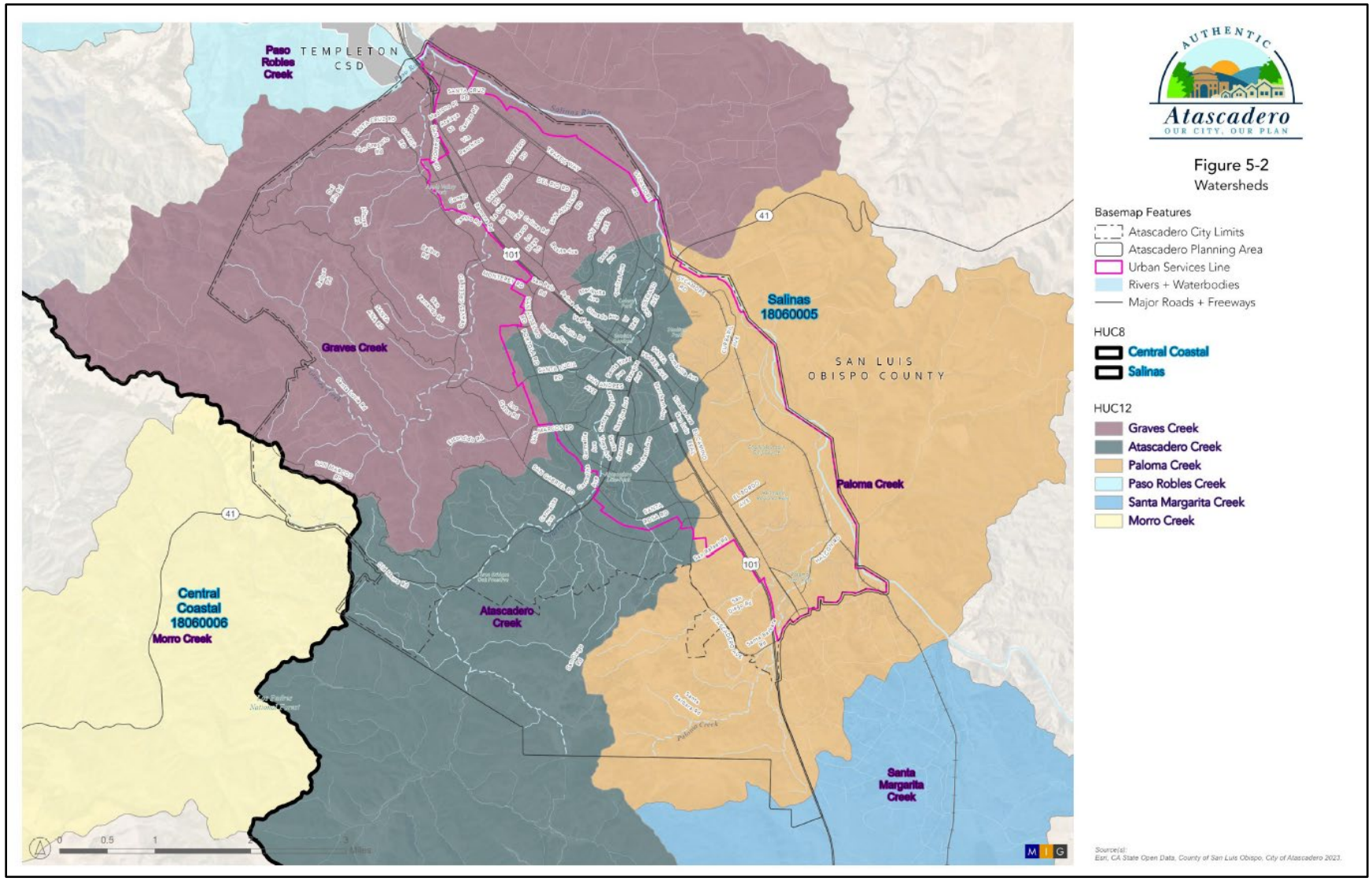
Most (98%) of the Planning Area falls within the Salinas River Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)-8 No. 18060005, with less than 2% falling within the Central Coast (HUC-8 No. 18060006) (Figure 4.4-2). The main watersheds in the Planning Area are the Graves Creek (HUC-12 No. 180600050403) watershed (42%), Atascadero Creek (HUC-12 No. 180600050204) watershed (32%), and Paloma Creek (HUC-12 No. 180600050205) watershed (24%). Graves, Atascadero, and Paloma Creeks all flow into the Salinas River, which parallels the eastern edge of the Planning Area. A large number of tributaries throughout the City contribute to the overall health of the watersheds and support the City's major creeks. Each of these tributaries, creeks, and watersheds play a role in water quality of surface water and groundwater resources within the City and can be affected by flooding, contamination, increased turbidity, litter and debris, and other land use effects

4.4.1.4 Vegetation and Land Cover Types

Dominant vegetation types within the Planning Area include coastal oak woodlands and annual grasslands. The vegetation and land cover categories within the Planning Area are classified via the City of Atascadero Native Tree and Biological GIS Mapping Inventory: Phases II & III (Figure 4.4-3) (City of Atascadero 2007). The acreage and percent of different vegetation or land cover types is shown in Table 4.4-1 below.

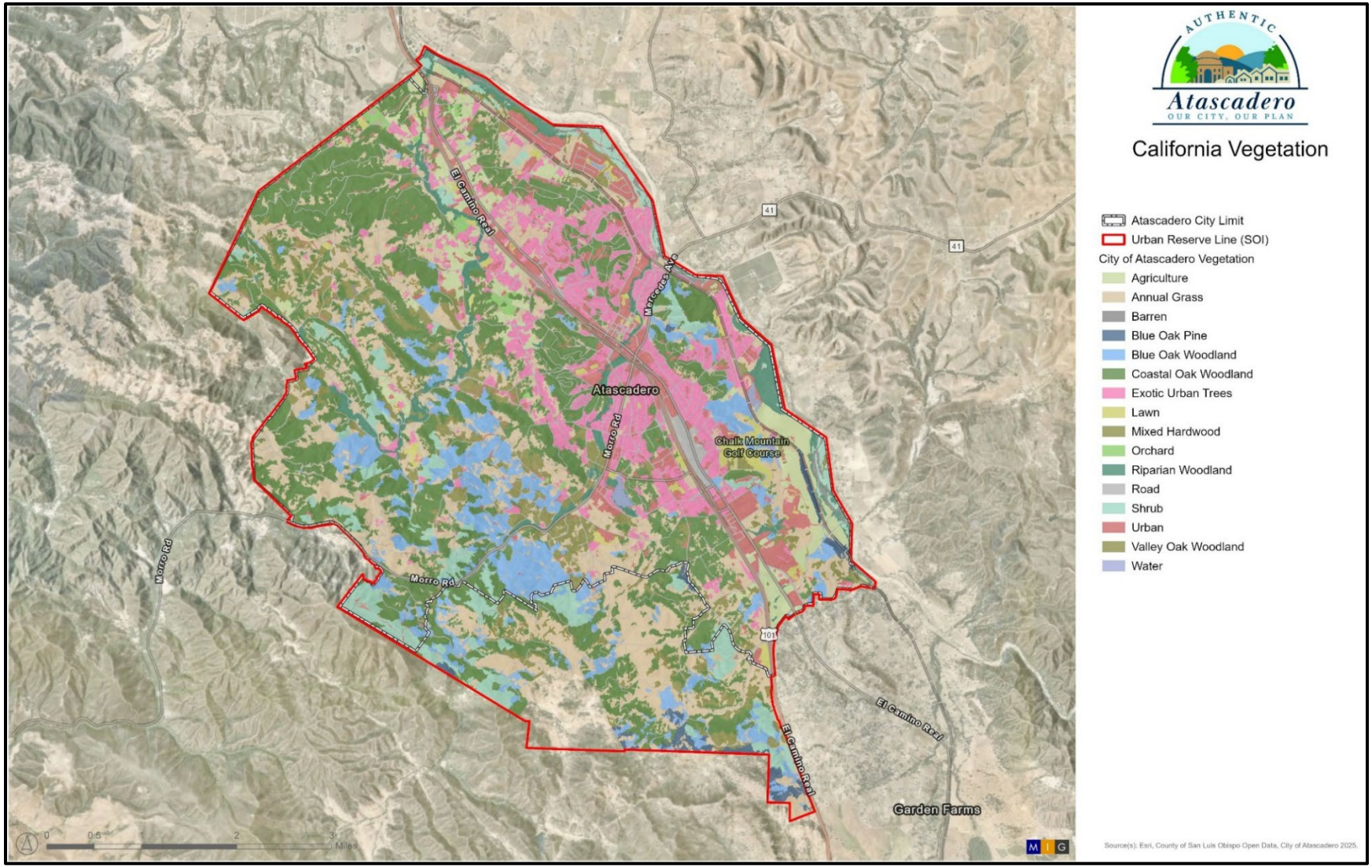
Table 4.4-1. Vegetation and Land Cover Types within the Planning Area

Vegetation or Land Cover Type	Area (acres)	% of Planning Area
Agriculture	823.28	4.9%
Annual Grass	2,844.58	17.0%
Barren	128.63	0.8%
Blue Oak Pine	51.50	0.3%
Blue Oak Woodland	1,243.26	7.4%
Coastal Oak Woodland	4,495.59	26.9%
Lawn	232.24	1.4%
Mixed Hardwood	2.47	0.0%
Orchard	76.98	0.5%
Road	1,471.97	8.8%
Shrub	693.37	4.1%
Exotic Urban Trees	1,725.70	10.3%
Urban	1,158.17	6.9%
Valley Oak Woodland	1,120.00	6.7%
Riparian Woodland	616.79	3.7%
Water	53.34	0.3%



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.4-2. Watershed map.



Source: City of Atascadero (2007).

Figure 4.4-3. Vegetation map.

LAND COVER TYPES

The land cover types within the Planning Area are described in detail below (MIG 2024).

Agriculture

The main agricultural land cover types in the Planning Area are deciduous orchard, pasture, cropland, irrigated hayfield, dryland grain crops, and evergreen orchard. Much of the orchard, cropland, and pasture is within parcels zoned rural estates; however, vineyards were equally popular on parcels zoned rural estates and larger (1.5–2.5 acre) single-family residential parcels.

Urban/Developed

There are approximately 1,500 acres of land within the Planning Area classified as urban/developed. Most of this land cover type falls within areas zoned general commercial, downtown, residential, public facilities, and public recreation.

Barren

Barren habitat is characterized by the absence of vegetation; more specifically, any habitat with less than 2% total vegetation cover by herbaceous, desert, or non-wildland species and less than 10% cover by tree or shrub species. Within the Planning Area, this category appears to correlate with non-vegetated infill areas interspersed between lower-density residential areas. It is also associated with public facilities, such as the fields around Atascadero High School. The largest areas mapped barren are between U.S. 101 and the Salinas River. Within the Planning Area, there are 1,120 acres (roughly 6%) of barren habitat in the Planning Area.

AQUATIC RESOURCES

Atascadero contains approximately 27 miles of creeks and rivers. Three main creeks and several tributaries run through the City—Graves, Atascadero, and Paloma Creeks. All three drain into the Salinas River, which runs along the eastern boundary of the City. The other main aquatic feature that plays a vital role in the Planning Area is Atascadero Lake.

Salinas River

The Salinas River defines the eastern boundary of Atascadero. It is the principal river system on the Central Coast of California. In Atascadero, most of the flow of the Salinas River is underground, surfacing only during seasonal rains. It flows northward for approximately 170 miles from San Luis Obispo County, through Monterey County, and empties into Monterey Bay near the city of Marina. The portion of the Salinas River that flows through the Planning Area is characterized by large washes, braided channels, and open-water habitat characteristic of a larger river. The Salinas River riparian corridor consists of mature, multilayered woodland habitat with sycamore, cottonwood, and willow that provide habitat for many species of songbirds and raptors; however, urban activity and agricultural practices have caused degradation and alteration of this habitat over time. For example, illegal off-road vehicle (ORV) use in the Salinas River causes displacement of the riverbed, pollution of the river, and destruction of riparian vegetation. The Salinas River provides important wildlife habitat and is an important wildlife corridor. Within the Planning Area, the Salinas River has been designated as critical habitat for steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*).

Graves Creek

Graves Creek is a tributary of the Salinas River. Almost the entire watershed of Graves Creek falls within the Planning Area boundary. There are approximately 60 linear miles of tributaries within the watershed that eventually drain into Graves Creek and the Salinas River. Graves Creek itself stretches approximately 7.5 linear miles in a northeasterly direction across the Planning Area. The headwaters start in the northwestern portion of the Planning Area and meander eastward through rural estate and rural residential parcels. The riparian canopy in the upper reaches is dominated by oaks and California bay trees. The riparian canopy in the middle reach is dominated by oaks, willows, black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*), and California sycamore trees. The creek abruptly turns north at Ramona Road and U.S. 101, where it parallels the highway before flowing underneath it and eventually flowing into the Salinas River. The creek opens into a wider channel east of U.S. 101, where it shortly thereafter flows into the Salinas River. In this area the riparian vegetation is dominated by arroyo willows (*Salix lasiolepis*) and California sycamore, and the banks are dominated by coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*).

Graves Creek provides important wildlife habitat but is heavily impacted by residential development. Historically (prior to the 1950s), Graves Creek supported an abundant population of steelhead and likely supported populations of foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylii*) and California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), but most of these species were extirpated from this area in the late 1970s. Nevertheless, Graves Creek still provides an important wildlife movement corridor connecting the Santa Lucia Mountain Range to the Salinas River Valley. There are historic accounts that steelhead runs would start in January and end in March, and depending on the rains, could bring steelhead upstream through May. Based on historical occurrence data the entirety of Graves Creek has been designated as critical habitat for steelhead.

Atascadero Creek

Atascadero Creek is a tributary of the Salinas River that flows eastward, parallel to State Route (SR) 41. Its two main tributaries are Eagle and Hale Creeks. The Planning Area includes approximately 6,427 acres of the Atascadero Creek watershed. There are approximately 42 linear miles of tributaries within the watershed that eventually drain into Atascadero Creek and the Salinas River. Atascadero Creek is an intermittent stream that stretches 6.7 linear miles from west to east across the Planning Area. Riparian vegetation ranges from willow scrub to multilayered mature riparian woodland with cottonwood, sycamore, black walnut, and willow. The creek has been highly impacted by urban development. Historically, problems of illegal dumping, ORV use, and urban pollution have significantly degraded the quality of the habitat, particularly for key aquatic species such as steelhead.

Paloma Creek

The Planning Area encompasses approximately 7.5 linear miles of Paloma Creek—approximately 4,891 acres of the Paloma Creek–Salinas River watershed—and approximately 18 linear miles of tributaries. The creek flows east and northeast in the southern portion of the Planning Area before eventually flowing into the Salinas River. This creek has been heavily impacted by grazing. Accessible reaches generally lack extensive riparian vegetation, and the channels are highly incised. Riparian vegetation consists of arroyo willows, coyote brush, and a few scattered oak trees. Several areas along Paloma Creek provide opportunities for riparian plantings and creek restoration projects, such as in the stretch that crosses through Paloma Creek Park.

Atascadero Lake

Atascadero Lake is approximately 1.25 miles southwest of the intersection of U.S. 101 and SR 41. It is approximately 30.5 acres, with an average depth of 6.85 feet and a maximum depth of 13 feet (City of Atascadero 2025b). Prior to being a perennial lake, it was a low-lying area fed by rainfall and runoff that naturally filled with water then receded during the summer heat. This natural basin was engineered into a larger lake as early as 1913 by the founder of Atascadero, E.G. Lewis (MIG 2024). There have been recent efforts by community groups to maintain water quality and water levels in the lake. It is an important recreational area for the community and is regularly stocked with trout for recreational fishing opportunities. It also supports important wetland vegetation that attracts waterfowl and other migratory bird species.

EXISTING OPEN SPACE AREAS

The open space areas and parks within the Planning Area are primarily focused on providing recreational opportunities for City residences and visitors. There are approximately 1,111 acres within the Planning Area zoned open space, including approximately 180 acres of annual grassland, 206 acres of blue oak–foothill pine, 168 acres of coast live oak woodland, 58 acres of blue oak woodland, 27 acres of lacustrine, and 17 acres of mixed chaparral. Most of the creek areas, including Atascadero Creek and Graves Creek, are within open space zoning and were placed into "creek reservations" with the original Atascadero Colony in 1913. Some of these creek reservations, such as within the downtown and along Highway 41, offer opportunities for recreational paths and related amenities. City-owned parks include Atascadero Lake Park, Colony Park, Paloma Creek Park, Sunken Gardens Park, Apple Valley Park, and Stadium Park. Non-City-owned parks include Heilmann Regional Park, Chalk Mountain Golf Course, and Faces of Freedom Veterans Memorial. Immediately west of the Planning Area is the Los Padres National Forest. The preservation and maintenance of these parks provide important recreational opportunities for residents, along with aesthetic value and important pockets of urban wildlife habitat. For example, Atascadero Lake Park provides important stopover habitat for migrating waterfowl.

4.4.1.5 Special-Status Species

SPECIAL-STATUS PLANT SPECIES

For the purposes of this chapter, special-status plant species are defined as the following:

- Plants listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (FESA) (50 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 17.12 for listed plants and various notices in the *Federal Register* for proposed species)
- Plants that are candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the FESA
- Plants that meet the definitions of rare or endangered species under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15380)
- Plants considered by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) to be "rare, threatened, or endangered" in California (CNPS California Rare Plant Ranks [CRPRs] 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B in the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory [CNPS 2025])
- Plants listed by the CNPS as plants about which we need more information and plants of limited distribution (CRPR 3 and 4 in the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory [CNPS 2025])
- Plants listed or proposed for listing by the State of California as threatened or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act of 1970 (CESA) (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 670.5)

- Plants listed under the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) of 1977 (California Fish and Game Code Section 1900 et seq.)
- Plants considered sensitive by other federal agencies (i.e., U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management), state and local agencies, or jurisdictions.

See Section 4.4.2, Regulatory Setting, for definitions of the different listing statuses under FESA, CESA, and the CRPRs. A literature review and database query were conducted as a part of the Existing Conditions Report (as described in Section 4.4.5, *Impact Assessment and Methodology*), which identified 92 taxa with the potential to occur within and around the Planning Area (MIG 2024). The following eight special-status plant species have California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) occurrences within the Planning Area (CDFW 2025c):

- Santa Margarita manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pilosula*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Mile's milk vetch (*Astragalus didymocarpus* var. *milesianus*) – CRPR 1B.2
- La Panza mariposa-lily (*Calochortus simulans*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Straight-awned spineflower (*Chorizanthe rectispina*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Eastwood's larkspur (*Delphinium parryi* ssp. *eastwoodiae*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Yellow-flowered eriastrum (*Eriastrum luteum*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Ojai fritillary (*Fritillaria ojaiensis*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* var. *puberula*) – CRPR 1B.1

Based on an analysis of CNDDB occurrence records and suitable vegetation and habitats within the Planning Area, there are suitable habitat conditions for the following four special-status plant species known to occur regionally (CDFW 2025c):

- Douglas' fiddleneck (*Amsinckia douglasiana*) – CRPR 4.2
- San Luis Obispo owls' clover (*Castilleja densiflora* ssp. *obispoensis*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Douglas' spineflower (*Chorizanthe douglasii*) – CRPR 4.3
- Shining navarretia (*Navarretia nigelliformis* ssp. *radians*) – CRPR 1B.2

Finally, there are marginal conditions present to potentially support habitat for the following 22 special-status plant species known to occur regionally. These species were identified through the background literature review and database queries described in Section 4.4.5, *Impact Assessment and Methodology*, including a review of CNDDB occurrence records and an evaluation of vegetation types, soils, and other habitat characteristics within the Planning Area(CDFW 2025c):

- Hoover's bent grass (*Agrostis hooveri*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Santa Lucia manzanita (*Arctostaphylos luciana*): CRPR 1B.2
- Salinas milk-vetch (*Astragalus macrodon*) – CRPR 4.3
- Dwarf calycadenia (*Calycadenia villosa*) – CRPR 1B.1
- Lemmon's jewelflower (*Caulanthus lemmonii*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Condon's tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *congdonii*): CRPR 1B.1
- Dwarf soaproot (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum* var. *minus*): CRPR 1B.2

- Santa Lucia purple amole (*Hooveria purpurea* var. *purpurea*) – Federal Threatened (FT), CRPR 1B.1
- Palmer's spineflower (*Chorizanthe palmeri*) – CRPR 4.2
- Cuesta Ridge thistle (*Cirsium occidentale* var. *lucianum*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Paniculate tarplant (*Deinandra paniculata*) – CRPR 4.2
- Small-flowered gypsum-loving larkspur (*Delphinium gypsophilum* ssp. *parviflorum*) – CRPR 3.2
- San Benito poppy (*Eschscholzia hypecoides*) – CRPR 4.3
- Stinkbell (*Fritillaria agrestis*) – CRPR 4.3
- Small-leaved lomatium (*Lomatium parvifolium*) – CRPR 4.2
- Jones' bushmallow (*Malacothamnus jonesii*) – CRPR 4.2
- Santa Lucia bushmallow (*Malacothamnus palmeri* var. *palmeri*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) – FT, CRPR 1B.1
- Hooked popcornflower (*Plagiobothrys uncinatus*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Diablo canyon blue grass (*Poa diaboli*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) – CRPR 1B.2

SPECIAL-STATUS ANIMAL SPECIES

For the purposes of this chapter, special-status animal species are defined as the following:

- Animals listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the FESA (50 CFR 17.11 for listed animals and various notices in the *Federal Register* for proposed species).
- Animals that are candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the FESA.
- Animals that meet the definitions of rare or endangered species under CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15380).
- Animals listed or proposed for listing by the State of California as threatened and endangered under the CESA (14 CCR 670.5).
- Animal species considered by the State of California/California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to be California Species of Special Concern (SSC) or included on CDFW's Watch List (WL) (CDFW 2025a).
- Animal species considered "Special Animals" (SAs) tracked by CDFW's CNDDB (CDFW 2025a).
- Animal species that are Fully Protected (FP) in California (Fish and Game Code Sections 3511 [birds], 4700 [mammals], and 5050 [reptiles and amphibians]).

See Section 4.4.2 *Regulatory Setting* for definitions of the different listing statuses under FESA and CESA and the CRPRs. The background review identified the potential for 53 special-status animal species to occur within and around the Planning Area (MIG 2024). This determination was based on a literature review and database queries, including a search of CDFW's CNDDB and other relevant regional biological resource datasets, and an evaluation of habitat types present within the Planning Area. The following nine special-status animal species have CNDDB occurrences in the Planning Area (CDFW 2025c):

- Southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) – Federal Proposed Threatened (FPT), SSC
- Northern California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*) – SSC
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – FP
- Obscure bumble bee (*Bombus caliginosus*) – SA
- Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) – State Candidate Endangered (SCE)
- Atascadero June beetle (*Polyphylla nubila*) – SA
- Purple martin (*Progne subis*) – SSC
- Coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*) – SSC
- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) – FT, SSC

Based on an analysis of CNDDB occurrence records and suitable vegetation and habitats within the Planning Area, there are suitable habitat conditions present within the Planning Area for the following 21 additional special-status animal species known to occur regionally (CDFW 2025c):

- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) – WL
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) – ST, SSC
- Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – SSC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) – SSC
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) – SCE, SCC
- Lesser slender salamander (*Batrachoseps minor*) – SSC
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) – WL
- Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) – SSC
- Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) – FPT
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) – FP
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) – WL
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) – WL
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) – WL
- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – FP
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – SSC
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis*) – SSC
- Monterey dusky-footed woodrat (*Neotoma macrotis luciana*) – SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) – SSC
- San Luis Obispo pyrg (*Pyrgulopsis taylori*) – SA
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*): FPT, SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) – SSC

Finally, there are conditions present to potentially support suitable habitat for the following seven special-status animal species; however, the Planning Area is outside of the known extant range of the species, or the species has had their population extirpated from the area (CDFW 2025c). This determination was based on the literature review and database queries conducted for the Planning Area, as described in Section 4.4.5, *Impact Assessment and Methodology*:

- California tiger salamander – central California Distinct Population Segment (DPS) (*Ambystoma californiense* pop. 1) – FT, ST, WL
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) – FT, SE
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) – FE, SE
- South-Central California Coast steelhead DPS (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus* pop. 9) – FT, SSC
- Foothill yellow-legged frog south coast DPS (*Rana boylii* pop. 6) – Federal Endangered [FE], State Endangered [SE]),
- Yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia*) – SSC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) – FE, SE

4.4.1.6 Critical Habitat

The Planning Area contains USFWS-designated critical habitat for the South-Central California Coast steelhead DPS and California red-legged frog (Figure 4.4-4) (MIG 2024).

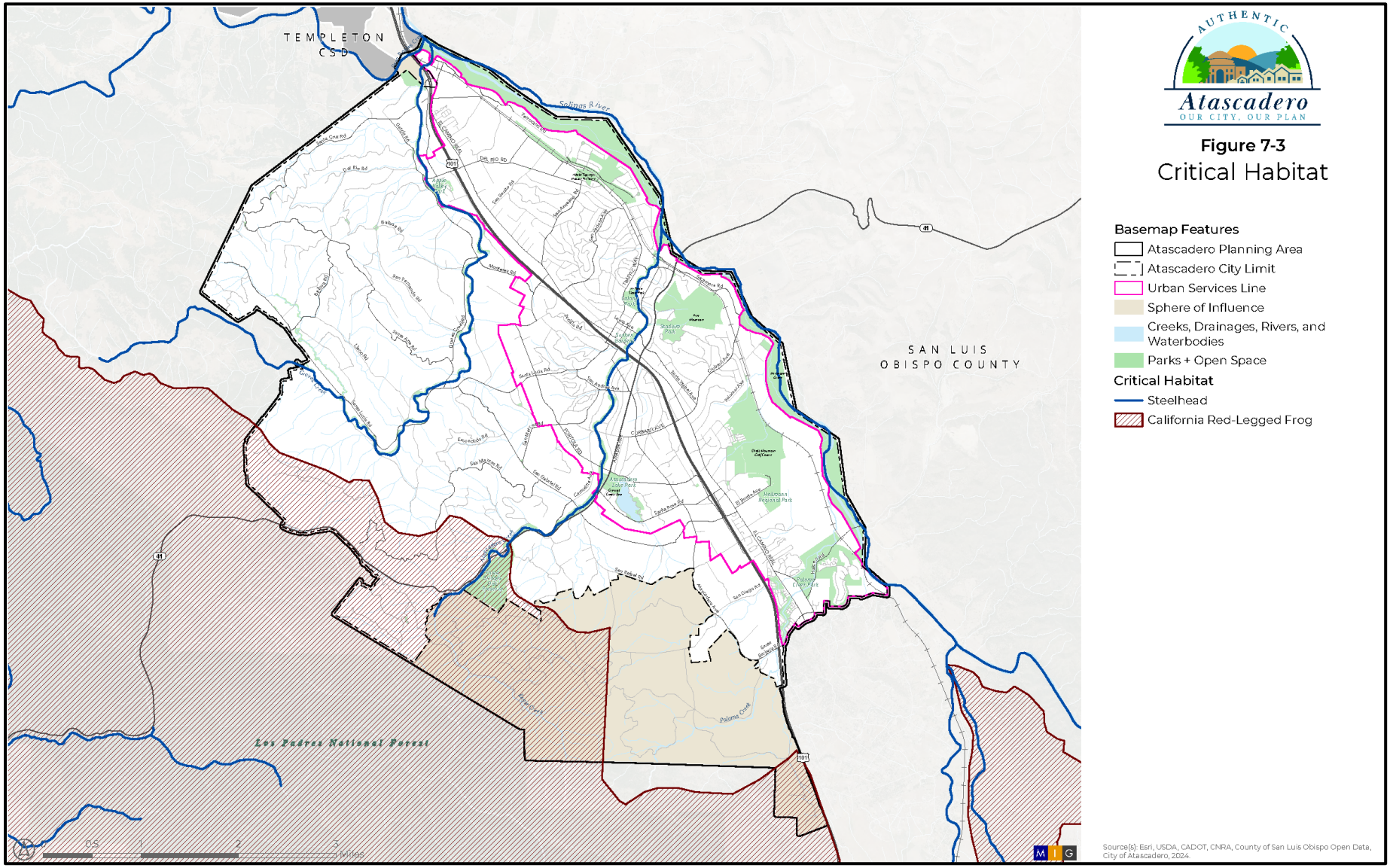
SOUTH-CENTRAL CALIFORNIA COAST STEELHEAD CRITICAL HABITAT

The South-Central California Coast steelhead DPS is federally listed as threatened and is listed as an SSC by CDFW (CDFW 2025a). There are no CNDDB occurrences of South-Central California Coast DPS steelhead in the Salinas River watershed south of Arroyo Seco and its tributaries, but several of the creeks in the Planning Area historically supported populations of steelhead. Prior to the 1950s, Graves Creek supported an abundant population of steelhead. Currently, Graves Creek, Atascadero Creek, and the Salinas River are designated as critical habitat for South-Central California Coast steelhead DPS.

Anthropogenic threats to steelhead in the Salinas River watershed were broken down into four general threat categories: 1) barriers to upstream and downstream migration (roads, dams, groundwater extraction, and sand and gravel mining); 2) agricultural conversion of floodplain habitats; 3) recreational facilities and activities; and 4) water management activities, including dam operations, diversions, and groundwater extractions (NOAA Fisheries 2013). All four waterways in the Planning Area (Atascadero Creek, Graves Creek, Paloma Creek, and the Salinas River) contain identified barriers to fish passage as mapped by the CDFW Fish Passage Assessment Database (FishPAD) (CDFW 2025b); however, Atascadero Creek contains the highest number, with 10 barriers.

CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG CRITICAL HABITAT

The Planning Area contains a small portion, approximately 3,072 acres, of Critical Habitat Unit SLO-3 for California red-legged frog. Critical habitat areas include the upper watershed areas of Morro and Atascadero Creeks, a small portion of Santa Margarita Creek watershed that falls in the Planning Area, and a small portion of the Paloma Creek watershed that falls within the Planning Area (but does not include Paloma Creek itself) (see Figure 4.4-4). The key threats to the physical and biological features essential to the conservation of California red-legged frog in Unit SLO-3 include predation by nonnative species, water diversion, overgrazing, and urbanization. These activities may alter aquatic or upland habitats and thereby result in the direct or indirect loss of egg masses or adults due to habitat modification.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.4-4. Critical habitat map.

4.4.1.1 Oak Woodland Resources

The Planning Area contains a diversity of oak woodlands, including blue oak woodlands, coast live oak woodlands, valley oak woodlands, and blue oak–foothill pine (see Figure 4.4-3). There are approximately 4,495.59 acres of coastal oak woodlands mapped in the Planning Area by the City of Atascadero Native Tree and Biological GIS Mapping Inventory, and 1,243.26 acres of blue oak woodland within the Planning Area (City of Atascadero 2007). Oak woodlands provide important wildlife habitat and are an integral part of the aesthetic appeal for living in the Atascadero. Approximately 7,600 acres of oak woodland habitat occur within parcels zoned for residential use. Land under the rural suburban zoning designation contain the largest amount (approximately 5,350 acres) of oak woodland resources compared to any other land use designation (MIG 2024).

4.4.2 Regulatory Setting

4.4.2.1 Federal

FEDERAL ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The FESA is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). Overall, NOAA Fisheries is responsible for the protection of FESA-listed marine species and anadromous fish species, whereas all other listed species fall under USFWS jurisdiction.

See below for definitions of different statuses under the FESA:

- Federal Endangered = any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range other than a species of the Class Insecta determined by the Secretary to constitute a pest whose protection under the provisions of this Act would present an overwhelming and overriding risk to man.
- Federal Threatened = any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- Federal Proposed Threatened = any species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range and USFWS has proposed a draft rule to list the species as threatened.

FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972 provides guidance for the restoration and maintenance of the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. CWA requirements pertaining to the proposed project are described below.

CWA Section 401 requires that an applicant for a federal license or permit that allows activities resulting in a discharge to waters of the United States (WOTUS) must obtain State certification that the discharge complies with other provisions of CWA. The nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) administer the certification program in California.

CWA Section 404 establishes U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) jurisdiction over fill materials in essentially all water bodies, including wetlands. All federal agencies are to avoid impacts on wetlands whenever there is a practicable alternative. Section 404 established a permit program administered by USACE regulating the discharge of dredged or fill material into WOTUS (including wetlands).

CWA Section 404 guidelines allow the discharge of dredged or fill material into the aquatic system only if there is no practicable alternative that would have less adverse impacts.

MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 with Canada, Mexico, and Japan makes it unlawful to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird, except under the terms of a valid federal permit. The federal MBTA applies to the removal of nests (such as swallow nests on bridges) occupied by migratory birds during the breeding season.

BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (as amended) provides for the protection of bald and golden eagles by prohibiting the take, possession, sale, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, of any bald or golden eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg, unless allowed by permit (16 United States Code 668(a); 50 CFR 22). The USFWS may authorize take of bald and golden eagles for activities where the take is associated with, but not the purpose of, the activity and cannot practicably be avoided (50 CFR 22.26).

4.4.2.2 State

CALIFORNIA ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

CESA generally parallels the main provisions of the FESA but also extends the take prohibitions to species proposed for listing. Sections 2080 and 2081 of the Fish and Game Code prohibit the take (defined as hunting, pursuing, catching, capturing, or killing) of endangered, threatened, or candidate species unless otherwise authorized by permit. CDFW regulates activities that may result in the "take" of such species. The CESA has a much less inclusive definition of "take" (limited to direct take such as hunting, shooting, capturing, etc.) that does not include the broad "harm" and "harassment" definitions in Federal law.

Take of State-listed species would require a Section 2081 Incidental Take Permit from CDFW. This process requires the submittal of a sensitive species study and permit application package, and is similar to the FESA Section 10 process, except that CDFW is the regulatory and decision-making agency. As no State-listed species are anticipated to be subjected to take for this proposed project, a Section 2081 Incidental Take Permit from CDFW will not be required.

See below for definitions of different statuses under the CESA.

- State Endangered – a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant which is in serious danger of becoming extinct throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range due to one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, overexploitation, predation, competition, or disease.
- State Threatened – a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future in the absence of the special protection and management efforts required by this chapter.
- State Candidate – means a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that the commission has formally noticed as being under review by the department for addition to either the list of endangered species or the list of threatened species, or a species for which the commission has published a notice of proposed regulation to add the species to either list.

NATIVE PLANT PROTECTION ACT

The legal protection afforded to listed plants under the NPPA (Fish and Game Code Sections 1900–1913) includes provisions that prohibit the take and possession of plants from the wild and a salvage requirement for landowners and project proponents that may encounter rare plants during the implementation of a project that may impact those species. If a landowner has been informed of a listed plant species on their property, CDFW must be notified at least 10 days in advance of any land use change that might affect the species or its habitat, thereby affording CDFW an opportunity to conduct a salvage operation. Candidate species are also protected from taking by the NPPA.

The CDFW has demonstrated a general policy of regarding many of the plants with CNPS CRPR 1 and 2 as meeting the definitions of Chapter 10 Section 1901 of the NPPA. As such, those plants also qualify for protection under CEQA.

The CRPRs are defined as follows (CNPS 2025):

- Rank 1A = plants presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere
- Rank 1B = plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere
- Rank 2A = plants presumed extirpated in California but common elsewhere
- Rank 2B = plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere
- Rank 3 = a review list for plants about which more information is needed
- Rank 4 = a watch list for plants of limited distribution

Ranks at each level also include a threat rank and are determined as follows:

- _.1 = seriously endangered I California (over 80% of occurrences threatened / high degree and immediacy of threat)
- _.2 = fairly endangered in California (20-80% occurrences threatened);
- _.3 = not very endangered in California (<20% of occurrences threatened or no current threats known)

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME CODE SECTIONS 3503, 3511, 4700, 5050, AND 5515

Section 3503 of the Fish and Game Code includes provisions to protect the nests and eggs of birds. Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515 include provisions to protect FP species, such as: 1) prohibiting take or possession "at any time" of the species listed in the statute, with few exceptions; 2) stating that "no provision of this code or any other law shall be construed to authorize the issuance of permits or licenses to 'take' the species;" and 3) stating that no previously issued permits or licenses for take of the species "shall have any force or effect" for authorizing take or possession. The CDFW is unable to authorize incidental take of "fully protected" species when activities are proposed in areas inhabited by those species; therefore, project-related activities must avoid take of fully protected species.

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME CODE SECTION 1602

Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code requires any person, state, or local government agency or public utility proposing a project that may affect a river, stream, or lake to notify the CDFW before beginning the project. If activities will result in the diversion or obstruction of the natural flow of a stream; substantially alter its bed, channel, or bank; impact riparian vegetation; or adversely affect existing fish and wildlife

resources, a Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) is required. An SAA lists the CDFW conditions of approval relative to the proposed project and serves as an agreement between an applicant and the CDFW for a term of not more than 5 years (for standard agreements) for the performance of activities subject to this section. Implementation of the proposed project may require a Section 1602 SAA for any impacts within the banks of drainages and extending to the outer edge of riparian vegetation (whichever is greater) if these areas are determined to be jurisdictional by CDFW.

PORTER-COLOGNE WATER QUALITY CONTROL ACT

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne Act) serves as the primary water quality law in California and addresses two primary functions: water quality control planning and waste discharge regulation. The various RWQCBs are charged with protecting all waters of California, defined as "any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the State." This encompasses all waters of the State (WOTS), including those not under federal jurisdiction. The Porter-Cologne Act defines WOTS very broadly, with no physical descriptors and no interstate commerce limitation. In regulating discharges of dredged or fill material, the RWQCB jurisdiction is broader than federal jurisdiction. The discharge of dredged or fill material may constitute a discharge of waste that could affect the quality of WOTS.

In 2019, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) adopted a *State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State*, for inclusion in the forthcoming *Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters and Enclosed Bays and Estuaries and Ocean Waters of California* (SWRCB 2019). Applicants must file an application with the California Water Boards (defined as the SWRCB and nine RWQCBs, collectively) for any activity that could result in the discharge of dredged or fill material to WOTS in accordance with Title 23 CCR Section 3855. The SWRCB procedures became effective on May 28, 2020.

For the purposes of this chapter, RWQCB jurisdiction (i.e., WOTS) has been interpreted conservatively as including natural streambeds, areas extending from the streambed/thalweg to the outer edge of adjacent riparian vegetation, isolated wetlands or waters that may not be under USACE jurisdiction, artificial ditches (nonagricultural) that could be relocated WOTS and have become relatively permanent features of the natural landscape, and excavated ponds or other artificial features that collect and/or convey surface water. Based on previous experience with the Central Coast RWQCB, their interpretation of state jurisdiction includes streambanks and riparian areas despite the lack of a statewide definition and methodology for determining limits of WOTS.

If there is no CWA Section 404/401 nexus (for example, when areas that are not considered WOTUS could be impacted), compliance with the Porter-Cologne Act for impacts to WOTS could be regulated by the RWQCB through the Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR) program, which could require obtaining a WDR permit instead of CWA Section 404/401 permits. If the project does not qualify for an existing General Order WDR, in many situations, the new dredge/fill procedures would be followed to obtain an Individual WDR, which can be an extensive process.

4.4.2.3 Local

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

The 2025 General Plan is composed of several elements, including the Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation (LOC) Element; Circulation Element; Safety and Noise Element; and Housing Element (City of Atascadero 2016). Each element includes specific goals, policies, and programs that inform short and long-term decision-making in the community.

Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element

Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to biological resources included within the LOC Element are listed here:

- **Goal LOC6:** Preserve natural flora and fauna and protect scenic lands, sensitive natural areas, historic buildings and cultural resources.
    - **Policy 6.1:** Ensure that development does not degrade scenic and sensitive areas, including historic sites, creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, woodlands, hillsides and other valuable habitats.
        - **Program 1.** Encourage use of planned developments to cluster projects around open space easements, parks, and open space dedications and minimize impacts to natural resources.
        - **Program 2.** Seek funding to purchase or require dedication of areas of unique habitats or scenic value, especially in areas lacking adequate park facilities and open space.
        - **Program 3.** Require native trees and plant species to be incorporated into landscaping plans.
        - **Program 4.** Scenic and sensitive lands, including creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, and other areas of significant habitat value, shall be protected from destruction, overuse, and misuse by the use of zoning, tax incentives, easements, or fee acquisition.
        - **Program 5.** Public and private development in close proximity to scenic and sensitive lands, including creek reservations, wooded areas, flood plains, prominent viewsheds, and historic sites, shall be designed to minimize impacts.
        - **Program 6.** Scenic and open space easements, parklands, and open space dedications shall be required as mitigation for subdivisions and development projects that impact, floodplains, creek reservations, wooded areas, scenic backdrops, sensitive areas, historic sites, cultural sites, and similar areas.
        - **Program 7.** The City shall carefully evaluate both public and private projects to require the preservation of trees, watersheds, natural slopes, and other natural features.
        - **Program 8.** Subdivisions shall be reviewed in accordance with the Appearance Review Manual and the principle of maintaining the rural and natural character of the community.
        - **Program 9.** Attention shall be paid to the aesthetic result of land division. Building sites shall minimize disruption of natural slopes, native vegetation, and watersheds by the careful selection of building sites, leach fields, and driveways. Building designs inappropriate for hillside locations shall not be approved.
- **Goal LOC7:** Tree-covered hills shall be preserved to retain the distinctive scenic quality of the community.
    - **Policy 7.1:** Ensure that the native trees of Atascadero are protected from new development in order to retain the natural character of the community.
        - **Program 1.** Enforce all provisions of the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance as a high priority.
        - **Program 2.** Maintain a current geographic information system (GIS)-based inventory map of all native woodlands, plant communities, sensitive habitats, connective habitat, and wildlife corridors. Require lot line adjustments,

subdivision maps, and development permits to minimize impacts on mapped resources that are identified as sensitive and provide mitigation as requirement by the Native Tree Ordinance.

- **Program 3.** Update and maintain the Appearance Review Manual to include standards requiring building siting, mass, and scale to be compatible with surrounding natural features.
- **Program 4.** Require lot line adjustments and tentative subdivision maps on sites with 25 percent or greater native tree canopy cover to establish locations of building sites, driveways, and leach fields that will minimize native tree impacts.

- **Policy 7.2:** Protect and replenish native tree populations, including saplings.
  - **Program 1.** Continue to implement and enforce the Native Tree Ordinance to protect and replenish native tree species within the city. Construction permits for both residential and non-residential development shall be required to preserve as many native trees as possible. Buildings shall be designed to utilize existing trees in the landscaping pattern. Any trees removed shall either (1) be replaced with like species, (2) in-lieu contributions made to the City's tree replacement fund or (3) have Planning Commission approved conservation easements created depending on the characteristics of the affected site.
  - **Program 2.** Augment the City Geographic Information System to include a native tree GIS database to assist decision-makers with analyzing development proposals.
  - **Program 3.** The City shall implement a comprehensive program for street tree planting and maintenance within the Urban Core and all major routes and approaches to the community.
  - **Program 4.** Require planting of large canopy shade trees in new projects, in part to provide shading adjacent to buildings to conserve energy use.

- **Goal LOC8:** Watersheds of Atascadero shall be protected.
  - **Policy 8.1:** Ensure that development along Atascadero Creek, Graves Creeks, the Salinas River, blue line creeks, and natural springs, lakes, or other riparian areas does not interrupt natural flows or adversely impact riparian ecosystems and water quality.
    - **Program 1.** Work with other agencies to implement the Erosion Control Assistance Program for review of development proposals to minimize sedimentation of creeks and the Salinas River.
    - **Program 2.** Update the Appearance Review Manual to include provisions for preserving, reclaiming and incorporating riparian features in conjunction with new development.
    - **Program 3.** The waterways in the city shall be maintained in a natural state and concrete channelization creeks shall be prohibited**.**
    - **Program 4.** The City shall strongly discourage underground piping, and unnecessary disturbance of creeks and streams, and encourage use of bridges and arched culverts. Any alterations required for public safety will be guided by this policy.
    - **Program 5.** Allow flood protection measures (such as selective brush cleaning), low-impact trail development, streambed maintenance and bank protection along streams where appropriate with necessary permits.
    - **Program 6.** Prohibit new structures or disturbance of riparian habitat along creek banks except for restoration purposes.

- **Program 7.** Maintain a current GIS-based map of the riparian areas within Atascadero.
- **Program 8.** Prior to permit approval, refer projects along blue-line creeks to the Corps of Engineers, Department of Fish and Game, Regional Water Quality Control, and Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District.
- **Program 9.** Creek reservations and the Salinas River shall be preserved for open space and recreational use, with appropriate areas left in their natural state for public enjoyment and habitat purposes. Any recreational use of the river and creeks shall minimize its impact on the habitat value and open space qualities of the creeks.
- **Program 10.** Land disturbance shall be minimized in proximity to watercourses including necessary flood protection measures, such as selective brush clearing, and low-impact trail development.
- **Program 11.** Areas subject to flooding, as identified through flood hazard overlay zoning and flood maps, shall be protected from unsound development consistent with the City's flood hazard ordinance requirements.
- **Program 12. Wellhead and Aquifer Recharge Area Protection Zones:** The City shall adopt and maintain an ordinance that identifies existing and potential well sites and aquifer recharge areas, including sufficient buffers to protect them from contamination. The ordinance shall define restricted and prohibited land uses within the wellhead/recharge protection zones and provide for the review and approval by both the City and the Atascadero Mutual Water Company of any project or development within the specified zones. The ordinance will establish a policy to provide for the monitoring of activities within these protection zones.
- **Program 13.** Support the establishment and protection of floodable terraces, wetlands, and revegetation along creeks and streams.

- **Policy 8.2:** Establish and maintain setbacks and development standards for creek side development.
  - **Program 1.** Adopt and maintain a creek setback ordinance that will establish building setbacks and development standards along the banks of Atascadero Creek, Graves Creek, blue line creeks and the Salinas River to ensure the uninterrupted natural flow of the streams and protection of the riparian ecosystem with flexible standards for the downtown area. Responsibility: Community Development Department, Planning Commission, City Council Timeframe: Adopt Ordinance in 2005.
  - **Program 2.** Prior to adoption of a creek setback ordinance an interim 35-foot creek setback shall be in effect along Atascadero Creek and Graves Creek until March 1, 2005. All other 7.5 min USGS quadrangle blue line creeks shall have an interim 20-foot setback. The interim setbacks shall be subject to the following:
    - On Atascadero Creek and Graves Creek setbacks shall be measured from the edge of the creek reservation.
    - All other blue line creek setbacks shall be measured from ordinary high-water mark.
    - The Planning Commission may approve exceptions to the interim creek setbacks in the form of a Conditional Use Permit if the finding can be made that creeks, riparian areas and site improvement will not be negatively impacted by the exception.

- **Policy 8.3:** Preserve public creek reserves for public access and ensure that recreational use does not impact habitat value and open space qualities.
  - **Program 1.** Develop park, trail, and recreational amenities where appropriate in public creek reserves.
  - **Program 2.** Require the dedication of trail easements and access points as part of subdivision maps or development permits consistent with the Circulation Element.

NATIVE TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE (TITLE 9 CHAPTER 11)

Recognizing the trees of Atascadero as a valuable natural resource, a Native Tree Ordinance was adopted in 1998 and incorporates replacement standards and follow-up requirements for the removal of any native tree, as defined by the ordinance, on any public or private property within the City and by any person, firm, corporation, or utility company doing work within the City limits and sets forth guidelines by reference for the preservation of native trees during construction. The Native Tree Ordinance applies to native trees that are 2 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) or greater for deciduous native oaks, California sycamore, and madrones (*Arbutus menziesii*); and 4 inches dbh or greater for all other protected native trees. Native trees, as defined by the ordinance, include the following species:

- Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)
- Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)
- California black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*).
- California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*)
- Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
- Blue oak/desert oak (*Quercus alvordiana*)
- Scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa*)
- Leather oak (*Quercus durata*)
- Blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*)
- Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*)
- Desert oak (*Quercus turbinella*)
- California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*)

Intentional harm, damage, death, or decline of a native tree or removal of a native tree requires a City-issued tree removal permit, unless exempt by the ordinance. Mitigation includes planting replacement trees, payment of fees into a tree fund, and/or establishment of an open space easement. A higher fee is required for the removal of deciduous native trees than for evergreen trees and for commercial and multifamily properties versus single-family homes.

4.4.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on biological resources if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.

f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.4.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.4.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

4.4.4.1 Study Area

The study area includes the entire Planning Area, which consists of the City limits and sphere of influence boundary. The Planning Area encompasses 20,218 acres, or roughly 32 square miles.

4.4.4.2 Literature Review

SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) compiled and reviewed available biological resources data within the Planning Area. The desktop review included existing environmental literature and other pertinent information, including:

- Special-Status Species
    - CDFW CNDDB search that focused on the following 12 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangles: Atascadero, Templeton, Creston, Santa Margarita, Lopez Mountain, San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay South, Morro Bay North, York Mountain, Adelaida, Paso Robles, and Estrella, California (CDFW 2025c)
    - CNPS Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California query of the same 12 quadrangles searched for the CNDDB (CNPS 2025)
    - USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation website query for the Planning Area (USFWS 2025a)
    - USFWS critical habitat (and relevant published shapefiles) query (USFWS 2025b)
- Wetlands and Waterways
    - Biogeographic Information and Observation System (CDFW 2025d)
    - USFWS National Wetland Inventory wetlands mapper (USFWS 2025c)

  - USGS National Hydrography Dataset (USGS 2022)
  - California's FishPAD (CDFW 2025b)
- Soils
  - U.S. Department of Agriculture NRCS Web Soil Survey (NRCS 2025a)
- Vegetation and Land Cover
  - USGS National Land Cover Database (Dewitz and USGS 2024)
  - California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Fire and Resource Assessment Program vegetation dataset (CAL FIRE 2020)

4.4.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The following section presents an analysis of the potential for impacts to biological resources from the adoption and implementation of the 2045 General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance update.

a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

IMPACT BIO-1: THE PROJECT WOULD IMPACT SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES AND SUITABLE HABITAT FOR SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

As identified in Section 4.4.2.3 Special-Status Species, there are 34 plant species and 37 animal species that meet the criteria for special-status and are known to occur, have potential to occur, or have suitable habitat in the Planning Area. From that list, there are eight special-status plant species and nine special-status animal species known to occur within the Planning Area and there are 26 special-status plant species and 21 special-status animal species with potential to occur within the Planning Area and known to occur within or adjacent to the Planning Area, based on regional occurrences and suitable to marginally suitable habitat within the Planning Area.

The Planning Area contains USFWS-designated critical habitat for two federally listed species: South-Central California Coast steelhead DPS and California red-legged frog. Currently, Graves Creek, Atascadero Creek, and the Salinas River are designated as critical habitat for South-Central California Coast steelhead DPS. Although this species is thought to be extirpated from the Planning Area, development associated with future community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could potentially impact this critical habitat because the General Plan would allow for the future development of land uses adjacent to creeks and the Salinas River and may result in direct or indirect impacts to these habitat areas. The Atascadero Municipal Code has standards that minimize impacts to riparian corridors through setbacks and watercourse adjacent development standards. These standards will remain as part of the Zoning Code Update, reducing the potential for impacts. Additionally, the Planning Area contains approximately 3,062 acres of California red-legged frog critical habitat, which includes the upper watershed areas of Morro and Atascadero Creeks and a small portion of the Santa Margarita and Paloma Creek watersheds.

The land use Placetypes, goals, policies, and implementation actions (Zoning Regulations) of the 2045 General Plan Update would allow for growth and redevelopment within the Planning Area. Depending on the location, orientation, and design of new development and redeveloped properties, new development could impact foraging and breeding habitat for special-status wildlife, habitat for special-status plants, and USFWS-designated critical habitat; introduce or spread invasive species that compete with native species; and/or directly injure or kill special-status species during construction. Growth facilitated by the project would generally be consistent with the existing pattern of land use in the Planning Area; however, some parcels with potential for future development may support special-status wildlife and plant species or suitable habitat for special-status species. Future development projects proposed on previously undeveloped areas, within or adjacent to riparian corridors, or involving vegetation and/or tree removals would particularly have potential to affect biological resources. Undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels include parcels near Paloma Creek at the south end of town that are changing from Public to Residential designations. All other parcels are retaining their current development potential. In areas along the Salinas River, industrially designated parcels include an open space buffer area directly adjacent to the river. All parcels would be developed consistent with proposed goals, policies, and actions of the General Plan, as well as zoning regulations related to development, including development standards related to watercourse adjacencies and biologically sensitive areas; therefore, impacts would be mitigated to a level of insignificance.

Implementation of the following goals, policies, and actions from the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element of the 2045 General Plan Update along with the standards adopted within the Zoning Regulations would reduce potential impacts to special-status species and their habitats:

- **Goal REC-2:** A network of public trails that provide opportunities to engage with nature, move through the City, and connect to key destinations
    - **Policy REC-2.2: Public Access to Creeks.** Preserve creek reservation parcels for open space and support opportunities for public access where appropriate.
- **Goal REC-3:** Dedicated system of open space that upholds the community's rural character, local biodiversity, natural landscape, and enjoyment of recreation
    - **Policy REC-3.2: New Development.** Require that new development and subdivisions blend in with surrounding topography by minimizing disturbance to the existing natural environment.
    - **Policy REC-3.3: Grading.** Prevent unnecessary intensive grading of development sites.
- **Goal REC-4:** Consideration of biological and watershed resources within the urban areas to provide multiple benefits, with resource areas including oak woodlands, riparian corridors, native trees and plants, and creeks and rivers
    - **Policy REC-4.1: Natural Resources Protection.** Protect natural and sensitive resource areas to the maximum extent practicable.
        - **Action A:** Enforce all provisions of the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance.
        - **Action B:** Maintain a GIS-based inventory of sensitive habitats and resources, including native trees, watercourse- and wetland-adjacent areas, archaeological resources, and historic sites.
        - **Action D:** Require identification of scenic and sensitive lands (creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, critical habitats, etc.) on development applications. Develop and work with applicants to implement avoidance and mitigation measures to minimize impacts.
        - **Action E:** Carefully evaluate public and private projects to require the consideration of trees, watersheds, natural slopes, and other natural features.

- **Policy REC-4.5: Agricultural Practices.** Allow agricultural practices, including keeping livestock and farm animals, on parcels designated as Rural Residential and Agriculture, with consideration for the natural environment and residential character.
  - **Action A:** Regulate allowed agricultural practices and the keeping of domestic animals on rural and agricultural lands consistent with the farm animal regulations of the Zoning Ordinance.
- **Policy REC-4.8: Atascadero Lake Water Quality Improvements.** Develop and implement a program to improve water quality in Atascadero Lake.
  - **Action A:** Perform periodic water quality assessments of Atascadero Lake.
  - **Action B:** Identify potential pollution sources and incorporate feasible mitigation strategies into the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
  - **Action C:** Work with local community groups and organizations to monitor lake water quality and propose strategies for enhancements.
  - **Action D:** Seek additional water supply sources, including recycled water sources, to maintain Atascadero Lake water levels and quality.

Additionally, the following goals and policies from the Land Use Element and Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element of the 2045 General Plan would contribute to the reduction of potential impacts to special-status species and their suitable habitat.

- **Goal LU-4:** A dedicated, focused area for industrial activity that minimizes impact on nearby residential neighborhoods and protected open space areas
- **Goal SEP-3:** Reduced potential for harm to individuals and the environment due to the presence of hazardous materials.
  - **Policy SEP-3.1: Hazardous Substance Exposure.** Reduce the potential for exposure to humans and the environment from hazardous substances.
  - **Policy SEP-3.2: Pesticide Exposure.** Reduce the potential of pesticide exposure to humans and the environment.

Implementation of the goals, policies, and actions included as a part of the project would reduce impacts to special-status species and suitable habitat for special-status species, including USFWS-designated critical habitat. The Placetypes included in the Land Use and Community Form Element of the 2045 General Plan would encourage infill development, focusing most future development within the existing urban core of the City or within parcels that are currently/previously developed. This would reduce development pressure on undeveloped land, which would minimize potential impacts to special-status species and their habitat. Parcels that are adjacent to creek and river corridors generally vary in use classification and include commercial, residential, multifamily, open space, industrial, parkland, and public facilities. Any development on underutilized or vacant parcels that contain biologically sensitive features or species would be subject to federal, state, and local ordinances that require avoidance of habitat through setbacks and watercourse adjacency standards. In addition, discretionary projects would be evaluated for consistency with relevant General Plan and Zoning goals, policies, and actions, as detailed above, that would limit habitat loss and protect habitat quality. Development under the proposed project would also be subject to local, state, and federal natural resource regulations and permitting processes, as described above under Section 4.4.2, *Regulatory Setting*, through which project-specific mitigation measures may be identified to reduce impacts to biological resources. Therefore, based on the proposed land use plan, Placetypes, and goals, policies, and actions of the 2045 General Plan Update and compliance with applicable regulations, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact BIO-1
The project would impact special -status species and suitable habitat for habitat for special-status species.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantial adverse effects to special-status species and/or their habitats would be less than significant, and mitigation is not necessary (Class III).

b) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

IMPACT BIO-2: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY ADVERSELY IMPACT RIPARIAN HABITAT AND OTHER SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

As discussed above, the Planning Area contains many streams, tributaries, and other aquatic resources, including the Salinas River, Graves Creek, Atascadero Creek, Paloma Creek, and Atascadero Lake, which support riverine, wetland, and riparian habitats. Existing and proposed policies in the former and new General Plan and Zoning Code are designed to preserve these habitats by providing development standards that avoid disturbance of these areas, such as establishment of development setbacks. Land use types adjacent to creek and river corridors include commercial, residential, multi-family, open space, parkland, industrial, and public facilities. Although some development may occur on underutilized or vacant parcels, these developments would be subject to City and waterway adjacency standards that are designed to minimize impacts to habitat areas. All future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be subject to the standards of the Municipal Code, in addition to state and federal regulations.

Any project that involves permanent or temporary impacts to jurisdictional waters or wetlands—including riparian habitat—would require permits from federal and/or state agencies with jurisdiction over the resource. Pursuant to the Zoning Code, a grading permit may only be issued if any permits required by state or federal agencies for the proposed grading have been obtained or are required by conditions of approval to be obtained before grading work is started. Additionally, the Zoning Code provides standards for grading near watercourses, which include protective measures for grading near watercourses and only allow grading, dredging, or diking in any stream or natural body of water with permitted approval of a drainage plan and appropriate state and federal permits. Compliance with the City's Zoning Code, Grading and Drainage Standards, and construction standards, as required through the development review and permitting process, would contribute to reducing or avoiding impacts to riparian habitats and sensitive natural communities within the Planning Area. Projects that could affect waters, wetlands, or riparian vegetation are also subject to review and permitting under Sections 404 and 401 of the federal Clean Water Act to ensure that any discharge of dredged or fill material meets water quality standards established by the RWQCB. Similarly, activities that could alter a river, stream, or lake or affect riparian vegetation require notification to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and may require an SAA pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 1602, which establishes conditions to avoid or minimize impacts

to stream channels, riparian habitat, and associated wildlife resources. Together, these permitting processes and development standards require avoidance and minimization measures, project redesign where feasible, and implementation of protective conditions during construction, thereby reducing the potential for impacts to riparian habitats and other sensitive biological resources.

Additionally, implementation of the following goals, policies, and actions in the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element of the General Plan would reduce potential impacts to riparian habitat and sensitive natural communities:

- **Policy REC-2.2: Public Access to Creeks.** Preserve creek reservation parcels for open space and support opportunities for public access where appropriate.
- **Goal REC-3:** Dedicated system of open space that upholds the community's rural character, local biodiversity, natural landscape, and enjoyment of recreation
    - **Policy REC-3.2: New Development.** Require that new development and subdivisions blend in with surrounding topography by minimizing disturbance to the existing natural environment.
        - **Action D:** Require dedication of open space easements, parklands, and open space as mitigation for subdivisions and development projects that impact significant slopes, floodplains, watercourses and wetlands, wooded areas, sensitive areas, historic sites, cultural sites, and similar areas.
- **Goal REC-4:** Consideration of biological and watershed resources within the urban areas to provide multiple benefits, with resource areas including oak woodlands, riparian corridors, native trees and plants, and creeks and rivers
    - **Policy REC-4.1: Natural Resources Protection.** Protect natural and sensitive resource areas to the maximum extent practicable.
        - **Action B:** Maintain a GIS-based inventory of sensitive habitats and resources, including native trees, watercourse- and wetland-adjacent areas, archaeological resources, and historic sites.
        - **Action D:** Require identification of scenic and sensitive lands (creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, critical habitats, etc.) on development applications. Develop and work with applicants to implement avoidance and mitigation measures to minimize impacts.
    - **Policy REC-4.3: Watershed Protection.** Ensure that development along Atascadero Creek, Graves Creeks, the Salinas River, blue line creeks, and natural springs, lakes, and other riparian areas does not interrupt natural flows or adversely impact riparian ecosystems and water quality.
        - **Action A:** Require new development be designed in accordance with all applicable best management practices to prevent obstruction or diversion of flood and drainage flow to minimize adverse impacts to riparian vegetation and habitat along or within a watercourse.
        - **Action B:** Maintain waterways in a natural state; prohibit concrete channelization of creeks.
        - **Action C:** Limit development and uses that allow animal keeping, storage of vehicles or materials, and active recreation uses that result in disturbance of sensitive resource areas.
        - **Action D:** Allow flood protection measures (such as selective brush cleaning), low-impact trail development, streambed maintenance, and bank protection along waterways where appropriate with necessary permits.

  - **Action E:** Preserve creek reservations and the Salinas River for open space and recreational use. Minimize the impact of recreational uses on the habitat value and open space qualities of the creeks.
  - **Action F:** Protect areas subject to flooding from development, consistent with the City's flood hazard ordinance requirements.
  - **Action G:** In conjunction with the Atascadero Mutual Water Company, maintain regulations that identify existing and potential well sites and aquifer recharge areas, including sufficient buffers to protect them from contamination.
  - **Action H:** Support the establishment and protection of floodable terraces, wetlands, and revegetation along creeks and streams.
- **Policy REC-4.4**: **Stormwater Control Program.** Maintain a stormwater control program consistent with the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Program (Phase II).
  - **Action A:** Continue to implement the Urban Storm Water Quality Management and Discharge Control ordinance.
  - **Action B:** Minimize impervious surfaces and decrease off-site storm flows for new and modified development.
  - **Action C:** Consider incorporating regionally focused improvements into the stormwater master plan, including shared detention facilities and natural retention and detention systems.
  - **Action D:** Continue to notify project applicants of requirements to inspect sediment and erosion control mitigation measures each year.
- **Policy REC-4.6: Soil Health.** Encourage soil conservation by minimizing grading and preventing erosion.
  - **Action A**: Require soil retention and erosion control as conditions of approval for development projects consistent with RWQCB standards.
  - **Action B:** Periodically review the Municipal Code for consistency with National Pollution Discharge Elimination System requirements.

Additionally, the following goals and policies from the Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element of the proposed project would contribute to the reduction of potential impacts to riparian habitat and sensitive natural communities:

- **Goal SEP-2:** Flood prevention and reduction strategies that limit damage to natural areas while safeguarding property and lives
  - **Policy SEP-2.2: Open Space for Flood Protection.** Promote the enhancement and expansion of open space areas for flood management and passive recreation where appropriate and safe.

Implementation of the goals, policies, and actions included in the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, and compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations (as detailed in Section 4.4.2, *Regulatory Setting*, above) would minimize impacts to riparian habitats and sensitive natural communities by implementing measures that preserve natural spaces and guide development away from critical natural resources. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact BIO-2
The project would potentially adversely impact riparian habitat and sensitive natural communities.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantial adverse impacts to riparian and sensitive natural communities would be less than significant, and mitigation is not necessary (Class III).

c) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

IMPACT BIO-3: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY ADVERSELY IMPACT STATE OR FEDERALLY PROTECTED WETLANDS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT (IMPACT [CLASS III])*

As discussed above, the Planning Area contains many streams, tributaries, and other aquatic resources including the Salinas River, Graves Creek, Atascadero Creek, Paloma Creek, and Atascadero Lake which support riverine, wetland, and riparian habitats. Many of the aquatic resources within the Planning Area are likely considered WOTUS and/or WOTS under the jurisdiction of USACE, RWQCB, and/or CDFW. Development facilitated by the project has the potential to impact these resources depending on the location, orientation, and design of new or redeveloped properties because these features occur on underdeveloped or vacant parcels that are primarily limited to a small number of sites at the south end of the City within the Paloma Creek watershed.

Any project that involves permanent or temporary impacts to jurisdictional waters or wetlands would likely require permits from federal and/or state agencies with jurisdiction over the resource. Pursuant to the City's Zoning Code, a grading permit may only be issued if any permits required by state or federal agencies for the proposed grading have been obtained or are required by conditions of approval to be obtained before grading work is started. Additionally, the Zoning Code provides standards for grading near watercourses which includes protective measures for grading near watercourses and only allows grading, dredging, or diking in any stream or natural body of water with permitted approval of a drainage plan and appropriate state and federal permits. Required compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations and permitting processes would contribute to reducing or avoiding impacts to wetlands within the Planning Area because standards are designed to maximize avoidance of critical resources and features.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes goals, policies, and actions in the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element and the Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element of the General Plan that would minimize potential impacts to jurisdictional wetlands (see discussion under Impact BIO-2). Implementation of the goals, policies, and actions included in the 2045 General Plan Update and compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations (as detailed in Section 4.4.2, *Regulatory Setting*, above) would minimize impacts to riparian habitats and sensitive natural communities. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact BIO-3
The project would potentially adversely impact state or federally protected wetlands.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantial adverse effects to state or federally protected wetlands would be less than significant, and mitigation is not necessary (Class III).

d) Would the project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

IMPACT BIO-4: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY INTERFERE WITH THE MOVEMENT OF NATIVE RESIDENT OR MIGRATORY FISH OR WILDLIFE SPECIES, OR CONFLICT WITH ANY NATIVE RESIDENT MIGRATORY WILDLIFE CORRIDORS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The Planning Area is east of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range, which contains the Los Padres National Forest, and provides extensive natural areas that support wildlife movement. Additionally, the Planning Area is to the west of the Salinas River, which is a large, complex river system that provides a corridor for wildlife movement. Due to the existing level of development in the Planning Area, the urban areas within Atascadero are not considered wildlife corridors; however, waterways and riparian corridors throughout the Planning Area provide suitable conditions for wildlife movement and provide important wildlife corridors connecting the Salinas River to the Santa Lucia Mountains. Atascadero contains approximately 27 miles of creeks and rivers, including Atascadero Creek, Graves Creek, Paloma Creek, and the Salinas River. Historically, the creeks have been impacted by encroachment from development, sedimentation and erosion, off-road vehicle (ORV) use, and urban pollution that has significantly degraded habitat quality in localized areas of the watershed. The current General Plan and Municipal Code, and the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update are designed to reduce or eliminate such encroachment by incorporating objective design standards that focus development away from critical resources. Furthermore, there are no officially designated native wildlife nursery sites within the Planning Area.

While potential intensification of use may occur, the proposed project does not alter or facilitate development that may impact these wildlife corridors beyond the scope of the previous General Plan and Zoning Code. Implementation of the following policies in the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element would reduce potential impacts to wildlife movement corridors within the Planning Area:

- **Policy REC-4.3: Watershed Protection.** Ensure that development along Atascadero Creek, Graves Creeks, the Salinas River, blue line creeks, and natural springs, lakes, and other riparian areas does not interrupt natural flows or adversely impact riparian ecosystems and water quality.
    - **Action A:** Require new development be designed in accordance with all applicable best management practices to prevent obstruction or diversion of flood and drainage flow to minimize adverse impacts to riparian vegetation and habitat along or within a watercourse.

  - **Action B:** Maintain waterways in a natural state; prohibit concrete channelization of creeks.
  - **Action C:** Limit development and uses that allow animal keeping, storage of vehicles or materials, and active recreation uses that result in disturbance of sensitive resource areas.
  - **Action D:** Allow flood protection measures (such as selective brush cleaning), low-impact trail development, streambed maintenance, and bank protection along waterways where appropriate with necessary permits.
  - **Action E:** Preserve creek reservations and the Salinas River for open space and recreational use. Minimize the impact of recreational uses on the habitat value and open space qualities of the creeks.
  - **Action F:** Protect areas subject to flooding from development, consistent with the City's flood hazard ordinance requirements.
  - **Action G:** In conjunction with the Atascadero Mutual Water Company, maintain regulations that identify existing and potential well sites and aquifer recharge areas, including sufficient buffers to protect them from contamination.
  - **Action H:** Support the establishment and protection of floodable terraces, wetlands, and revegetation along creeks and streams.

- **Goal REC-4:** Consideration of biological and watershed resources within the urban areas to provide multiple benefits, with resource areas including oak woodlands, riparian corridors, native trees and plants, and creeks and rivers
  - **Policy REC-4.1: Natural Resources Protection.** Protect natural and sensitive resource areas to the maximum extent practicable.
    - **Action B:** Maintain a GIS-based inventory of sensitive habitats and resources, including native trees, watercourse- and wetland-adjacent areas, archaeological resources, and historic sites.
    - **Action D:** Require identification of scenic and sensitive lands (creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, critical habitats, etc.) on development applications. Develop and work with applicants to implement avoidance and mitigation measures to minimize impacts.

In addition, the following goal and policies from the Land Use Element of the proposed project would reduce potential impacts to wildlife movement corridors within the Planning Area:

- **Goal LU-1.** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
  - **Policy LU-1.2: Urban Services Line (USL).** Concentrate new and infill development within the Urban Services Line in areas where utilities and public services exist or are planned.
  - **Policy LU-1.7: Regional Impacts.** Coordinate with neighboring cities and community services districts, the County of San Luis Obispo, and regional transportation agencies to plan for growth and minimize regional impacts.

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update specifically includes policies and code standards intended to preserve and protect sensitive habitats within the Planning Area, including those on Atascadero Mutual Water Company property, creeks, and riparian corridors, ensuring that future development is carefully designed and implemented in a manner that minimizes impacts to these ecological resources. As discussed under Impact BIO-2 and Impact BIO-3, any project that involves impacts to jurisdictional waters or wetlands, including riparian corridors, would require permits from federal and/or state agencies with

jurisdiction over the resource. Because most of the wildlife corridors within the Planning Area are associated with riparian areas or waterways, obtaining required state and federal permits would minimize impacts to these resources. With implementation of the goals, policies, and actions included in the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Update and required compliance with local, state, and federal regulations and permits, the project would not substantially interfere with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, or conflict with any native resident migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites, and this impact would be *less than significant.*

Impact BIO-4
The project would potentially interfere with the movement of native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or conflict with any native resident migratory wildlife corridors.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, wildlife corridors, and native wildlife nursery sites would be less than significant, and mitigation is not necessary (Class III).

e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

IMPACT BIO-5: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE LOCAL POLICIES OR ORDINANCES PROTECTING BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES. *(NO IMPACT)*

Future development facilitated by the project would be subject to all applicable local policies and regulations related to protection of biological resources, including the City's Native Tree Ordinance. The project does not propose any substantive changes to the Native Tree Ordinance (Municipal Code Title 9, Chapter 11), which requires any intentional harm, damage, death, or decline of a native tree or removal of a native tree to require a City-issued tree removal permit. In addition, the following policy and actions in the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element of the General Plan show that development facilitated by the project would be required to be in conformance with applicable local policies and ordinances protection biological resources, including the Native Tree Ordinance.

- **Policy REC-4.2: Tree Protection and Replenishment.** Protect and replenish street and native trees.
    - **Action A:** Implement and enforce the Native Tree Ordinance to protect and replenish native tree species.
    - **Action C:** Implement a comprehensive street tree planting and maintenance program, specifically within the Downtown core and along major corridors.
    - **Action E:** Update the Zoning Ordinance to require native trees and plant species to be incorporated into landscaping plans, as appropriate.

Therefore, the project would not conflict with any applicable policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, and *no impacts would occur*.

Impact BIO-5
The project would not conflict with applicable local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts related to conflicts with applicable policies or ordinances protecting biological resources would occur.

f) Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

IMPACT BIO-6: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF AN ADOPTED HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN, NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN, OR OTHER APPROVED LOCAL, REGIONAL, OR STATE HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN. *(NO IMPACT)*

There are no adopted habitat conservation plans, natural community conservation plans, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plans applicable to the Planning Area. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with such plans, and *no impacts* would occur.

Impact BIO-6
The project would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts related to conflicts with an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan would occur.

4.4.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT BIO-7: THE PROJECT WOULD RESULT IN CUMULATIVE IMPACTS TO BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES. *(IMPACTS WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Impacts to biological resources, as described above, are related to the potential for direct and indirect impacts to sensitive natural communities, special-status species, regulated waterways and wetlands, sensitive habitat and mature native trees, and wildlife movement corridors. Future development associated

with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could result in impacts to special-status species, riparian, wetland, or other sensitive natural communities, as well as wildlife movement in the Planning Area. Many of these biological resources—such as streams, riparian corridors, and associated habitats—extend beyond the City's jurisdiction and are influenced by land use and development activities throughout the broader watershed and adjacent communities. Land use and development activities in San Luis Obispo County—including urban growth, agricultural operations, infrastructure improvements, and water management practices—contribute to cumulative impacts on streams, riparian corridors, and associated habitats within the broader watershed by altering hydrology, water quality, and habitat connectivity. Accordingly, implementation of the proposed project could contribute to cumulative impacts to biological resources within the Planning Area as well as within the larger regional watershed and adjacent jurisdictions, including San Luis Obispo County and other communities connected through shared ecological systems. As a result, cumulative impacts to sensitive biological resources would be potentially significant.

Implementation of goals, policies, and actions included as a part of the proposed project, as described above, would protect biological resources that have potential to be impacted by development facilitated by the project. These goals, policies, and actions would reduce the project's potential contribution to cumulative impacts to special-status species, sensitive natural communities, waterways and wetlands, and wildlife movement corridors to a less-than-significant level. Additionally, the following policy and actions from the Land Use Element of the proposed project would reduce potential regional impacts of the proposed project:

- **Policy LU-1.9: Regional Impacts.** Coordinate with neighboring cities and community services districts, the County of San Luis Obispo, and regional transportation agencies to plan for growth and minimize regional impacts.
    - **Action A:** Continue to coordinate with the County to maintain rural land use patterns, agriculture, and open space uses beyond the City limit.
    - **Action B:** Discourage land use changes by the County within the Colony boundary that would result in more intensive or higher density development, particularly in unincorporated areas and east of the Salinas River.
    - **Action C:** Develop financial agreement(s) with the County to recoup the costs to the City if development occurs beyond the City limit that would rely on City services or infrastructure.
    - **Action D:** Update the County Memorandum of Understanding requiring City comment on development proposals in the area between Vineyard Drive and Cuesta Grade, between the ridges east of the Salinas River, and Cerro Alto Campground.

Therefore, the contribution of the proposed project's cumulative impacts would not be cumulatively considerable with required compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations and implementation of applicable goals, policies, and actions included as a part of the proposed project.

Impact BIO-7
The project would result in cumulative impacts to biological resources.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.

Impact BIO-7
Residual Impacts
Residual cumulative impacts related to cumulative impacts to biological resources would be less than significant (Class III).

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4.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section analyzes potential impacts to cultural resources and Tribal Cultural Resources that would be caused by implementation of the proposed project. This analysis includes impacts to prehistoric archaeological sites and historic-era structures and buildings and the potential for newly identified archaeological resources, which could potentially be impacted by the gradual buildout of Atascadero under the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update. Information sources used in preparation of this section include literature and data review, background research, pedestrian surveys, Tribal consultation, and Chapter 6: Cultural Resources, of the 2045 General Plan Existing Conditions Report (Appendix F) (MIG, Inc. [MIG] 2023). Due to the sensitive nature of archaeological resources, which can be damaged or destroyed through uncontrolled public disclosure of information, specific resource locations are not disclosed in this EIR.

4.5.1 Existing Conditions

The information presented in this section draws primarily from Chapter 6 of the 2045 General Plan Existing Conditions Report prepared for the City in 2023 (MIG 2023). The Central California Information Center (CCIC), part of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, also conducted a records search for the Planning Area on June 23, 2025. Their review encompassed previous research, literature, and records of previously documented resources held by the CCIC, as well as historical aerial imagery and maps of the surrounding area. Through this process, CHRIS identified 72 cultural resources within the EIR Planning Area, which include both prehistoric and historic-era archaeological sites and built environment features.

4.5.1.1 Cultural Resources

PREHISTORIC OVERVIEW

The Planning Area lies within the Central Coast Archaeological Region, which extends southward from Monterey Bay through Big Sur to Morro Bay, including southern Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties, all of San Benito and Monterey Counties, and most of San Luis Obispo County (MIG 2023).

The prehistoric chronology for California is divided into three broad temporal periods, reflecting shared cultural characteristics throughout the state: the Paleoindian period (ca. 9000–6000 BC), Archaic period (6000 BC–AD 500), and Emergent period (AD 500–Historic Contact) (Fredrickson 1973, 1974, 1994). The Archaic period is further subdivided into Lower (6000–3000 BC), Middle (3000–1000 BC), and Upper (1000 BC–AD 500) periods. These divisions are influenced by climatic and environmental changes, such as the drying of pluvial lakes at the transition from the Paleoindian to Lower Archaic periods (MIG 2023).

Paleoindian Period (ca. 9000–6000 BC)

The Paleoindian period marks the earliest known human occupation in California, characterized by adaptation to a changing environment as pluvial lakes began to dry. Cultural characteristics from this period are reflected throughout the state.

Archaic Period (6000 BC–AD 500)

The Archaic period is divided into three subperiods:

- **Lower Archaic (6000–3000 BC):** Marked by continued adaptation to changing environmental conditions.

- **Middle Archaic (3000–1000 BC):** Characterized by further cultural developments and regional diversification.
- **Upper Archaic (1000 BC–AD 500):** Defined by more complex social organization and technological advancements.

Milling Stone Period (ca. 6500–3500 BC)

The Milling Stone period is notable for the widespread use of milling implements and is a foundational part of the Southern California coastal region sequence. This period reflects a distinct ecological adaptation and is still widely referenced in Central Coast archaeological studies (MIG 2023).

Central Coast Sequence (Post-Milling Stone Period)

Several chronological sequences have been developed to understand cultural changes in the Central Coast Region after the Paleoindian and Milling Stone periods. Sur and Monterey Patterns were proposed for occupations younger than 5,000 years. It has become apparent that the archaeology of the Central Coast Region subsequent to the Milling Stone period is distinct from that of the Bay Area and Central Valley; the region has more in common with the Santa Barbara Channel area during the Middle and Middle-Late Transition periods but few similarities during the Late period (MIG 2023). More recently, Jones and Ferneau updated the sequence following the Milling Stone Period, as follows:

- Early period
- Early–Middle Transition period
- Middle period
- Middle-Late Transition period
- Late period

This sequence highlights the distinct archaeological history of the Central Coast Region compared to neighboring regions, with greater affinity to the Santa Barbara Channel area during the Middle and Middle-Late Transition periods but few similarities during the Late period (MIG 2023).

Ethnography

The Planning Area was historically occupied by the Salinan, with the northernmost subdivision of the Chumash—the Obispeño (after Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa)—bordering to the south; however, the precise location of the boundary between the Chumashan-speaking Obispeño Chumash and their northern neighbors, the Hokan-speaking Salinan, is currently the subject of debate. It has been stated that "those boundaries may well have fluctuated through time in response to possible shifts in economic strategies and population movement" (MIG 2023). As such, a discussion of both groups is provided below.

Salinan

The Salinan language generally has been regarded as part of Hokan linguistic stock, but more recent linguistic analysis indicates Salinan has no close relatives or demonstrated connections to other languages (MIG 2023). Two Salinan dialects were recorded, northern (Antoniaño) and southern (Migueleño) divisions, associated with the people administered by the Spanish from Mission San Antonio de Padua and Mission San Miguel Arcángel, established in 1771 and 1797, respectively. Neophytes at Mission San Antonio included Salinan living along the coast, referred to as "Playanos." Little is known about Salinan names for themselves (MIG 2023).

The semisedentary Salinan occupied a rugged, mountainous area on the south-central California coast (MIG 2023). Heavily wooded hills and mountains of the South Coast Ranges dominated the interior, with sheer cliffs and rocky beaches along the Pacific coast. Salinan territory was bounded on the north by the Esselen and Costonoan, to the east by the Yokuts, and the south by Chumashan groups. The Chumash and Esselen languages were previously thought to be part of the Hokan linguistic family, but both are now considered isolate stocks (MIG 2023). The Costonoan and Yokuts languages were derived from Penutian linguistic stock, which is widespread in central California. The actual extent of Salinan territory is uncertain, with different ethnographers ascribing large variations in range. In general, their lands included the area between the coast and approximately 50 miles inland, from near the city of Soledad in the Salinas River Valley in the north, southward to north of the cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay. As described by Henshaw and Kroeber, their territory extended from the "sea to the main ridge of the Coast Range, and from the head of the Salinas drainage to a short distance above Soledad" (MIG 2023).

Salinan villages were recorded near the missions and along interior drainages, with some habitation areas along the coast (MIG 2023). No permanent sites were recorded in the Coast Range, although temporary camps were likely to have existed. Their subsistence economy was one of hunting and gathering. The surrounding environment was rich and varied, and they exploited the mountains, foothills, valleys, and coast. As with most Native Californians, acorns were a staple food, supplemented by wild oats, sage seeds, berries, mescal, and wild fruits. Additional resources exploited by coastal and interior groups included large and small mammals, such as deer, bear, and rabbits, as well as fish. The full extent of their villages is unknown, but 21 villages were identified from earlier records (MIG 2023). From north to south, villages along the segment route include *Ginau*, *Atnel* (near present-day King City), *Tsho-hwal*, *Teshaya*, and *Him'-se-en'* (south of Mission San Miguel).

Salinan houses were domed, up to 10 feet square, constructed of poles, and covered with tule or rye grass (MIG 2023). Other structures included birthing huts, dance houses, and semisubterranean sweathouses, among additional communal structures. Acorns were stored in willow-twig granaries. The Antoniaño group practiced cremation of their most distinguished individuals. Among the Migueleño, the deceased were wrapped in skins and their possessions burned.

A variety of tools and implements, some of which are inferred from the archaeological record in the area, were employed by Salinan groups, including bows and arrows, traps, nets, blinds, throwing stocks and slings, spears, harpoons, and hooks (MIG 2023). Bone and shell tools included bone awls and C-shaped shell fishhooks. Foods were processed using stone mortars and pestles, metates, stone bowls, and basket, bedrock, and wooden mortars. The Salinan also made a wide variety of baskets; cooking baskets, as well as earth ovens, were used in food preparation.

There is little recorded of Salinan subsistence economy, but they would have taken full advantage of the plant and animal resources available in the river valley, foothills, and mountains within their territory. They also had a stretch of coastline from which to gather shellfish, fish, and marine mammals. Ornaments included items made of steatite, serpentine, and abalone shell. Clothing included basket hats, rabbit-skin or otter-skin cloaks, and tule aprons. The Salinan also used beads made from mussel and abalone shell for currency and had musical instruments, such as cocoon rattles, wooden flutes, and bone whistles.

Some of Salinan material culture was obtained through an important trade network, established with neighboring groups (MIG 2023). In exchange for saltgrass salt, obsidian, seeds, lake fish, and possibly tanned animal skins, Salinan groups traded shell and shell beads with the Yokuts to the east. Shell ornaments, wooden dishes, and steatite vessels were obtained from the Chumash to the south, but apparently the Salinan did not trade with a rival trade group, the Costonoan, to the north.

Like other Indigenous Californians living near the coastal missions, the Salinan population decreased rapidly after the arrival of the Spanish. A relatively small population to begin with, the Salinan were

decimated by diseases introduced by the missions and later settlers. By 1831, their numbers were fewer than 700, and their population continued to decrease even more rapidly after secularization of the missions (MIG 2023). By the turn of the twentieth century, only three families survived within their traditional territory. The California Indian Roll of 1928 registered only 36 Salinans, and research 5 years later could identify only one Antoniaño family, comprising four elderly siblings (MIG 2023).

Chumash

The term Chumash initially applied only to the people living on Santa Cruz Island (MIG 2023). Chumash now refers to the entire linguistic and ethnic group of societies that occupied the coast between San Luis Obispo and northwestern Los Angeles County, including the Santa Barbara Channel Islands and inland to the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley. Neighboring groups included the Salinan to the north, Southern Valley Yokuts and Tataviam to the east, and Gabrielino (Tongva) to the south. Chumash place names in the project vicinity include *Pismu* (Pismo Beach), *Tematatimi* (along Los Berros Creek), and *Tilhini* (near San Luis Obispo) (MIG 2023).

The Chumash spoke six closely related Chumashan languages, which have been divided into two broad groups—Northern Chumash (consisting only of Obispeño) and Southern Chumash (including Purisimeño, Ineseño, Barbareño, Ventureño, and Island Chumash) (MIG 2023). Whereas Island Chumash was the most divergent of the five southern languages, Ventureño may have had the most internal variation, with at least six distinct dialects. The Chumashan language currently is considered an isolate stock with a long history in the Santa Barbara region (MIG 2023).

The earliest European visits to the Chumash region began with Cabrillo, Vizcaíno, and other naval explorers to the southern California coast in the 1500s. The first land expedition through the area occurred in AD 1769, when Gaspar de Portolà led an overland expedition from the newly established settlement at San Diego to the San Francisco Bay. The first permanent, non-Indigenous settlement in the area occurred with the founding of Mission San Luis Obispo in 1771, and soon numerous troop and supply trains passed through Chumash lands on the way from San Diego to more northerly missions and outposts. Within Chumash lands, additional Franciscan missions were founded at La Purísima, Santa Ynez, Santa Barbara, San Buenaventura, and San Fernando. When the pueblo of Los Angeles was established in 1781, the Ventureño Chumash were recruited as laborers.

Chumash subsistence varied between coastal and inland resources, but like many Indigenous Californian groups, the acorn was a dietary staple for the mainland Chumash. Acorns were gathered in the autumn and stored in villages, where they were ground to a meal, leached, and then cooked daily. In addition to acorns—mainly from the coast live oak—other nuts, such as pine nuts and walnuts, were collected. Chumash diet also included cattail roots, fruits and pads from cactus, and bulbs and tubers of plants such as amole (MIG 2023). Yucca stalks were harvested and roasted, and the buds and flowers also were gathered. Staples included small, hard seeds of several annual and perennial plants, such as grass, chia and other sages, and buckwheat. Seasonal resources included berries (blackberry, elderberry, grape, madrone, laurel, and wild cherry), mushrooms, and cress.

The effect of mission influence on local Native populations was devastating. The dissolution of their culture alienated them from their traditional subsistence patterns, social customs, and marriage networks. European diseases, against which they had no immunity, reached epidemic proportions, and Chumash populations were decimated (MIG 2023). The increase in agriculture and the spread of grazing livestock into their collecting and hunting areas made maintaining traditional lifeways increasingly difficult. Although most Chumash eventually submitted to the Spanish and were incorporated into the mission system, some refused to give up their traditional existence and escaped into the interior regions of the state, as refugees living with other Tribes. With the secularization of mission lands after 1834, traditional Chumash lands were distributed among grants to private owners. Only in the area of Mission Santa Barbara and Mission San

Fernando Rey de España were several small ranchos granted to neophytes of these missions, providing a secure home and gardens for a few people.

Most Chumash managed to maintain a presence in the area into the early twentieth century as cowboys, farm hands, and town laborers. The Catholic Church provided some land near Mission Santa Inés for ex-neophytes. This land eventually was deeded to the U.S. government in 1901 as the 127-acre Santa Ynez Reservation. Since the 1970s, Chumash descendants living in the city of Santa Barbara and the rural areas of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties have formed social and political organizations to aid in cultural revitalization to protect sacred areas and archaeological sites and to petition for federal recognition (MIG 2023).

HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The City has its roots in the Atascadero Colony, the utopian brainchild of Edward Gardner (E.G.) Lewis, an enterprising publisher, promoter, and land developer. For his planned community, Lewis envisioned "a city in the country, especially adapted to the automobile, with small orchard estates, residential section and all of the civic, educational and businesses as well as the administrative buildings grouped into a civic center" (MIG 2023). The property he selected, in northern San Luis Obispo County, was advantageously located on the main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad, bisected by the state highway, midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, "the two great markets of the Pacific Coast" (MIG 2023).

Lewis's choice of the Atascadero region also took advantage of an exceptionally extensive and relatively undeveloped tract of land that had historically been part of three Mexican-era land grants: Rancho Santa Margarita and Rancho Atascadero south of Atascadero Creek and Rancho La Asunción to the north. As was the case with California ranchos in general, cattle ranching was the dominant land use.

By the late-nineteenth century, nearly all of Ranchos Asunción and Atascadero, as well as a portion of Rancho Santa Margarita and adjacent government land, had been acquired by Jason H. Henry—a rancher who kept the large holdings intact. In 1913, E.G. Lewis purchased the entire Henry Ranch, encompassing some 23,000 acres of level or gently rolling terrain that had seldom—if ever—been plowed. Lewis systematically worked with a series of civil engineers, agricultural specialists, urban planners, and other experts to lay out an entirely new community, with roads, irrigation systems, and orchard trees established before house construction would begin. Specific areas of the Colony were designated for particular kinds of land uses. Beyond the downtown core, with the smaller residential parcels, two-story Mercantile Building as the Colony's retail center, and impressive civic buildings designed by San Francisco-based architects Walter D. Bliss and William B. Faville, scores of larger, outlying "blocks" were intended for development as family-owned orchard and farm properties (MIG 2023).

The Colony was promoted extensively throughout the United States, Canada, western Europe, and other English-speaking countries. Initially, Lewis intended for the civic core of the Colony with its grand buildings to be completed prior to residential construction, although the extensive construction costs of the new community required aggressive marketing campaigns to begin selling the plotted residential lots (MIG 2023). In 1914, while the Colony was still under construction, a convention was promoted for people to visit the Colony. Temporary accommodations were set up as a tent city, and visitors were able to view the work at hand while visiting the Colony's sale office. The tent city model grew over the following year while residents waited for new residences to be constructed. The Colony, often referred to as "Atascadero Estates," took form as residences were constructed. In many instances, residents of the tent city first constructed garages and chicken coops and established gardens while waiting for their residences to be completed. By the end of 1915, several homes were finished, and the large public buildings were coming closer to completion, including the Administration Building (now City Hall), which would serve as the offices for the Colony Holding Corporation, sales office, community center, and other important communal functions, and the Atascadero Printery, which housed extensive printing press and lithographic equipment

to produce the Colony's newspaper and promotional materials, the *Illustrated Review* world news publication, and contracted printing for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Los Angeles Times* (MIG 2023).

Through 1917, Atascadero was booming as additional public, commercial, industrial and residential developments were completed; however, following the U.S. entry into World War I, the Colony was facing new economic pressures. With ramp-up in the war effort, building supplies were in short supply and a moratorium on nonessential new construction was in place. Additionally, plans for businesses, factories, and other industrial centers in Atascadero were shelved, except for a few enterprises related to agriculture and food processing. By the mid-1920s, development momentum in Atascadero had waned, and the financial challenges faced by Lewis and the Colony's holding companies became insurmountable. Lewis ultimately declared bankruptcy following an alternative scheme for developing a new community on the Palos Verdes Peninsula in which he used his mail order lists to actively fundraise for the project. Lewis was ultimately convicted of using the U.S. mail to commit fraud and was imprisoned (MIG 2023).

Following Lewis' indictment, the attorney Oscar Willet became the administrator of the Colony Holding Company. Contrary to the original Colony plan, Willet began selling company-owned property for private development. During this period, there was a degree of concentrated commercial development, particularly along the main corridors of El Camino Real and Traffic Way, shifting from the central Mercantile Building, which had served as a pseudo-company store for the Colony. The commercial corridors developed similarly to other communities, with a variety of two-story commercial blocks, composed in common and popular architectural styles of the period, that housed a variety of businesses, including retail, restaurants, hotels, entertainment venues, and an increasing number of automobile-related services. Under the direction of Willet, the Colony also purchased the community of Eaglet, which was a small town centered along El Camino Real and surrounded by Colony lands. Initially, residents in Eaglet rejected the Lewis plan and the various restrictions he had emplaced to develop his vision; however, with Lewis by the wayside and Atascadero developing more conventionally during this period, Eaglet was easily incorporated into the broader Colony community (MIG 2023).

The onset of the Great Depression slowed the modest development of Atascadero, although many of the buildings and enterprises were able to continue in some capacity. In the lead up to Word War II (WWII), the U.S. Army opened Camp Roberts, which was one of the largest training centers on the West Coast. The influx of people and capital was a catalyst for development during this period, with the population of the Atascadero area growing by nearly 50% over the course of the WWII (MIG 2023).

In the post-WWII years, Atascadero underwent a similar transformation as other communities in California. The influx of people spurred residential development of tract homes, accompanied by an influx of both federal and state government funding. One of the most drastic interventions was the construction of the new U.S. Route 101. Funded by the U.S. government, the new highway alignment was constructed several hundred feet west of downtown and replaced El Camino Real as the main thoroughfare, which enhanced the connection between Atascadero and the rest of California through the expanding interstate system but divided the master planned community in half, severing links between the east and west sides of Atascadero. The State of California also invested in the community in 1954 with the construction of the Atascadero State Hospital, a state-run forensic psychiatric hospital southwest of downtown Atascadero. As a major employer, the hospital brought an influx of people into the community. Additionally, private investment and the development of other industries spurred growth. The increased diversity in the economy resulted in the construction of a variety of new property types, including multifamily and mixed-use developments, particularly within the central community (MIG 2023).

As one of the last cities to incorporate in the region, Atascadero was incorporated as an independent city in 1979, and steady growth in the community continued over the following decades. Although the original vision of the Atascadero Colony Plan did not materialize, the lack of extremely intensive developmental

pressures allowed for steady and manageable growth in the community, which effectively deviated from the original plan for the community. However, the most prominent civic buildings and spaces—as well as some of the rural and agricultural aesthetics of the original Colony remain in place today, although divided by Highway 101 and the placement of public schools within the original downtown district. (MIG 2023).

EXISTING CULTURAL RESOURCES

Known Historic Resources

Currently, the City maintains a comprehensive local register or inventory of historical resources that is referenced within the City's Municipal Code as "Colony Homes and related structures". To provide insight into the extant resources within the City's boundaries, SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) architectural historians conducted a review of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) inventory databases and files available through the Library of Congress, as well as the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) databases, specifically the California Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD) for San Luis Obispo County.

Based on this review, Atascadero contains several known historical resources that have been identified, documented, and evaluated, as well as several prospective resources that have been the subject of local study. It should be noted that this section does not provide an exhaustive list of all previously identified historical resources. For example, the residential properties developed during the City's period of significance (Colony Era) (from 1913 to approximately 1920) are known as Colony homes and are not currently on the local, state or national register, however these properties may qualify for listing on one or more of these registers. The BERD, which served as the primary inventory source for this investigation, is a living document that is updated as new information, surveys, and documentation are submitted to OHP. Although it is not a wholly comprehensive list, it provides valuable insight into previous identification efforts and highlights resources that have been evaluated for historical significance in Atascadero.

Table 4.5-1 lists properties of historical significance within Atascadero listed in the BERD for San Luis Obispo County and includes the resource name, address, property type, built date, and the assigned California Historical Resource Status Code. Appendix B provides a list of the California Historical Resource Status Codes.

Table 4.5.-1. Previously Documented Historical Resources in Atascadero

Resources Name	Address	Property Type	Built Date(s)	Historic Status
Atascadero Printery	6351 Olmeda Avenue	Building	1915–1916	Listed in NRHP and CRHR
Atascadero Administration Veteran's Memorial Building	6500 Palma Avenue	Building	1914–1918	Listed in the NRHP and CRHR, designated CHL
Atascadero Estates Residential Historic District[1]	–	–	1913–1919	NRHP eligible
Bucklin House	6905 Country Club Drive	Building	1930	NRHP eligible, CRHR listed
The Doran Building	5850 El Camino Real	Building	1925	NRHP eligible
Jorgens House	5345 Magnolia Avenue	Building	1918	NRHP eligible, CRHR listed
Carlton Hotel	5995 Traffic Way	Building	1929	NRHP eligible, CRHR listed

Source: MIG (2023).

Notes: CHL = California Historical Landmark; CRHR = California Register of Historical Resources.

[1] Contributors to the Atascadero Estates Residential Historic District are outlined in Table 4.5-2.

Atascadero Estates Residential Historic District

The Atascadero Estates Residential Historic District (AERHD), first documented in 1987 and recognized by the California State Historic Preservation Officer, is notable for its original street layout, infrastructure, and overall design reflecting the Garden City tradition. Significant for its association with E. G. Lewis and planners Walter D. Bliss and William B. Faville, the district is eligible for the NRHP under criteria A, B, and C, with a period of significance from 1914 to approximately 1921 (MIG 2023). The NRHP criteria for evaluation are described in Section 4.5.2, *Regulatory Setting*. Unlike typical historic districts, AERHD is defined primarily by its street network and foundational elements from Atascadero's early development, with only a few contributing buildings and many non-contributors present. The district's historic value is rooted in the components completed during the initial phase of the Colony plan, as outlined in Table 4.5-2.

Table 4.5-2. Previously Documented Historical Resources in Atascadero

Resources Name	Address	Property Type	Built Date
Atascadero Printery	6351 Olmeda Avenue	Building	1915–1917
Atascadero Administration Veteran's Memorial Building (City Hall)	6500 Palma Avenue	Building	1914–1918
Atascadero Historic Street System	–	Structure	1914–1948
Street trees	–	Site	1914–1948
Community Center (Federated Church Building)	6225 Atascadero Mall	Building	1920
Atascadero Hospital	5575 Hospital Drive	Building	1919–1921
The Mall	Traffic Way/El Camino Real	Structure	1914–1915
Mall Park (Sunken Gardens)	East Mall/West Mall/Palma Avenue/ El Camino Real	Site	1918
Palma Avenue retaining wall	Palma Avenue	Structure	1916
Bridge #49-100 (Magnolia Avenue Bridge/ Atascadero Creek Bridge)	State Route 41/Atascadero Creek	Structure	1921

Source: MIG (2023).

Records Search

On June 14, 2023, SWCA requested a records search from the CCIC of the CHRIS at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. The records search included any previously recorded cultural resources and investigations within a 0.25-mile radius of the planning area.

In addition to official maps and records on file at the CCIC, the following inventories, publications, and technical studies were consulted as part of the record search:

- National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
- California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR)
- California Inventory of Historical Resources
- California State Historical Landmarks (CHLs)
- California Points of Historical Interest
- California OHP Historic Property Directory and Determinations of Eligibility

On June 23, 2023, the CCIC provided a response to the records search request identifying previously recorded cultural resources and investigations within 0.25 mile of the Planning Area, the results of which are summarized in Table 4.5-3. Due to the sensitive nature of archaeological resources, which can be damaged or destroyed through uncontrolled public disclosure of information, specific resource locations are not disclosed in this EIR.

Table 4.5-3. Previously Recorded Cultural Resources within 0.25 Mile of the Planning Area

Primary Number	Trinomial	Resource Description	NRHP Eligibility Status	Recorded by and Year	Proximity to Planning Area
P-40-000492	CA-SLO-000492	Prehistoric: portable mortar; profuse thermal fractured stone, pestles, spalls, drill	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	von Werlhof (1969) W. Nettles and D. McIntosh (1999)	Outside
P-40-000493	CA-SLO-000493	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, habitation debris, other (pestles, mortar fragments)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	von Werlhof (1969) W. Nettles and D. McIntosh (1999)	Outside
P-40-000517	CA-SLO-000517	Prehistoric: bedrock milling feature (bowls, mortars)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C. E. Dills (1969) T. Carpenter (1999)	Outside
P-40-000529	CA-SLO-000529	Prehistoric: cairns/rock feature, bedrock milling feature	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C. E. Dills (1970)	Outside
P-40-000531	CA-SLO-000531	Prehistoric: bedrock milling feature	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C. E. Dills (1970)	Within
P-40-000537	CA-SLO-000537	Prehistoric: cairns/rock feature (small mortar, boulder converted into bowl)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C. E. Dills, Cuesta College Archaeology class (1970)	Outside
P-40-000617	CA-SLO-000617	Prehistoric: bedrock milling feature, burials, other (bowls, grave marker, burials)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C. E. Dills (1971)	Outside
P-40-000834	CA-SLO-000834	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, hearth (denticulate, scrapers, chopper, cores, detritus, hammer stones, obsidian flake, unidentified clamshell, metaquartzite biface)	Certified	R. Gibson (1978)	Within
P-40-000848	CA-SLO-000848	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, bedrock milling features (chert and quartzite flakes, chert flake scraper, bedrock mortar outcrop)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	Marciel Zenor and R. L. Hoover (1978)	Within
P-40-000849	CA-SLO-000849	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, other (chert flakes and cores, projectile point, boiling stones, hammer stones, ground stone artifacts, metate, shell fragments, large mammal bone)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R. O. Gibson (1992)	Outside
P-40-001075	CA-SLO-001075	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, hearth (chert bifaces and debitage, shale Rossi large square stemmed projectile point base, chert flake tool, chert core, igneous pestle blank fragment, and fire-altered rock)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R. O. Gibson (1992)	Outside
P-40-001076	CA-SLO-001076	Prehistoric: lithic scatter (stone flakes, burnt rock fragments, sparce)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R. O. Gibson (1992)	Outside

Primary Number	Trinomial	Resource Description	NRHP Eligibility Status	Recorded by and Year	Proximity to Planning Area
P-40-001077	CA-SLO-001077	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, other (stone flakes, tool fragments, shell fragments, chert flakes and cores, lithic scatter, fire-altered rock)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	W. Nettles (1999)	Outside
P-40-001119	CA-SLO-001119	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, burials, habitation debris, other (Monterey chert flakes, chalcedony, mortars, pestles, burials)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C.A. Singer, Jaime Karl, C.A. Singer, and Jamie Karl (1985)	Outside
P-40-001147	CA-SLO-001147	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, habitation debris (chert flake, chert biface flake, burnt gravel, mammal, and shell fragments)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C.A. Singer and R. O. Gibson (1986)	Outside
P-40-001148	CA-SLO-001148	Prehistoric: habitation debris (Monterey chert flake and Franciscan core)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C.A. Singer and R. O. Gibson (1986)	Outside
P-40-001199	CA-SLO-001199	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, habitation debris, (biface knives, preforms, flake knives, flake scrappers, quartzite and Franciscan chert cores, debitage of various size)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R. O. Gibson (1987)	Outside
P-40-001260	CA-SLO-001260	Prehistoric: burials, shale	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	C. A. Singer and Lei Lynn Odom (1989)	Outside
P-40-001372	CA-SLO-001372	Prehistoric: habitation debris (Monterey and Franciscan chert flakes fragment of Franciscan chert biface)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	Debra Jones, Far Western (1991); T. Cooley and D. James (1991); Sharon Waechter (1998)	Outside
P-40-001375	P-40-001375	Prehistoric: lithic scatter (Monterey and Franciscan chert flakes)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	T. Cooley and D. James (1991); S. Waechter (1999)	Outside
P-40-001391	CA-SLO-001391	Prehistoric: bedrock milling feature (mortars)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	Gerrit L. Fenenga (1991)	Outside
P-40-001490	CA-SLO-001490	Prehistoric: lithic scatter (Monterey chert flakes, flake scraper)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R O. Gibson (1992)	Outside
P-40-001711	CA-SLO-001711	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, burials, habitation debris (bowl fragment, pestle, points)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	Charles E. Dills and Terry Frederick (1994, 1995)	Outside
P-40-001779	CA-SLO-001779	Prehistoric: lithic scatter (volcanic and quartzite hammer stones, Monterey and Franciscan flakes, chert blades and flakes)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R O. Gibson (1992) Clay A. Singer (1998)	Outside
P-40-001874	CA-SLO-001874	Prehistoric: habitation debris (chert projectile point, quartzite primary flake, volcanic hammer stone, granite hammer stone)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R. O. Gibson and J. A. Parsons (1998)	Outside
P-40-001875	CA-SLO-001875	Prehistoric: habitation debris (Monterey chert projectile point)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R. O. Gibson and J. A. Parsons (1998)	Outside

Primary Number	Trinomial	Resource Description	NRHP Eligibility Status	Recorded by and Year	Proximity to Planning Area
P-40-001876	CA-SLO-001876	Prehistoric: habitation debris (Monterey chert core and flakes, shellfish and burnt rock fragments)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R. O. Gibson and J. A. Parsons (1998)	Outside
P-40-001877	CA-SLO-001877	Prehistoric: habitation debris (quartzite chopper, hammer stones, Monterey chert projectile point, Franciscan chert core, shellfish fragments)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	R. O. Gibson and J. A. Parsons (1998)	Outside
P-40-001892	CA-SLO-001892	Historic: cemetery (gravestones with concrete plinths)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	Clay Singer (1998)	Outside
P-40-001910	CA-SLO-001910	Prehistoric: habitation debris (chert flakes and shellfish fragment)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	John E. Atwood (1999)	Outside
P-40-001911	CA-SLO-001911	Prehistoric: lithic scatter (Monterey chert point fragment, chert flake, glass flake)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	John E. Atwood (1999)	Outside
P-40-001912	CA-SLO-001912	Prehistoric: habitation debris (manos, chert cores and flakes, quartzite hammer stones, chert knives, burnt rock, bone and shell fragments) Historic: foundations (roofing tile, square nails, bone, ceramic and glass fragments)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	John E. Atwood (1999)	Outside
P-40-001913	CA-SLO-001913	Prehistoric: other (chert flakes, core and chopper, quartzite hammer stone)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	John E. Atwood (1999)	Outside
P-40-001932	CA-SLO-001932	Historic: dump (historic trash containing numerous early twentieth-century domestic products including glass bottles, metal, and shells)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	Carole Denardo and John Sharp (1999)	Outside
P-40-002029	CA-SLO-002029	Prehistoric: lithic scatter, quarry, habitation debris (chert cobbles, chert flakes and biface, chert flake tool, and clamshells)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	M. Avina (1999)	Outside
P-40-002049	CA-SLO-002049	Prehistoric: quarry (Franciscan chert outcrop)	Unknown/ Not Evaluated	T. Carpenter (1999)	Outside

Note:
Outside = Outside the Planning Area but within the 0.25-mile search radius.

4.5.1.2 Tribal Cultural Resources

The City provided Native American Tribes consultation opportunities consistent with Senate Bill (SB) 18 and Assembly Bill (AB) 52 to identify potential concerns or issues associated with Native American cultural resources located within the Planning Area. The City mailed notice letters inviting requests for consultation to representatives of the Chumash Council of Bakersfield, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, Northern Chumash Tribal Council, Salinan Tribe of Monterey, San Luis Obispo Counties, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Tule River Indian Tribe, Xolon-Salinan Tribe, and yak tityu tityu yak tiłhini – Northern Chumash Tribe on July 17, 2025. No consultation requests have been received as of the date of circulation of this Draft EIR.

4.5.2 Regulatory Setting

4.5.2.1 Federal

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT OF 1966

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) is intended to identify and preserve historic and archaeological sites within the country. The NHPA created the State Historic Preservation Officer, NRHP, and NHPA Section 106 review process.

Section 106 Review Process

Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to undergo a review process for all federally funded and permitted projects that may impact historical or archaeological resources that are listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP. Section 106 requires federal agencies to consider the effect a project may have on a historic property and allows interested parties the opportunity to comment on a project's potential effects. The typical process includes the following four steps:

1. Initiation of the Section 106 review process;
2. Identification of historic properties that may be affected;
3. Assessment of adverse effects; and
4. Resolution of adverse effects.

National Register of Historic Places

The NRHP was established by the NHPA as "an authoritative guide to be used by Federal, State, and local governments, private groups and citizens to identify the Nation's cultural resources and to indicate what properties should be considered for protection from destruction or impairment" (36 CFR 60.2). The NRHP recognizes properties that are significant at the national, state, and/or local level.

A property is eligible for the NRHP if it is significant under one or more of the following criteria:

- **Criterion A:** It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- **Criterion B:** It is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in our past;
- **Criterion C:** It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; and/or,
- **Criterion D:** It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historic figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, and properties that are primarily commemorative in nature, are not considered eligible for the NRHP, unless they satisfy certain conditions.

In general, a resource must be 50 years of age to be considered for the NRHP, unless it satisfies a standard of exceptional importance.

In addition to meeting any or all the eligibility criteria identified above, properties must also possess historic integrity to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. Historic integrity is defined by the Secretary of the Interior's

(SOI's) Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation, Article 20, Preservation Terminology as the ability of a property to convey its significance and is defined as the "authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic period" (National Park Service [NPS] 2020). According to the National Register Bulletin 15 – *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (NPS 1995), to retain the integrity, the property must demonstrate several of these aspects; however, determining the most important of these aspects requires information specific to when, where, and why the property is significant. To determine this, the seven aspects of integrity, as defined by the NPS, include the following:

- **Location:** The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event took place.
- **Design:** The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- **Setting:** The physical environment of a historic property.
- **Materials:** The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- **Workmanship:** The physical evidence of the crafts or a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- **Feeling:** A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- **Association:** The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

A property must retain several of these aspects of integrity for the period during which it achieved significance to be eligible for listing in the NRHP.

NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION ACT

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was passed in 1990 to provide for the protection of Native American graves. The act conveys to Native American's of demonstrated lineal descent, the human remains, including the funerary or religious items, that are held by federal agencies and federally supported museums, or that have been recorded from federal lands. NAGPRA makes the sale or purchase of Native American remains illegal, whether or not they were derived from federal or Native American lands.

4.5.2.2 State

The OHP, a division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, is responsible for carrying out the duties described in the California Public Resources Code (PRC) and maintaining the California Historic Resources Inventory and CRHR. The state-level regulatory framework also includes the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which requires the identification and mitigation of substantial adverse impacts that may affect the significance of eligible historical and archaeological resources for applicable discretionary projects.

CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Created in 1992 and implemented in 1998, the CRHR is "an authoritative guide in California to be used by state and local agencies, private groups, and citizens to identify the state's historical resources and to indicate what properties are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change" (PRC Sections 21083.2 and 21084.1). Certain properties, including those listed in or formally determined eligible for the NRHP and CHLs numbered 770 and higher, are automatically included in the

CRHR. Other properties recognized under the California Points of Historical Interest program, identified as significant in historical resources surveys, or designated by local landmarks programs, may be nominated for inclusion in the CRHR. According to PRC Section 5024.1(c), a resource, either an individual property or a contributor to a historic district, may be listed in the CRHR if the State Historical Resources Commission determines that it meets one or more of the following criteria, which are modeled on NRHP criteria:

- **Criterion 1:** It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage.
- **Criterion 2:** It is associated with the lives of persons important in our past.
- **Criterion 3:** It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values.
- **Criterion 4:** It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Resources nominated to the CRHR must retain enough of their historic character or appearance to convey the reasons for their significance. Resources whose historic integrity does not meet NRHP criteria may still be eligible for listing in the CRHR.

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

Often associated with the iconic highway signage and monument placards, CHLs are remnants of the State's earliest program to identify and commemorate historic resources. Established in 1931, the CHL program focused primarily on commemorating buildings, sites, and other properties of particular historic significance within California. Initially, the emphasis of the early CHL program was on recognizable locations associated early California history, including missions, battlefields, settlements, and California Gold Rush sites. These early designations did not require criteria for evaluation significance or other metrics for determination but rather were directed by the efforts of nonprofit organizations, such as the Native Sons of the Golden West and Native Daughters of the Golden West; however, to give the program additional credibility, the California Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee (now the State Historical Resources Commission) was established, which adopted formal registration criteria in 1962 (California State Parks 2025; OHP 2011).

To qualify as a CHL, a resource must exhibit significance under one of the following criteria:

- The resource must be the first, last, only, or most significant of its type in the state or within a large geographical region (northern, central, or southern California).
- Associate with an individual or group having a profound influence on the history of California.
- A prototype of, or an outstanding example of a period, style, architectural movement or construction, or is one of the more notable works or the best surviving work in a region of a pioneer architect, designer or master builder.

Because the CHL program predates the other historic resource registration programs, only those CHLs with a landmark number of 770 and above are automatically listed in the CRHR. Those CHLs with earlier numbers are identified as needing future evaluation using current practices and significance criteria to affirm historical significance and listing in the CRHR. The CHL program has not been widely used since the creation of the CRHR and is limited largely to environmental review of State-owned properties under PRC Section 5024 and 5024.5, although resources can still be nominated and designated

CALIFORNIA POINTS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

California Points of Historical Interest are sites, buildings, features, or events of local (city or county) significance, having anthropological, cultural, military, political, architectural, economic, scientific or technical, religious, experimental, or other value. Criteria are the same as those for CHLs but directed to local areas. Points of Historical Interest designated after December 1997 and recommended by the State Historical Resources Commission are also listed in the CRHR. No historical resource may be designated as both a Landmark and a Point; however, if a Point is subsequently granted status as a Landmark, the Point designation will be retired.

TREATMENT OF HUMAN REMAINS

The disposition of burials falls first under the general prohibition on disturbing or removing human remains under California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5. More specifically, remains suspected to be Native American are treated under CEQA in California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15064.5; PRC Section 5097.98 illustrates the process to be followed if remains are discovered. If human remains are discovered during construction, no further disturbance to the site shall occur, and the County Coroner must be notified (CCR 15064.5; PRC 5097.98).

CALIFORNIA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, TITLE 14 SECTION 4308

The purpose of California Administrative Code Title 14, Section 4308 is to preserve the state's cultural resources. This regulation prohibits any persons from removing, injuring, defacing, or otherwise destroying any valuable archaeological or historical resource.

ASSEMBLY BILL 52

AB 52 amended PRC Section 5097.94 and added PRC Sections 21073, 21074, 21080.3.1, 21080.3.2, 21082.3, 21083.09, 21084.2, and 21084.3. AB 52 formalizes the lead agency–Tribal consultation process, requiring the lead agency to initiate consultation with California Native American groups that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project, including Tribes that may not be federally recognized. As the lead agency, the City is required to begin consultation prior to the release of a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or EIR.

Section 4 of AB 52 added PRC Section 21074(a) and (b), which address Tribal Cultural Resources and cultural landscapes. Section 21074(a) defines Tribal Cultural Resources as one of the following:

> (1) Sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following:
>
> > (A) Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources.
> >
> > (B) Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in subdivision (k) of Section 5020.1.
>
> (2) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1 for the purposes of this paragraph, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Section 1(a)(9) of AB 52 establishes that "a substantial adverse change to a Tribal Cultural Resource has a significant effect on the environment." Effects on Tribal Cultural Resources must be considered under

CEQA. Section 6 of AB 52 added Section 21080.3.2 the PRC, which states that parties may propose mitigation measures "capable of avoiding or substantially lessening potential significant impacts to a Tribal Cultural Resource or alternatives that would avoid significant impacts to a Tribal Cultural Resource." Further, if a California Native American Tribe requests consultation regarding project alternatives, mitigation measures, or significant effects to Tribal Cultural Resources, the consultation shall include those topics (PRC Section 21080.3.2[a]). The environmental document and the mitigation monitoring and reporting program (where applicable) shall include any mitigation measures that are adopted (PRC Section 21082.3 [a]).

TRADITIONAL TRIBAL CULTURAL PLACES ACT (SENATE BILL 18)

California Government Code Section 65352.3 (adopted pursuant to the requirements of SB 18) requires local governments to coordinate and consult with Tribal organizations prior to making a decision to adopt or amend a general or specific plan. The Tribal organizations would be considered eligible to consult on a project if they were to have traditional lands in a local government's jurisdiction, and are identified, on request, by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). As noted in the California Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Tribal Consultation Guidelines (OPR 2005), "The intent of SB 18 is to provide California Native American Tribes an opportunity to participate in local land use decisions at an early planning stage, for the purpose of protecting, or mitigating impacts to, cultural places."

4.5.2.3 Local

Although the City does not have a formal historic preservation ordinance or preservation program specific to cultural and historical resources, there are several approved zoning overlays and planning documents that outline specific goals and policies related to the treatment of cultural resources within the City.

HISTORIC SITES OVERLAY ZONE

Initially developed in 1983, the City has integrated a Historical Site (HS) Overlay Zone category into its Municipal Code. Outlined in Section 9-3.621. The HS overlay is applied to areas where there are significant cultural resources, including archaeological and historical sites or structures on or eligible to be on the State or national register, and is intended to "protect historic structures and sites by requiring new uses and alterations to existing uses be designed with consideration for preserving and protecting" the resource. The standards pertain to both 1) new structures and uses and 2) modifications to historic structures and outline the permitting and environmental review processes for each.

Archaeological Resources

Specific to archaeological resources, the existing Municipal Code (Section 9-4.162) sets standards for analysis for any development in known potential resource areas. Unless otherwise specified, citations to the Municipal Code in the EIR are to the Atascadero Municipal Code as it exists at the time of publication of this EIR. Although the subject matter of all Municipal Code citations will be carried forward with the Zoning Code Update, the Zoning Code Update may renumber certain sections. A Phase I is required prior to any ground-disturbing activities. Should the Phase I indicate the need for additional analysis, a Precise Plan application and full CEQA analysis must be completed prior to permitting. These regulations will be carried forward with the Zoning Code Update but may be renumbered.

Historic Resources

The City's Municipal Code was updated in 2024 to include revised standards and processes for proposed development affecting or surrounding historic resources. The purpose of the ordinance is to promote public health, safety, and welfare and provide for the recognition and consideration of historic resources that reflect

the social, cultural, historical, and architectural heritage of the city by establishing procedures and standards necessary to:

a. Implement the goals and policies of the General Plan;

a. Maintain historic community assets;

b. Integrate the consideration of historic resources into the development process;

c. Maintain rights of the owners of historic resources; and

d. Fulfill the City's responsibilities under any applicable State and Federal laws, including the California Environmental Quality Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

The HS overlay zone was applied to properties with significant historic resources, either those listed or eligible for listing. All other historically significant properties, most notably those with Colony Homes, were included on the City's adopted Historic Resources List and additional analysis and standards are applied when permits on these listed properties are sought. Listed structures include:

1) Colony-era and Pre-Colony-era structures built prior to 1926 that retain historical integrity; or

2) Other buildings, structures, objects, or sites that:

    a. Are at least 50 years old;

    b. Exhibit demonstrable historic significance consistent with the Historic Resource List eligibility criteria; and

    c. Retain sufficient historic integrity to accurately convey its significance

In order to qualify as eligible for listing in the City's Historic Resources List, a resource must exhibit demonstrable historical significance consisting of one or more eligibility criteria:

1) The resource is associated with a significant local event or pattern of development.

2) The resource is associated with a significant person or persons.

3) The resource is recognized as possessing distinctive stylistic characteristics or workmanship significant for the study of a period, method of construction, or use of native materials.

4) The resource is recognized as possessing special aesthetic merit or value in the community as a resource with quality of design or workmanship and that retains sufficient character-defining features embodying its aesthetic significance.

5) The resource is associated with an architect, designer, or builder whose work has influenced the development of Atascadero.

6) The resource is recognized as a significant example of the cultural, natural, archaeological, or built heritage of Atascadero.

These regulations and standards will be carried forward with the Zoning Code Update.

GENERALIZED HISTORIC RESOURCES LIST

In November 2024, the Atascadero City Council formally approved Resolution 2024-064, adopting a Historic Resources Ordinance (City of Atascadero 2025). The Historic Resources Ordinance (Municipal Code Sections 9-4.163–9-4.169) formally recognizes and protects properties, buildings, and other resources of historical and aesthetic significance. Enabled by California Government Code Section 37361, the ordinance establishes special conditions and regulations for the preservation, enhancement, and use of such resources. Atascadero's historic context stems from its origins as one of California's first master planned

communities, dating back to the "Colony era" (1913–1926), with several properties already listed on state and national historic registers. In collaboration with the Atascadero Historical Society, the City has identified Colony-era homes (aka Colony Homes) and other historic assets to ensure accurate documentation. The ordinance outlines standards for the modification of historic resources—referencing both local criteria and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (SOI's Standards) (NPS 2017)—and incorporates review procedures under CEQA.

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

The 2025 General Plan is composed of several elements, including the Land Use, Open Space and Conservation (LOC) Element; Circulation Element; Safety and Noise Element; and Housing Element. Each includes specific goals, policies, and programs that inform short and long-term decision-making in the community (City of Atascadero 2016).

Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element

Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to cultural resources included within the LOC Element are listed here.

- **Goal LOC1:** Protect and preserve the rural atmosphere of the community by assuring "elbow room" for residents by means of maintenance of large lot sizes which increase in proportion to distance beyond the Urban Core.
    - **Policy 1.1:** Preserve the rural atmosphere of the community and assure "elbow room" in areas designated for lower density development by guiding new development into the Urban Core to conform to the historic Colony land use patterns of the City and to respect the natural environment, hillside areas, and existing neighborhoods.
- **Goal LOC6:** Preserve natural flora and fauna and protect scenic lands, sensitive natural areas, historic buildings and cultural resources.
    - **Policy 6.1:** Ensure that development does not degrade scenic and sensitive areas, including historic sites, creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, woodlands, hillsides and other valuable habitats.
        - **Program 5.** Public and private development in close proximity to scenic and sensitive lands, including creek reservations, wooded areas, flood plains, prominent view sheds and historic sites shall be designed to minimize impacts.
        - **Program 6.** Scenic and open space easements, parklands and open space dedications shall be required as mitigation for subdivisions and development projects that impact floodplains, creek reservations, wooded areas, scenic backdrops, sensitive areas, historic sites, cultural sites, and similar areas.
    - **Policy 6.2:** Protect prehistoric cultural resources from disturbance associated with development.
        - **Program 1.** Maintain a current GIS-based map of generalized areas of known archaeological resources.
        - **Program 2.** For discretionary projects within the generalized areas of archaeological resources, require Phase I surveys to determine the extent and significance of archaeological sites prior to approval.

- **Program 3.** For discretionary projects located in areas of known resources, require Phase II surveys to determine the significance and mitigation requirements for identified resources.
- **Program 4.** Require short and long-term mitigation measures for significant archaeological resource sites; include avoidance of impacts, burial under sterile fill, and/or monitoring of earthmoving activities.
- **Program 5.** If determined appropriate by a qualified archaeologist, actively involve Native Americans with any work located within known archaeological sites.
- **Program 6.** If archaeological resources are unearthed during construction, suspend all earth-disturbing work until appropriate mitigation is established.

o **Policy 6.3:** Encourage conservation and preservation of neighborhoods, Colony Homes and sound housing, including places and buildings of historical and architectural significance.

- **Program 1.** Actively utilize the Historic Overlay zoning district to protect known historic structures, significant Colony homes and Colony sites.
- **Program 2.** Develop a GIS-based mapping inventory and protection ordinance for the historic Colony homes
- **Policy 6.4:** Encourage conservation and preservation of structures and house that have historical and architectural significance.
- **Program 1.** Protect historic buildings and sites. Atascadero's historic buildings and features shall be preserved and protected in recognition of the role the community's past plays in its present and future. Historic overlay zoning shall be utilized to protect appropriate historic districts.
- **Program 2.** Utilize the State Historic Building Code to encourage rehabilitation, preservation, restoration or relocation of historic buildings listed or deemed on the local, State or Federal register
- **Program 3.** Implement the Historic Site (HS) overlay zone to help preserve and protect historic Colony homes.
    - Develop and adopt a comprehensive inventory of historic resources.
    - Identify HS overlay boundaries on zoning map.
- **Program 4.** Implement the Historic Site (HS) overlay zone to help preserve and protect historic Colony homes.
- **Program 5.** Update the PD (Planned Development) overlay zone to include retention and rehabilitation of historic resources as a primary justification for PD zoning regulation standards
- **Program 6.** Update the City's Appearance Review Manual to include preservation guidelines for preservation, rehabilitation, and maintenance of historic properties.
- **Program 7.** Develop incentives for retaining and rehabilitating Atascadero's historic resources including:
    - Exceptions to development regulations;
    - Conservation districts;

- Staff technical assistance;
- Program to facilitate relocation instead of demolition; and
- Mill's Act contracts.

2021—2028 Housing Element

The 2021–2028 Housing Element specifically refers to historic preservation and conservation practices through the HS and Sensitive Resources Overlay zoning designations (City of Atascadero 2020).

Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to cultural resources included within the 2021–2028 Housing Element are listed here:

- **Goal HOS4:** Protect and conserve the existing housing stock and neighborhoods, including the City's affordable housing stock.
    - **Policy 4.1:** Encourage conservation and preservation of neighborhoods and sound housing.
    - **Policy 4.2:** Promote and preserve affordable housing.
    - **Policy 4.3:** Encourage conservation and preservation of houses that have historical and architectural significance.
    - **Policy 4.4:** Leverage state and federal loans and grants to assist in preserving existing housing and rehabilitating unsound housing structures.
        - **Program 4.F: Historic Building Conservation** Preserve and protect homes that have historical and architectural significance, such as the Colony homes, through continued implementation of the Historic Site (HS) overlay zone and by maintaining a GIS-based map of historic buildings and sites.

2000 DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

The *City of Atascadero Downtown Revitalization Plan* is an area specific plan that outlines the City's vision and goals for the redevelopment of Downtown (Crawford Multari Clark & Mohr 2000). Modeled after the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program, the Downtown Revitalization Plan is centered around the preservation and careful stewardship of the downtown area as a form of placemaking that can incentivize the enhancement of the area's unique character simultaneously with economic improvement through a mixture of private, public, and nonprofit support. Specifically, the Main Street approach is based upon four key aspects: design, organization, promotion, and economic restructuring (Crawford Multari Clark & Mohr 2000).

Key goals in the plan specific to the preservation of cultural resources include:

- Develop a distinctive architectural character for Downtown while allowing for reasonable design flexibility.
- Encourage more intense development at appropriate locations within downtown.
- Create a downtown identity program that preserves the historic character of the City
- Develop a façade improvement program (loan, grants, etc.)

It should be noted that some aspects of this plan were tied to redevelopment agencies, which have since been dissolved. However, the design features and overall vision identified in this plan are still relevant.

ATASCADERO CODE OF ORDINANCES

Chapters 9-4.162 through 9-4.169 of the existing Atascadero Municipal Code outline requirements for the protection of archaeological and historic resources. Section 9-4.162 establishes procedures for archaeological review and protocols in the event resources are discovered during construction. Sections 9-4.163 through 9-4.169 set forth the standards, definitions, and processes for identifying, listing, altering, relocating, or demolishing historic resources, including requirements for documentation, mitigation, and compliance with state and federal laws such as CEQA and NHPA.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The *Downtown Design Guidelines* (Crawford Multari Clark & Mohr 2000) is an appended document within the Downtown Revitalization Plan that is specifically intended to 1) assist in the revitalization of downtown Atascadero, 2) provide for infill commercial development of high architectural quality that is compatible with existing attractive buildings, and 3) promote the conservation of reuse of existing buildings with preferred design quality. Collectively, the design guidelines aim to protect the essential architectural features of downtown and the essential architectural features through rehabilitation and preservation to contribute further to the historic character in downtown Atascadero.

Whereas the Downtown Design Guidelines primarily provide a framework for new and context-sensitive infill development within the Downtown core, they also provide guidelines for preserving cultural resources and require adherence to the SOI's Standards (NPS 2017). these guidelines are centered around the overall goal that "when an existing structure is to be renovated or added to, care should be taken to complete the work in a manner that respects the original design character of the structure" (Crawford Multari Clark & Mohr 2000).

4.5.3 Thresholds of Significance

If a project would cause a substantial adverse change in the characteristics of a resource that convey its significance or justify its eligibility for inclusion in the CRHR or a local register, either through demolition, destruction, relocation, alteration, or other means, the project is judged to have a significant effect on the environment (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)). The following thresholds for cultural resources and Tribal Cultural Resources are based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines.

4.5.3.1 Cultural Resources

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on cultural resources if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Title 14 (State CEQA Guidelines) Section 15064.5.

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5.

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.5.4, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, specifically Section 4.5.4.1, *Cultural Resources*, below.

4.5.3.2 Tribal Cultural Resources

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on Tribal Cultural Resources if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below, which are based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines.

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place or cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

   i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or

   ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.5.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, specifically Section 4.5.4.2, *Tribal Cultural Resources*, below.

4.5.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

4.5.4.1 Cultural Resources

CEQA requires a lead agency to analyze whether historic and/or archaeological resources may be adversely impacted by a proposed discretionary project. Under CEQA, a "project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historic resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment" (PRC Section 21084.1). Answering this question is a two-part process: first, the determination must be made as to whether the proposed project involves cultural resources. Second, if cultural resources are present, the proposed project must be analyzed for a potential "substantial adverse change in the significance" of the resource.

Pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the term "historical resources" shall include the following:

- A resource listed in, or formally determined eligible . . . for listing in the CRHR (PRC 5024.1; California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 14, Section 4850 et seq.).
- A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in PRC Section 5020.1(k) or identified as significance in a historic resources survey meeting the requirements of PRC Section 5024.1(g).
- Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that the lead agency determines to be eligible for national, state, or local landmark listing; generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be historically significant (and therefore a historic resource under CEQA) if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the CRHR (as defined in PRC Section 5024.1; 14 CCR Section 4852).

Resources nominated to the CRHR must retain enough of their historic character or appearance to convey the reasons for their significance. Resources whose historic integrity (as defined above) do not meet NRHP criteria may still be eligible for listing in the CRHR.

According to CEQA, the fact that a resource is not listed in or determined eligible for listing in the CRHR or is not included in a local register or survey shall not preclude the lead agency from determining that the resource may be a historical resource (PRC Section 5024.1). Pursuant to CEQA, a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource may have a significant effect on the environment (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)).

HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The State CEQA Guidelines specify that a "substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource means physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired" (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5). Material impairment occurs when a project alters in an adverse manner or demolishes "those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion" or eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP, CRHR, or local register. In addition, pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2, the "direct and indirect significant effects of the project on the environment shall be clearly identified and described, giving due consideration to both the short-term and long-term effects."

The following guides and requirements are of particular relevance to this study's analysis of indirect impacts to historic resources. Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, study of a project under CEQA requires consideration of "the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment." State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(d) further defines direct and indirect impacts:

> (1) A direct physical change in the environment is a physical change in the environment which is caused by and immediately related to the project. Examples of direct physical changes in the environment are the dust, noise, and traffic of heavy equipment that would result from construction of a sewage treatment plant and possible odors from operation of the plant.
>
> (2) An indirect physical change in the environment is a physical change in the environment which is not immediately related to the project, but which is caused indirectly by the project. If a direct physical change in the environment in turn causes another change in the environment, then the other change is an indirect physical change in the environment. For example, the construction of a new sewage treatment plant may facilitate population growth in the service area due to the increase in sewage treatment capacity and may lead to an increase in air pollution.
>
> (3) An indirect physical change is to be considered only if that change is a reasonably foreseeable impact which may be caused by the project. A change which is speculative or unlikely to occur is not reasonably foreseeable.

State CEQA Guidelines 15064.5(b) states that a project that results in substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource may have a significant effect on the environment. According to Section 15064.5(b)(1), substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource means physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of a historical resource would be materially impaired.

State CEQA Guidelines 15064.5(b)(2) describes materially impaired as the following:

> (A) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources; or

(B) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant; or

(C) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources as determined by a lead agency for purposes of CEQA.

For purposes of this EIR, potential impacts on cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources were evaluated by determining if any potentially significant impacts to historic or archaeological resources would result from buildout anticipated to occur pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update goals and policies through the corresponding Zoning Code Update.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

In terms of archaeological resources, PRC Section 21083.2(g) defines a unique archaeological resource as an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets any of the following criteria:

(1) Contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions and that there is a demonstrable public interest in that information.

(2) Has a special and particular quality such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type.

(3) Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person.

If it can be demonstrated that a proposed non-ministerial project will cause damage to a unique archaeological resource, the lead agency may require reasonable efforts be made to permit any or all these resources to be preserved in place or left in an undisturbed state. To the extent that they cannot be left undisturbed, mitigation measures are required (PRC Sections 21083.2(a), (b), and (c)). State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(c)(4) notes that if an archaeological resource is neither a unique archaeological resource nor a historical resource, the effects of the project on those resources shall not be considered to be a significant effect on the environment.

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15120(d), information regarding archaeological sites and sacred lands is considered confidential and not available for public review. Accordingly, sensitive details regarding archaeological site locations and Tribal outreach are not included in this EIR.

4.5.4.2 Tribal Cultural Resources

Background research conducted for the project, including records searches through the CCIC, identified numerous previously recorded cultural resources within and near the Planning Area, including prehistoric archaeological sites and historic-era resources. For the purposes of this environmental review, archaeological resources that meet the criteria for eligibility under the CRHR, including those that have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history (Criterion 4), are considered

historical resources under CEQA and may also qualify as Tribal Cultural Resources. As with historical resources, the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource may be affected by direct physical disturbance associated with ground-disturbing activities or indirectly through changes to the resource's setting or increased use of the surrounding area. This analysis focuses on the City's outreach to Native American Tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the Planning Area pursuant to AB 52 and SB 18 and how the potential for impacts to tribal cultural resources would be evaluated for future development projects associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update.

4.5.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

4.5.5.1 Cultural Resources

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?

IMPACT CR-1: THE PROPOSED PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY ADVERSELY AFFECT HISTORICAL RESOURCES PURSUANT TO CCR SECTION 15064.5. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The types of cultural resources that meet the definition of historical resources under CEQA Section 21084.1 in the City generally include sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant for their historical associations. As discussed in Section 4.5.1, Setting, there are a number of resources listed in either the NRHP or CRHR or designated locally as a landmark or point of interest within the City. Under CEQA, both prehistoric and historic-area archaeological sites may qualify as historical resources. Therefore, the two main categories of historical resources that may be subject to impacts from development in Atascadero are archaeological deposits (including those containing human remains) and historic architectural resources.

The Municipal Code requires that a Phase I archaeological study be completed and submitted to the City prior to construction or grading within areas identified by the City's geographic information system (GIS) database as archaeologically sensitive. If the study determines there is no potential for adverse effects to archaeological resources, and no discretionary approval is required, the project may proceed as a ministerial approval; however, if there is potential for adverse effects under CEQA, the project is subject to further review. Municipal Code Section 9-4.162 explains that in the event that archaeological resources or human remains are identified during construction or earth-disturbing activities, work must cease and the Planning Department must be notified so that the extent and location of unearthed materials can be documented by a qualified archaeologist, and artifacts or remains can be treated in accordance with state and federal law.

In addition, Municipal Code Sections 9-4.163 through 9-4.169 establish standards and procedures for the identification, protection, alteration, relocation, and demolition of historic resources. These provisions require the City to maintain a Historic Resources List, define eligibility criteria for listing, and set forth procedures for reviewing proposed changes to historic resources. Alterations that meet the SOI's Standards may be processed ministerially, whereas others require more detailed review. In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)(3) and CCR Title 14 Section 15126.4(b)(1), generally, a project that follows the SOI's Standards shall be considered mitigated to a level of *less-than-significant* impact on the historical resource. These standards are maintained in the Zoning Code Update.

Furthermore, the proposed Land Use and Community Form (LOC) Element of the 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policies and actions that would minimize impacts to historic resources in the City:

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
    - **Policy LU-1.3: Character and Scale.** Ensure new and infill development complements the character and scale of existing neighborhoods, cultural resources, historic structures, and natural landscapes.
    - **Policy LU-1.5: Historic Resources.** Encourage the conservation and preservation of structures and houses that have historical and architectural significance.
        - **Action A:** Maintain a comprehensive Historic Resources Inventory.
        - **Action B:** Continue to implement the California Historical Building Code in review, approval, and design of projects involving historic resources.
        - **Action C:** Utilize the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Properties to assess proposed improvements to historic properties.
        - **Action D:** Develop incentives for retaining and rehabilitating Atascadero's historic resources, which may include exceptions to development regulations, conservation districts, staff technical assistance, programs to facilitate relocation instead of demolition, and Mill's Act contracts.

The proposed Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element of the 2045 General Plan also includes the following policies and action items that would minimize impacts to historic resources in the City:

- **Goal REC-6:** Protection and celebration of Atascadero's rich prehistory and history
    - **Policy REC-6.1: Cultural Resource Protection.** Protect prehistoric cultural resources from disturbance associated with development.
        - **Action A:** Maintain a current GIS-based map of generalized areas of known archaeological resources.
        - **Action B:** Continue to implement the City's archaeologic development standards.
        - **Action C:** Require short- and long-term mitigation measures for significant archaeological resource sites, include avoidance of impacts, burial under sterile fill, and/or monitoring of earthmoving activities.
        - **Action D:** Involve local Tribal governments with any work located within known archaeological sites where resources are present or likely.
    - **Policy REC-6.2: Historic Structures and Resources.** Encourage conservation and preservation of places and buildings of historical and architectural significance.
        - **Action A:** Periodically review, and update as necessary, the historic resources standards in the zoning ordinance to maintain historic community assets and provide recognition and consideration of historic resources, districts, and character-defining features.
        - **Action B:** Create and maintain a list of historic resources in Atascadero, known as the Historic Resources List, to maintain resources significant to Atascadero's heritage, such as Colony homes with character-defining features.
        - **Action C:** Utilize the State Historic Building Code to encourage rehabilitation, preservation, restoration, or relocation of historic buildings.

- **Action D:** Utilize the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Properties to assess proposed improvements to historic properties.
- **Action E:** Develop incentives for retaining and rehabilitating Atascadero's historical resources, including exceptions to development regulations, conservation districts, staff technical assistance, programs to facilitate relocation instead of demolition, and Mills' Act contracts.

All future development associated with buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update would be subject to current federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to the protection of historic resources (detailed above under Section 4.5.2). Given the existing regulatory framework and the proposed goals, policies, and actions included in the 2045 General Plan Update and Municipal Code, impacts to historic resources resulting from implementation of the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be *less than significant*.

Impact CR-1
The project would potentially adversely affect historical resources pursuant to Section 15064.5.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?

IMPACT CR-2: THE PROPOSED PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY CAUSE ADVERSE CHANGES IN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development that would occur within the Planning Area pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would involve ground-disturbing activities that would have the potential to damage or destroy subsurface archaeological resources, particularly in areas where cultural resource investigations have not been conducted or where excavation depths exceed those of previous development. Records searches indicate that three previously recorded archaeological resources occur within the Planning Area (CA-SLO-000531, CA-SLO-000834, and CA-SLO-000848), and numerous additional resources have been documented within 0.25 mile of the Planning Area (see Table 4.5-3). These resources consist primarily of prehistoric archaeological sites, including lithic scatters, bedrock milling features, habitation debris, hearths, and burial-associated materials, as well as a small number of historic-era resources such as a cemetery and historic dump.

Both historic and prehistoric archaeological resources may be discovered throughout the City, and such resources are at risk of being damaged or destroyed by new development. The LOC Element of the updated Atascadero General Plan contains policies and action items that require local planning and development decisions to consider and minimize impacts to cultural resources, including archaeological and historic

resources. The following 2045 General Plan Update goals, policies, and actions would minimize potential adverse impacts to archaeological resources:

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
    - **Policy LU-1.3: Character and Scale.** Ensure new and infill development complements the character and scale of existing neighborhoods, cultural resources, historic structures, and natural landscapes.
- **Goal REC-6:** Protection and celebration of Atascadero's rich prehistory and history
    - **Policy REC-6.1: Cultural Resource Protection.** Protect prehistoric cultural resources from disturbance associated with development.
        - **Action A:** Maintain a current GIS-based map of generalized areas of known archaeological resources.
        - **Action B:** Continue to implement the City's archaeologic development standards.
        - **Action C:** Require short- and long-term mitigation measures for significant archaeological resource sites, include avoidance of impacts, burial under sterile fill, and/or monitoring of earthmoving activities.
        - **Action D:** Involve local Tribal governments with any work located within known archaeological sites where resources are present or likely.

All future development associated with buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be subject to current federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to the protection of archaeological resources (detailed above under Section 4.5.2), including those local regulations referenced above and maintained as part of the Zoning Code Update. Given the existing regulatory framework and the proposed goals, policies, and actions of the 2045 General Plan Update, together with Municipal Code regulations carried forward in the Zoning Code Update, impacts to archaeological resources resulting from implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be *less than significant*.

Impact CR-2
The proposed project would potentially cause adverse changes in the significance of archaeological resources.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

IMPACT CR-3: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY DISTURB HUMAN REMAINS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The City of Atascadero contains one cemetery within the City limits, the Atascadero Cemetery District, also known as Pine Mountain Cemetery. The cemetery property was established early in the Colony period and is currently designated a combination of Public and Rural Residential in the 2025 General Plan. Under the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, the entire property will be designated Public to limit development potential and thus, impacts to existing gravesites. Outside of cemeteries, inadvertently undiscovered human burial sites may occur throughout the City. Future development that would occur within the Planning Area pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update would involve ground-disturbing activities that would have the potential to uncover and disturb human remains.

Construction proposed as a result of the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be subject to the standards of the Zoning Code and the California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, which states that if human remains are unearthed, no further disturbance can occur until the County Coroner has made the necessary findings as to the origin and disposition of the remains, pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98. If the remains are determined to be of Native American descent, the Coroner has 24 hours to notify the NAHC, which will determine and notify a Most Likely Descendant (MLD). The MLD shall complete the inspection of the site and make recommendations to the landowner within 48 hours of being granted access. Compliance with State regulations ensures that appropriate protocols are followed if previously unknown human remains are encountered, which minimizes potential impacts.

In addition, the Municipal Code requires Phase I archaeological surveys to help identify archaeologically sensitive sites. Projects that may affect these sites are subject to review under CEQA and AB 52, and appropriate mitigation measures such as archaeological monitoring or establishment of no-disturbance buffers would be implemented to further reduce potential impacts to buried human remains, if discovered. The 2045 General Plan also includes policies that reinforce these protections. As discussed in Impact CR-2, Policy LU-1.3 requires that new and infill development complements the character of existing neighborhoods and cultural resources. In addition, Goal REC-6 and Policy REC-6 require the protection of prehistoric cultural resources from disturbance associated with development and direct the City to maintain mapping of known archaeological resources, implement archaeological development standards, require mitigation measures such as avoidance or monitoring for significant sites, and involve Tribal governments when work occurs in areas where resources are present or likely. Therefore, this impact would be *less than significant*.

Impact CR-3
The project would potentially disturb human remains.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts associated with disturbance of human remains would be less than significant (Class III).

4.5.5.2 Tribal Cultural Resources

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a Tribal Cultural Resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place or cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or

ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of public resources code section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

IMPACT TCR-1: THE PROPOSED PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY ADVERSELY IMPACT TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES. ***(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])***

Pursuant to AB 52 and SB 18, the City provided the following Tribes an opportunity to comment and engage in Tribal consultation regarding the proposed project: Chumash Council of Bakersfield, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, Northern Chumash Tribal Council, Salinan Tribe of Monterey, San Luis Obispo Counties, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Tule River Indian Tribe, Xolon-Salinan Tribe, and yak tityu tityu yak tiłhini – Northern Chumash Tribe.

One Tribe responded confirming review of the updates with no further comments or concerns. No Tribes requested consultation with the City, and no Tribes provided information regarding Tribal Cultural Resources within the vicinity of the Planning Area.

In addition, a records search conducted for this analysis identified numerous prehistoric archaeological resources within 0.25 mile of the Planning Area, including lithic scatters, bedrock milling features, habitation debris, hearths, and burial-associated sites (see Table 4.5-3). Whereas archaeological resources are not synonymous with Tribal Cultural Resources as defined by CEQA, the presence of these sites reflects a long history of Native American land use in the area and indicates the potential for Tribal Cultural Resources to occur within the Planning Area, including resources that may not have been previously recorded.

Ground-disturbing activities instigated by construction facilitated under the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update have the potential to directly impact these significant prehistoric archaeological resources and Tribal Cultural Resources. The 2045 General Plan policies LU-1.3 (Character and Scale), LU-1.5 (Historic Resources), and REC-6.1 (Cultural Resource Protection) would retain the known cultural resources and culturally sensitive areas in designated open space land, which would avoid disturbance to

identified resources to the extent feasible. Additionally, regulations described in Section 4.5.2, *Regulatory Setting*, further minimize impacts on known cultural resource sites, Tribal Cultural Resources, and culturally sensitive areas present within the Planning Area, as well as impacts to potentially unknown cultural resources, including human remains. The Zoning Code Update will maintain current regulations of the Municipal Code, as described in Section 4.5.2. Based on implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update polices LU-1.3, LU-1.5, and REC-6.1 and required compliance with state and local regulations, future development would not result in substantial adverse change in the significance of known or unknown Tribal Cultural Resources. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact TCR-1
The proposed project would potentially adversely impact Tribal Cultural Resources.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts associated with Tribal Cultural Resources would be less than significant (Class III).

4.5.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT TCR-2: THE PROJECT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A CUMULATIVE SOURCE OF SUBSTANTIAL LOSS OF CULTURAL AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

When evaluating cumulative impacts to cultural resources, the geographic scope is determined by the patterns of historic, ethnographic, and prehistoric use within the planning area and surrounding region. For historic resources, the cumulative context is limited to the Planning Area, whereas the cumulative context extends beyond the Planning Area to include San Luis Obispo County and areas historically occupied by Indigenous peoples for archaeological resources, human remains, and Tribal Cultural Resources. This broader geographic scope is appropriate because cultural resources in the region reflect similar prehistoric settlement patterns, ethnographic land use, and historic development trends. As shown in Table 4.5-3, numerous previously recorded cultural resources occur within 0.25 mile of the Planning Area but outside its boundaries, demonstrating that cultural resources are widely distributed throughout the surrounding area of San Luis Obispo County and that development both within and outside the Planning Area has the potential to affect similar types of resources.

Because development is likely to include ground-disturbing activities, future development under the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update could adversely affect cultural and Tribal resources by potentially disturbing historic resources, archaeological sites, human remains, and Tribal resources as discussed in Section 4.5.5, *Project-Specific Impacts*. Similarly, development projects occurring throughout San Luis Obispo County could also involve ground disturbance and therefore have the potential to affect similar cultural resources identified in regional records searches and summarized in Table 4.5-3. Projects outside the Planning Area would be required to assess impacts to these resources, implement mitigation measures for any significant impacts, and comply with applicable state and federal regulations as described in Section 4.5.2, *Regulatory Setting*.

With adherence to existing regulations relating to cultural resources and Tribal Cultural Resources, cumulative impacts would be *less than significant*, and the project's contribution to cumulative impacts related to cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources would not be cumulatively considerable.

Impact TCR-2
The project would contribute to a cumulative source of substantial loss of cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts associated with Tribal Cultural Resources would be less than significant (Class III).

4.6 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

This section discusses the potential impacts of the proposed 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update related to geologic hazards and resources within the City of Atascadero. Geologic resources include physical features such as soils, rocks, and minerals, as well as topographical features like steep slopes and faults, which may present challenges to future development throughout the Planning Area. In accordance with the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, paleontological resources are also considered geologic resources and are addressed in this analysis.

4.6.1 Existing Conditions

4.6.1.1 Regional Geology

The City of Atascadero is located at the south end of the Coast Ranges Geomorphic Province, a region characterized by northwest-trending mountain ranges that run parallel to the San Andreas Fault Zone. This area is underlain by granite and crystalline metamorphic basement rocks, which are overlain by marine and terrestrial sediments deposited over the past 65 million years. The Coast Ranges are bordered by the San Andreas Fault to the east, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Peninsular Ranges to the south. Tectonically, the City is situated between the Oceanic Fault to the southwest and the Rinconada Fault to the northwest, in a region defined by numerous northwest-trending faults, some of which have experienced historic earthquake activity (First Carbon Solutions 2017).

4.6.1.2 Topography

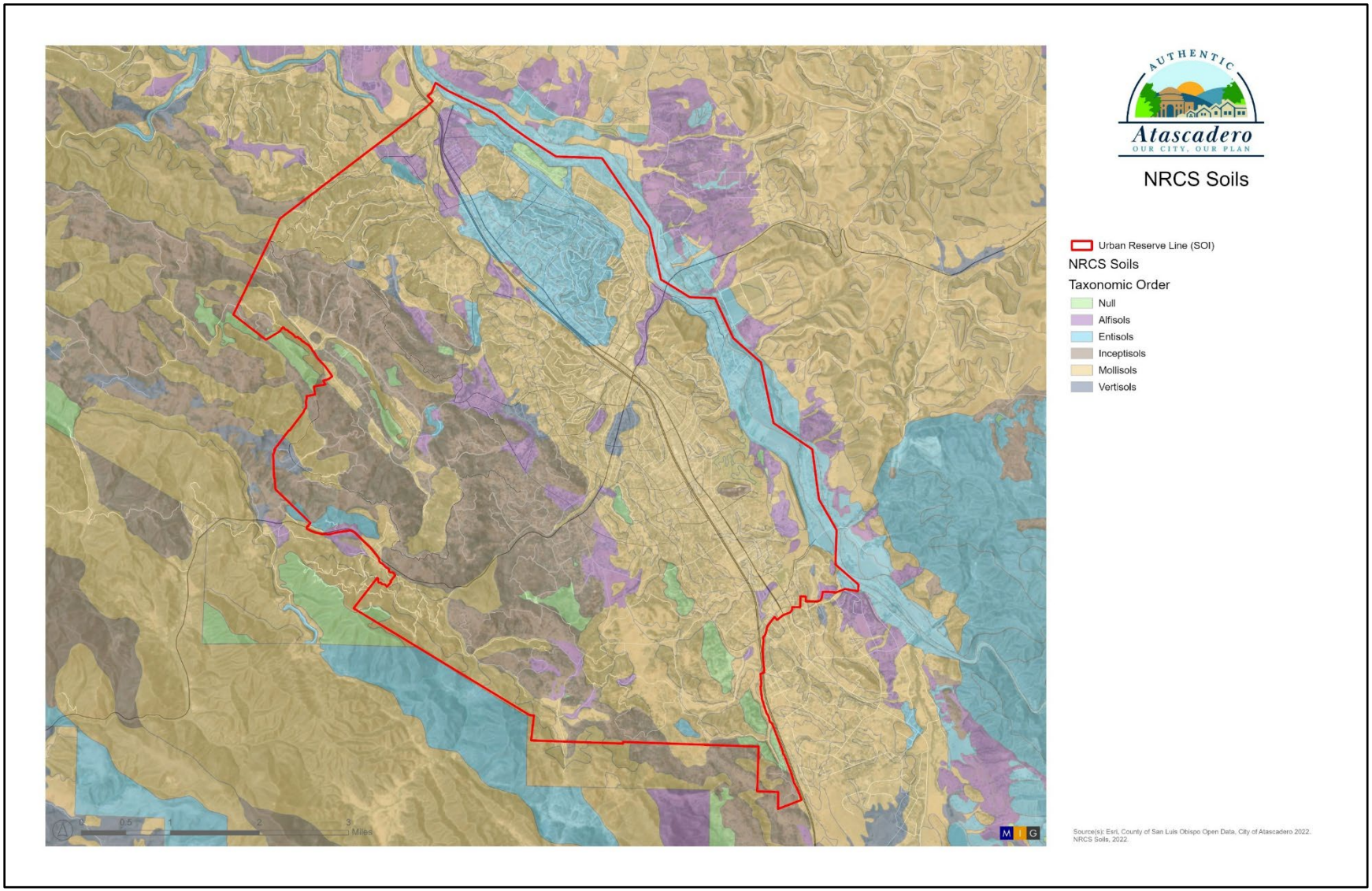
Within the Planning Area, the topography can generally be divided into western and eastern regions, separated by a line running parallel to and just west of the U.S. Route (U.S. 101) corridor. The western region is characterized by the rugged peaks and steep slopes of the Santa Lucia Range, with many areas exhibiting slopes greater than 20% and some exceeding 30%. This area is primarily composed of rural residential land uses set within hilly terrain.

As the Santa Lucia Range descends eastward, the landscape transitions into rolling hills and valleys, culminating at the Salinas River, which forms the eastern boundary of the City. The eastern region of Atascadero is generally flatter, with ground slopes ranging from nearly level up to approximately 20%; however, there are localized areas of steep terrain, including Chalk Mountain, Pine Mountain, and Spaghetti Hill, where slopes can exceed 30%. Most parcels with slopes over 30% are concentrated in these areas (Monsoon Consultants 2018).

4.6.1.3 Soils

The geology of the region is primarily composed of Cretaceous sedimentary rocks and Miocene marine sediments. Within the study area, 49 distinct soil types have been identified, spanning five taxonomic orders: Alfisols, Entisols, Inceptisols, Mollisols, and Vertisols (Figure 4.6-1). Only one soil type, Clear Lake clay (drained), is classified as hydric.

Mollisols are the most prevalent, covering 52% of the Planning Area. These fertile, deep, and dark soils are mainly found along U.S. 101 and El Camino Real and are associated with alluvial fans, flats, plains, terraces, mountains, and hillslopes. Inceptisols, which are relatively young soils, make up 25% of the area and are concentrated along the western edge, especially in the foothills of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.6-1. NRCS soils map.

Entisols, characterized by their recent formation and lack of well-developed horizons, typically occur in alluvial fans, floodplains, stream terraces, valleys, and on the terraces of hills and mountains. Corducci and Typic Xerofluvents, which are prominent in this group, are found mainly in the streambed of the Salinas River. Alfisols, which contain aluminum and iron, are primarily on terraces adjacent to the Salinas River. Vertisols are the smallest group, accounting for just 1.1% of the study area. These clay-rich soils include the only hydric soil, Clear Lake clay (drained), which lies within a small pocket along Morro Road west of U.S. 101.

SOIL EROSION

Erosion is defined as the breakdown, detachment, transport, and redistribution of soil particles by natural forces, including water (i.e., rain, concentrated flow, streams, glaciers, etc.), wind, or gravity (U.S. Geological Survey [USGS] 2006). Increased amounts of sediment, which is caused by erosion, may runoff from a site and block drainage and irrigation ditches and canals and navigational channels, degrade wildlife habitat and fisheries, infill water reservoirs, elevate water treatment costs, increase the need for dredging, and may indirectly contribute to flooding (USGS 2006). Potential for erosion to occur at a particular site may depend on, but is not limited to, type of soils present, existing uses, and vegetative cover. Of the soil types located within the Planning Area, soils with high sand content would be expected to be highly erodible.

EXPANSIVE SOIL

Soil expansion, also referred to as shrink/swell potential, is the extent to which soil shrinks as it dries out or swells when it gets wet. Typically, soils with high potential for expansion largely consist of clay and clay materials. Shrinking and swelling of soils can cause damage to building foundations, roads, and other structures. A high potential for expansion indicates a hazard for maintenance of structures built in, on, or with material having this rating. Moderate and low ratings lessen the hazard accordingly (NRCS 2004).

4.6.1.1 Geologic and Seismic Hazards

The geologic setting of Atascadero contributes to a variety of seismic hazards that can impact the community. The presence of multiple active and potentially active faults in the region, including the Rinconada and Nacimiento faults, increases the likelihood of earthquake-related hazards such as ground shaking, surface fault rupture and liquefaction. Historical records show that the area has experienced several significant earthquakes, demonstrating the ongoing seismic risk. The Atascadero region has experienced several significant earthquakes since 1900, with seven events of magnitude 6.0 or greater recorded in the vicinity. The most recent was the 2003 San Simeon earthquake (magnitude 6.5), which occurred 24 miles from Atascadero on the north end of the San Simeon/Oceanic/Hosgri Fault System (Goel 2003).

In addition to direct shaking, secondary hazards such as liquefaction and landslides on steep or unstable slopes are of concern. Other geologic hazards associated with seismicity in the City of Atascadero area include fault rupture, ground shaking, liquefaction, and seismically induced settlement. Each of these geologic and seismic hazards with potential to occur within the Planning Area are described in further detail below.

FAULT RUPTURE

Seismically induced ground rupture occurs as the result of differential movement across a fault. An earthquake occurs when seismic stress builds to the point where restraining forces are overcome and one side of a fault block moves relative to the other side. The resulting shock wave is the earthquake. If the rupture plane reaches the ground surface, ground rupture occurs. The California Geological Survey (CGS)

defines "active" faults as those that have exhibited displacement within the last 11,000 years (i.e., Holocene age), "potentially active" faults as those that have exhibited displacement within the last 1.6 million years but have not been active during the Holocene age, and "inactive" faults as those that have not experienced displacement within the last 2.58 million years (i.e., prior to the Pleistocene) (CGS 2008).

The nearest fault zones to Atascadero are the Rinconada and Nacimiento Faults. The USGS identifies the Rinconada Fault as active, with the capability of producing earthquakes up to magnitude 7.5. Such an event could cause substantial ground shaking and may lead to seismic hazards like liquefaction (Figure 4.6-2) and landslides (Figure 4.6-3). The level of risk associated with these hazards is influenced by factors such as the epicenter's location, the strength and duration of the earthquake, local topography, groundwater conditions, and building construction types. In contrast, the Nacimiento Fault is classified as inactive. The San Andreas Fault, a major regional feature, stretches from the San Francisco Bay Area through central California to the Gulf of California. A significant earthquake along the San Andreas Fault could result in intense ground shaking and, depending on its location, potentially cause widespread damage. Table 4.6-1 lists the fault zones found near the Planning Area (City of Atascadero 2025).

GROUND SHAKING

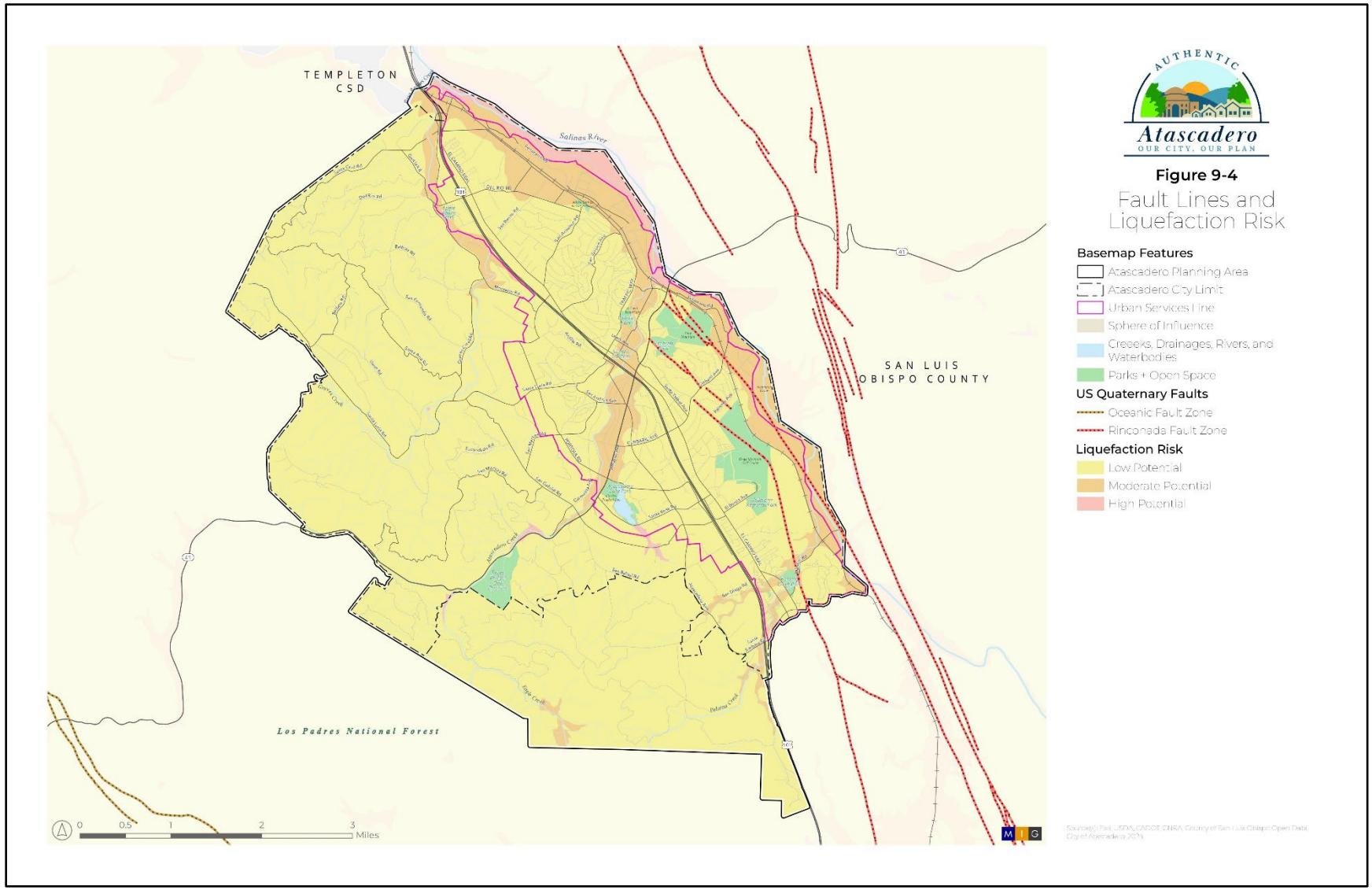
Section 1613 of the 2025 California Building Code (CBC) requires that structures be designed and constructed to resist the effects of seismic ground motions. The design of such structures is based on their Seismic Design Category. Structures shall be assigned to a Seismic Design Category D or higher based on one of two methods:

1. Based on the structure risk
2. Determined in accordance with ASCE 7

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Standards offer comprehensive technical guidance to support safety, reliability, productivity, and efficiency in civil engineering practice. ASCE 7, recognized nationwide, serves as the primary standard for determining structural loading requirements. It outlines the criteria for design loads associated with a variety of hazards, including dead and live loads, soil pressures, flooding, tsunamis, snow, rain, atmospheric ice, earthquakes, wind, and fire, as well as procedures for assessing load combinations. For sites with soils classified as DE, E, or F, seismic design categories must be established in accordance with the provisions set forth in ASCE 7.

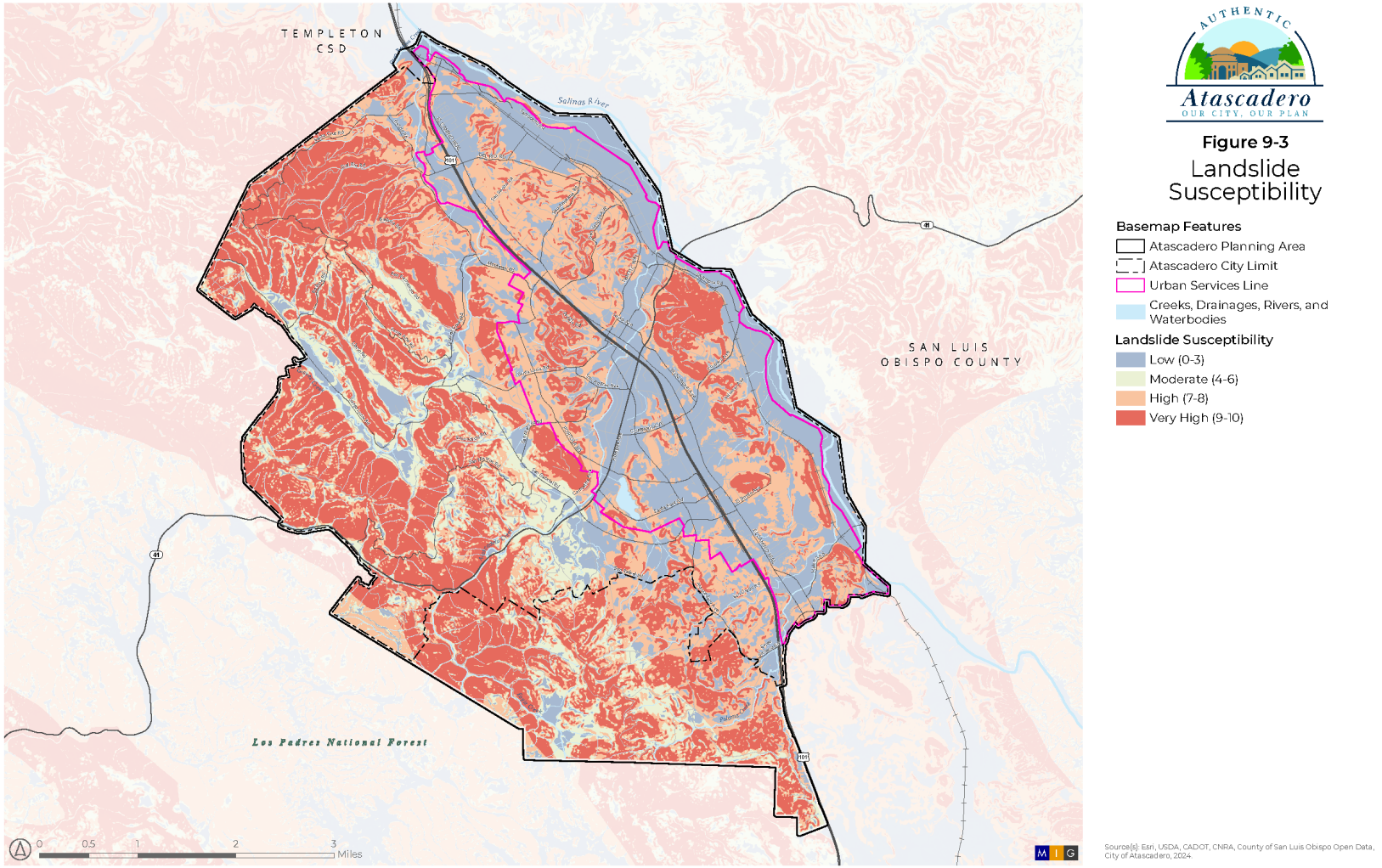
The Planning Area is located within a seismically active region of California. Historical records and recent geotechnical reports indicate that the region has experienced strong and damaging ground shaking from earthquakes. Several faults mapped near Atascadero contribute to the City's seismic hazard profile. These include the potentially active Rinconada Fault and associated Jolon Fault, the Nacimiento Fault—which is classified as inactive but coincides with a historic earthquake epicenter—and the Black Mountain Thrust Fault 3 miles east of the City. Other nearby potential ground shaking sources include the La Panza, Los Osos, Hosgri, San Andreas, and San Simeon Faults (City of Atascadero 2016). Table 4.6-1 summarizes the distance and estimated seismic parameters for these faults, which are considered potential sources of strong ground shaking in Atascadero, and Figure 4.6-2 depicts fault lines near the Planning Area.

Due to the proximity to these active and potentially active fault zones, seismically induced ground shaking and ground motions are expected within the Planning Area during a significant seismic event.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.6-2. Fault lines and liquefaction risk.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.6-3. Landslide susceptibility.

Table 4.6-1. Potential Ground Shaking Sources

Fault	Distance*	Max. Earthquake	Max. Probable Earthquake	Acceleration Range (g)
Rinconada and Jolon	2	7.5	7.0	0.4–0.6
Black Mountain	3	7.5	5.75	0.1
La Panza	9	7.5	Unknown, but 5 assumed	0.1–0.4
Los Osos	14	7	Unknown, but 5 assumed	0.1–0.2
Hosgri	22	7.5	6.5–7.5	0.1–0.2
San Andreas	27	8.25	8	0.1–0.2
San Simeon	35	Unknown	6.5	Unknown

Source: Atascadero General Plan (2025).
Note:
* Distance from El Camino Real/ Traffic Way in miles.

LIQUEFACTION AND SEISMICALLY INDUCED SETTLEMENT

Liquefaction is a seismic phenomenon in which loose-to-medium dense, young, saturated, granular, and nonplastic fine-grained soil or sensitive clay lose their structure/strength when subjected to high-intensity ground shaking. Liquefaction occurs when three general conditions exist: (1) shallow groundwater (within the top 50 feet of the ground surface); (2) low-density nonplastic soils; and (3) high-intensity ground motion.

Loose granular soil can also settle (compact) during liquefaction and as pore pressures dissipate following an earthquake. Settlement can occur when foundations and surface improvements span soils with variable consolidation characteristics, such as the soils with variable moisture and density. Settlement can stress and damage foundations and surface improvements, resulting in cracks and displacement.

The Planning Area is underlain by soils that generally fall within the sand-gravelly and fine silty clay categories, including sands, sandy loams, gravels, and clays with varying amounts of silt and gravel. These soils are typically moderately well-drained and, depending on location, range from loose to very dense or medium stiff to hard consistency. As depicted in Figure 4.6-1, the predominant soil types present in the Planning Area are characterized by a low potential for liquefaction, seismic settlement, or lateral spreading. However, localized areas containing fine silty clays may exhibit moderate shrink-swell potential, which should be considered in site-specific geotechnical evaluations (Monsoon Consultants 2018).

LANDSLIDES AND SLOPE INSTABILITY

Landslides and slope instability can occur as a result of wet weather, weak soils, improper grading, improper drainage, steep slopes, adverse geologic structure, earthquakes, or a combination of these factors. Slope instability can occur in the form of creep, slumps, large progressive translation or rotational failures, rockfall, debris flows, or erosion (County of San Luis Obispo 1999). Landslides can result in damage to property and cause buildings to become unsafe due to distress or collapse during sudden or gradual slope movement. Structures constructed in steep terrain, possibly on stable ground, may also experience landslide hazards if they are sited in the path of potential mud flows or rockfall hazards. Landslides tend to occur in weak soil and rock on sloping terrain (California Department of Conservation [CDOC] 2019a).

The Safety and Noise Element of the 2025 Atascadero General Plan identifies higher landslide and slope instability potential in steep, undeveloped areas, while such hazards are relatively rare in developed portions of the City with more level topography. Currently, State building codes and careful site planning provide safeguards against loss of life and damage to property resulting from landslides. Figure 4.6-3 provides a map depicting the susceptibility of landslides in the Planning Area.

4.6.1.2 Paleontological Setting

Paleontological resources are the evidence of once-living organisms as preserved in the rock record. They include both the fossilized remains of ancient plants and animals and the traces thereof (e.g., trackways, imprints, burrows, etc.). In general, fossils are considered to be older than recorded human history or greater than 5,000 years old and are typically preserved in sedimentary rocks. Although rare, fossils can also be preserved in volcanic rocks and low-grade metamorphic rocks under certain conditions (Society of Vertebrate Paleontology [SVP] 2010).

The SVP has established standard guidelines that outline professional protocols and practices for conducting paleontological resource assessments and surveys, monitoring and mitigation, data and fossil recovery, sampling procedures, and specimen preparation, identification, analysis, and curation (SVP 1995, 2010). Most practicing professional vertebrate paleontologists adhere closely to the SVP's assessment, mitigation, and monitoring requirements as specifically provided in its standard guidelines. Most state regulatory agencies with paleontological laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards accept and use the professional standards set forth by the SVP.

In general, paleontological studies assess fossils as significant if one or more of the following criteria apply:

1. The fossils provide information on the evolutionary relationships and developmental trends among organisms, living or extinct;
2. The fossils provide data useful in determining the age(s) of the rock unit or sedimentary stratum, including data important in determining the depositional history of the region and the timing of geologic events therein;
3. The fossils provide data regarding the development of biological communities or interaction between paleobotanical and paleozoological biotas;
4. The fossils demonstrate unusual or spectacular circumstances in the history of life; or
5. The fossils are in short supply and/or are in danger of being depleted or destroyed by the elements, vandalism, or commercial exploitation, and are not found in other geographic locations.

Paleontological potential or sensitivity is defined as the potential for a geologic unit to produce scientifically significant fossils. This is determined by rock type, history of the geologic unit in producing significant fossils, and fossil localities recorded from that unit. Paleontological sensitivity is derived from the known fossil data collected from the entire geologic unit, not just from a specific survey or study. A geologic unit known to contain significant fossils is considered sensitive to adverse impacts if there is a high probability that earth-moving or ground-disturbing activities in that rock unit would either disturb or destroy fossil remains, directly or indirectly.

Based on scientific literature and fossil locality databases, significant paleontological resources have been recovered from Pleistocene-age older alluvial sediments (Qoa) and other unnamed Pleistocene-age deposits throughout San Luis Obispo County, including fossil horse, bison, camel, ground sloth, mammoth, and other terrestrial vertebrates (Jefferson 1991a, 1991b; Jefferson et al. 1992; Paleobiology Database 2021; University of California Museum of Paleontology [UCMP] 2021). Additionally, scientific literature and fossil locality databases have indicated Pleistocene- and latest Pliocene-age Paso Robles Formation (QTp) from San Luis Obispo County has also yielded significant paleontological resources, including undifferentiated mammal, seal, bivalve, gastropod, ostracod, and brachiopod (Addicott and Galehouse 1973; Kellogg 1921; Paleobiology Database 2025; UCMP 2025; Woodring and Bramlette 1950).

4.6.1.3 Geologic Units

The geological setting is key to understanding the potential for important paleontological resources to be found in the Planning Area. The geologic units in the Coast Ranges range in age from Jurassic to recent (Wiegars and Holland 2012). A list of geologic units underlying the Planning Area is shown in Table 4.6-2 and mapped in Figure 4.6-4.

Table 4.6-2. Geologic Units in the City of Atascadero

Geologic Unit	Description	Age
Quaternary Deposits – Very Young Surficial Deposits		
Artificial fill (af)	Fill placed to construct earth dam and artificial island at Atascadero Lake.[1]	Historic
Alluvial floodplain and channel deposits (Qa)	Active and recently active floodplain and channel deposits mapped along the modern braided channel of the Salinas River. Consist of unconsolidated alluvial deposits of gravel, cobbles, boulders, sand, silt and clay.	Late Holocene to Historic
Landslide deposits (Qls)($Qls_{(SD)}$)	Highly fragmented to largely coherent landslide deposits. Most landslides occur in Franciscan mélange and Toro Formation rocks in the west part of the quadrangle. Qls(sd) – Very large, ancient, deeply-dissected landslide deposits in serpentinite and diabase dike-and-sill complex on the south and southwest side of Cuesta Ridge and Cerro Alto.	Holocene and Pleistocene
Quaternary Deposits – Old Surficial Deposits		
Old alluvial floodplain deposits (Qoa)	Fluvial sediments preserved above active flood plains and channels. Consists of interfingering beds and lenses of weakly-consolidated gravel, sand, silt and clay. Terrace surfaces preserved along the Salinas River, Atascadero Creek and other drainages are slightly dissected and capped by moderate to well-developed pedogenic soils. Locally divided by relative age (2 = youngest, 1 = oldest): Old alluvial floodplain deposits, Unit 2 (Qoa_2) Old alluvial floodplain deposits, Unit 1 (Qoa_1)	Late to middle Pleistocene
Tertiary and Older Rocks		
Paso Robles Formation (QTp)	Most of the unit consists of poorly sorted conglomerate lenses set in a sandy and muddy matrix. Clasts range from sand-sized to boulders and consist primarily of Monterey debris, including siliceous shale, chert, porcelinite, calcareous sandstone and dolomite. Various clasts of volcanic, sedimentary and granitic rocks from other units are also present. Some of the beds are poorly sorted with large boulders and are probably debris flow deposits. The unit also contains interbedded sandstone, claystone and mudstone. Some of the claystone contains freshwater diatoms and mollusks, indicating a probable lake origin. Pholad-bored clasts are present near the base, indicating the unit was deposited near a former marine shoreline.	Pliocene – lower Pleistocene
Santa Margarita Sandstone (Tsm)	White, weakly-consolidated, coarse arkosic sandstone. Includes interbedded mudstone, siltstone and diatomite, mostly in the lower part of the unit. Resistant shell beds containing pectin and oyster shells are locally present, possibly representing storm-constructed masses similar to the chenier ridges of the modern Gulf Coast. Sandstones contain pebble and small cobble lenses with clasts of volcanic rocks, siliceous Monterey debris, granitic rocks, diabase, chert and quartz. Mostly confined to the synclinal trough on the west side of the Rinconada Fault.	Upper Miocene

Geologic Unit	Description	Age
Monterey Formation (Tmu)(Tml)	Subdivided into a lower calcareous member (Tml) and an upper siliceous member (Tmu) In the Atascadero and Santa Margarita areas: Tml – well-bedded foraminiferal and calcareous shale, mudstone and siltstone with some interbedded siliceous shale, porcelinite and sandstone. Contains minor amounts of conglomerate, limestone and dolomite (dol). Rocks are generally gray-brown where fresh and weather to lighter shadows of buff and pale gray. Contains some arkosic sandstone beds up to 20 feet thick. Tmu – Light gray and tan, often rhythmically-bedded porcelinite, opaline chert, mudstone shale, siltstone, diatomite and tuff. Porcelinite is hard and brittle with a dull luster. Opaline chert is subvitreous with a waxy luster. Unit includes white to light-gray arkosic, locally pebbly sandstone. Nearly white diatomite is present near the top of the unit north of Santa Margarita.	Upper to middle Miocene
Basalt and Diabase (Tb)	Dark olive-gray, fine- to medium-grained, spheroidically weathered, olivine basalt and diabase. Locally vesicular. Weakly developed pillow structure suggests some of the unit is extrusive. Includes some blue-gray silicified tuff. Interbedded with silicic tuff and tuffaceous sandstone and siltstone at the base of the Monterey Formation in the northwest part of the quadrangle.	Miocene
Vaqueros Sandstone (Tv)	Gray to brown, medium- to coarse-grained arkosic sandstone. Includes pebbly sandstone and sandy and pebbly limestone. Poorly indurated to hard, with a silty, calcareous matrix. Some beds are hard and resistant due to abundant calcite cement. Clasts are well-rounded to subrounded with a typical composition of 50% to 90% quartz, less than 10% to 30% feldspar, 5% to 35% rock fragments. Contains fossiliferous zones with broken mollusk shells and large oysters.	Oligocene
Felsic Volcaniclastic Rocks (Tf)	Light gray and grayish orange felsic tuff, tuff breccia and flow-layered felsite. Appears to underlie and possibly interfinger with terrestrial conglomerate described above. Some of the tuff is welded and contains angular fragments of blue green serpentinite, possibly derived from ophiolitic rock dislodged from the walls of eruptive vents. May correlate with felsites in the Morro Bay North Quadrangle to the west or dacites of the Morro Rock-Islay Hill volcanic complex near San Luis Obispo.	Oligocene
Great Valley Sequence (Cretaceous to Jurassic)		
Atascadero Formation (Ka)	Light gray to dark olive gray, thin to thick-bedded turbidite sandstone with interbedded siltstone, mudstone and conglomerate. Unit structurally overlies Franciscan rocks and the Toro Formation and is internally disrupted by faulting and shearing. Sandstones typically consist of quartz (30-40%), feldspars (30-50%), volcanic and lithic debris (10-30%) and biotite (2 -10%) Hart (1976). Conglomerates contain silicic and basic volcanics, quartzite, and granitics and lack Franciscan debris. Hart (1976) identified an apparently intact sequence on the east side of Paradise Valley, grading upward from mudstone to massive feldspathic sandstone, and mapped four subunits: Ka1 – Dark mudstone with thin to thick beds of well-bedded sandstone; Ka2 – Flaggy to massive calcareous greywacke with interbedded dark mudstone; Ka3 – Relatively soft, poorly-bedded sandstone with interbedded mudstone, sandstone and minor conglomerate lenses, and; Ka4 – Massive, coarse feldspathic and biotitic sandstone with interbedded finer sandstone, siltstone and mudstone. Elsewhere, the unit is generally too disrupted to distinguish subunits, except a lower unit of dark mudstone and sandstone (Kal), which is mapped locally.	Upper Cretaceous
Toro Formation (KJt)	Thin-bedded, greenish brown to brown micaceous shale interbedded with thin sandstone beds. Sandstone occurs rarely in beds up to 5 meters thick. Contains calcareous lenses and concretions. Buchia fragments occur locally in thin sandstone beds. Discontinuous conglomerate lenses representing channel fills on submarine fans occur along Tassajara Creek and on the northeast side of Cerro Alto, with well-rounded pebbles and cobbles of chert and fine-grained volcanic rocks. Depositionally, it overlies chert and basalt of the Coast Range Ophiolite.	Lower Cretaceous to Upper Jurassic

Geologic Unit	Description	Age
Coast Range Ophiolite (Jurassic)		
Chert (Jc)	Brownish black to olive brown impure chert. Beds 2 to 15 cm thick intercalated with black, flaky, siliceous shale partings. Rock breaks into blocky, joint-bounded blocks with black manganese oxide coatings on some surface. Depositional on basaltic dike-and-sill complex. Overlain by and probably gradational with marine shales of the Toro Formation.	Jurassic
Serpentinite and Intrusive Dike-and-Sill Complex (Jsp)	Serpentinite extensively intruded by altered diabase dikes and sills (mantle remnant). Relict minerals and textures of peridotite locally present where serpentinization is incomplete. Intrusive dikes and sills are primarily diabase typically altered to hydrous calcium aluminum silicates. Unit is in fault contact with overlying basalt dike and-sill complex. Dikes and sills considered to be feeders to overlying extrusive basalts. Unit is tectonically underlain by Franciscan mélange. Serpentinite locally hydrothermally altered to silica-carbonate rock (sc).	Jurassic
Serpentinized Ultramafic Rocks (Jos)	Pervasively sheared serpentinite occurring as lenticular fault-bounded bodies in Franciscan mélange. Considered to be dismembered bodies of the Coast Range Ophiolite tectonically interleaved with mélange during subduction.	Jurassic
Franciscan Complex (Cretaceous to Jurassic)		
Franciscan Mélange (KJfm)	Chaotic mixture of fragmented, fault-bounded rock masses embedded in a penetratively sheared matrix of argillite and crushed metasandstone. Individual rock masses range from less than a meter to kilometers in scale and include altered mafic volcanic rocks (greenstone), graywacke, chert, serpentinite and high grade blueschist. Penetrative deformation of matrix postdates metamorphism of enclosed rock masses. Greenstone, chert and serpentinite blocks are probably derived from the Coast Range Ophiolite and were emplaced and interleaved in the matrix during subduction.	Cretaceous to Jurassic
Metavolcanic Rocks (KJFv)	Primarily greenstone, metamorphosed from basalt. Includes massive to pillowed basalt flows, breccia, tuff and diabase. Commonly deeply weathered	Cretaceous to Jurassic

Source: Weigars and Holland (2012).

Note:

[1] In addition to the area described here and shown in the corresponding map below, there are also other areas of significant artificial fill associated with development or historic patterns (Downtown) within the City.

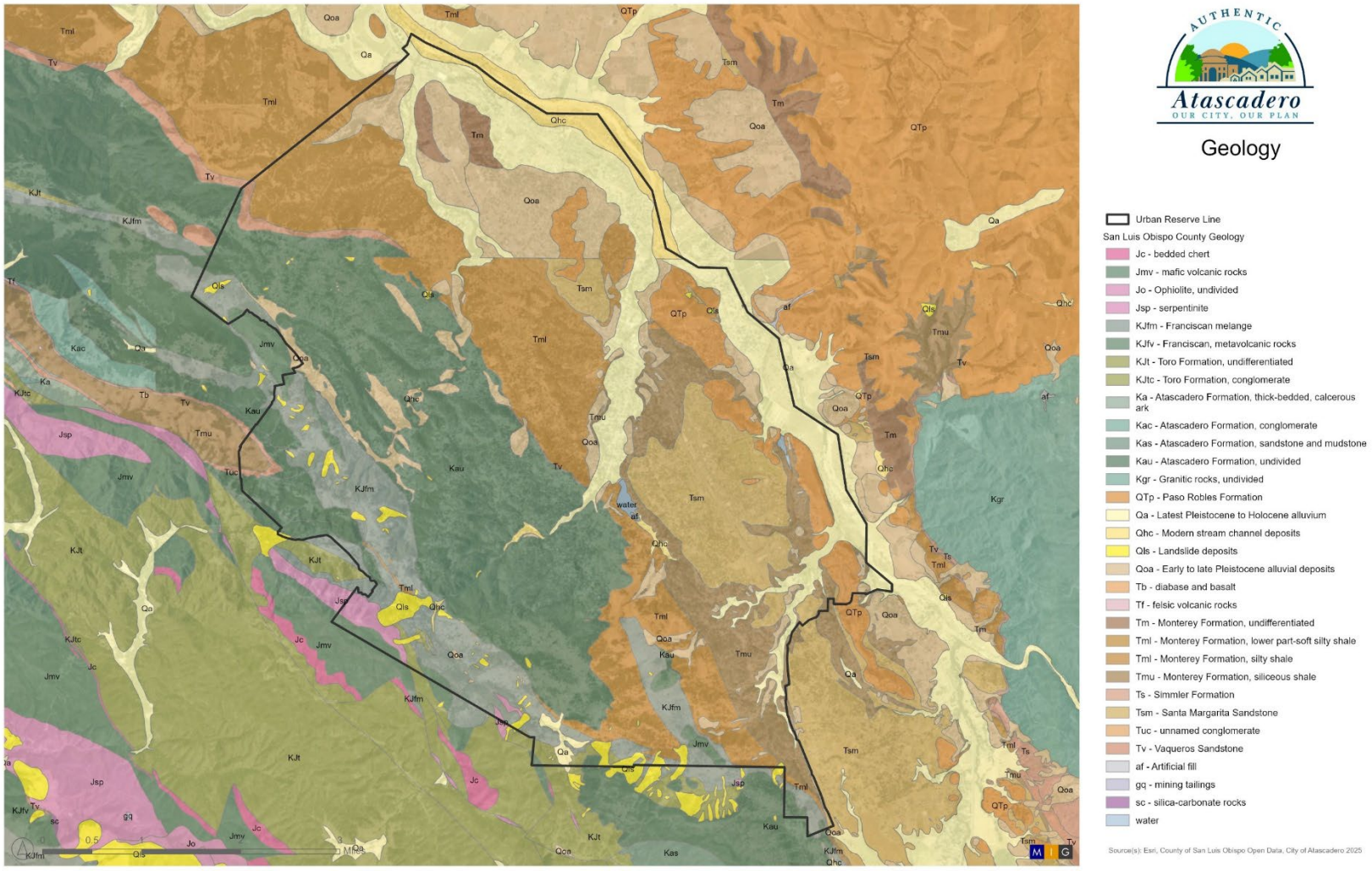


Figure 4.6-4. Geologic map of the City of Atascadero area.

4.6.2 Regulatory Setting

4.6.2.1 Federal

There are no applicable federal regulations relevant to the proposed project.

4.6.2.2 State

ALQUIST-PRIOLO EARTHQUAKE FAULT ZONING ACT

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act was signed into law following the 1971 San Fernando earthquake. The act provides a mechanism for reducing losses from surface fault rupture on a statewide basis. The intent of the act is to ensure public safety by prohibiting the siting of most structures for human occupancy across traces of active faults that constitute a potential hazard to structures from surface faulting or fault creep. This act groups faults into categories of active, potentially active, and inactive. Historic and Holocene faults are considered active, Late Quaternary and Quaternary faults are considered potentially active, and pre-Quaternary faults are considered inactive.

SEISMIC HAZARDS MAPPING ACT

The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act of 1990 (Public Resources Code [PRC] Chapter 7.8, Sections 2690–2699.6) directs the CGS to delineate seismic hazard zones. The purpose of the act is to reduce the threat to public health and safety and to minimize the loss of life and property by identifying and mitigating seismic hazards. Cities, counties, and state agencies are directed to use seismic hazard zone maps developed by the CGS in their land use planning and permitting processes. The act requires that site-specific geotechnical investigations be performed prior to permitting most urban development projects within seismic hazard zones.

CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE

The CBC, Title 24, Part 2 provides building codes and standards for the design and construction of structures in California. The 2025 CBC is based on the 2024 International Building Code with the addition of more extensive structural seismic provisions. Chapter 16 of the CBC contains definitions of seismic sources and the procedure used to calculate seismic forces on structures. The CBC requires addressing soil-related hazards, such as treating hazardous soil conditions involving removal, proper fill selection, and compaction, prior to construction. In cases where soil remediation is not feasible, the CBC requires structural reinforcement of foundations to resist the forces of expansive soils.

PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE SECTION 5097.5

Requirements for paleontological resource management are included in PRC Division 5, Chapter 1.7, Section 5097.5, which states:

> A person shall not knowingly and willfully excavate upon, or remove, destroy, injure or deface any historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, archaeological or vertebrate paleontological site, including fossilized footprints, inscriptions made by human agency, rock art, or any other archaeological, paleontological or historical feature, situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency having jurisdiction over such lands . . . Violation of this section is a misdemeanor.

These statutes prohibit the removal, without permission, of any paleontological site or feature from land under the authority of the state or any city, county, district, authority, or public corporation, or any agency thereof. Consequently, local agencies are required to comply with PRC 5097.5 for their own activities, including construction and maintenance, as well as for permit actions (e.g., encroachment permits) undertaken by others. PRC Section 5097.5 also establishes the removal of paleontological resources as a misdemeanor and requires reasonable mitigation of adverse impacts to paleontological resources from developments on public (state, county, city, and district) land.

4.6.2.3 Local

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

The San Luis Obispo County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan is designed to reduce injury, loss of life, property damage, and interruption of essential services resulting from natural hazards. San Luis Obispo County acknowledged the importance of having a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) and began developing one in 2005. The LHMP is currently undergoing an update, following its most recent revision in 2019. This LHMP offers a thorough assessment of both natural and human-caused hazards facing San Luis Obispo County, with a strong emphasis on mitigation strategies. By participating in this plan, the County remains eligible for critical federal and State funding to support emergency response and recovery efforts, as authorized by the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and relevant California law (County of San Luis Obispo 2025).

The LHMP update process is comprehensive and collaborative, involving all seven incorporated cities, including Atascadero, as well as multiple community service and special districts. This ensures a coordinated approach to hazard mitigation across the region. The plan not only fulfills the requirements of the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 but also complements Atascadero's General Plan Safety Element.

CITY OF ATASCADERO GENERAL PLAN 2025

Safety and Noise Element

The Safety and Noise Element of the 2025 Atascadero General Plan was prepared with the intent to guide land use planning by providing goals and policies to minimize the adverse effects of geologic hazards and ensure adequate design of structures (City of Atascadero 2002). Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to energy included within the Safety and Noise Element are listed here:

- **Goal SFN 4.** Minimize the potential for loss of life and property resulting from geologic and seismic hazards.
    - **Policy 4.1:** Ensure that developments, structures, and public facilities adequately address geologic and seismic hazards.
        - **Program 1:** Disseminate information to the public to improve awareness of geologic hazards and seismic safety.
        - **Program 2:** Continually update information about faults and geologic hazards (including GIS data and geologic and fault mapping), and encourage the California Division of Mines and Geology to provide new and updated geologic hazard data for inclusion in the database.
        - **Program 3:** Conduct studies to assess seismic activity within the Nacimiento Fault Zone in the southwestern part of the City and SOI prior to approving construction of new structures in the mapped fault traces.

  - **Program 4:** When projects are proposed in geologically hazardous areas, require development applicants to submit reports, technical documents, and plans reviewed by a State licensed independent geologist or geotechnical engineer, and that include that expert's opinion as to whether documents were prepared in accordance with standard practices, applicable codes, and regulations pertaining to geologic hazards.
- **Policy 4.2:** Ensure that structures are designed and located to withstand strong ground shaking, liquefaction, and seismic settlement.
  - **Program 1:** Enforce adopted Building Code provisions pertaining to grading and construction relative to seismic hazards.
  - **Program 2:** Update the Title 8 of the Municipal Code as necessary to promote seismic safety in structural designs.
  - **Program 3:** Enforce building code requirements for addressing liquefaction potential in the design of structures.
  - **Program 4:** Require geotechnical studies for development in areas with moderate to high liquefaction potential that include analysis of seismic settlement potential and specify appropriate mitigation.
- **Policy 4.3:** Avoid development in areas at risk for slope failure when possible, and ensure that hillside developments employ appropriate design and construction techniques.
  - **Program 1:** Continue to require slope stability assessments by appropriate registered professionals for developments in areas of known slope instability, landslides, or slopes steeper than 10 percent.
  - **Program 2:** Require slope stability studies for subdivisions prior to delineating lot lines and building envelopes.
  - **Program 3:** Prohibit new development in areas of high-risk landslide activity, unless plans demonstrate prior to development that the hazard can be reduced to a less than significant level.
  - **Program 4:** Prohibit expansion of existing structures or developments in areas of high-risk landslide activity, except when it will reduce the potential for loss of life and property.
  - **Program 5:** Require development proposals to mitigate landslide and slope stability impacts on neighboring property, structures, and infrastructure.
  - **Program 6:** Enforce building code provisions and other applicable ordinances regulating development on sloping ground.
- **Policy 4.4:** Improve the ability of City personnel and residents to respond to seismic emergencies.
  - **Program 1:** Train City personnel to a level appropriate to their position and responsibilities to adequately and safely respond to seismic emergencies.
  - **Program 2:** Encourage residents to participate in Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training or other types of programs to improve community wide response to seismic emergencies.

ATASCADERO MUNICIPAL CODE OF ORDINANCES

Municipal Code Chapters 9-3 and 9-4 describe requirements for soils and geology reports and grading permit requirements. Municipal Code Section 9-3.613 describes when a soils report is required and what it should include. These reports ensure that any necessary engineering or design modifications are incorporated into project plans to reduce potential soil and/or geologic hazards. Additionally, Municipal

Code Section 9-3.614 describes special standards to be applied for development with the City's Geologic Hazard Overlay Zone such as additional grading requirements and the prohibition of certain structures within 50 feet of an active trace fault within a special studies zone. Chapter 9-4 also describes requirements related to the control of drainage and stormwater and the design of streets and other public improvements. Section 9-4.147 describes when a drainage plan must be submitted and the content it must include. This plan is then reviewed by the City Engineer for compliance with the drainage standards of Municipal Code Section 9-4.151.

4.6.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on geology and soils if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
    i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.
    ii) Strong seismic ground shaking.
    iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction.
    iv) Landslides.

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil.

c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse.

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property.

e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water.

f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.6.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.6.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

For the purposes of this analysis, relevant documents were reviewed, including the Local Area Management Plan (LAMP) (Monsoon Consultants 2018), regional geologic mapping (Weigars and Holland 2012), and soils mapping prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. These sources describe the geological and soil conditions within the Planning Area. Assessment of paleontological resources was conducted using SVP (2010) guidelines as a reference. This included a review of relevant geologic maps, scientific literature, and fossil locality database information to evaluate the potential for significant paleontological resources to occur within the Planning Area. Although the 2045 General Plan Update and the Zoning Code Update does not include any specific development plans, this document evaluates potential impacts associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update on a programmatic level.

4.6.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.

IMPACT GEO-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CAUSE SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS DUE TO RUPTURE OF A KNOWN EARTHQUAKE FAULT. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

There are no Alquist-Priolo Earthquake fault zones located within the Planning Area (CDOC 2019b). In addition, no active faults capable of ground surface rupture have been identified within the Planning Area. Although several active and potentially active faults, including the Rinconada and Nacimiento faults, are present in the broader region, the nearest mapped fault is the Rinconada Fault, approximately 2 miles from Atascadero City limits. Because there are no active or potentially active faults located within the Planning Area, future community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update, and as implemented by the Zoning Code Update, would not be at risk of loss, injury, or death involving rupture of an active fault. Therefore, impacts related to rupture of a known earthquake fault would be *less than significant*.

Impact GEO-1
The project would not cause substantial adverse effects due to rupture of a known earthquake fault.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantial adverse effects due to rupture of a known earthquake fault would be less than significant (Class III).

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

IMPACT GEO-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS RELATED TO STRONG SEISMIC GROUND SHAKING. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Development anticipated under the 2045 General Plan Update will take place near several fault zones. The Rinconada and Nacimiento faults are the closest to Atascadero. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) identifies the Rinconada Fault as active, with the capability of producing earthquakes up to magnitude 7.5. Such an event could lead to intense ground shaking and may result in secondary hazards, including landslides and liquefaction. The severity of these hazards is influenced by factors such as the epicenter's location, the strength and duration of the shaking, local topography, groundwater conditions, and construction practices.

Additionally, the San Andreas Fault, which runs from the San Francisco Bay Area through central California to the Gulf of California, is of significant regional concern. A major seismic event along the San Andreas Fault could produce widespread ground shaking and, depending on its proximity, has the potential to cause severe damage. The local geologic setting, characterized by a variety of rock formations and soil types, combined with the City's proximity to major fault zones, means that strong ground shaking is a recognized hazard for the area. Historical records confirm that Atascadero and the surrounding region have experienced multiple significant earthquakes, most notably the 2003 San Simeon event. The City's 2045 General Plan includes policies and action items to further address reducing risks posed by earthquakes, including the following:

- **Goal SEP-4:** Minimized exposure geologic and seismic hazards and the associated risks to life and property.
    - **Policy SEP-4.1: Risk Reduction.** Ensure that the public is informed about the risks of geologic and seismic hazards and potential mitigation options.
        - **Action A:** Provide information to the public to improve awareness of geologic hazards and seismic safety.
        - **Action B:** Continually update information about faults and geologic hazards (including GIS data and geologic and fault mapping) as new information becomes available.
        - **Action C**: Work with property owners of unreinforced masonry buildings to retrofit or demolish structures consistent with the California Building Code.
    - **Policy SEP-4.2: Structure Design.** Ensure that structures are designed and located to withstand strong ground shaking, liquefaction, and seismic settlement.
        - **Action A:** Enforce building code requirements for new development, including addressing liquefaction potential and preparing geotechnical reports.
        - **Action B:** Enforce Building Code provisions pertaining to grading and construction relative to seismic hazards.
        - **Action C:** Update Title 8 of the Municipal Code as necessary to promote seismic safety in structural designs.
        - **Action D:** Require retrofitting and abatement of structural hazards to levels of risk acceptable to the Building Official.
        - **Action E:** Prioritize retrofitting and abatement of City-owned structures, including buildings, bridges, and other infrastructure, in areas determined to experience strong ground shaking during an earthquake.
        - **Action F:** Work with and support state and local agencies, including public utilities, to retrofit and harden water storage facilities, wastewater conveyance, electricity transmission lines, roadways, regional stormwater facilities, levees, and other utilities that could be negatively affected by earthquakes.
    - **Policy SEP-4.3: Reduced Risk.** Minimize development in areas at high risk for geologic hazards.
        - **Action A:** Avoid or adequately mitigate any development of critical facilities—hospitals, fire stations, emergency management headquarters, broadcast services, sewage treatment plants, and places of large congregations of people—in high-risk geologic hazard zones (e.g., fault zones, liquefiable soils, areas of slope instability).

The 2045 General Plan is a policy document and does not authorize construction of any specific development. Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update would be required to comply with the CBC standards in effect at the time, including Section 1613,

which mandates that structures be engineered to withstand anticipated levels of seismic ground motion based on site-specific soil and seismic characteristics. The CBC requires that new buildings are designed according to mapped seismic parameters, occupancy type, and local soil conditions, ensuring a high level of public safety.

Additionally, the existing Atascadero Municipal Code and Zoning Code Update enforces local requirements for preparation of geotechnical investigations for proposed development in areas with potential geologic hazards. These investigations must evaluate site-specific seismic risks and recommend appropriate engineering measures to address them. By adhering to state and local building regulations, the risk of substantial adverse effects from strong seismic ground shaking would be minimized. Therefore, impacts related to seismic ground shaking under the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be *less than significant*.

Impact GEO-2
The project would not result in substantial adverse effects related to strong seismic ground shaking.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantial adverse effects due to seismic ground shaking would be less than significant (Class III).

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

IMPACT GEO-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS RELATED TO SEISMIC-RELATED GROUND FAILURE, INCLUDING LIQUEFACTION. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would occur in a seismically active region with complex geology and several active or potentially active faults. Liquefaction and seismic settlement, or the reduction of soil volume, are important hazards in this setting, with liquefaction potential increasing with earthquake magnitude and shaking duration. Low-lying areas adjacent to Atascadero and Graves Creeks and the Salinas River, underlain by unconsolidated alluvial soils, are mapped as having high liquefaction potential, while much of the City underlain by older alluvium is considered to have moderate liquefaction potential. The CBC requires assessment of liquefaction potential for all structures, and if buildings cannot be located away from potentially liquefiable soils, the hazard can typically be mitigated through engineering solutions such as deep foundations, soil compaction, or other construction techniques.

Liquefaction, which can occur when loose, saturated soils lose strength during strong ground shaking, requires the presence of shallow groundwater, low-density nonplastic soils, and intense seismic motion. Although these conditions are not prevalent throughout most of the Planning Area, site-specific variations may exist and will be addressed through required geotechnical investigations.

As previously described, the 2045 General Plan Update is a policy document and does not authorize construction of any specific development. Any future development pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be subject to the CBC requirements in effect at the time, including Section 1613, which mandates that structures be designed to withstand site-specific seismic

ground motions and to account for local soil and geologic conditions. As discussed in Section 4.6.2, *Regulatory Setting*, the Atascadero Municipal Code further requires geotechnical investigations for new development in areas potentially subject to geologic hazards, including liquefaction. These studies must evaluate site-specific risks and recommend engineering measures to reduce hazards.

Additionally, the 2045 General Plan Update includes policies that would minimize seismic hazards through careful land use planning and emergency preparedness. Based on future development being required to comply with State and local building regulations, incorporating recommendations from site-specific geotechnical studies, and adhering to the 2045 General Plan policies described in the discussion for Impact GEO-2 and implementation through the Zoning Code Update, the risk of substantial adverse effects from seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, would be minimized. Therefore, impacts related to seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, under the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update would be *less than significant*.

Impact GEO-3
The project would not result in substantial adverse effects related to seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantial adverse effects due to seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, would be less than significant (Class III).

iv) Landslides?

IMPACT GEO-4: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS, INCLUDING THE RISK OF LOSS, INJURY, OR DEATH INVOLVING LANDSLIDES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

As described in Section 4.6.2 Regulatory Setting, several California state codes are instrumental in addressing landslide hazards in Atascadero. The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act prohibits most occupied structures from being sited across traces of active faults, reducing risks associated with surface fault rupture. The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act requires the identification of seismic hazard zones and mandates site-specific geotechnical investigations prior to permitting development within these zones. Additionally, the CBC establishes standards for building design and construction, including requirements for soil remediation and structural reinforcement to mitigate hazardous soil conditions such as those that could contribute to landslides.

In addition to these State regulations, the City's municipal code (Atascadero Municipal Code Section 9-3.613), requires geologic and soils reports for new development, ensuring that landslide hazards are evaluated and mitigated as part of the permitting process. The proposed 2045 General Plan also includes policies aimed at controlling erosion. The 2045 General Plan Update Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element contains the following relevant policy and action items:

- **Policy SEP-4.4: Erosion Control.** Promote erosion control strategies that reduce hazards to structures, properties, and drainages.
    - **Action A:** Identify and require enhanced erosion control measures for properties that exhibit high erosion potential, are in areas of steep slopes, or have experienced past erosion problems.
    - **Action B:** Require development proposals to mitigate landslide and slope stability conditions that have the potential to impact adjacent properties, structures, and infrastructure.
    - **Action C:** Enforce Building Code provisions and other applicable ordinances regulating development on sloping ground.
    - **Action D:** Continue to require slope stability assessments by appropriate registered professionals for developments in areas of known slope instability, landslides, or slopes steeper than 10 percent.
    - **Action E:** Maintain mapping of high landslide risk areas and ensure that structures are engineered to account for any associated risk.

By adhering to State and local building regulations along with 2045 General Plan Update regulations and adoption of applicable corresponding Zoning Code regulations, the risk of substantial adverse effects from landslides would be minimized. Therefore, impacts related to seismic ground shaking would be *less than significant*.

Impact GEO-4
The project would not directly or indirectly result in substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving landslides.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving landslides, would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

IMPACT GEO-5: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CAUSE SIGNIFICANT SOIL EROSION OR RESULT IN THE LOSS OF TOPSOIL. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update may involve activities such as grading, excavation, and construction that could disturb soils and potentially expose areas to unstable soil conditions.

As detailed in Section 4-.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, proposed development projects that would disturb one acre or more of soil during construction would be required to comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for stormwater discharges associated with construction and land disturbance activities. Compliance with the Construction General Permit involves the

preparation and implementation of a storm water pollution prevention plan (SWPPP), which requires implementation of best management practices (BMPs) to minimize soil erosion and control the discharge of sediments. Typical BMPs may include measures such as installing silt fences, applying water to control dust, managing stormwater runoff, and following dewatering protocols as necessary.

In addition to State requirements, the City of Atascadero enforces its municipal code regulations that require the use of erosion control measures for all construction activities. The Zoning Code Update will retain these standards, consistent with the General Plan. The proposed General Plan also includes policies aimed at mitigating soil erosion. The 2045 General Plan Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element includes the following policy and action items:

- **Policy REC-4.6: Soil Health.** Encourage soil conservation by minimizing grading and preventing erosion.
    - **Action A:** Require soil retention and erosion control as conditions of approval for development projects consistent with Regional Water Quality Control Board standards.
    - **Action B:** Periodically review the Municipal Code for consistency with National Pollution Discharge Elimination System requirements.

Together, these State and local regulations minimize potential impacts related to soil erosion and loss of topsoil associated with future development associated with community development pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact GEO-5
The project would not cause significant soil erosion or result in the loss of topsoil.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to significant soil erosion or result in the loss of topsoil would be less than significant (Class III).

c) Would the project be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

IMPACT GEO-6: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY EXPOSE PEOPLE OR STRUCTURES TO RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING LOCATED ON A GEOLOGIC UNIT OR SOIL THAT IS UNSTABLE, OR THAT COULD BECOME UNSTABLE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development in Atascadero could encounter unstable or expansive soils, which may increase the risk of geologic hazards such as landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or ground collapse. The EIR's analysis identifies areas within the City that are subject to these potential soil and seismic hazards. Some of the soils present in Atascadero are known to have expansive properties, which, if not properly managed, could affect the stability of new structures.

To address these risks, the 2045 General Plan Update Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element includes the following policies to reduce risks associated with geologic and seismic hazards:

- **Policy SEP-4.1: Risk Reduction.** Ensure that the public is informed about the risks of geologic and seismic hazards and potential mitigation options.
    - **Action A:** Provide information to the public to improve awareness of geologic hazards and seismic safety.
    - **Action B:** Continually update information about faults and geologic hazards (including GIS data and geologic and fault mapping) as new information becomes available.
    - **Action C:** Work with property owners of unreinforced masonry buildings to retrofit or demolish structures consistent with the California Building Code.
- **Policy SEP-4.3: Reduced Risk.** Minimize development in areas at high risk for geologic hazards.
    - **Action A:** Avoid or adequately mitigate any development of critical facilities—hospitals, fire stations, emergency management headquarters, broadcast services, sewage treatment plants, and places of large congregations of people—in high-risk geologic hazard zones (e.g., fault zones, liquefiable soils, areas of slope instability).

In addition, Municipal Code Section 9-4.613 describes when a soils report is required and what it should include. These reports ensure that any necessary engineering or design modifications are incorporated into project plans to reduce potential soil and/or geologic hazards. These regulations will be maintained in the Zoning Code Update. All future construction associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 Atascadero General Plan Update would also be subject to the CBC, which sets forth standards for site preparation and building practices to minimize risks associated with unstable or expansive soils.

With these policies, local ordinances, and building code requirements in place, the potential for harm to people or property due to unstable or expansive soils would be minimized. As a result, impacts related to geologic unit and/or soil stability would be *less than significant*.

Impact GEO-6
The project would potentially expose people or structures to risks associated with being located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that could become unstable.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to potentially exposing people or structures to risks associated with being located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that could become unstable would be less than significant (Class III).

d) Would the project be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

IMPACT GEO-7: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY EXPOSE PEOPLE OR STRUCTURES TO RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH UNSTABLE OR EXPANSIVE SOILS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update located in areas with expansive soils could create substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property, potentially resulting in adverse impacts such as structural damage or ground instability. As described in Section 4.6.1.4, the Planning Area contains a variety of soil types, including fine silty clay soils with moderate to high shrink-swell potential in localized areas. These soils, particularly the Arbuckle-San Ysidro complex, Arbuckle-Positas complex, and Rincon clay loam, are known to exhibit expansive characteristics.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies and programs (see Impact Discussion 4.6-1) that require site-specific geotechnical investigations for new development to identify and address potential hazards related to expansive soils. In addition, the City's Municipal Code and the CBC require that all new construction in areas identified as having expansive soils be designed and engineered to minimize risks associated with soil expansion and contraction. These measures include appropriate foundation design, soil treatment, and grading practices to ensure soil stability and reduce the risk of damage to structures and will be maintained in the Zoning Code Update.

Therefore, with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update policies, compliance with the CBC, and adherence to local code requirements, future community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not expose people or structures to substantial risks associated with expansive soils. Potential impacts related to expansive soils would be *less than significant*.

Impact GEO-7
The project would potentially expose people or structures to risks associated with unstable or expansive soils.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to potentially exposing people or structures to risks associated with unstable or expansive soils would be less than significant (Class III).

e) Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

IMPACT GEO-8: THE PROJECT COULD ALLOW FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT BE LOCATED WITHIN SOILS INCAPABLE OF ADEQUATELY SUPPORTING THE USE OF SEPTIC TANKS OR ALTERNATIVE WASTEWATER DISPOSAL SYSTEMS WHERE SEWERS ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR THE DISPOSAL OF WASTEWATER. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

New development within the Urban Services Line (USL) associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be required to connect to municipal sewer lines. In areas where sewer service is not available, such as areas outside of the USL, on-site septic systems or alternative wastewater disposal systems may be used.

Prior to construction, a permit must be obtained for any such system, and all systems must be designed, sited, and operated in accordance with the State Water Resources Control Board's Water Quality Control Policy for Siting, Design, Operation, and Maintenance of On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems, as well as applicable City ordinances and standards as discussed in *Section 4.8 Hydrology and Water Quality*.

Well-drained soils are essential for the effective installation and operation of septic systems and alternative wastewater disposal systems. As described in Section 4.6.1.4, *Soils*, the Planning Area is underlain by a range of soil types, with sand-gravelly soils generally providing suitable conditions for septic systems, while areas with fine silty clay soils or rock outcrops may require additional site-specific evaluation to ensure adequate percolation and system performance.

Atascadero's LAMP describes that the permitting process for on-site wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) requires a thorough evaluation of site-specific soil conditions because soil suitability is the most critical factor in effective wastewater treatment and dispersal. The City requires detailed site evaluations to document soil characteristics and depth for each proposed OWTS installation, using observed soil depth and percolation rates to guide the location, sizing, and design of each system to achieve effective effluent dispersal and groundwater protection (Monsoon Consultants 2018).

Because any proposed septic or alternative system would be required to comply with State and local regulations, including soil suitability assessments and permitting requirements, impacts related to the capability of soils to support septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems would *be less than significant*.

Impact GEO-8
The project could allow for future development be located within soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to future development located within soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater would be less than significant (Class III).

f) Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

IMPACT GEO-9: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY DESTROY UNIQUE PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES OR SITES OR UNIQUE GEOLOGICAL FEATURES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED [CLASS II])*

The City of Atascadero is situated within the southern Coast Ranges Geomorphic Province, an area characterized by diverse geology and topography, including rugged peaks of the Santa Lucia Range to the west and rolling hills and valleys descending to the Salinas River in the east. The region is underlain by a variety of geologic units, ranging in age from Jurassic to Holocene, including alluvial floodplain deposits, landslide deposits, and the Paso Robles and Monterey Formations. These geologic formations contribute to the region's scenic landscape and contain both common and unique geological features such as Chalk Mountain and Pine Mountain. These unique geologic features would be located within the Conservation/ Parks/ Open Space Placetype designation. This designation is intended for parks and recreation and community serving uses, habitat preserves, rivers and creeks, and other protected lands. Therefore, development potential within this Placetype would be extremely limited.

Paleontological resources are more likely to be observed on hillsides because slopes promote natural erosion from rainfall, runoff, and gravity. The 2045 General Plan contains policies discouraging hillside development and preserving hillside features. These policies include the following:

- **Policy MO-1.5: Hillside Area Street Character.** Preserve the winding, tree-lined nature of the City street system in hillside areas.
    - **Action A:** Continue to allow flexible street design standards to allow roads to curve around hillsides to preserve rural character, limit landform alteration, and control vehicle speed.
- **Policy REC-3.2: New Development.** Require that new development and subdivisions blend in with surrounding topography by minimizing disturbance to the existing natural environment.
    - **Action B:** Require development built on hillsides to conform with the City's adopted hillside grading ordinance.
- **Policy REC-3.3: Grading.** Prevent unnecessary intensive grading of development sites.
    - **Action A:** Periodically review, and update as necessary, the hillside grading ordinance to minimize hillside grading, cuts, fills, and ridgeline disturbance.

The Hillside Development Sections (9-4.152 through 9-4.157) of the Atascadero Municipal Code establish standards to preserve the rural character of hillside areas, protect existing trees and vegetation, and promote grading and site design that maintain natural landforms, minimize aesthetic impacts, and ensure slope stability. These regulations apply to any development, grading, or construction project with a pre-grading slope of 15% or more. Key provisions include limiting the maximum area of disturbance to 12,500 square feet, restricting building pad grading on slopes over 20%, and requiring specialized foundation techniques for steeper slopes. Building design must follow the natural slope and grading for outdoor recreation on slopes over 20% is limited to no more than half the footprint of the primary structure. Projects that meet these standards may be approved through ministerial review, while those that do not require discretionary approval (City of Atascadero 2024).

Within the Planning Area, the potential for encountering paleontological resources depends on the paleontological sensitivity of the underlying geologic units. Scientific literature and regional fossil locality databases indicate that significant paleontological resources have occasionally been recovered from Pleistocene-age older alluvial sediments and the Paso Robles Formation near Atascadero (Addicott and Galehouse 1978). A portion of the Planning Area is underlain by younger Quaternary deposits and artificial fill, including very young surficial deposits, earth dam and artificial island fill at Atascadero Lake, and alluvial floodplain and channel deposits mapped along the Salinas River; these units are composed of unconsolidated gravel, cobbles, boulders, sand, silt, and clay, and have a lower paleontological sensitivity due to their recent age. In contrast, the Planning Area also contains older geologic units with moderate to high paleontological sensitivity, such as the lower calcareous member of the Monterey Formation, the Santa Margarita Formation, the upper siliceous member of the Monterey Formation, the Atascadero Formation, the Franciscan Complex mélange, and locally preserved old alluvial floodplain deposits. These formations are generally more likely to yield significant fossil resources due to their age and depositional environments (SVP 2010).

Ground-disturbing activities associated with future development pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update could potentially encounter paleontological resources; however, future development would be required to comply with State regulatory requirements, including CEQA and PRC Section 5097.5. CEQA mandates that projects are evaluated for their potential to directly or indirectly impact unique paleontological resources, based on site-specific information such as the paleontological sensitivity of underlying geologic units, the extent of proposed earthwork, and methodologies to be used. PRC Section 5097.5 specifically prohibits the unauthorized excavation, removal, or destruction of paleontological sites or features on public lands, with violations subject to fines, imprisonment, and mandatory restitution for restoration and repair of affected resources.

Impacts to paleontological resources would generally be considered potentially significant if development occurs within geologic units of high paleontological sensitivity, in previously undisturbed areas, or where excavation exceeds prior disturbance. Compliance with CEQA, General Plan policies, Zoning Code regulations, and PRC Section 5097.5 ensures that such impacts are minimized through appropriate evaluation, permitting, and mitigation measures.

Mitigation Measure (MM) GEO-9.1 has been identified to require implementation of a policy and action that would require development projects with the potential to disturb paleontologically sensitive geologic units to prepare a paleontological resource study to avoid and minimize potential impacts to unique paleontological resources.

Based on future development being evaluated for potential impacts to unique paleontological resources under CEQA, as well as implementation of the 2045 General Plan policies and actions and MM GEO-9.1, impacts to paleontological resources would be minimized. Therefore, impacts to unique geologic features and paleontological resources would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Impact GEO-9
The project would potentially directly or indirectly destroy unique paleontological resources or sites or unique geological features
Mitigation Measures
MM GEO-9.1 *The City shall incorporate the following Policy and Actions into the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element of the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption:* • *Policy REC-6.3: Paleontological Resource Protection. Protect unique paleontological resources from disturbance associated with development.* – *Action A: Maintain a current GIS-based map of generalized areas of paleontologically sensitive areas and areas that have yielded significant fossils.* – *Action B: Require preparation of a Paleontological Resource Study for projects that would include proposed development within a geologic unit with high paleontological sensitivity and earthwork would occur in areas that have not previously been developed with urban uses, or when excavation depths would exceed those previously disturbed. The Paleontological Resource Study shall evaluate potential impacts to unique paleontological resources and identify appropriate avoidance/mitigation measures in accordance with processional standards set forth by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology.*
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to potentially directly or indirectly destroy unique paleontological resources or sites or unique geological features would be less than significant with mitigation (Class II).

4.6.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT GEO-10: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY RESULT IN CUMULATIVE IMPACTS RELATED TO GEOLOGIC HAZARDS AND THE LOSS OR DISTURBANCE OF GEOLOGIC AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACTWITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED [CLASS II])*

Geological impacts are typically site-specific, arising from localized conditions such as soil type, slope, and proximity to faults, and are not generally cumulative in nature. For instance, while seismic events may cause damage to individual structures, the construction of one development project does not increase the susceptibility of adjacent parcels to seismic hazards, nor does it alter the regional geology in a manner that would increase geologic risks across the broader area.

The cumulative context for geology and soils encompasses growth within the City of Atascadero in combination with projected growth throughout San Luis Obispo County. All future development in Atascadero would be required to comply with the CBC, which mandates stringent seismic design standards and common engineering practices to address site-specific geologic hazards, including expansive soils, slope stability, and seismic ground shaking. Furthermore, any project involving clearing, grading, or excavation that disturbs one acre or more, or is part of a larger phased development, is subject to the NPDES Construction General Permit. This requires preparation and implementation of a SWPPP that includes BMPs to control erosion, sedimentation, and stormwater runoff.

Implementation of these regulatory requirements, along with the 2045 General Plan Update policies and City Municipal Code provisions as maintained or updated with the Zoning Code Update, would ensure that potential impacts associated with geology and soils, such as erosion, slope instability, or soil expansion, are

addressed at the project level and do not accumulate to a significant regional effect. Site-specific review, including required geotechnical reports for new development, further reduces the potential for cumulative impacts. Therefore, the proposed 2045 General Plan Update's and Zoning Code Update's contribution to cumulative impacts related to geology and soils would be less than cumulatively considerable.

The cumulative setting for paleontological resources includes the Planning Area and adjacent lands where similar features or fossil-bearing formations may occur. Cumulative impacts could arise if multiple projects in the region disturb or remove unique geologic features or deposits with high paleontological sensitivity, potentially resulting in the cumulative loss of scientifically significant resources.

However, the City's regulatory framework, including compliance with PRC Section 5097.5 and MM GEO-9.1 identified above would minimize impacts associated with impacts to unique geologic features or paleontological resources.

While cumulative development in Atascadero and the wider region could potentially result in the loss of unique geologic features or paleontological resources, the project's contribution to such impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable due to the implementation of applicable State and local policies, regulatory requirements, and mitigation requirements. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Impact GEO-10
The project would contribute to cumulative impacts related to geologic hazards and the loss or disturbance of geologic and paleontological resources.
Mitigation Measures
Implement Mitigation Measure GEO 9.1.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to cumulative impacts related to geology and soils would be less than significant with mitigation (Class II).

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4.7 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

This section discusses the General Plan and Zoning Update's potential impacts relating to hazards and hazardous materials. This analysis consists of a description of existing conditions of the Planning Area, a summary of the regulatory framework, and an evaluation of potential impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials.

4.7.1 Existing Conditions

The City is composed of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, public facilities, recreational, and open space land uses. Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) runs along the eastern portion of the City. As described in Chapter 4.14, Public Services, Parks, and Recreation, Atascadero is served by the Atascadero Unified School District (AUSD), which includes four elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, and an alternative education facility within the City. Additionally, there are private schools that operate independently of AUSD. The closest airports to the project site are the Paso Robles Municipal Airport approximately 10 miles northeast of the project site and the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport approximately 16 miles south of the City.

4.7.1.1 Hazardous Materials

A material is considered hazardous if it appears on a list of hazardous materials prepared by a federal, state, or local agency, or if it has characteristics defined as hazardous by such an agency. A hazardous material is a substance or combination of substances which, because of its quantity, concentration, or physical, chemical or infectious characteristics, may either (1) cause, or significantly contribute to, an increase in mortality or an increase in serious irreversible, or incapacitating reversible, illness; or (2) pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health or environment when improperly treated, stored, transported or disposed of or otherwise managed (22 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 66261.10).

A hazardous materials release site refers to any area, location, or facility where a hazardous material has been released or threatens to be released into the environment.

Transport of hazardous materials along U.S. Route (U.S.) 101 and UPRR poses the most significant hazardous material risk in the City. A hazardous material release from the highway or railroad could expose residents to significant health and safety hazards and cause substantial environmental damage. Hazardous material use by City businesses is limited and not concentrated in any specific area. Commercial hazardous material uses and storage occurs at industrial operations, manufacturing businesses (such as cabinet shops), and a propane distribution terminal.

RECORDED HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SITES

The Hazardous Waste and Substances Site (Cortese) List is a planning tool used by the state, local agencies, and developers to comply with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements related to the disclosure of information about the location of hazardous materials release sites. California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to develop an updated Cortese List on an annual basis. Various state and local government agencies are required to track and document hazardous material release information for the Cortese List. The California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) EnviroStor database tracks DTSC cleanup, permitting, enforcement, and investigation efforts at hazardous waste facilities and sites with known contamination, such as Superfund, state response, voluntary cleanup, school cleanup, school investigation, and military evaluation sites (DTSC 2024). The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) GeoTracker database contains records for sites that impact, or have the potential to impact, water in California, such as Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites, Department of Defense sites, and Cleanup Program Sites (SWRCB 2024).

Based on a query of the DTSC EnviroStor and SWRCB GeoTracker databases, there are no open hazardous materials sites within the City limits; however, there are 33 closed LUST cleanup sites, two closed school investigation sites, and one closed school cleanup site within the City (DTSC 2024; SWRCB 2024). In addition, the California Department of Conservation (CDOC) Geologic Energy Management Division Well Finder map database was queried and there are no reported active oil or gas wells recorded within the City (CDOC 2021).

PESTICIDES AND FERTILIZERS

Due to the project region's agricultural setting, it is possible that surrounding active agricultural lands use pesticides and/or fertilizers during typical operations; however, there are no significant agricultural uses within or directly adjacent to the City limits. Most agricultural lands near the City are used for cattle grazing and horse breeding. Pesticides are toxic and may be potentially hazardous to human, animal, and environmental health. Those people who use pesticides regularly or are in close proximity to an area where pesticides are regularly used may be at risk for potential health effects. The likelihood and severity of potential health effects are influenced by distance from pesticide or fertilizer application areas, and land uses farther from commercial agricultural operations are generally less likely to be affected by such uses.

The four types of exposure are through skin contact, through inhalation, orally, and/or through the eyes. Acute toxicity of a pesticide refers to the chemical's ability to cause injury to a person or animal from a single exposure, generally of short duration (Pennsylvania State University [Penn State] 2017). Any harmful effects that occur from long-term exposure to a pesticide are called chronic effects. Suspected chronic effects from exposure to certain pesticides include birth defects, toxicity to a fetus, production of benign or malignant tumors, genetic changes, blood disorders, nerve disorders, endocrine disruption, and reproduction effects (Penn State 2017). Transportation, storage, and use of pesticides in agricultural and commercial settings (e.g., commercial plant nurseries) also pose potential hazards to the public. The County of San Luis Obispo (County) Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) regulate pesticides.

Fertilizers, commonly made with nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, are used to improve soil fertility and boost crop production, but scientific studies have linked exposure to a range of health concerns. Research on both occupational and environmental exposure to inorganic fertilizers has found associations with increased risks of certain cancers such as leukemia, multiple myeloma, and some solid organ tumors, as well as neurological diseases like Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and narcolepsy, respiratory symptoms, skin lesions, and congenital disorders—including polydactyly and syndactyly. Organic fertilizers, derived from materials like animal manure or sewage sludge, have been primarily linked to higher risks of infections such as Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aure*us (MRSA), a type of staph bacteria that is resistant to common antibiotics, and diarrhea, and may also contribute to the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The complexity of these health risks is increased by frequent co-exposure to other agricultural chemicals like pesticides and by differences in exposure levels and research methods, highlighting the importance of careful management and ongoing research to better understand and reduce the potential health hazards related to fertilizer use (Tagkas et al. 2024).

NATURALLY OCCURRING ASBESTOS AND ASBESTOS-CONTAINING MATERIALS

Asbestos, a mineral fiber that occurs in rock and soil, naturally occurs in serpentine rock throughout San Luis Obispo County. In accordance with the California Air Resources Board's Air Toxics Control Measure (ATCM) for Construction, Grading, Quarrying, and Surface Mining Operations for naturally occurring asbestos (NOA), any landowner or operator must comply with the NOA ATCM prior to conducting any grading activities at sites within the green "buffer" areas identified on the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD) NOA map (SLOAPCD 2025). The SLOAPCD identifies areas in

the county that are likely to contain NOA. The southwestern portion of the City is within an NOA buffer area (SLOAPCD 2018).

In addition to NOA, asbestos may also occur in asbestos-containing material (ACM), including a variety of building construction materials for insulation and as a fire retardant. Asbestos has also been used in a wide range of manufactured goods, mostly in building materials, including roofing shingles, ceiling and floor tiles, paper products, and asbestos cement products (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [USEPA] 2021a). Exposure to asbestos may occur through the disturbance of ACM during product use, demolition work, building or home maintenance, repair, and remodeling. In general, exposure may occur only when the ACM is disturbed or damaged in some way to release particles and fibers into the air. Exposure to asbestos increases risk of developing lung disease (USEPA 2021a).

The SLOAPCD implements the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) regulation for asbestos for projects within San Luis Obispo County. Unlike lead-based paint, there is no cut-off date for the use of asbestos in building materials; therefore, all regulated structures—prior to renovation, tenant improvement, or demolition—require an ACM survey. This survey must be completed before any work is done. Depending on the nature of the project as well as the results of the survey, the project may be subject to NESHAP notification and fee requirements (SLOAPCD 2025).

AERIALLY DEPOSITED LEAD

In the 1920s, refiners began adding lead compounds to gasoline to boost octane levels and improve engine performance. Due to the addition of lead compounds in gasoline, automobile emissions resulted in aerially deposited lead (ADL) being deposited in and along roadways throughout the state. Although the use of lead in gasoline has since been prohibited, ADL-contaminated soils still exist along historically highly traveled roadsides (principal arterial roadways, freeways, or expressways) and medians and may also be found under existing road surfaces. The highest lead concentrations are usually found within 10 feet of the edge of the pavement and within the top 6 inches of the soil. In some cases, lead is as deep as 2 to 3 feet below the surface and can extend 20 feet or more from the edge of pavement (DTSC 2016).

VALLEY FEVER

Coccidioidomycosis, often referred to as San Joaquin Valley Fever or Valley Fever, is one of the most studied and oldest known fungal infections. In 2024, San Luis Obispo County reported a record 482 Valley Fever cases, nearly doubling the previous year's total and surpassing all prior annual counts (County of San Luis Obispo 2025a). Valley Fever most commonly affects people who live in hot dry areas with alkaline soil and varies with the season. This disease, which affects both humans and animals, is caused by inhalation of arthroconidia (spores) of the fungus *Coccidioides immitis* (CI). CI spores are found in the top few inches of soil and the existence of the fungus in most soil areas is temporary. The cocci fungus lives as a saprophyte in dry, alkaline soil. When weather and moisture conditions are favorable, the fungus "blooms" and forms many tiny spores that lie dormant in the soil until they are stirred up by wind, vehicles, excavation, or other ground-moving activities and become airborne. The spores become airborne when the soil is disturbed by winds, construction, farming, and soil-disturbing activities. This type of fungus is endemic to the southwestern United States, including San Luis Obispo County. The ecological factors that appear to be most conducive to the survival and replication of the fungal spores are high summer temperatures, mild winters, sparse rainfall, and alkaline, sandy soils. During drought years, the number of organisms competing with CI decreases, and the CI remains alive, but dormant. When rain finally occurs, the arthroconidia germinate and multiply more than usual because of a decreased number of other competing organisms. Later, the soil dries out in the summer and fall, and the fungi can become airborne and potentially infectious lungs (Valley Fever Center for Excellence [VFCE] 2024).

Agricultural workers, construction workers, and other people who work outdoors and who are exposed to wind and dust are more likely to contract Valley Fever. Children and adults whose hobbies or sports activities expose them to wind and dust are also more likely to contract Valley Fever. After the fungal spores have settled in the lungs, they change into a multicellular structure called a spherule. Fungal growth in the lungs occurs as the spherule grows and bursts, releasing endospores, which then develop into more spherules. About 60% of Valley Fever cases are mild and display flu-like symptoms or no symptoms at all. In those who are exposed that seek medical treatment, the most common symptoms include fatigue, cough, loss of appetite, rash, headache, and joint aches. In some cases, painful red bumps may develop on the skin. Valley Fever is not contagious and cannot be transmitted from person to person. Most who are infected will recover without treatment within 6 months and will have a lifelong immunity to the fungal spores. In severe cases—especially in those patients with rapid and extensive primary illness, those who are at risk for dissemination of disease, and those who have disseminated disease—antifungal drug therapy is used. The usual course of Valley Fever in healthy people is complete recovery within 6 months. In most cases, the body's immune response is effective, and no specific course of treatment is necessary. About 5% of cases of Valley Fever result in pneumonia (infection of the lungs), and another 5% of patients develop lung cavities after their initial infection with Valley Fever. These cavities occur most often in older adults, usually without symptoms, and about 50% of them disappear within 2 years. Occasionally, these cavities rupture, causing chest pain and difficulty breathing, and require surgical repair. Only 1% to 2% of those exposed who seek medical attention will develop a disease that disseminates (spreads) to other parts of the body other than the lungs (VFCE 2024).

4.7.1.2 Evacuation Routes

Based on information from the County Office of Emergency Services (OES), U.S. 101 and State Route (SR) 1 serve as the primary evacuation routes out of San Luis Obispo County, with state highways and local roads providing access to these main corridors. In the event of an evacuation, the California Highway Patrol, local law enforcement, and other response agencies would direct traffic along these routes (OES 2024). The City of Atascadero has identified appropriate evacuation routes and route alternatives (City of Atascadero 2008). The County recently adopted the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP), of which, the City of Atascadero is included as Annex B. This plan identifies hazard areas, evacuation routes and emergency plans for the community. Significant evacuation routes in Atascadero include SR 41 to U.S. 101 and Santa Lucia Road to U.S. 101. These two major spines connect many of the rural west side properties to the Highway and avoid the potential congestion of downtown areas. Evacuation zones in San Luis Obispo County are designated geographic areas intended to help first responders and the public quickly identify which locations need to evacuate during large-scale emergencies; each zone has a unique identifier and description, and residents can find their zone by entering their address into an online map tool (County of San Luis Obispo 2025b). Atascadero's evacuation mobile alert siren system is a European-style two-tone siren that will only be used in an emergency to alert residents within specific areas of the need to evacuate, with the message: "Hi-Lo, It's Time To Go" (Hi-Lo) (City of Atascadero 2025b).

4.7.2 Regulatory Setting

4.7.2.1 Federal

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND RECOVERY ACT

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976 (42 United States Code 6926) establishes the framework for a national system of solid waste control. RCRA is a program administered by the USEPA for the regulation of the generation, transportation, treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste. RCRA was amended in 1984 by the Hazardous and Solid Waste Act, which affirmed and extended the "cradle to grave" system of regulating hazardous wastes. Among other things, the use of certain techniques

for the disposal of some hazardous waste was specifically prohibited by the Hazardous and Solid Waste Act (USEPA 2021a).

TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL ACT

The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) of 1976 authorizes the USEPA to require reporting, record keeping, testing requirements, and restrictions related to chemical substances and/or mixtures. Food, drugs, cosmetics, and pesticides are generally excluded from TSCA. There are six primary substances that the USEPA focuses on under the TSCA, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), asbestos, radon, lead, formaldehyde, and mercury (USEPA 2016). TSCA requirements most often affect the regulation of PCBs, asbestos, and lead in federal facilities. For example, under the TSCA, asbestos regulations require that only properly trained and certified persons perform asbestos abatement activities in public or commercial buildings (USEPA 2016).

COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE, COMPENSATION, AND LIABILITY ACT

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980 provides a federal "superfund" to aid in the cleanup of uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites, as well as accidents, spills, and other emergency releases of pollutants and contaminants into the environment. The "superfund" was established by taxing the chemical and petroleum industries. Under CERCLA, the USEPA is given the power to seek out parties responsible for pollutant or contaminant release and assure their cooperation in cleanup. CERCLA also established the revision of the National Contingency Plan, which provides guidelines and procedures necessary to respond to releases and threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. In addition, the National Contingency Plan created the National Priorities List (NPL), which is the list of sites of national priority among the known releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States (USEPA 2021b).

SUPERFUND AMENDMENTS AND REAUTHORIZATION ACT

On October 17, 1986, the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986 was enacted to amend RCRA, described above, based on the USEPA's experience in administering the superfund during the program's first 6 years. The following changes were reflected by the SARA:

- The SARA stresses the importance of permanent remedies and innovative treatment technologies in cleaning up hazardous waste sites;
- Superfund actions were required to consider the standards and requirements found in other federal and state environmental laws and regulations;
- New enforcement authorities and settlement tools;
- The SARA increases state involvement in every phase of the Superfund program;
- The SARA increases the focus on human health problems posed by hazardous waste sites;
- Citizen participation was encouraged during the decision-making process regarding site cleanup; and
- The SARA increased the size of the trust fund to $8.5 billion.

In addition, the SARA required the USEPA to revise the Hazard Ranking System to ensure that the risk caused by uncontrolled hazardous waste sites is accurately assessed and reflected on the NPL (USEPA 2025). According to the USEPA, there is only one active Superfund Site in San Luis Obispo County, the Klau/Buena Vista Mercury Mines, approximately 12 miles west of Paso Robles (USEPA 2025).

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL TRANSPORTATION UNIFORM SAFETY ACT

The Hazardous Material Transportation Uniform Safety Act was amended in 1990 to clarify conflicting federal, state, and local regulations. The amendment requires the Secretary of Transportation to issue regulations for the safe transport of hazardous materials in domestic and foreign commerce. The secretary also retains the authority to designate hazardous materials as hazardous when they pose an uncontrolled threat to health, safety, or property. The act also includes provisions to encourage uniformity among different state and local highway routing regulations, develop criteria for issuance of federal permits to motor carriers of hazardous materials, and regulate the transport of radioactive materials.

FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION – PROCESS SAFETY MANAGEMENT STANDARD

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued the Process Safety Management of Highly Hazardous Chemicals standard (29 CFR Sections 1910.119 and 1926.64) to identify requirements for the management of hazards during the use of hazardous chemicals for general industry and construction activities. This standard includes requirements for preventing or minimizing the consequences of catastrophic releases of toxic, reactive, flammable, or explosive chemicals. Requirements of this standard include providing employees with information about hazardous chemicals, training employees on the operation of equipment that use hazardous materials, and employer requirements to perform a process hazard analysis.

ASBESTOS HAZARD EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT

The purpose of the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) of 1986 is to require the USEPA to evaluate the danger to human health posed by asbestos in public and commercial buildings and the means to respond to any identified danger. The AHERA establishes regulations for inspections, abatement activity, appropriate response actions, implementation of response actions, operations and maintenance programs, periodic surveillance of asbestos, transport and disposal, and management plans required for schools. The AHERA also creates accreditation programs for inspectors, management plan developers, and abatement contractors.

ASBESTOS NATIONAL EMISSION STANDARDS FOR HAZARDOUS AIR POLLUTANTS

The SLOAPCD is delegated authority by the USEPA to implement the federal asbestos NESHAP regulations specified in 40 CFR 61, Subpart M. There are specific requirements and procedures delineated in this regulation that pertain to certain demolition and renovation projects. SLOAPCD requires advance approval of all nonresidential demolitions of any kind of structure or ACM disturbance. Requirements for an owner/operator subject to this regulation include conducting a thorough inspection for the presence of asbestos by a Certified Asbestos Consultant and written notification to the SLOAPCD of the demolition or renovation at least 10 working days prior to the start of the job.

FEDERAL CLEAN AIR ACT

Regulations under the federal Clean Air Act are designed to prevent accidental releases of hazardous materials. The regulations require facilities that store minimum quantities (called threshold quantities) or greater of listed regulated substances to develop a risk management plan, including hazard assessments and response programs to prevent accidental releases of listed chemicals.

4.7.2.2 State

CORTESE LIST

The Cortese List, which is a hazardous waste and substances site list, is a planning document used by the state, local agencies, and developers to comply with the requirements of CEQA, which requires the disclosure of hazardous materials sites. California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the CalEPA to compile and annually update lists of hazardous waste sites and land designated as hazardous waste sites throughout the state. CalEPA may seek assistance from the DTSC, California Department of Health Services, SWRCB, or California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery when compiling the list (DTSC 20241). With respect to a new project, before the lead agency accepts an application for any development project as complete, the applicant must consult these lists to determine if the subject site is included on the Cortese List.

HAZARDOUS WASTE CONTROL

The California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapter 6.5 codifies the Hazardous Waste Control law, which states that generators of hazardous waste must employ technology and management practices for the safe handling, treatment, recycling, and destruction of their hazardous wastes prior to disposal. The law also creates the Hazardous Waste Management Council, who is responsible for making recommendations for a system that ensures financial liability for persons injured or otherwise affected by hazardous wastes that are treated or disposed of within their community. It is the overall intent of this law to grant those powers necessary to secure and maintain interim and final authorization for the state hazardous waste program, in accordance with the requirements of Section 3006 of RCRA (Public Law 94-580) and to implement such program in lieu of the federal program.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STANDARDS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF HAZARDOUS WASTE

Title 22 CCR Division 4.5 codifies regulations in place for the management of hazardous waste, implemented by and affecting the DTSC. DTSC is a department of CalEPA, which is the primary agency in California that regulates hazardous waste, cleans up existing contamination, and looks for ways to reduce the hazardous waste produced in California. The DTSC regulates hazardous waste in California primarily under the authority of RCRA and the California Health and Safety Code.

> A material is considered hazardous if it appears on a list of hazardous materials prepared by a federal, state, or local agency, or if it has characteristics defined as hazardous by such an agency.

Title 22 of the CCR identifies several regulations pertaining to the management of hazardous materials, and the following may be applicable to construction and/or operation of the project:

- Title 22 CCR Sections 66261.20–66261.24 classify hazardous waste as a substance that is ignitable, corrosive, reactive, or toxic.
- Title 22 CCR Section 66262.11 provides a method of determination for hazardous materials to ensure generators properly handle, store, transport, and/or dispose of hazardous materials accordingly.
- Title 22 CCR Sections 66262.30–66262.35 require proper packaging, labeling, marking, placarding, and accumulation timing of hazardous materials that are to be transported.
- Title 22 CCR Section 66262.70 states that waste pesticide, including pesticide containers or inner liners from pesticide containers, that meets the definition of hazardous waste, generated as part of

a commercial farming operation is not required to be managed in compliance with the standards in this chapter.

- Title 22 CCR Sections 66263.30-66262.32 require that in the event of a discharge of hazardous waste during transportation, the transporter shall take immediate action to protect human and environmental health, shall clean up spilled hazardous waste discharge, and shall properly report the incident.
- Title 22 CCR Sections 66268.1 et seq. identify land disposal restrictions for hazardous wastes, treatment standards for wastes, prohibitions on storage and land disposals, and potential incineration requirements.

CERTIFIED UNIFIED PROGRAM AGENCY

The Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) is overseen by CalEPA and is a program that protects residents of the state from hazardous waste and hazardous materials by ensuring local regulatory agencies consistently apply statewide standards when they issue permits, conduct inspections, and engage in enforcement activities. The CUPA consists of the following programs:

- **California Accidental Release Prevention Program:** California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapter 6.95, Article 2 identifies requirements of the California Accidental Release Prevention Program (CalARP), which is implemented by the California Governor's OES. The purpose of CalARP is to prevent accidental releases of substances that can cause serious harm to the public and the environment, to minimize the damage if releases do occur, and to satisfy community right-to-know laws. These objectives are accomplished by requiring businesses that produce, handle, process, distribute, or store certain chemicals over a threshold quantity to develop a risk management program, prepare a risk management plan, and submit the risk management plan to the local CUPA.
- **Hazardous Material Release Response Plans and Inventory Law:** California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapter 6.95, Article 1 (Sections 25500–25519) identifies requirements of the Hazardous Material Release Response Plans and Inventory Law, which requires businesses to develop a Release Response Plan for hazardous materials emergencies if they handle more than 500 pounds of solid, 55 gallons of liquid, or 200 cubic feet of compressed gas hazardous materials. In addition, the business must prepare a Hazardous Materials Inventory of all hazardous materials stored or handled at the facility. Handling and storage of hazardous materials must be conducted in a manner that promotes worker and environmental safety. Both the Release Response Plan and the Hazardous Materials Inventory must be supplied to the CUPA for the program. For the proposed project, the CUPA consists of the County of San Luis Obispo Environmental Health Services (EHS).
- **Aboveground Petroleum Storage Tank Program:** California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapter 6.67 (Sections 25270–25270.13) identifies the requirements for the Aboveground Petroleum Storage Tank Program, which is implemented by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (CAL FIRE). Under this program, tank facilities with 10,000 gallons or more of total aboveground petroleum storage capacity are inspected at least once every 3 years by a CUPA and have reporting and fee requirements, while tank facilities with an aboveground petroleum storage capacity of less than 10,000 gallons have reporting and fee requirements.
- **Underground Storage Tank Program:** California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapter 6.7 (Sections 25280–25299.8) identifies the requirements for the Underground Storage Tank Program, which is implemented by the SWRCB. The purpose of this program is to protect the public health and safety and the environment from releases of petroleum and other hazardous substances from underground storage tanks through leak prevention, cleanup, enforcement, and tank tester licensing.

PESTICIDES AND PEST CONTROL OPERATIONS

Title 3 (Food and Agriculture) CCR Division 6 (Section 6000 *et seq.*) consists of regulations for pesticide and pest control operations within California. These regulations identify program requirements, licensing requirements, use requirements, storage requirements, transportation requirements, safety requirements, and monitoring requirements for pesticide use, Specifically, Title 3 CCR Section 6600 identifies the general standards of care for pesticide use, which includes:

- Use only pest control equipment which is in good repair and safe to operate.
- Perform all pest control in a careful and effective manner.
- Use only methods and equipment suitable to ensure proper application of pesticides.
- Perform all pest control under climatic conditions suitable to ensure proper application of pesticides.
- Exercise reasonable precautions to avoid contamination of the environment.

In addition to regulations regarding pest control use, CCR Division 6, Chapter 4 (Sections 6800–6990.16) prohibits and otherwise restricts the use of pesticides that may result in damage to air quality, aquatic and marine environments, compost, and surface waters.

CALIFORNIA FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL CODE

Division 7, Chapter 2 (Section 12751 *et seq.*) of the State of California Food and Agricultural Code provides regulations for the use of pesticides in the state. These regulations include recommended uses, worker safety requirements, contamination prevention, and other requirements to minimize or avoid negative impacts to health due to improper use of pesticides. Specifically, Section 12972 requires that the use of pesticides shall not result in substantial drift to non-target areas. Section 12977 allows the Agricultural Commissioner to enforce this provision. In addition, Section 12982 states that the local health officer has the right to investigate any health hazard from pesticide use and take necessary action, in coordination with the Agricultural Commissioner, to abate the hazard.

The DPR was officially established in 1991. Prior to that, the regulation of pesticide use in California was primarily the responsibility of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The DPR currently oversees all aspects of pesticide registration, use, enforcement, and safety in California.

SITE-SPECIFIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Under Article 1, Subchapter 2, Chapter 3.2 (California Occupational Safety and Health Administration), Division 1 (Department of Industrial Relations), Title 8 (Industrial Relations), employers must disclose potential workplace hazards and develop site-specific health and safety plans for workers and the workplace. In addition, workers that may potentially be exposed to hazardous materials in their workplace must be notified of exposure so that they are aware of workplace hazards.

CALIFONIA FIRE CODE

The California Fire Code (CFC), outlined in Title 24 CCR Chapter 9, is an integrated code derived from the International Fire Code. It sets forth the minimum requirements, aligned with nationally recognized best practices, to protect public health, safety, and welfare from fire, explosions, and hazardous conditions in both new and existing buildings and premises. The CFC also aims to ensure the safety of firefighters and emergency responders during emergencies. It uses a hazard classification system to determine necessary protective measures for fire safety and life protection, which may include construction standards, property line separations, and specialized equipment. Compliance with these safety measures is enforced through a permit system based on hazard classification.

Specifically, CFC Chapter 8 deals with fire-related interior finishes, Chapter 9 covers fire protection systems, and Chapter 10 addresses fire-related means of egress. Additionally, Chapter 49 includes regulations for vegetation and fuel management to maintain clearances around structures. These standards set the minimum requirements for safeguarding buildings in Fire Hazard Severity Zones within State Responsibility Areas, Local Responsibility Areas, and Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) fire zones.

CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE

Wildland-Urban Interface Building Standards

On September 20, 2007, the Building Standards Commission approved emergency regulations from the Office of the State Fire Marshal, amending the Title 24 CCR Part 2, known as the 2007 California Building Code (CBC). CBC provisions govern the construction, alteration, relocation, expansion, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, maintenance, removal, and demolition of every building or structure, including any connected or attached appurtenances, across California. These codes incorporate ignition-resistant construction standards specifically for the WUI areas, employing a hazard classification system to determine necessary protective measures for fire safety and life protection. Chapter 7A of the CBC (Part 2) specifically addresses materials and construction methods for exterior wildfire exposure.

The Atascadero's WUI designation for most of its area further emphasizes the challenges posed by the proximity of residential development to fire-prone wildlands. The definitions and recommendations for WUI areas are further elaborated in the County MJHMP 2025–2030 (County of San Luis Obispo 2025b).

4.7.2.3 Local

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

The City addresses hazards and hazardous materials issues through implementation of adopted City of Atascadero General Plan 2025 policies and programs. The City's Safety and Noise Element was adopted in 2002 and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to minimize risk associated with the loss of life, property, and economic well-being as a result of disasters.

The Safety and Noise Element establishes comprehensive goals and policies to protect the community from a range of hazards, including natural disasters, flooding, dam inundation, wildland fires, geologic and seismic hazards, and hazardous materials. The City emphasizes emergency preparedness through coordinated response programs, public education, and maintenance of critical facilities and evacuation routes. Policies address reducing risks from flooding and dam failure by enforcing development standards and maintaining emergency plans. Fire safety is promoted by regulating development in high-risk areas, ensuring adequate infrastructure and education, and requiring fire-resistant construction. Geologic and seismic hazards are managed through public awareness, updated hazard mapping, and strict building requirements for new developments in risk-prone areas. Additionally, the City works to minimize exposure to hazardous materials, radiation, and unsafe structures through regulatory oversight, interagency coordination, and ongoing public outreach, all aimed at safeguarding residents, property, and the environment.

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

The County MJHMP is designed to reduce injury, loss of life, property damage, and interruption of essential services resulting from natural hazards. The County recently adopted an update to the MJHMP (2025 MJHMP). The 2025 MJHMP aims to provide practical, meaningful, attainable, and cost-effective mitigation solutions to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters and other hazards. The 2025 MJHMP is

applicable to the County and to its municipalities, community services districts, and special districts. The MJHMP will allow the region to mitigate the impacts of hazards based on current and expected future conditions, creating a more resilient county in the face of increasingly severe, frequent, and costly disasters.

Annex B of the MJHMP serves as a comprehensive resource for understanding and managing risks in the City of Atascadero. Included in the 2025 MJHMP, Annex B builds on previous planning efforts and is intended to integrate hazard mitigation strategies into the City's General Plan, Municipal Code, and Fire Department Master Plan. It identifies the full range of natural and human-caused hazards facing Atascadero, such as wildfire, flood, drought, landslide, and hazardous materials. Annex B assesses vulnerable populations, critical facilities, infrastructure, and assets at risk, and reviews the City's regulatory, administrative, fiscal, and outreach capabilities for hazard mitigation. It also outlines opportunities for improvement and presents a prioritized list of mitigation actions designed to strengthen local resilience and reduce future risk.

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The County EHS provides a CUPA Program, based on CalEPA's CUPA program, for hazardous materials and waste. Under the County's CUPA Program, the following programs are monitored and enforced:

- **Aboveground Petroleum Storage Tank Program**: The purpose of this program is to protect public health and the environment from a potential source of surface and groundwater contamination by regulating aboveground storage tanks containing hazardous materials. Program objectives are accomplished through inspection, plan review, incident investigation, enforcement, public education, and assistance to industry.
- **Underground Storage Tank Program**: The intent of the identified program is to protect public and environmental health from a potential source of groundwater contamination by regulating underground storage tanks containing hazardous materials. This is accomplished through inspection, plan check, incident investigation, enforcement, public education, and assistance to industry.
- **California Accidental Release Prevention Program**: As described above, the purpose of the CalARP is to protect the public health and the environment from the uncontrolled release of extremely hazardous substances by requiring businesses to establish programs to reduce the risk of an accidental hazardous substance release and manage emergency operations in the event of a release.
- **Hazardous Materials Business Plan**: As described above, the purpose of this program is to protect public health, emergency responders, and the environment from the release of hazardous materials at a regulated facility by ensuring proper handling and storage, and to provide timely and accurate information to emergency response personnel and to the public.
- **Hazardous Waste Generator Program**: This program protects the public health and the environment from the release of hazardous wastes by regulating industries that generate hazardous waste. This is accomplished through inspection, surveillance, incident investigation, assistance to industry, enforcement, and public education.
- **Household Hazardous Waste Disposal**: This program regulates the release of hazardous wastes stored and generated by the general public by providing public education as well as opportunities to the general public to dispose of common household hazardous wastes in a manner that prevents contamination to the environment. This program is implemented by the San Luis Obispo County Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA).

ASBESTOS AIRBORNE TOXIC CONTROL MEASURE FOR CONSTRUCTION, GRADING, QUARRYING, AND SURFACE MINING OPERATIONS

CARB identifies asbestos as a toxic air contaminant. In San Luis Obispo County, asbestos naturally occurs in serpentine rock throughout the county. According to CARB's ATCM for Construction, Grading, Quarrying, and Surface Mining Operations, prior to any grading activities at a site identified as having the potential for NOA, the owner or operator will be required to comply with the applicable sections contained in the NOA ATCM (SLOAPCD 2025). For those projects within an area identified as having the potential for NOA, the following requirements apply:

- For grading projects qualifying for NOA ATCM exemption, an NOA exemption form must be submitted with geologic evaluation.
- For grading projects in serpentine rock, less than 1 acre, a project form with geologic evaluation must be submitted and dust control measures shall be included during grading.
- For grading projects in serpentine rock, more than 1 acre, a project form with geologic evaluation must be submitted, and an asbestos dust mitigation plan must be submitted for approval to be implemented during grading.

4.7.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on hazards and hazardous materials if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.

b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.

d) Be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.

e) For a project within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.

f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.7.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.7.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

The project's potential impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials were evaluated by use of the environmental checklist questions included in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, included in Section 4.9.3, *Thresholds of Significance*. Potential impacts were evaluated based on a comprehensive review of the proposed project and all associated components, applicable database information, and all applicable regulatory requirements.

4.7.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

IMPACT HAZ-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CREATE A SIGNIFICANT HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC OR THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH THE ROUTINE TRANSPORT, USE OR DISPOSAL OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development associated with community buildout and the redevelopment of urban areas, including demolition and construction pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would include residential, mixed-use, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses. Hazardous materials would continue to be used, transported, and handled in various settings. In residential areas, these materials typically include common household cleaning products, paints, solvents, fertilizers, and pesticides, which generally do not occur in quantities that would pose a significant risk to public health, safety, or the environment. Commercial, industrial, and agricultural operations may involve the use, storage, transport, or generation of hazardous materials for purposes such as manufacturing, research, maintenance, or crop management. In addition, demolition occurring as a result of implementation of the 2045 General Plan/Zoning Code Update has the potential to release lead particles, asbestos fibers, and/or other hazardous materials to the air. These activities would be subject to federal, state, and local regulations, including requirements for the safe transport of hazardous materials governed by RCRA and TSCA, and oversight by agencies such as the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and DTSC, proper disposal and removal of hazardous substances, air monitoring, and other protective measures during demolition activities when lead-based materials or ACMs are present or suspected.

Nonresidential developments requiring hazardous materials are regulated through permitting systems managed by local, regional, and state agencies, ensuring that the use, storage, and disposal of such materials are monitored and routinely updated according to the type and risk of the material involved. Where contamination is suspected, applicants are required to investigate and remediate sites in accordance with regulatory standards. The San Luis Obispo County EHS, acting as the CUPA, is responsible for implementing and enforcing hazardous materials regulations in Atascadero, including additional requirements outlined in local ordinances.

Future development introducing hazardous materials or generating hazardous waste would continue to be regulated under these stringent federal, state, regional, and local laws, minimizing the potential for significant environmental or public health impacts. Furthermore, the Atascadero 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, including the *Land Use and Community Form Element* and *Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element* includes goals and policies that require best practices for hazardous materials management as part of the development permitting process. If adopted, these goals and policies would further reduce the potential for exposure to hazardous materials from routine use, transport, or disposal,

minimizing potential hazards to the public and the environment. These goals and policies include the following:

- **Goal LU-4:** A dedicated, focused area for industrial activity that minimizes impact on nearby residential neighborhoods and protected open space areas.
    - **Policy LU-4.2: Research and Development.** Transition away from heavy industrial and storage uses in favor of light industrial uses.
        - **Action A:** Prohibit future uses solely devoted to outdoor storage in industrial areas.
        - **Action B:** Adopt development standards that focus on creating buildings and spaces that can be adapted over time and respond to changing trends. Consider a form based code for new development in the Industrial Zone.
    - **Policy LU-4.3: Buffer Industrial Uses.** Provide buffers between industrial and residential uses. Focus heavy industrial sites away from residential uses.
        - A**ction A:** Establish standards for new industrial uses adjacent to existing residential and commercial uses, and standards for new residential and commercial uses adjacent to existing industrial uses.
        - **Action B:** Develop standards for the interface between industrial development and adjacent creeks and rivers. Consider requirements for public trails and access where appropriate.
- **Goal SEP-3:** Reduced potential for harm to individuals and the environment due to the presence of hazardous materials
    - **Policy SEP-3.1: Hazardous Substance Exposure.** Reduce the potential for exposure to humans and the environment from hazardous substances.
        - **Action A:** Coordinate with the County to ensure that hazardous materials used in business and industry be used, handled, transported, and stored in accordance with federal, state, county, and local regulations.
        - **Action B:** Work with Caltrans to require all transport of hazardous materials to follow approved routes.
        - **Action D:** Ensure that regional routes for transportation of hazardous materials are identified and unsafe conditions comprehensively addressed with partner agencies.
    - **Policy SEP-3.2: Pesticide Exposure.** Reduce the potential of pesticide exposure to humans and the environment.
        - **Action A:** Ensure that emergency first responders and dispatch operators know to contact the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office or State Poison Control for technical assistance in the event of a pesticide-related emergency.
        - **Action B:** Minimize use and continue to train City staff on the safe application and handling of chemical-based pesticides at City parks and other City facilities.
    - **Policy SEP-3.3: Oil and Gas Spills.** Minimize potential hazards and spills from oil and gas pipelines and underground storage tanks.
        - **Action A:** Work with pipeline owners and operators and appropriate county and state agencies to develop adequate prevention and cleanup strategies.
        - **Action B:** Coordinate with property owners and the San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Department to abate leaking underground storage tanks and monitor existing tanks for leakage.

- **Policy SEP-3.4: Radiation Exposure Reduction.** Support San Luis Obispo County efforts to maintain a high level of radiation emergency preparedness.
  - **Action A:** Coordinate with the County and PG&E to review and update information about emergency preparedness and evacuations.
  - **Action B:** Coordinate with the County and PG&E to provide information about the Diablo Canyon Power Plant.

Based on ongoing compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations, and implementation of the goals, policies, and actions included in the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Update, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact HAZ-1
The project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to the creation of a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

IMPACT HAZ-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CREATE A SIGNIFICANT HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC OR THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH REASONABLY FORESEEABLE UPSET AND ACCIDENT CONDITIONS INVOLVING THE RELEASE OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INTO THE ENVIRONMENT. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Update would include residential, mixed-use, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses. Activities related to construction, such as site preparation, excavation, and building demolition, may disturb and release hazardous substances like fuels, oils, paints, contaminated soils, ACMs, or lead-based paint into the environment. Once construction is completed, the ongoing use of these properties may involve hazardous materials in everyday operations, such as cleaning agents, fertilizers, and pesticides. Furthermore, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses permitted under the 2045 General Plan may involve the handling, storage, or generation of hazardous materials for purposes like research, manufacturing, or agricultural production.

Because these activities could involve hazardous materials, there is potential for upset or accident conditions—such as spills, leaks, or improper handling during transport, storage, or use—that could result in the release of hazardous substances into the environment and potentially cause injury, property damage,

or environmental contamination. Although the risk of upset and accident conditions involving hazardous materials cannot be completely eliminated, it can be reduced to a manageable level through adherence to applicable regulations and implementation of established safety and response procedures.

All future development in Atascadero is required to adhere to federal, state, and local regulations as part of the City's approval process. Construction crews would be required to comply with CCR Title 22, which regulates the use, storage, and transport of hazardous materials and California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapter 6.95, which requires the preparation and implementation of a hazardous material release response plan and the preparation of a hazardous materials inventory for materials used and stored at the site. Future development within the City would also be required to comply with hazardous materials management protocols, standards, and prohibitions outlined in Atascadero Municipal Code Section 7-13 for stormwater pollution prevention, and the use of best management practices detailed in Chapter 4-8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, to protect water resources. In addition, the goals and policies of the 2045 General Plan Update, as referenced in impact discussion *Impact HAZ-1*, above, would minimize risks to public health and the environment associated with the accidental release of hazardous materials. Based on ongoing compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations and the implementation of the goals, policies, and actions identified in the 2045 General Plan Update, potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact HAZ-2
The project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to the creation of a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment would be less than significant (Class III).

c) Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

IMPACT HAZ-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT EMIT HAZARDOUS EMISSIONS OR HANDLE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, SUBSTANCES, OR WASTE WITHIN ONE-QUARTER MILE OF AN EXISTING OR PROPOSED SCHOOL. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

As discussed in Section 4.7.1, *Existing Conditions*, the AUSD has public schools throughout the City and there are several other private schools dispersed throughout the City. Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update could involve the use, storage, or handling of hazardous materials during construction or operation within 0.25 mile of existing or planned schools.

Siting of new school facilities within the Planning Area would be subject to California Education Code (Section 17210 et seq.), which outlines the requirements for siting near or on known or suspected hazardous materials sites, or near facilities that emit hazardous air emissions, handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste.

As discussed under Impact HAZ-1 and Impact HAZ-2, although some future development may reasonably be expected to handle hazardous materials or generate hazardous emissions, all storage, use, and handling of such materials would be required to comply with federal, state, and local regulations. These requirements, outlined in Section 4.7.2, *Regulatory Setting*, and would be reinforced by 2045 General Plan Update goals and policies that minimize risks associated with hazardous materials (as detailed under Impact HAZ-1). Compliance with these regulations and implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update goals, policies, and actions would effectively minimize the risks associated with exposure of sensitive receptors to hazardous materials or emissions. As a result, potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact HAZ-3 (Class III)
The project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to the emission hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school would be less than significant (Class III).

d) Would the project be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

IMPACT HAZ-4: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY ALLOW FOR DEVELOPMENT LOCATED ON A SITE WHICH IS INCLUDED ON A LIST OF HAZARDOUS MATERIAL SITES COMPILED PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 65962.5 AND, AS A RESULT, MAY CREATE A SIGNIFICANT HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC OR THE ENVIRONMENT. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The Cortese List, maintained by CalEPA pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5, is used for planning and CEQA compliance. DTSC EnviroStor and SWRCB GeoTracker track sites with known contamination and cleanup activities. Recent queries of these databases indicate there are no open hazardous materials sites within Atascadero; however, the City contains 33 closed LUST cleanup sites, two closed school investigation sites, and one closed school cleanup site, all remediated to the satisfaction of the responsible agencies (DTSC 2024; SWRCB 2024). Additionally, there are no active oil or gas wells reported in the City (CDOC 2021).

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would include residential, mixed-use, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses. Some future development may occur on properties listed in hazardous materials databases. As discussed in impact analyses HAZ-1 through HAZ-3, construction activities such as grading, excavation, and demolition could disturb residual hazardous substances in soil or building materials, potentially resulting in environmental release or exposure to contaminants such as ACM or lead-based paint. Routine operations of newly developed properties may also involve the use of hazardous materials for maintenance purposes.

All future development in Atascadero would be required to comply with applicable federal, state, regional, and local regulations governing the handling, transport, disposal, and use of hazardous materials. The 2045 General Plan Update includes specific goals and policies to minimize environmental and public health impacts from hazardous materials (as detailed under Impact HAZ-1). For sites with known contamination, project-specific compliance with the state and federal regulations described in section 4.7.2, *Regulatory Setting*, would be required. These regulations collectively govern the generation, handling, transport, storage, disposal, abatement, and emergency response for hazardous materials and waste, as well as requirements for site-specific health and safety plans, hazardous material inventories, and reporting.

General Plan 2045 Policy S-P4.3, as referenced in impact discussion HAZ-1, requires site-specific evaluation for locations with known contamination. Phase I or Phase II hazardous materials studies would be required to be completed during project design for each identified site, resulting in tailored mitigation measures such as environmental site management plans. Adherence to all applicable laws and 2045 General Plan Update policies would effectively minimize potential hazards to public health and the environment. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact HAZ-4
The project would potentially be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, may create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to the project's location on a site which is included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment, would be less than significant (Class III).

e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

IMPACT HAZ-5: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN A SAFETY HAZARD OR EXCESSIVE NOISE FOR PEOPLE RESIDING OR WORKING IN THE PROJECT AREA. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The City of Atascadero is not within an adopted airport land use plan area nor is it within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport. The nearest airport, Paso Robles Municipal Airport, is approximately 10 miles from the City limits and does not encompass any portion of the Planning Area within its Airport Influence Area. As a result, there are no land use or building height limitations within the City that would be subject an airport land use compatibility plan, and the potential for airport-related hazards or excessive noise affecting residents or workers within the Planning Area would be *less than significant*.

Impact HAZ-5
The project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to the project resulting in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area would be less than significant (Class III).

f) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

IMPACT HAZ-6: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT IMPAIR IMPLEMENTATION OF OR PHYSICALLY INTERFERE WITH AN ADOPTED EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN OR EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Based on information from the County OES, U.S. 101 is identified as a primary evacuation route for the region (County of San Luis Obispo 2025c). The City of Atascadero is directly served by U.S. 101, which provides convenient access for emergency evacuation purposes. Other major roadways in the City, including El Camino Real, State Route 41, Curbaril Avenue, and Traffic Way, would also serve as important transportation corridors during an emergency evacuation depending on the location and nature of the emergency.

Emergency response and evacuation planning in the City is guided by federal, state, and local regulatory frameworks and planning documents that establish requirements for hazardous materials management, emergency response coordination, and hazard mitigation. Federal and state regulations require facilities that handle hazardous materials above specified thresholds to prepare risk management plans, release response plans, and hazardous materials inventories to support coordinated emergency response and protect public health and safety. At the local level, the City of Atascadero General Plan and the County of San Luis Obispo MJHMP identify local hazards, vulnerable populations, and critical facilities and establish strategies to reduce risk. These plans require coordination among emergency service providers, identification and maintenance of evacuation routes and critical infrastructure, and implementation of hazard mitigation and emergency response procedures to support effective evacuation and emergency response. San Luis Obispo County also maintains designated evacuation zones that allow emergency officials to rapidly communicate Evacuation Warnings and Evacuation Orders to specific geographic areas during large-scale emergencies, enabling residents and responders to quickly identify affected areas and respond accordingly (County of San Luis Obispo 2025c).

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Update would include residential, mixed-use, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses consistent with the land use designations and growth projections identified in the 2045 General Plan. Population growth, employment increases, and associated vehicle trips would incrementally increase traffic volumes on local roadways and regional routes over the course of the planning period, which could affect travel times during an emergency evacuation. Future development would be subject to review by the City

of Atascadero Public Works Department and Fire Department for compliance with state and local standards for emergency access. In addition, the 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policies and actions to minimize impacts to the City's emergency response programs and evacuation plans:

- **Goal SEP-1:** A high level of protection from and minimized risk to life in the event of a fire.
    - **Policy SEP-1.1: New Development Risk Reduction.** Promote new development in areas of the community that have lower risk of wildfire hazards and ensure new development in higher risk areas are consistent with Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) standards.
        - **Action C:** Review new development to ensure adequate access for emergency vehicles and compliance with Fire and Building Codes.
        - **Action F:** Ensure at least two evacuation routes for all new residential developments, with roads wide enough for emergency vehicles.
        - **Action I:** Prohibit increased land use densities in WUI areas, such as those allowed by state laws and density bonus laws, to minimize risk of exposure to persons in the event of wildfires.
    - **Policy SEP-1.2: Fire Impact Reduction.** Implement programs and policies that minimize risks to life and property posed by fires.
        - **Action C:** Consider updating the Zoning Code to require conditions on land uses that serve mobility-limited persons, such as assisted care facilities or small group homes, to prepare and maintain detailed evacuation plans in the event of wildfires and other catastrophic events.
    - **Policy SEP-1.3: Wildfire Risk Reduction.** Increase wildfire resiliency using required and voluntary risk reduction regulations and strategies.
        - **Action D:** Identify and implement evacuation procedures in coordination with the City's Emergency Plan.
        - **Action G:** Identify residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes identified and pursue grant funding opportunities to construct emergency access roads.
- **Goal SEP-2:** Flood prevention and reduction strategies that limit damage to natural areas while safeguarding property and lives
    - **Policy SEP-2.7: Dam Failure.** Minimize the risk of dam failure.
        - **Action C:** Maintain a dam failure evacuation plan to guide public officials that includes use of the emergency alert system to notify the public.
- **Goal SEP-3:** Reduced potential for harm to individuals and the environment due to the presence of hazardous materials
    - **Policy SEP-3.4: Radiation Exposure Reduction.** Support San Luis Obispo County efforts to maintain a high level of radiation emergency preparedness.
        - **Action A:** Coordinate with the County and PG&E to review and update information about emergency preparedness and evacuations.
- **Goal SEP-6:** A community well prepared to respond to and recover from natural and human-caused disasters
    - **Policy SEP-6.1: Emergency Preparedness and City Response:** Train City staff, coordinate with regional agencies, and implement programs to be prepared for and capable of responding to all emergency events.
        - **Action A:** Maintain and periodically update the City's Emergency Operations Plan.

- **Action B:** Coordinate with San Luis Obispo County, adjacent cities, special districts, and unincorporated communities to prepare and regularly update joint emergency response and disaster response plans.
- **Action C:** Consider hazard mitigation and climate resilience actions and strategies with the City's Capital Improvement Program and annual budgeting process.
- **Action D:** Provide required training to ensure the readiness of response teams and Emergency Operations Center staff.
- **Action E:** Follow statewide Standardized Emergency Management System procedures.
- **Action F:** Consider planned evacuation routes with roadway improvement projects and incorporate identified elements as feasible.
- **Action G:** Provide ongoing emergency preparedness training for all City staff.

Although buildout under the 2045 General Plan may incrementally increase the number of residents in the City over the course of the planning period, the City's proximity to U.S. 101 and other regional roadways generally ensures that efficient evacuation routes are available, projected long-term growth rates in the City and region remain relatively modest and consistent with historical trends, and future development projects would be evaluated for consistency with applicable emergency plans and policies as well as the 2045 General Plan policies identified above.

The 2045 General Plan also includes policies and actions to improve regional circulation and emergency access, including enhancements to local collector streets and intersections. Further discussion of roadway improvements and circulation is provided in Section 4.17, *Transportation*, and additional information regarding emergency access in the event of wildfire is included in Section 4.20, *Wildfire*.

Compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations and implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update goals, policies, and actions would effectively reduce impacts to implementation of the City's adopted emergency response plans and emergency evacuation procedures. As a result, potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact HAZ-6
The project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to the impairment of implementation of or the physical interference with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan would be less than significant (Class III).

g) Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

IMPACT HAZ-7: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY EXPOSE PEOPLE OR STRUCTURES, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, TO A SIGNIFICANT RISK OF LOSS, INJURY OR DEATH INVOLVING WILDLAND FIRES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Portions of the City, particularly those near open space or undeveloped areas, may be subject to increased wildfire risk due to the region's climate, vegetation, and topography. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Update does not directly authorize or facilitate specific development or construction activities. Instead, it provides a framework for future growth and land use that would be implemented through project-specific review and permitting. If the 2045 General Plan Update is adopted, all future development projects would be subject to requirements set forth by the City, County, and state agencies for fire safety, defensible space, and emergency access and evaluated for consistency with the goals, policies, and actions set forth in the 2045 General Plan Update. Applicable regulatory requirements include compliance with the CBC and Fire Code, which mandate fire-resistant construction materials, adequate water supply for firefighting, and access for emergency vehicles.

The 2045 General Plan Update Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element contains goals and policies that would reduce risks to public health and safety related to wildfire, including limiting development in high fire hazard severity zones, requiring fire-safe landscaping and building materials, maintaining evacuation routes, and promoting public education on wildfire preparedness. For additional information and analysis regarding the project effects and policies related to wildfire, see Section 4-16, *Wildfire*. The City coordinates with regional agencies and participates in the County MJHMP, which prioritizes wildfire mitigation strategies and emergency response planning. Additionally, the City's existing evacuation maps and alert systems, such as the Hi-Lo evacuation siren, ensure residents are informed and prepared in the event of a wildfire emergency.

Given these regulatory protections, planning measures, and the requirement for project-level review, the 2045 General Plan would minimize risks associated with exposure of people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. Therefore, impacts related to exposure to significant risk involving wildfires would be *less than significant*.

Impact HAZ-7
The project would potentially expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to potentially exposing people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires would be less than significant (Class III).

4.7.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT HAZ-8: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACT RELATED TO HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Existing and foreseeable future development within the City of Atascadero and surrounding region is described in Chapter 3, *Environmental Setting*. Although the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Update does not directly authorize construction of any specific development projects, it establishes a framework for future growth that would be implemented through project-specific discretionary review and environmental analysis. Any development project, whether under existing or future policies, may temporarily expose additional groups of people and the environment to construction-related hazards due to the use, storage, and transport of hazardous materials because demolition, grading, new construction, and the transportation associated with these activities tends to expose hazards to nearby residents.

Site-specific hazards associated with individual development projects would be identified and addressed through the City's permitting process and required environmental review. The handling, transport, and disposal of toxic or hazardous substances would be regulated and conducted in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements, including California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapter 6.95, and conditions established through County-issued permits. Compliance with these regulations would minimize cumulative impacts associated with hazardous materials. In addition, the County MJHMP provides a regional framework for reducing risks associated with natural and human-caused hazards, including hazardous materials incidents. The plan applies to the County and its municipalities and includes Annex B for the City, which identifies local hazards, vulnerable populations, critical facilities, and infrastructure, and establishes mitigation actions to reduce hazard related risks. The 2045 General Plan requires future development to adhere to all relevant standards and regulations, ensuring that cumulative effects related to hazardous materials use are less than cumulatively considerable.

As discussed under Impact HAZ-6 above, community buildout pursuant to the General Plan would result in an incremental increase in vehicles on local roadways, which could potentially affect public egress during an evacuation. Population growth in the City and the broader San Luis Obispo County region has historically occurred at relatively modest rates, generally at or below approximately 1% annually, and future growth is expected to occur gradually over time. As a result, increases in traffic volumes on regional corridors, such as U.S. 101 and connecting arterials, would occur incrementally and would not be expected to substantially alter the role of these roadways as primary evacuation routes. In addition, regional transportation planning conducted by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments evaluates long-term growth and travel demand to ensure that roadway infrastructure and circulation planning can accommodate projected population and employment increases.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies and actions to improve regional circulation, maintain and enhance emergency access, and coordinate with the County OES. Future development would be required to provide adequate public and emergency entry and exit points and would be reviewed and approved by the City's Public Works Department and Fire Department to ensure compliance with state and local standards for emergency ingress and egress. Additionally, all future development projects within the City would be subject to environmental review to confirm consistency with applicable emergency response and evacuation plans. Therefore, the contribution of the 2045 General Plan Update toward cumulative effects related to hazardous materials and emergency response/evacuation would be *less than significant*.

Impact HAZ-8
The project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact related to hazards and hazardous materials.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to a cumulatively considerable impact related to hazards and hazardous materials would be less than significant (Class III).

4.8 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

This section discusses the existing water resources within the Planning Area and evaluates the potential environmental effects of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update related to hydrology, water quality, drainage, groundwater, impervious surface area, and flooding. A summary of the relevant regulatory framework and existing conditions is provided below, followed by an analysis of potential impacts and cumulative impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project. Potential effects regarding wetlands and waters of the United States (WOTUS) are discussed in Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*.

4.8.1 Existing Conditions

4.8.1.1 Regional Hydrology

WATERSHEDS

A watershed is a land area that catches rain or snow and channels it into a marsh, stream, river, lake, ocean, or groundwater. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) categorizes the state's surface watersheds into ten distinct hydrologic regions. Atascadero is situated in the Central Coast hydrologic region, which covers approximately 11,300 square miles along the Pacific coast of Central California. Watersheds provide drinking water and habitats for wildlife (DWR 2003). The Atascadero watershed includes Atascadero Creek, Graves Creek, and numerous other small tributaries of the Salinas River, which serves as the primary water source for the City. The watershed originates at the top of Cuesta Ridge and is bounded by the Santa Lucia mountain range to the west and the La Panza mountain range to the east (Atascadero Mutual Water Company [AMWC] 2025).

The City of Atascadero is on the north side of the Atascadero Creek Watershed boundary, as shown in Figure 4.8-1. Additional features within the watershed include two quarry sites, Atascadero Lake, and the City's wastewater treatment plant. The average rainfall within the Atascadero Creek Watershed is 21 to 37 inches. The average summer temperatures range from 52 degrees Fahrenheit (ºF) to 92ºF and the average winter temperatures range from 34ºF to 60ºF. The dominant land use within the Atascadero Creek watershed is agriculture (County of San Luis Obispo 2014).

4.8.1.1.1 GROUNDWATER

Atascadero is on the edge of the Atascadero Groundwater Basin, which is identified as Subbasin No. 3-004.11 by the DWR (Atascadero Groundwater Sustainability Agency 2022). In 2016, this subbasin was subdivided from the Paso Robles Area Subbasin as the Rinconada Fault was proven to be a significant barrier to groundwater flow. As shown in Figure 4.8-2, the Atascadero Basin covers approximately 19,800 acres and stretches northward along the Salinas River from Santa Margarita to the southern boundary of Paso Robles. It consists of flatlands with elevations ranging from about 700 to 1,400 feet above mean sea level and is bordered to the west by the southern Coast Ranges of the Santa Lucia Range. The basin receives an average annual precipitation of 13 to 23 inches, with the Salinas River being the primary surface water feature within the area (Atascadero Groundwater Sustainability Agency 2022).

Prior to its subdivision from the Paso Robles Area Subbasin, the Atascadero Basin was required to comply as a high priority basin. The Atascadero Groundwater Basin has since been designated as a very low priority basin by DWR and therefore no longer required to adhere to a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) in accordance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

Groundwater has been and will continue to be an important component of the City's water supply. AMWC has provided water service since establishment of the Colony in 1913. AMWC pumps the groundwater from its 15 wells into the distribution system. The company carefully monitors groundwater levels and quality to ensure a reliable and safe supply for residents and businesses.

Groundwater Quality

The groundwater quality in the Atascadero Basin is generally suitable for both drinking water and agricultural purposes, with no significant changes observed since 2016. The GSP identifies five constituents of concern (COCs): total dissolved solids (TDS), sodium, chloride, nitrate, and boron, which have shown steady concentration trends. This plan focuses regional efforts on actions and management strategies aimed at maintaining and enhancing water quality and minimizing negative impacts. Regional efforts include monitoring and reporting to ensure that individual actions undertaken by jurisdictions align with the plan; therefore, actions are not expected to degrade groundwater quality, and any changes will be documented in future reports (GEI Consultants, Inc. 2025).

4.8.1.1.1 SURFACE WATER

Surface water features in Atascadero consist of approximately 27 miles of creeks and rivers, including Atascadero Creek, Boulder Creek, Graves Creek, Paloma Creek, and the Salinas River. The Salinas River and Atascadero Lake are the primary surface water features within the City. The Salinas River loses water to the shallow aquifer during most of the year as it is an ephemeral water body. Although only a limited number of parcels are directly adjacent to the Salinas River, a hydraulic connection exists between the river and the main creeks, along with their smaller tributaries. As a result, any factors affecting surface water quality in the Paloma, Atascadero, and Graves Creek watersheds may also influence the surface water quality of the Salinas River which can affect the quality of the underlying groundwater (Monsoon Consultants 2018).

The other primary surface water feature that plays a vital role in the Planning Area is Atascadero Lake. Atascadero Lake is approximately 1.25 miles southwest of the intersection of U.S. 101 and SR 41. It is approximately 30.5 acres, with an average depth of 6.85 feet and a maximum depth of 13 feet (City of Atascadero 2025b). Prior to being a perennial lake, it was a low-lying area fed by rainfall and runoff that naturally filled with water then receded during the summer heat. This natural basin was engineered into a larger lake as early as 1913 by the founder of Atascadero, E.G. Lewis (City of Atascadero 2025b). Water has historically been diverted from Atascadero Creek under a Water Board permit to help maintain water lake levels. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) stocks the lake with trout on a regular basis for recreational fishing. There have been recent efforts by community groups to maintain water quality and water levels in the lake. It is an important recreational area for the community and is regularly stocked with trout for recreational fishing opportunities.

Surface waters within the City of Atascadero are part of the Salinas River watershed and include the Salinas River, Atascadero Creek, Graves Creek, Paloma Creek, and numerous smaller tributaries that ultimately drain to Monterey Bay. These waterways consist primarily of intermittent creeks that flow during the rainy season and convey runoff from surrounding hillsides and developed areas before discharging to the Salinas River along the city's eastern boundary. Riparian corridors along these creeks support native vegetation and provide ecological habitat, although some reaches have been influenced by urban development and historical land uses. Surface water quality in the City generally reflects conditions typical of developed Central Coast watersheds, with seasonal variability and localized influences from stormwater runoff, erosion, and watershed activities. Under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act (CWA), Atascadero Creek is listed as impaired for *E. coli*, fecal coliform, and low dissolved oxygen, and a reach of the Salinas River near Atascadero is listed for chloride, sodium, and pH. These waterways also contribute to groundwater recharge within the Atascadero Subbasin and the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin, making the condition of

surface waters an important component of the region's hydrologic system (City of Atascadero 2018; MIG 2024).

FLOOD CONDITIONS

Flood zones identified on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are identified as a Special Flood Hazard Area. A Special Flood Hazard Area is defined as the area that will be inundated by a flood event having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1%-annual-chance flood is also referred to as the base flood or 100-year flood. "Floodways" are areas within the Special Flood Hazard Area that include the channel of a river/watercourse and adjacent land areas, which, in an unobstructed condition, can discharge a 100-year flood/base flood without any increase in water surface elevations. The area outside the floodway but still within the 100-year floodplain can be obstructed without increasing the water surface elevation of a 100-year flood event more than 1 foot at any point.

Flooding occurs in response to heavy rainfall when creek and drainage channels overflow. Flooding may also occur in areas that have experienced wildfire, in low-lying areas that have poor drainage, or when a culvert or creek channel becomes blocked, even during moderate storms. Flood severity can be increased by structures or fill placed in flood-prone areas, and increased runoff resulting from development of impervious surfaces (such as parking lots, roads, and roofs).

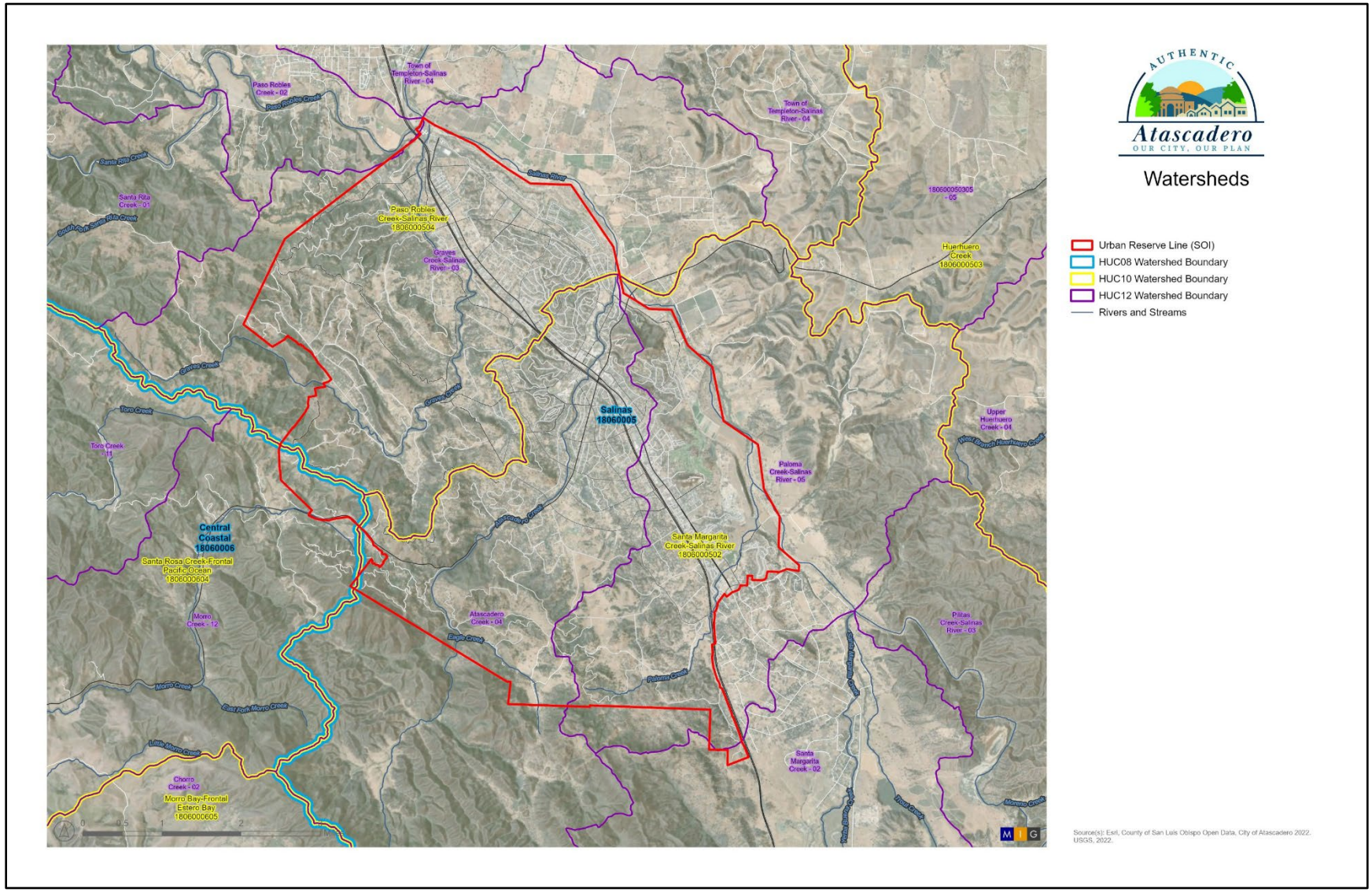
Some properties fall within high-risk areas, known as Special Flood Zone Areas. These areas—largely located adjacent to the creeks and the Salinas River—have at least a 1% annual chance of flooding. If a property owner has a federally backed loan within these areas, federal regulations dictate that the owner maintain flood insurance. Flood-prone areas along Atascadero Creek could provide multi-benefit functions such as passive park space, places to recharge the groundwater basin, and areas to naturally filter urban run-off pollutants. However, because Atascadero Creek and other creeks transverse private property, creating dual public benefit uses presents challenges (City of Atascadero 2025).

Other Flood Hazards

Flooding can also occur as a result of dam failure. Dam failure can result from a number of different causes, such as earthquakes, fast-rising flood waters, or structural flaws. Flooding can also occur when landslides displace large volumes of reservoir water.

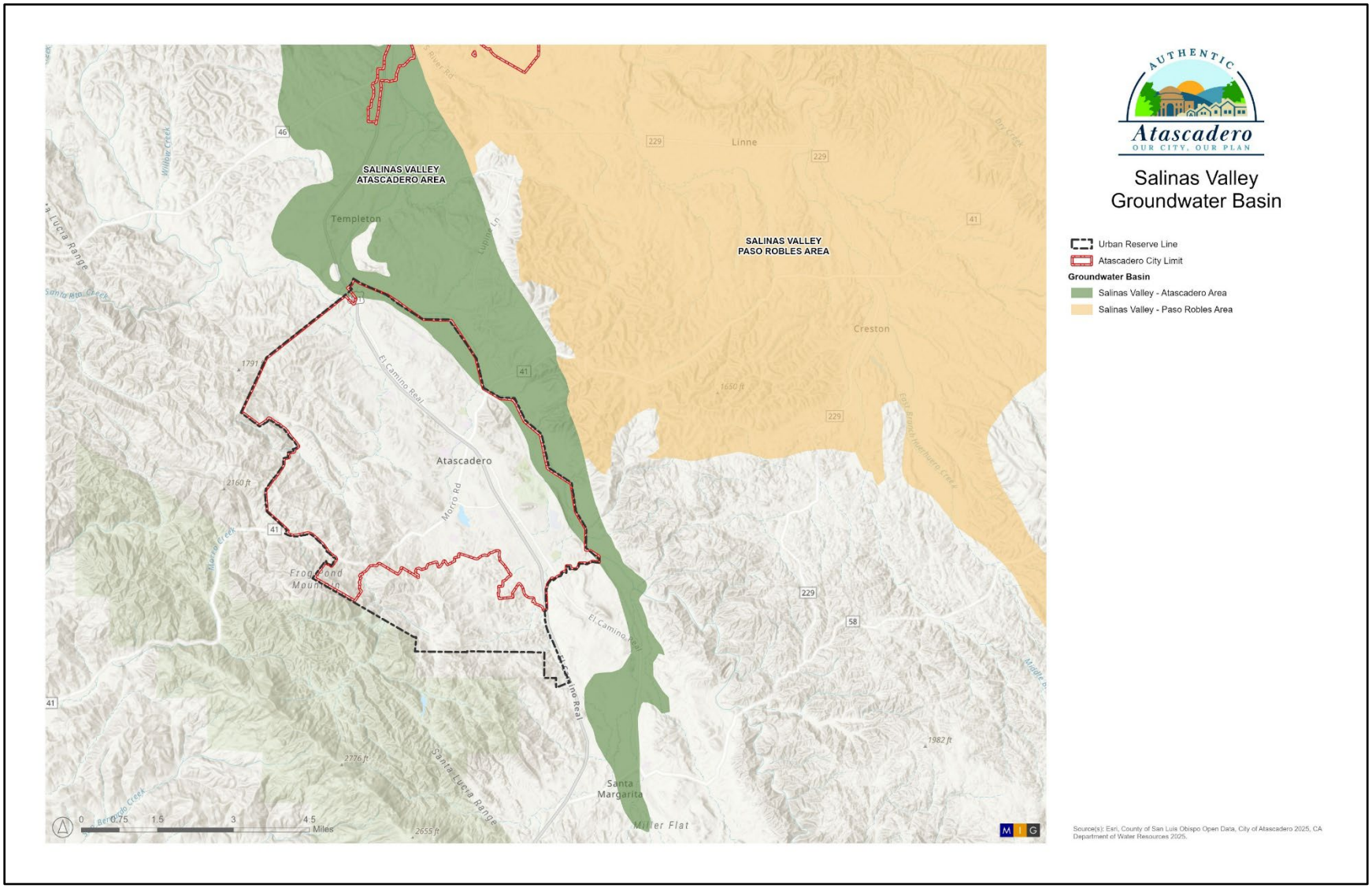
The Salinas Dam was built in 1941 and captures water from a 112 square mile watershed, and the associated Salinas Reservoir (Santa Margarita Lake) can currently store up to 22,320 acre=feet of water. Since the late 40s or early 50s, the San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District has operated this water supply (City of San Luis Obispo 2025). Sudden failure of the Salinas Dam at Santa Margarita Lake could inundate an area in the City within about 1,000 feet of the Salinas River, and failure at the Atascadero Lake Dam with the lake at capacity could also produce flooding about 2 feet deep in the Morro Flats/Tecorida area (Figure 4.8-3) (City of Atascadero 2016).

Eagle Creek Dam is a small upstream impoundment west of the City of Atascadero on Eagle Creek, a tributary to Atascadero Creek within the Salinas River watershed. The dam functions primarily for local water management and flood attenuation and is situated in the foothills of the Santa Lucia Range adjacent to developed portions of the City. In the event of a dam failure, inundation would follow the Eagle Creek drainage downstream into Atascadero Creek, impacting low-lying creek corridors, adjacent residential neighborhoods, road crossings, and portions of the urban core near the Atascadero Creek channel (see Figure 4.8-3). Floodwaters would ultimately move east toward the Salinas River floodplain, with the greatest risk occurring along creek channels and developed areas immediately adjacent to them rather than higher-elevation portions of the City (City of Atascadero 2016).



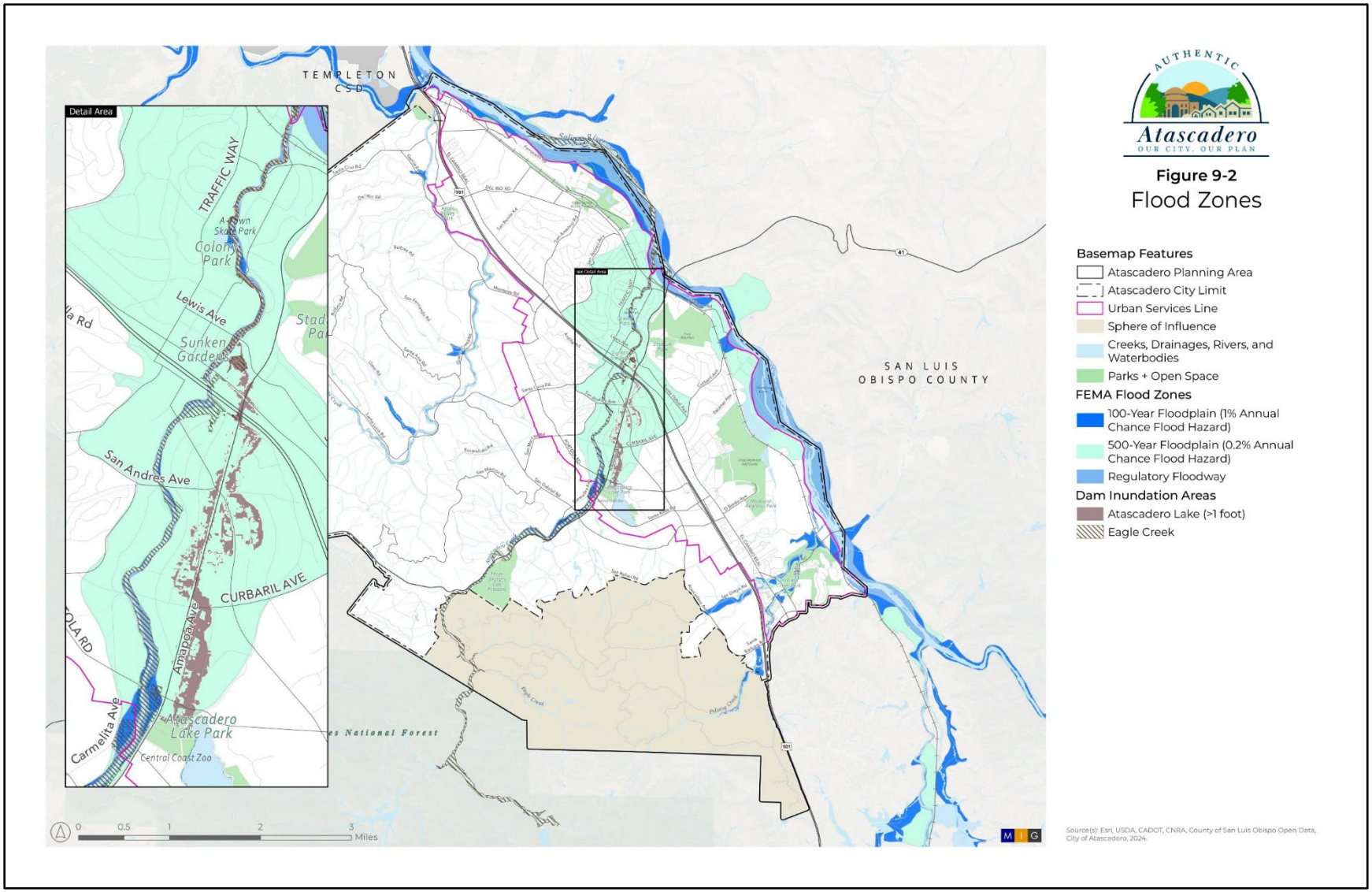
Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.8-1. Watersheds within the Planning Area.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.8-2. Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.8-3. Local flood zones and dam inundation areas.

4.8.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local agencies regulate surface water and groundwater resources and their associated water quality for the protection of watersheds, floodplains, and water quality. These agencies regulate surface water and groundwater so that identified beneficial uses are not impaired. Water quality regulations are designed to limit the discharge of pollutants into the environment, maintain surface water and groundwater quality, protect fish and wildlife and their habitats, and protect beneficial uses.

4.8.2.1 Federal

FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT

The CWA is the primary federal law regulating discharges of pollutants into WOTUS and regulating water quality standards for surface waters. The CWA prohibits the discharge of any pollutants from a point source into navigable waters unless a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit is obtained. The following CWA sections include relevant policies for regulating water quality:

- **Section 208** requires all states to assess damages to water quality from nonpoint source pollution, including runoff. Section 208 requires states to develop either regulatory or non-regulatory programs to control nonpoint source pollution.
- **Section 303(d)** authorizes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to assist states, territories, and other authorized tribes in listing impaired waters and developing Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the identified water bodies. A TMDL establishes the maximum amount of a pollutant allowed in a listed water body. In addition, a TMDL establishes a starting point for restoring water quality.
- **Section 304(a)(4)** requires the USEPA to designate potential water pollutants as either conventional pollutants or toxic pollutants based on the latest scientific knowledge regarding the effects of pollutants on water quality. Conventional pollutants include biochemical oxygen demand, total suspended solids, fecal coliform, pH, oil, and grease. The USEPA has designated 126 "priority" toxic pollutants.
- **Section 313** requires that each federal agency that has jurisdiction over any facility or is engaged in an activity that may result in discharge or runoff of pollutants must comply with all federal, state, and local water pollution control requirements. This may include adherence to all requirements, including, but not necessarily limited to, reporting, recordkeeping, and/or permitting requirements.
- **Section 401** requires a water quality certification to be issued or waived by states and other authorized tribes prior to issuance of a permit or license to conduct activities that may result in discharge to WOTUS. In cases where a state or tribe does not have authority, the USEPA is responsible for issuing certification. The major federal licenses and permits subject to Section 401 include: (1) CWA Section 402 and 404 permits issued by USEPA or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); (2) Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licenses for hydropower facilities and natural gas pipelines; and (3) Rivers and Harbors Act Section 9 and 10 permits.
- **Section 402** establishes the NPDES. Discharge of point source pollutants to the WOTUS are prohibited unless they are compliant with provisions of the CWA. Typically, compliance is achieved by obtaining authorization to discharge pursuant to an NPDES permit issued by USEPA or a state agency that has an approved NPDES program. In California, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is authorized to oversee the NPDES program. NPDES permits generally contain water quality- and/or technology-based standards for effluent discharges, monitoring requirements, analytical testing methods, and reporting requirements.

- **Section 404** requires facilities that discharge dredged or fill materials into WOTUS to apply for a permit issued by the USACE.
- **Section 405** requires that facilities that treated domestic sewage must meet federal requirements for the use and disposal of sewage discharge through land application, surface disposal, or incineration. These requirements are incorporated to permits issued under CWA Section 402.

SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, the USEPA establishes standards and regulations for several contaminants and chemicals in public drinking water. Under this regulation, the USEPA also monitors the states, local authorities, and other water suppliers who enforce these standards. The USEPA has set maximum contaminant levels, as well as treatment requirements for over 90 different contaminants in public drinking water.

SPILL PREVENTION, CONTROL, AND COUNTERMEASURE PLANS

Spill prevention, control, and countermeasure plans require that facilities prevent oils spills from reaching navigable WOTUS or adjoining shorelines. This regulation applies to owners or operators of certain facilities that drill, produce, gather, store, process, refine, transfer, distribute, use, or consume oil or oil products. This regulation differs from spill contingency plans because it requires facilities to implement prevention measures rather than measures to address accidental spills that may or may not occur.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEMA oversees floodplains and manages the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FEMA also prepares the FIRMs for states and other communities participating in the NFIP. FIRMs delineate regulatory floodplains to assist communities with land use and floodplain management decisions. FEMA's floodplain management follows directives set by the Executive Office, including the following:

- **Executive Order 11988: Floodplain Management** requires federal agencies to avoid long- and short-term impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains to the extent feasible. Executive Order (EO) 11988 also requires agencies to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain management wherever there is a practicable alternative.
- **Executive Order 11990: Protection of Wetlands** aims to minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and also aims to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands. EO 11990 requires federal agencies to consider alternatives to wetland sites and limit potential damage if an activity affecting a wetland cannot be avoided during construction.

FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

USACE operates the Flood Risk Management Program, which includes policies and programs aimed at reducing overall flood risk. Typical policies and programs include appropriate use and resiliency of structures (i.e., levees and floodwalls) and the promotion of feasible alternatives to reduce the risk of loss of life, reduce long-term economic damages to the public and private sector, and improve the natural environment.

4.8.2.2 State

PORTER-COLOGNE WATER QUALITY CONTROL ACT

The Porter-Cologne Act (Water Code Section 13000 et seq.) created the SWRCB and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) within the state. The SWRCB coordinates responsibilities of water quality and water rights within the state. The proposed project is within the jurisdiction of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB), further discussed in Section 4.8.2.3.1, *Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board*, below.

The Porter-Cologne Act requires that Waters of the State are protected. The SWRCB is given authority to enforce the Porter-Cologne Act, as well as CWA Section 401. In California, the SWRCB issues a statewide Construction General Permit to regulate runoff from construction sites involving grading and earth moving of greater than 1 acre. The Construction General Permit also applies to projects of less than 1 acre that are part of a larger plan of common development and requires covered construction projects to use the best available technology economically achievable and the best conventional pollution control technology. Each construction project subject to the Construction General Permit is required to have a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) prepared. A SWPPP identifies likely sources of sediment and pollution and incorporates measures to minimize sediment and pollution in runoff water.

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME CODE SECTION 1602

California Fish and Game Code Section 1602 prohibits an entity from substantially diverting or obstructing the natural flow of a river or stream and also prohibits an entity from substantially altering the material from the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake. California Fish and Game Code Section 1602 also prohibits discharge of debris, waste, or other material (i.e., material containing crumbled, flakes, or ground pavement) where it may pass into a river, stream, or lake. The identified activities are prohibited unless the CDFW is notified prior to the commencement of any activities and any requirements established by the CDFW for the specific activity are met.

INTEGRATED REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) is a collaborative effort by DWR to identify and implement water management solutions on a regional scale that increases regional self-reliance, reduces conflict, and manages water to concurrently achieve social, environmental, and economic objectives. IRWM provides multiple benefits, including improved water quality, better flood management, restored and enhanced ecosystems, and more reliable surface and groundwater supplies.

FLOODSAFE

FloodSAFE is a program managed by the DWR within the state. FloodSAFE includes a flood management and emergency response system throughout California that improves public safety, protects and enhances environmental and cultural resources, and supports economic growth by reducing the likelihood of destructive floods, promoting beneficial floodplain processes, and lowering the risk of damage caused by flooding.

SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT

The SGMA is managed by the DWR and provides a long-term statewide framework for the management of groundwater resources in California. Its primary goal is to ensure long-tern groundwater sustainability and avoid undesirable results such as overdraft, land subsidence, degraded water quality, and depletion of interconnected surface waters. The SGMA is comprised of a three-bill legislative package, including

AB 1739, SB 1168, and SB 1319. The SGMA requires local agencies to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), and requires GSAs to develop and implement GSPs for high- and medium-priority basins, outlining how they will achieve sustainability within 20 years.

At the state level, DWR has the primary role in the implementation, administration, and oversight of the SGMA, with the SWRCB stepping in should a local agency be found to not be managing groundwater in a sustainable manner. As discussed in Section 4.8.1.1.2, *Groundwater*, the Planning Area is within the Atascadero Groundwater Basin, a very low-priority groundwater basin and thus does not require a GSP.

CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE GROUNDWATER ELEVATION MONITORING PROGRAM

Since 2009, the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring Program has tracked seasonal and long-term groundwater elevation trends in groundwater basins statewide. The program works to establish a permanent, locally managed program of regular and systematic monitoring in all of California's alluvial groundwater basins to improve overall management of California's groundwater resources.

URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT PLANNING ACT

As a part of the California Water Code, the California Urban Water Management Planning Act (UWMP Act) requires all urban water suppliers with more than 3,000 connections or distributing more than 3,000 AFY to complete a UWMP every 5 years ending in "5" and "0". Each plan must include a description of the service area, existing and planned sources of water available to the supplier, how much water the agency has on a reliable basis, how much it needs for the foreseeable future, what the agency's strategy is for meeting its water needs, the challenges facing the agency, and any other information necessary to provide a general understanding of the agency's plan. In addition, every urban water supplier shall prepare and adopt a water shortage contingency plan as part of its UWMP that includes, but is not limited to, an analysis of water supply reliability over a 20-year planning timeframe, the procedures used in conducting an annual water supply and demand assessment, a definition of standard water shortage levels corresponding to progressive ranges of up to 50% shortages and greater than 50% shortages, and shortage response actions that align with the defined shortage levels.

The City's UWMP has been prepared in accordance with the UWMP Act. The purpose of the UWMP is to discuss the city water system and water supply sources, as well as to document historical and projected water use in comparison to water supply and water demands during normal service years. This document also contains an Urban Water Shortage Contingency Plan in the event of severe, prolonged drought or loss of a water source (MIG 2023). The most recent UWMP update available at the time of preparation of this EIR is the 2020 UWMP update.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES DIVISION OF SAFETY OF DAMS AND ASSEMBLY BILL 1270

Since August 14, 1929, the State of California has regulated dams to prevent failure, safeguard life, and protect property. The California Water Code entrusts dam safety regulatory power to the DWR, who delegates that authority to the Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD). DSOD provides oversight to the design, construction, and maintenance of approximately 1,250 jurisdictional sized dams in California. Jurisdictional sized dams include those that are more than 6 feet in height and impound 50 acre-feet or more of water, or if the dam is 25 feet or higher and impounds more than 15 acre-feet of water. Dam owners must receive DSOD approval prior to the construction of new dams or the enlargement, repair, alteration, or removal of existing dams. DSOD also has statutory authority to require that dams be constructed, maintained, and operated in a safe manner. Ultimately, the dam owner bears the legal responsibility and associated consequences related to the failure of a dam.

Assembly Bill 1270, signed into law on February 26, 2018, amended section 6102 of the California Water Code to require inspections of jurisdictional dams that have a downstream hazard classification of significant, high, and extremely high once every fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). Low-hazard dams must be inspected at least once every 2 fiscal years.

WATER QUALITY CONTROL POLICY FOR SITING, DESIGN, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF ON-SITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS

The SWRCB regulates on-site wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) through the Water Quality Control Policy for Siting, Design, Operation, and Maintenance of On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS Policy). This policy establishes minimum statewide standards and a risk-based, tiered regulatory framework to ensure that OWTS installations protect beneficial uses of waters of the state and prevent conditions of pollution or nuisance. The policy authorizes the subsurface disposal of domestic-strength wastewater and establishes requirements for the permitting, design, monitoring, and operation of OWTS.

The OWTS Policy is implemented through coordination between the SWRCB, RWQCBs, and local agencies. The policy recognizes that local agencies are generally best positioned to manage OWTS on a routine basis and therefore encourages the use of Local Agency Management Programs (LAMPs). These programs allow local jurisdictions to regulate OWTS installation, replacement, and operation while ensuring that statewide water quality protection objectives are met.

The policy establishes a tiered system for OWTS management. Existing systems that are properly functioning and meet specified conditions are automatically covered under Tier 0, which provides a conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements. Tier 1 establishes minimum siting, design, and construction standards for new or replacement OWTS in areas without an approved local management program. Tier 2 allows local agencies with approved LAMPs to implement alternative standards tailored to local environmental and hydrogeologic conditions while maintaining protection of water quality and public health. Tier 3 applies to OWTS near impaired water bodies and may require additional protective measures or advanced treatment to address pollutants such as nitrogen or pathogens. Tier 4 applies to systems that are failing or causing pollution and requires corrective action, repair, or system replacement.

4.8.2.3 Local

CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD

The protection of water quality within San Luis Obispo County, including the City, is under the jurisdiction of the CCRWQCB. The CCRWQCB establishes water quality standards, discharge limitations, and waste discharge requirements (WDRs) to protect surface water and groundwater resources in accordance with the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. These requirements are implemented through permits and regulatory programs that control discharges of pollutants to waters of the state, including stormwater, wastewater, and other point and nonpoint source discharges.

RWQCBs are required to periodically review WDRs based on the complexity of the discharge and the potential threat to water quality. WDRs are intended to protect the beneficial uses of ground and surface waters and typically include monitoring, reporting, and operational requirements. The CCRWQCB reviews self-monitoring reports submitted by dischargers, conducts independent compliance inspections, and may take enforcement actions as necessary to ensure compliance. Under the Porter-Cologne Act, RWQCBs are authorized to issue enforcement actions ranging from orders requiring corrective actions to monetary penalties in order to achieve compliance with WDRs. These standards are intended to maintain water quality objectives identified in the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin (CCRWQCB 2024). The CCRWQCB identifies 20 categories of beneficial uses. Each body of water in the state has a set

of beneficial uses, each of which requires different water quality control. Each beneficial use has a set of water quality objectives designed to protect that use (CCRWQCB 2024).

CCRWQCB Resolution R3-2013-0032 outlines stormwater management requirements for development projects in the Central Coast region and defines four post-construction requirements to help maintain water quality and overall health and function of watersheds. These requirements are based on the project's type, size, and regional location. These four post-construction requirements include the following for regulated projects:

1. **Site Design and Runoff Reduction.** Requirements include limiting disturbance to creeks and drainage features, minimizing compaction of permeable soils, limiting clearing and grading of vegetation, and minimizing impermeable surfaces.
2. **Water Quality Treatment.** Requirements include treating urban runoff with onsite source control systems such as Low Impact Development (LID) treatment systems, Biofiltration Treatment Systems, or other Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce pollution before runoff enters the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4).
3. **Runoff Retention.** Prevent offsite discharge from events up to the 95th percentile 24-hour rainfall event (as determined from local rainfall data).
4. **Peak Flow Management.** Post development peak flows, discharged from the site, shall not exceed peak flows for the 10-year storm event.

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

The City addresses hydrology and water quality issues through implementation of adopted City of Atascadero General Plan 2025 policies and programs. These policies are found in the Land Use, Open Space and Conservation (LOC) and Safety and Noise Elements. The goals and policies from the existing General Plan related to protecting water quality and managing stormwater.

Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element

The LOC Element (City of Atascadero 2016) contains the following goal, policies, and programs related to hydrology and stormwater management:

- **Goal LOC 8.** Watershed areas of Atascadero shall be protected.
    - **Policy 8.1** Ensure that development along Atascadero Creek, Graves Creeks, the Salinas River, blue line creeks, and natural springs, lakes, or other riparian areas does not interrupt natural flows or adversely impact riparian ecosystems and water quality.
    - **Program 12 Wellhead and Aquifer Recharge Area Protection Zones**
        - **.** The City shall adopt and maintain an ordinance that identifies existing and potential well sites and aquifer recharge areas, including sufficient buffers to protect them from contamination. The ordinance shall define restricted and prohibited land uses within the wellhead/recharge protection zones and provide for the review and approval by both the City and the Atascadero Mutual Water Company of any project or development within the specified zones. The ordinance will establish a policy to provide for the monitoring of activities within these protection zones.
    - **Policy 8.4** Review and regulate all proposed on-site wastewater disposal systems to protect public health and water quality.
        - **Program 1** Update and support a Memorandum of Understanding or similar agreement between the City of Atascadero and Regional Water Quality Control

Board regarding the standards for the design, approval, exception process, installation, and maintenance of on-site wastewater disposal systems.

- **Program 2** Require percolation testing of all proposed subdivision lots that will not be served by sewer.
- **Program 3** The City's Sewer Master Plan shall address sewering areas with a high concentration of existing lots below 1/2 acre and areas with extremely severe soil percolation constraints.

- **Policy 8.5** The City shall implement a storm water control program consistent with the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Program (Phase II).
  - **Program 1** Adopt and implement an Urban Storm Water Quality Management and Discharge Control ordinance.
  - **Program 2** Include design guidelines to minimize impervious surfaces and decrease off-site storm flows in the Appearance Review Manual.
  - **Program 3** New development shall be required to maintain historic off-site storm flows unless improvements are made that maintain historic downstream and upstream flows.
  - **Program 4** The City will develop a storm water master plan including shared detention facilities.
  - **Program 5** Require Erosion Control Plans and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) for development on sites of 1-acre or more and on smaller sites with slopes over 10%.
  - **Program 6** The City will continue to notify project applicants and actively inspect sediment and erosion control mitigation measures from October 15 to April 15 of each year.

Safety and Noise Element

The Safety and Noise Element (City of Atascadero 2016) contains the following goal, policies, and programs related to flood hazards:

- **Goal SFN 2.** Reduce damage to structures and danger to life caused by flooding and dam inundation.
  - **Policy 2.1** Enforce federal regulations regarding placement of structures in floodplains, and maintain appropriate standards for development in flood-prone and poorly drained areas.
    - **Program 1** Require an engineered floodplain and hydrologic analysis to be prepared for new development project within or directly adjacent to known 100-year flood plains.
    - **Program 2** Prohibit development within floodways and areas of high flood hazard potential to the extent practicable.
    - **Program 3** Required the lowest finished floor of new construction in low-lying or other areas with serious drainage or flooding potential to be contracted a minimum of 1-foot above the 100-year water surface elevation.
    - **Program 4** Prohibit development that will create new upstream or downstream flooding or drainage problems.

- **Policy 2.2** Reduce flood damage in areas known to be prone to flooding.
  - **Program 1** Augment existing GIS and other data regarding low-lying areas with information obtained during storms.
  - **Program 2** Develop a prioritized list of proposed capital improvement projects for low-lying, flood-prone areas, and seek funding for those projects.
  - **Program 3** Perform flood-related preventive maintenance and repair and ensure that all flood-related work in riparian areas minimizes impacts to biological resources.
- **Policy 2.3** Prepare the City to respond to flood emergencies.
  - **Program 1** Train City personnel to a level appropriate to their positions and responsibilities to respond to flood emergencies.
  - **Program 2** Require new subdivisions to construct a system of all-weather emergency access connections consistent with the City's Emergency Evacuation Plan.
  - **Program 3** Identify and map appropriate evacuation routes for neighborhoods along the Salinas River.

CITY OF ATASCADERO LOCAL AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

The City of Atascadero adopted its Local Area Management Plan (LAMP) in 2018. The LAMP is designed to ensure that OWTS are properly sited, constructed, operated, and maintained to protect public health and prevent environmental degradation. Developed in response to California's statewide OWTS Policy, the LAMP gives the City the flexibility to address unique local conditions, such as diverse soils, topography, and proximity to sensitive water resources, while meeting or exceeding state and regional water quality standards. The program also includes provisions for monitoring, maintenance, and periodic review.

ATASCADERO CODE OF ORDINANCES

The City adopted its own Stormwater Pollution Prevention ordinance in 2014 as required by the State of California, which regulates the entry of pollutants and non-stormwater discharges into the City storm drain system (City of Atascadero 2025). The requirements are set forth in the City's Municipal Code Chapter 7-13 (Stormwater Pollution Prevention), and include the following provisions:

- Anyone whose activities may pollute stormwater or cause illicit discharges must implement City-approved BMPs.
- Property owners must keep watercourses on their land free of pollutants, maintain bank vegetation, and comply with all relevant state and federal waterway regulations.
- All waste, including refuse and animal waste, must be properly disposed of in containers or legal dump sites, not in public areas, storm drains, or gutters.
- Construction projects must follow State permits and City BMPs to control pollutants, with proof of compliance required for City permits.
- The City may halt any activity or construction that violates stormwater or pollution regulations until compliance is achieved.
- New development and redevelopment projects must submit drainage plans prepared by a registered civil engineer and ensure long-term BMP maintenance per City standards.

These requirements provide the City with the authority to enforce procedures intended to avoid and minimize the potential for surface water pollutants to enter the storm drain system, and the natural surface waters to which the system discharges. These procedures allow the City to comply with applicable federal and state law and to mitigate the potential water quality impacts from nonpoint source pollutants associated with land development.

In addition, the City's Zoning Code includes grading standards for grading near watercourses and includes standards for requiring preparation and implementation of sedimentation and erosion control plans. Lastly, the Zoning Code identifies standards of control of grading and drainage to minimize harmful effects of stormwater runoff and resulting inundation and erosion on proposed projects, and to protect neighboring and downstream properties from drainage problems resulting from new developments.

WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN FOR THE CENTRAL COAST BASIN

The purpose of the Basin Plan is to provide management objectives for surface and groundwater quality within the Central Coast region. Chapter 5 of the Basin Plan includes plans and policies for surface and groundwater quality to meet standards set by the state. Specifically, Section 5.3 provides RWQCB management principles for wastewater, discharge, sewer, groundwater, and erosion and sediment control. (CCRWQCB 2024)

ATASCADERO BASIN GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The Atascadero Basin GSP was adopted in 2022. The purpose of the GSP is to proactively manage the basin's groundwater resources. The GSP outlines the characteristics of the basin and current groundwater conditions, establishes measurable management goals that consider the needs of groundwater users and uses, and proposes a series of projects and management strategies designed to ensure the basin remains sustainable moving forward.

The Atascadero Basin GSP establishes criteria and strategies for the long-term sustainable management of groundwater resources in the basin. The plan sets a clear sustainability goal: to manage groundwater in a way that meets the needs of all stakeholders while preventing undesirable outcomes such as chronic lowering of groundwater levels, reduction of storage, water quality degradation, and surface water depletion. Because the basin is currently managed sustainably and the basin is currently designated a very low-priority groundwater basin by the DWR, no immediate projects or management actions are required to achieve sustainability. However, the GSP outlines ongoing and planned activities including monitoring, groundwater modeling, reporting, and data coordination that will be implemented adaptively as needs arise and as funding becomes available. The plan also details the reporting requirements, such as annual and five-year evaluations, which may lead to updates and improvements in groundwater management.

WASTEWATER COLLECTION SYSTEM MASTER PLAN

The City of Atascadero Wastewater Collection System Master Plan Update was developed to support the City's long-term infrastructure planning and ensure that its wastewater collection system can reliably serve both current and future needs. The plan requires the City to regularly assess and document its service area, existing collection and treatment facilities, projected wastewater flows based on growth and land use, and the overall condition and capacity of the system. It establishes a framework for identifying and prioritizing necessary capital improvements, optimizing the use of existing infrastructure, expanding service to new developments and areas currently served by septic systems, and maintaining compliance with state and federal regulations. The plan also incorporates a risk-based asset management strategy to evaluate the probability and consequence of failure for system components and recommends ongoing inspection, maintenance, and periodic updates to ensure the system remains resilient, efficient, and protective of public health and the environment over a 20-year planning horizon.

4.8.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by the California Environmental Quality Act and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on hydrology and water quality if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

Would the project:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:
    i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;
    ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;
    iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or
    iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.8.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.8.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

The impact assessment is based on a comprehensive evaluation of the existing environmental setting in Atascadero, which includes an analysis of watersheds, surface water resources, groundwater systems, and areas susceptible to inundation. This analysis identifies potential effects on hydrology and water quality that may arise from the construction, operation, and maintenance of future developments in the City associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Update.

4.8.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

IMPACT HYD-1: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY VIOLATE WATER QUALITY STANDARDS AND WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS AND/OR OTHERWISE SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE SURFACE OR GROUND WATER QUALITY. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Construction Activities

Development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Update would include general construction activities, which would have the potential to result in short-term water quality impacts, such as soil erosion and sedimentation due to land disturbances, polluted stormwater runoff, and improper handling of hazardous materials. Without proper consideration and precautions, and without conducting construction and development activities according to the terms and conditions of applicable permits, such activities could degrade water quality in receiving water bodies, leading to violation of water quality standards and/or Water Quality Control Plan objectives.

During construction, particularly during phases that include excavation, grading, and other earthwork, the potential exists for substantial increases in soil erosion and sediment transport that have the potential to affect water quality from runoff. Construction would also involve activities that would generate new sources of pollutants on-site, such as pesticides, fertilizers, oils, grease, lubricants, and sediment in urban runoff. New impervious surfaces, including roads and parking lots, collect automobile derived pollutants such as oils, greases, heavy metals, and rubber. During storm events, these pollutants would be transported into the proposed stormwater management system by surface runoff. An increase in point source and nonpoint source pollution could result from increases in development intensity that may directly impact water quality specific to site drainage patterns. Accordingly, disturbed soils, sedimentation, and contaminants that are mobilized by water flow may ultimately be conveyed through existing drainages and culverts to surface water bodies.

As described under Section 4.8.2, *Regulatory Setting*, the SWRCB issues a statewide Construction General Permit to regulate runoff from construction sites involving grading and earth moving in areas over 1 acre. Under the NPDES permit guidelines, construction activities that would result in the disturbance of one or more acres require the development of a SWPPP, completed by a certified Qualified SWPPP Developer. A typical SWPPP includes a grading plan, a drainage plan, an erosion and sedimentation control plan, pollutant sources, BMP identification, and post-construction stormwater management. It also specifies compliance measures with regulatory requirements, schedules for implementing BMPs, methods for monitoring and maintaining controls, and documentation of training for responsible personnel. BMPs must be implemented to address the potential release of fuels, oil, and/or lubricants from construction vehicles and equipment (e.g., drip pans, secondary containment, washing stations); release of sediment from material stockpiles and other construction-related excavations (e.g., sediment barriers, soil binders); and other construction-related activities with the potential to adversely affect water quality. The number, type, location, and maintenance requirements of BMPs to be implemented as part of the SWPPP depend on site-specific risk factors, such as soil erosivity factors, construction season/duration, and receiving water sensitivity.

Projects with activities disturbing less than one acre would be subject to State and City regulations pertaining to minimizing adverse impacts to water quality during construction activities, including RWQCB regulations (as applicable), and the Atascadero Municipal Code. Projects that would disturb less than 1 acre would generally be exempt from the State's Construction General Permit but still must comply with local ordinances and the California Building Code, which requires compliance with local stormwater and erosion control ordinances and prevention of stormwater pollution from construction activities. The City's Municipal Code includes several regulations that would minimize water quality impacts from construction activities for both projects greater than and less than an acre, including requirements for development and implementation of a sedimentation and erosion control plan for any action that includes land disturbance for any non-agricultural purpose and preparation of a drainage plan for any actions that involves land disturbance of more than 1 acre, results in an impervious surface of more than 1,000 square feet, is in a Flood Hazard Overlay Zone, involves land disturbance or placement of structures within 50 feet of a watercourse, or involves hillside development on slopes greater than 15%. Atascadero Municipal Code section 7-13.024 also states that City permit applicants required to obtain and NPDES Construction General Permit for stormwater discharges must comply with all permit conditions and provide proof of enrollment before receiving a grading or building permit. Construction activities that could release pollutants must use BMPs approved by the City to control potential contaminants like chemicals, litter, and sediments. If any activity violates these requirements, the City Manager has the authority to halt the activity until compliance is achieved.

The drainage standards in the City's Municipal Code requires that all drainage systems and facilities subject to drainage plan review be designed and constructed in accordance with City Engineering Department standards and the CCRWQCB's postconstruction stormwater management requirements. These standards ensure that drainage improvements are implemented using best engineering practices to prevent degradation of surface and groundwater quality. Additionally, City Municipal Code section 7-13 outlines requirements to prevent stormwater pollution. Developments are prohibited from discharging waters containing pollutants into any municipal storm drain system, watercourse, natural outlet, etc. unless that discharge has been exempted according to Atascadero Municipal Code section 7-3.013. The City may establish specific BMPs for activities or facilities that could pollute stormwater or water bodies. Anyone whose actions or properties could contribute to stormwater pollution or unauthorized discharges must follow the City's adopted BMPs to minimize pollutants as much as possible.

Adherence to Federal and State regulations and local Municipal Code requirements would minimize construction impacts related to water quality and ensure development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would not violate water quality standards or WDRs, or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality. Therefore, construction impacts would be *less than significant*.

Operational Activities

Future development has the potential to result in long-term changes in drainage patterns within the City, including an increase in impermeable surfaces from additional paving and building construction, and modifications to topography resulting from grading and excavation activities. These future developments would be required to comply with the post-construction stormwater management requirements according to the CCRWQCB, in which all new and redevelopment projects that create or replace significant impervious surfaces implement, based upon total new or replaced impervious surface area, site design strategies, treatment and retention of stormwater runoff, and management of peak flows to protect water quality and watershed health, with detailed documentation and verification. Alternative compliance options and exemptions are available for certain project types or projects with unique site constraints, but these exceptions would still be subject to the review and approval of regulatory authorities and would still be required to meet core water quality standards.

Groundwater quality in the Atascadero Basin is generally suitable for drinking water and agricultural uses. The Atascadero Basin GSP identifies five COCs, as described under Section 4.8.1.1.1 *Groundwater*, which have exhibited relatively steady concentration trends and therefore represent the baseline groundwater quality conditions in the basin (GEI Consultants, Inc. 2025). Future community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan could introduce new potential sources of these pollutants through urban runoff, landscape irrigation and fertilizer application (which may contribute to nitrate), dissolved salts in stormwater runoff (which may contribute to TDS, sodium, and chloride), and wastewater discharges or irrigation return flows.

Wastewater generated from new development could also negatively impact groundwater quality if it is not properly treated. Future development that would not be served by the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant permitted pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update would be required to adhere to the LAMP. The LAMP aims to safeguard groundwater and surface water from contamination by establishing guidelines for the appropriate design, location, installation, maintenance, and evaluation of individual OWTS. The plan outlines the minimum requirements for treating and disposing of sewage via OWTS within the City of Atascadero. The City's Wastewater Treatment Facility is required to comply with effluent standards set by the CCRWQCB, which are detailed in WDR permit. These standards regulate the quality of treated wastewater and require regular monitoring and reporting to ensure effluent discharge does not degrade the Atascadero groundwater subbasin. For more information and analysis of the capacity of the City's wastewater treatment system, see Section 4-15, *Utilities and Service Systems*.

According to the CCRWQCB, the occurrence of streamside homeless encampments has been on the rise in the central coast, resulting in increased impacts associated with excessive trash, human waste, drug paraphernalia (e.g., discarded needles), and erosion that pose risks to water quality (CCRWQCB 2025). Assessing these impacts and addressing them is an ongoing, challenging, and complex process. The CCRWQCB is currently collaborating with local and state agencies and non-profit organizations to identify and promote solutions that reduce water quality impacts associated with people experiencing homelessness. Actions such as improving access to emergency shelters, social services, clean drinking water, sanitation services, and affordable housing can help reduce impacts to surface water quality by providing interim and long-term solutions, thereby reducing the occurrence of streamside homeless encampments (CCRWQCB 2025). As described in Section 4-12, *Population and Housing*, the 2045 General Plan Update would not result in substantial displacement of people or housing, and the currently adopted 2021-2028 Housing Element assesses the current and future housing needs for people of all income levels, identifies specific policies and actions intended to facilitate meeting the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation goals, and identifies goals and policies pertaining to housing access and affordability. Accordingly, the 2045 General Plan would not result in any increase in water quality risks associated with streamside homeless encampments when compared to baseline conditions.

The 2045 General Plan *Land Use and Community Form Element* includes the following goal, policy, and associated implementation actions to promote infill development within the areas that can connect to sewer services and other City infrastructure and plan for growth in a way that minimizes regional impacts:

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
    - **Policy LU-1.2: Urban Services Line (USL).** Concentrate new and infill development within the Urban Services Line in areas where utilities and public services exist or are planned.
        - **Action A:** Revisit density and intensity requirements for land use(s) if sewer extends into new areas.
        - **Action B:** Maintain Rural Residential as the predominant use and limit the subdivision of land beyond the USL.

        - **Action C:** Consider future planned density and intensity when repairing infrastructure and ensure that infrastructure is sized to accommodate future growth.

The 2045 General Plan *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* also includes the following proposed policies and associated implementation actions to promote sustainable wastewater treatment that will aid in preserving groundwater:

- **Goal PSI-3:** A comprehensive wastewater collection system and wastewater treatment plant capacity that support growth and economic development goals
    - **Policy PSI-3.1: Water Reclamation Facility Master Plan.** Ensure the Water Reclamation Facility Master Plan responds to long-term growth objectives and local water quality goals.
    - **Policy PSI-3.2: Reclamation Facility.** Construct and maintain a water reclamation facility with capacity for forecasted growth that allows for beneficial reuse of treated wastewater.
    - **Policy PSI-3.3: Wastewater Collection System Master Plan.** Ensure the municipal sewage collection system serves the needs of all customers efficiently and cost effectively.
        - **Action A:** Establish sewer service fees and adjust to levels that can fund planned improvements to the water reclamation facility and sanitary sewer collection system.
        - **Action B:** Pursue State and Federal funding opportunities to update the current system and comply with regional regulations.
        - **Action C:** Include provisions in the Sewer Collection System Master Plan to address providing sewer service to identified areas in the Local Agency Management Program.

Lastly, the 2045 Atascadero General Plan *Safety Element* includes the following proposed goal, policy, and action associated with regulating the discharge of pollutants into surface waters and groundwater:

- **Goal SEP-3:** Reduced potential for harm to individuals and the environment due to the presence of hazardous materials
    - **Policy SEP-3.1: Hazardous Substance Exposure.** Reduce the potential for exposure to humans and the environment from hazardous substances.
        - **Action F:** Coordinate with the Regional Water Quality Control Board to implement standards that regulate discharge of pollutants into surface waters and groundwater.

Adherence to WDR permit requirements, Atascadero Municipal Code provisions, the City's LAMP, and the goals and policies of the General Plan 2045 would minimize operational impacts to water quality and reduce the risk of pollutant discharge that could violate water quality standards or WDRs. As a result, operational impacts would be *less than significant*.

As discussed above, both construction and operational impacts to water quality and the risk of pollutant discharge that could violate water quality standards or WDRs would be minimized by adherence to applicable local, regional, and state regulations. Accordingly, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact HYD-1
The project would potentially violate water quality standards and waste discharge requirements and/or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to potentially violating water quality standards and waste discharge requirements and/or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

IMPACT HYD-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY DECREASE GROUNDWATER SUPPLIES OR INTERFERE SUBSTANTIALLY WITH GROUNDWATER RECHARGE SUCH THAT THE PROJECT MAY IMPEDE SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT OF THE BASIN. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would potentially result in increased impermeable surfaces and reduced groundwater recharge within the Planning Area due to new structures, parking facilities, and other related site improvements; however, any new development project is required to comply with current RWQCB standards which require stormwater to be retained on-site, whether in surface basins or underground infiltration systems. As discussed under Impact HYD-1, above, adherence to the City's municipal code and post-construction stormwater requirements would optimize onsite infiltration capacity for new and redevelopment projects in Atascadero. All regulated projects that would create or replace more than 2,500 square feet of impervious surface would be required to implement site design strategies to protect natural drainage features, minimize soil compaction and native vegetation removal, reduce impervious surfaces, and manage stormwater runoff using measures such as directing runoff to vegetated areas or using permeable materials. Compliance with these site design and runoff reduction requirements would be required to be documented and submitted with project permit applications. Ongoing compliance and enforcement of these regulations would minimize the amount of stormwater runoff that enters the storm drain system and water runoff to nearby surface waters and the Salinas River.

Water services in Atascadero are managed by AMWC. AMWC sources all its water from two distinct groundwater supplies: the Salinas River Underflow and the Atascadero Groundwater Basin. Water is stored in the small spaces between sand and gravel particles, which naturally filter it before it is extracted by AMWC's wells. Shallow wells, ranging from 70 to 100 feet deep, draw water from the Salinas River Underflow, while deeper wells, between 300 and 500 feet, access the Atascadero Groundwater Basin (AMWC 2025).

In addition to groundwater sources, AMWC now receives water from the Nacimiento Water Project (NWP), a regional raw water transmission facility that delivers water from Lake Nacimiento to communities in San Luis Obispo County. The NWP includes 45 miles of pipeline ranging from 12 to 36 inches in diameter, an intake structure at Nacimiento Lake, three pump stations (1,200 to 3,500 horsepower), and three water storage tanks (300,000 to 850,000 gallons). Designed to deliver 15,750 acre-feet of water per year (AFY), AMWC has contracted for 2,000 AFY, significantly improving its ability to meet current and future water needs. One acre-foot of water is approximately 326,000 gallons. AMWC began taking deliveries of water in the summer of 2012.

The 2020 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) released by AMWC in 2021 demonstrates that the City has adequate water supply reliability to meet existing and projected water demands in normal, single dry, and multiple dry years (AMWC 2021). However, the water demand estimates from AMWC's 2020 UWMP were based on population projections that did not take changes in land uses or other 2045 General Plan factors into account. The 2020 UWMP population projections within the AMWC service area was based on the Department of Finance 2020 population data for the City of Atascadero, which makes up 92% of the service area, and an estimated persons per connection for the services located within the County portion of the service area. Based on the 2020 UWMP, the projected population within the AMWC service area for 2045 was 38,460. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the City's forecasted population for the General Plan Update planning period (through 2045) is 38,112. While the 2020 UWMP's water demand forecasts did not fully account for future changes in land use or other factors associated with the 2045 General Plan, the buildout projections in General Plan 2045 are comparable to the growth assumptions used in the 2020 UWMP and as a result, the analysis and conclusions of the 2020 UWMP still provide a valuable reference for evaluating long-term water supply availability. Given the reliable groundwater sources managed by AMWC, and the demonstrated supply resilience outlined in the 2020 UWMP, Atascadero is well-positioned to meet current and projected water demands for the planning period (through 2045) under a range of hydrologic conditions (AMWC 2021).

2045 General Plan goals, policies, and actions described under *Impact HYD-1* would also ensure that future development optimizes onsite infiltration and protects groundwater resources through effective site design and stormwater management requirements. The 2045 General Plan *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* also contains the following Goal, policy, and actions to ensure that future development water demands do not result in an overdraft of groundwater resources:

- **Goal PSI-2:** Continued high-quality water services.
- **Policy PSI-2.1: Water Service Capacity.** Ensure that adequate water service capacity and facilities exist prior to approving new development.
    - **Action A:** Coordinate with the Atascadero Mutual Water Company to ensure provision of facilities and water supplies commensurate with demand and projected need.
    - **Action B:** Require all proposed new projects and new development requiring domestic water service to obtain a will serve letter from the Atascadero Mutual Water Company.

Additionally, the Safety Element of the 2045 General Plan includes the following policy and action item that would facilitate recharge of groundwater aquifers:

- **Policy SEP-2.2: Open Space for Flood Protection.** Promote the enhancement and expansion of open space areas for flood management and passive recreation where appropriate and safe.
    - **Action A:** Protect floodplains by retaining and expanding, as feasible, open space areas that can retain stormwater, recharge groundwater aquifers, and prevent or reduce flooding.

Adherence to the City's municipal code, post-construction stormwater requirements, and 2045 General Plan policies would ensure that future development optimizes onsite infiltration, protects natural drainage features, and conserves groundwater resources. With the implementation of these regulations and planning measures, impacts related to groundwater recharge would be *less than significant*.

Impact HYD-2
The project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantially decreasing groundwater supplies or interfering substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin would be less than significant (Class III).

c) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

IMPACT HYD-3: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY SUBSTANTIALLY ALTER THE EXISTING DRAINAGE PATTERN OF THE AREA IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL EROSION OR SILTATION ON- OR OFF-SITE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

New development or redevelopment associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could increase impervious surfaces within the Planning Area due to new structures, parking facilities, and other related site improvements, which could lead to greater stormwater runoff, higher peak flows in drainage channels, and the potential for increased creek bank erosion or channel instability; however, most areas in the Planning Area that may be developed with new or higher intensity uses are within areas that are already developed with impervious surfaces. Sites that are underutilized or vacant will be required to adhere to City and RWQCB standards for on-site stormwater retention and management that limits increased flows off-site. As described under Impact HYD-1, all projects that would result in disturbance of 1 acre of land or greater would be required to develop and implement a SWPPP, including both construction-phase and postconstruction BMPs, as well as site design, source control, and treatment measures consistent with state and local stormwater guidelines. During construction, typical BMPs such as silt fences, fiber rolls, inlet protection, water trucks, street sweeping, and stabilized entrances will be required. Projects that would result in less than 1 acre of land disturbance would still be subject to City Municipal Code Requirements pertaining to preparation of sedimentation and erosion control plans, drainage plans, and stormwater requirements.

The following goal, policies and action items are included in the 2045 General Plan *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* would further reduce impacts associated with erosion and/or siltation:

- **Goal PSI-4:** Minimized flood risks via a well-functioning stormwater management system.
    - **Policy PSI-4.1: Stormwater Drainage Planning.** Plan comprehensively for stormwater drainage, considering the age of the City's system and emerging needs based on targeted growth areas and areas of concern.
        - **Action A:** Prepare, implement, and keep current a stormwater drainage master plan. Identify infrastructure in need of significant improvements or capacity upgrades.
        - **Action B:** Require improvement and ongoing maintenance of private stormwater drainage and retention areas as a condition of development approval.
        - **Action C:** Identify and collect development impact fees needed to pay for mitigation of regional stormwater drainage impacts for new development.
        - **Action D:** Require implementation of best management practices for new development to reduce discharges of nonpoint-source pollutants to the storm drain system.
        - **Action E:** Require implementation of post-construction structural control measures for new development to mitigate and treat additional stormwater runoff created by new impervious surfaces.
        - **Action F:** Consider adopting watershed management plan(s) and implementation mechanisms in Downtown to facilitate off-site stormwater management aimed at maximizing development potential.
    - **Policy PSI-4.2: Stormwater Management.** Manage stormwater drainage in a manner that protects and enhances natural drainage areas as habitat and outdoor places people enjoy.
        - **Action A:** Establish guidelines or standards for drainage improvements in natural areas that respond to applicable Federal and State requirements.

Additionally, the *Safety Element* of the 2045 General Plan includes the following policy that addresses erosion control:

- **Policy SEP-4.4:** Erosion Control. Promote erosion control strategies that reduce hazards to structures, properties, and drainages.
    - **Action A:** Identify and require enhanced erosion control measures for properties that exhibit high erosion potential, are in areas of steep slopes, or have experienced past erosion problems.
    - **Action B:** Require development proposals to mitigate landslide and slope stability conditions that have the potential to impact adjacent properties, structures, and infrastructure.
    - **Action C:** Enforce Building Code provisions and other applicable ordinances regulating development on sloping ground.
    - **Action D:** Continue to require slope stability assessments by appropriate registered professionals for developments in areas of known slope instability, landslides, or slopes steeper than 10 percent.
    - **Action E:** Maintain mapping of high landslide risk areas and ensure that structures are engineered to account for any associated risk.

After construction, development projects would be required to comply with RWQCB post-construction stormwater management requirements for site design, source control, LID, and stormwater treatment, which would reduce stormwater runoff and minimize erosion and sedimentation. These measures include reducing impervious areas, preserving natural site features, protecting slopes and channels, using permeable pavements, directing runoff to pervious surfaces, and installing bioretention systems. RWQCB postconstruction requirements operations and maintenance agreements would also be required to provide for the ongoing operation and maintenance of stormwater treatment facilities. Additionally, compliance with CDFW requirements for streambed alterations, as applicable, would further limit erosion and sediment impacts for projects that would involve work within jurisdictional areas of Waters of the State. Projects creating or replacing an acre or more of impervious surface and subject to State and local stormwater control regulations would be required to ensure that post-project conditions do not increase erosion potential in receiving streams. By adhering to these regional and local regulations, erosion and sedimentation impacts from future development in Atascadero pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be *less than significant*.

Impact HYD-3
The project would potentially substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the area in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantially altering the existing drainage pattern of the area in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site would be less than significant (Class III).

ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?

IMPACT HYD-4: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE THE RATE OR AMOUNT OF SURFACE RUNOFF IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD RESULT IN FLOODING ON- OR OFF-SITE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

New development, redevelopment, or changes in land use in the Planning Area pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could increase impervious surfaces due to new structures, parking facilities, and other related site improvements, leading to increased stormwater runoff volume and rates, higher peak flows in drainage channels, and localized flooding in areas lacking sufficient drainage infrastructure. However, all future projects that would create new impervious surfaces or otherwise have the potential to impact water quality would be required to comply with local and regional stormwater management regulations, as discussed in detail under Impacts HYD-1 and HYD-2. Furthermore, most portions of the Planning Area that may be developed with new or higher-intensity uses are already developed with impervious surfaces. Sites that are underutilized or vacant will be required to adhere to City and RWQCB standards for on-site stormwater retention and management that limits increased flows off-site. Additionally, the *Safety Element* of the 2045 General Plan includes the following policies that would minimize potential impacts associated with flooding:

- **Policy SEP-2.1: Reduce Flooding Risk.** Ensure land use strategies consider flood control and stormwater management tactics to reduce the adverse impact of potential minor and major flooding.
    - **Action A:** Incorporate flood management strategies into land use analysis and development review.

  - **Action C:** Employ flood mitigation strategies in the development of plans and projects along creeks and waterways.

- **Policy SEP-2.2: Open Space for Flood Protection.** Promote the enhancement and expansion of open space areas for flood management and passive recreation where appropriate and safe.
  - **Action A:** Protect floodplains by retaining and expanding, as feasible, open space areas that can retain stormwater, recharge groundwater aquifers, and prevent or reduce flooding.
  - **Action B:** Integrate stormwater features, as appropriate, into pocket parks in new development where such can provide co-benefits of flood control and passive or active open space.

Projects that create or replace impervious surfaces or otherwise have the potential to impact water quality would be subject to RWQCB postconstruction stormwater requirements. These requirements include implementing LID measures and site design strategies that would reduce impervious surface area, promote on-site stormwater detention, and slow runoff rates. Projects that exceed Tier 1 thresholds, as established by the RWQCB, would also be required to be developed in compliance with NPDES and RWQCB stormwater control standards to ensure that post-development runoff does not exceed pre-development rates for key storm events. Compliance with these requirements would effectively manage stormwater and minimize flood risks from future development under the 2045 General Plan, resulting in *less than significant* impacts related to increasing surface runoff in a manner that would result in on- or off-site flooding.

Impact HYD-4
The project would potentially substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantially increasing the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site would be less than significant (Class III).

iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

IMPACT HYD-5: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY ALTER THE EXISTING DRAINAGE PATTERN OF THE SITE OR AREA IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD CREATE OR CONTRIBUTE RUNOFF WATER WHICH WOULD EXCEED THE CAPACITY OF EXISTING OR PLANNED STORMWATER DRAINAGE SYSTEMS OR PROVIDE SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF POLLUTED RUNOFF. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

New development or redevelopment associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would increase the amount of impervious surfaces within the Planning Area due to new structures, parking facilities, hardscaping (sidewalks and walkways, etc.) and other related site

improvements, potentially resulting in higher stormwater runoff that could challenge the capacity of existing or planned drainage systems. Most areas in the Planning Area that may be developed with new or higher-intensity uses are within areas that are already developed with impervious surfaces. Any development on vacant or underutilized sites would be required to meet all local, regional, and State standards related to postconstruction stormwater management and would include on-site retention and infiltration. All future projects that would create new impervious surfaces would be required to comply with local and regional stormwater management regulations, as discussed in detail under Impacts HYD-1 and HYD-2. In addition, the City maintains capital improvement programs that are designed to accommodate future growth and ensure adequate function of the stormwater conveyance system as needed. The Public Services and Infrastructure Element of the 2045 General Plan includes a goal, policies, and actions to manage stormwater in a manner that ensures adequate collection capacity and reduces non-point source pollution including the following:

- **Goal PSI-4:** Minimized flood risks via a well-functioning stormwater management system
    - **Policy PSI-4.1: Stormwater Drainage Planning.** Plan comprehensively for stormwater drainage, considering the age of the City's system and emerging needs based on targeted growth areas and areas of concern.
        - **Program A:** Prepare, implement, and keep current a stormwater drainage master plan. Identify infrastructure in need of significant improvements or capacity upgrades.
        - **Program B:** Require improvement and ongoing maintenance of private stormwater drainage and retention areas as a condition of development approval.
        - **Action C:** Identify and collect development impact fees needed to pay for mitigation of regional stormwater drainage impacts for new development.
        - **Action D:** Require implementation of best management practices for new development to reduce discharges of nonpoint-source pollutants to the storm drain system.
        - **Action E:** Require implementation of post-construction structural control measures for new development to mitigate and treat additional stormwater runoff created by new impervious surfaces
        - **Action F:** Consider adopting watershed management plan(s) and implementation mechanisms in Downtown to facilitate off-site stormwater management aimed at maximizing development potential.
    - **Policy PSI-4.2: Stormwater Management.** Manage stormwater drainage in a manner that protects and enhances natural drainage areas as habitat and outdoor places people enjoy.
        - **Action A:** Establish guidelines or standards for drainage improvements in natural areas that respond to applicable Federal and State requirements.

Based on compliance with applicable Federal, State, and local Municipal Code stormwater regulations and the Goals and policies identified in the 2045 General Plan, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not result in significant increases in stormwater runoff or exceed the capacity of the City's storm drain systems; therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact HYD-5
The project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a manner which would create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantially altering the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a manner which would create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff would be less than significant (Class III).

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

IMPACT HYD-6: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY ALTER THE EXISTING DRAINAGE PATTERN OF THE SITE OR AREA IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD IMPEDE OR REDIRECT FLOOD FLOWS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The discussion within *HYD-4* regarding on- and off-site flooding is also applicable to the analysis of impeding or redirecting flood flows. New development or redevelopment in Atascadero associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could increase impervious surfaces and potentially impede or redirect flood flows. However, the 2045 General Plan includes a policy and actions pertaining to projects involving structures located within mapped floodplains:

- **Policy SEP-2.4: Structures in Floodplains.** Enforce Federal regulations regarding placement of structures in floodplains, and maintain appropriate standards for development in flood-prone and poorly drained areas.
    - **Action A:** Require an evaluation of flood hazards and appropriate on-site mitigation options by a qualified professional for any project in a FEMA-designated floodway during the development review process.
    - **Action B:** Discourage modifications to natural floodways, and enforce FEMA's Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) and Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) processes if development occurs within an existing floodway.
    - **Action C:** Require the lowest finished floor of new construction in low-lying or other areas with serious drainage or flooding potential to be a minimum of one foot above the 100-year water surface elevation.
    - **Action D:** Prohibit development that will create new upstream or downstream flooding or drainage problems.

Future development projects would be evaluated for consistency with the above policies and generally would be required to demonstrate compliance with these standards. In addition, all future development projects would be required to comply with the CCRWQCB stormwater regulations (as applicable) and the City's Municipal Code, which includes regulations for stormwater management and drainage. These regulations require the use of BMPs. Projects must also submit drainage plans prepared by licensed professionals to ensure that stormwater runoff is properly managed and that the City's stormwater drainage system is not overwhelmed. The City enforces these requirements through permitting, inspections, and abatement measures if necessary. As a result, impacts related to the potential for future development to impede or redirect flood flows would be *less than significant*.

Impact HYD-6
The project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a manner which would impede or redirect flood flows.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to substantially altering the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a manner which would impede or redirect flood flows would be less than significant (Class III).

d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the project Impede or redirect flood flows?

IMPACT HYD-7: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT IMPEDE OR REDIRECT FLOOD FLOWS IN FLOOD HAZARD, TSUNAMI, OR SEICHE ZONES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Implementation of the proposed 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could result in development within FEMA-designated flood zones, particularly in areas adjacent to creeks, streams, and low-lying regions of Atascadero. However, any future development in these floodplains would be required to comply with the City's floodplain management regulations, as set forth in Atascadero Municipal Code Chapter 7-11 and would be subject to review for consistency with applicable policies and actions of the 2045 General Plan pertaining to structures within a floodplain (as detailed under Impact HYD-6, above). These regulations are designed to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

There are no areas in the City within designated tsunami hazard zones (CDOC 2025). A seiche is standing wave oscillating in a body of water. Seiches are typically caused when strong winds and rapid changes in atmospheric pressure push water from one end of a body of water to the other. When the wind stops, the water rebounds to the other side of the enclosed area. The water then continues to oscillate bath and forth for hours or even days. Seiches can also occur in the aftermath of a seismic event (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2025). While minor seiches can occur in any body of water, hazardous seiches, i.e., those capable of causing property damage, flooding, or risk to life, generally occur in large lakes (e.g., Lake Erie), large reservoirs, and bays and harbors several miles in length and width (NOAA 2025; USGS 1976). The largest standing body of water in the Planning Area is Atascadero Lake, which is approximately 0.45 miles long with a perimeter of approximately 1.2 miles and covers approximately 30.5 acres. Seiches could occur in Atascadero Lake during acclimate weather conditions or following a seismic event. However, seiche effects would generally be limited to land uses directly adjacent to the lakefront and the 2045 General Plan includes policies for structures located within a mapped floodplain that would apply to these areas. These policies (as detailed under Impact HYD-6, above) would ensure that any development or redevelopment in these areas would be designed in a manner that would minimize impacts from flooding events, including seiches.

Before construction can begin in a designated Flood Hazard Area, applicants are required to demonstrate that new structures would be elevated above the base flood elevation or otherwise floodproofed, in accordance with both local standards and FEMA's NFIP. The City's ordinance also requires that development proposals include detailed plans showing compliance with elevation, anchoring, floodproofing, and drainage requirements, and that all utilities and facilities are designed to minimize flood damage.

Prior to occupancy, applicants must provide documentation such as an elevation certificate, and the City's Floodplain Administrator is responsible for verifying compliance and maintaining records. Adherence to these floodplain management standards will minimize flood risks, prevent the release of pollutants during flood events, and ensure that public and private losses due to flooding are reduced. As a result, impacts related to flood hazards and seiche zones would be *less than significant*.

Impact HYD-7 (Class III)
The project would not impede or redirect flood flows In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to impeding or redirecting flood flows In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones would be less than significant (Class III).

e) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

IMPACT HYD-8: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH OR OBSTRUCT WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLANS OR SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT PLANS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The project includes the proposed adoption of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, which provides goals, policies, and actions intended to maintain and enhance water quality of surface water and groundwater resources within the Planning Area, ensure new development effectively manages stormwater runoff and the City's stormwater facilities have sufficient capacity, and minimize potential hazards associated with flooding. In addition to the goals, policies and actions set forth in the 2045 General Plan, future development pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be subject to Federal regulations related to water quality and stormwater drainage, the CBC, State permitting requirements, and local stormwater management standards that have been adopted with the purpose of ensuring that both surface and groundwater quality are protected during construction and operation of future development. As a result, new development would not interfere with the implementation of regional Water Quality Control Plans.

The City overlies a portion of the Atascadero Groundwater Basin which is managed to maintain long-term sustainability and is not currently designated a high priority basin or in a state of critical overdraft. The Atascadero Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency released a GSP in 2022, and the 2020 UWMP was released by AMWC in 2021. The City of Atascadero works alongside other local agencies to manage these resources sustainably. Therefore, future development in Atascadero associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would not conflict with groundwater management plans, and related impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact HYD-8
The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of water quality control plans or sustainable groundwater management plans.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to conflicting with or obstructing implementation of water quality control plans or sustainable groundwater management plans would be less than significant (Class III).

4.8.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT HYD-9: THE PROJECT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO CUMULATIVE CHANGES IN HYDROLOGY, WATER QUALITY, DRAINAGE, GROUNDWATER, IMPERVIOUS SURFACE AREA, AND FLOODING WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

For the cumulative analysis of hydrology and water quality, the assessment considers the watersheds that contain the land area covered by the Planning Area, including portions of those watersheds that extend beyond the City's boundaries where watershed limits are not coterminous with the Planning Area. As discussed in the impact analysis above, future development associated with community buildout in these areas would result in an increase of impervious surfaces within the Planning Area, which could result in greater stormwater runoff and higher flows into local drainage systems, new sources of polluted runoff, reduced groundwater recharge, and/or increased flood hazards; however, all future projects would be required to comply with applicable Federal, State, and local stormwater management requirements, which include NPDES permit requirements, preparation and implementation of SWPPPs, preparation and implementation of erosion control plans, drainage plans, and/or stormwater control plans, and implementation of BMPs such as directing runoff to landscaped areas and incorporating bioretention features to reduce stormwater impacts. Widespread implementation of these BMPs would minimize cumulative effects on hydrology and drainage.

Projects located within floodplains or other flood-prone areas would be required to comply with FEMA's NFIP and local floodplain management standards, which are designed to limit cumulative flood risks. These projects would also be subject to review for consistency with the 2045 General Plan policies and actions pertaining to structures located within a mapped flood zone. Therefore, with these regulatory measures in place, cumulative impacts to hydrology, drainage, and flooding in Atascadero would be less than significant and not cumulatively considerable.

Impact HYD-8
The project would contribute to cumulative changes in hydrology, water quality, drainage, groundwater, impervious surface area, and flooding within the Planning Area.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related the project's contribution to cumulative changes in hydrology, water quality, drainage, groundwater, impervious surface area, and flooding within the Planning Area would be less than significant (Class III).

4.9 LAND USE AND PLANNING

This section describes the City of Atascadero's land use characteristics and analyzes the 2045 General Plan Update's consistency with applicable state, regional, and local plans and policies to determine the environmental effects of the projects related to land use and planning. Potential impacts associated with land use compatibility (e.g., aesthetics, air quality, noise, etc.) are evaluated in other sections of this EIR.

4.9.1 Existing Conditions

4.9.1.1 Historic Land Use and Planning Background

Atascadero's land use and planning framework has evolved through a series of significant milestones, including the transition from county-administered planning in the unincorporated community to incorporation as a city with its own City Council and Planning Commission. This evolution is reflected in successive General Plan adoptions and updates that have established the foundation for orderly growth and development. Significant events in Atascadero's history related to land use and planning are summarized below (City of Atascadero 2016):

- In 1913, the Atascadero Colony was established by E.G. Lewis which subdivided and master planned the entirety of Atascadero. The original subdivision map created the framework for many of the neighborhoods that exist today. Although the City is entirely within the original Colony map area, portions of the original colony map remain outside of the City Limits and include areas south of the City and areas to the west such as Eagle Ranch.
- In 1958, U.S. Route 101 was constructed through the middle of Atascadero.
- In 1968, the county adopted a General Plan to guide growth in the unincorporated community of Atascadero, as recommended by the local advisory committee.
- In 1972, the local advisory committee was expanded and served as a policy-directing entity for the 1980 General Plan.
- In 1978, the County Board of Supervisors adopted a draft General Plan during the early stages of the incorporation process.
- In 1979, the residents of Atascadero voted in favor of incorporation and elected a City Council. The newly elected City Council directed the Planning Commission to review and update the draft 1978 General Plan as its first major task after incorporation. Public hearings were conducted, and the 1980 General Plan became the first major planning document adopted by the newly incorporated City.
- In 1985, the City began the process of updating the 1980 General Plan, which was phased over fiscal years 1986 and 1987.
- In 1992, the revised General Plan was adopted, which planned for a City population of slightly less than 33,000 people.
- In 2000, the City began updating the 1992 General Plan to address community concerns about preserving its integrity. Rather than rewrite the existing 1992 General Plan, the City updated and refined it and adopted Guiding Community Goals by readopting the goals from the previous plan.
- In 2002, the City Council and Planning Commission jointly developed a set of Smart Growth Principles to encourage more compact, walkable communities and pedestrian-scale mixed-use infill rather than automobile-dependent subdivisions. The Smart Growth Principles were intended to supplement the goals of the previous General Plan.
- In 2002, the City Council adopted the 2025 General Plan; subsequent updates were made in June 2004, February 2008, and July 2016.
- In 2020, the City Council adopted the 2021–2028 Housing Element update.

The City's 2025 General Plan is the current general plan, adopted in 2002. Many of the statements and land use policies of the 2025 General Plan are still relevant to the City. Current land use policies emphasize retaining the City's residential character by ensuring that character and land uses are compatible with existing neighborhoods and natural environments. California state law requires that each city adopt and regularly update their general plan. Although it has been amended several times, the majority of the City's general plan elements have not been comprehensively updated since 2002, with the exception of the Housing Element, which is updated regularly in accordance with State law.

4.9.1.2 Existing Land Use Patterns

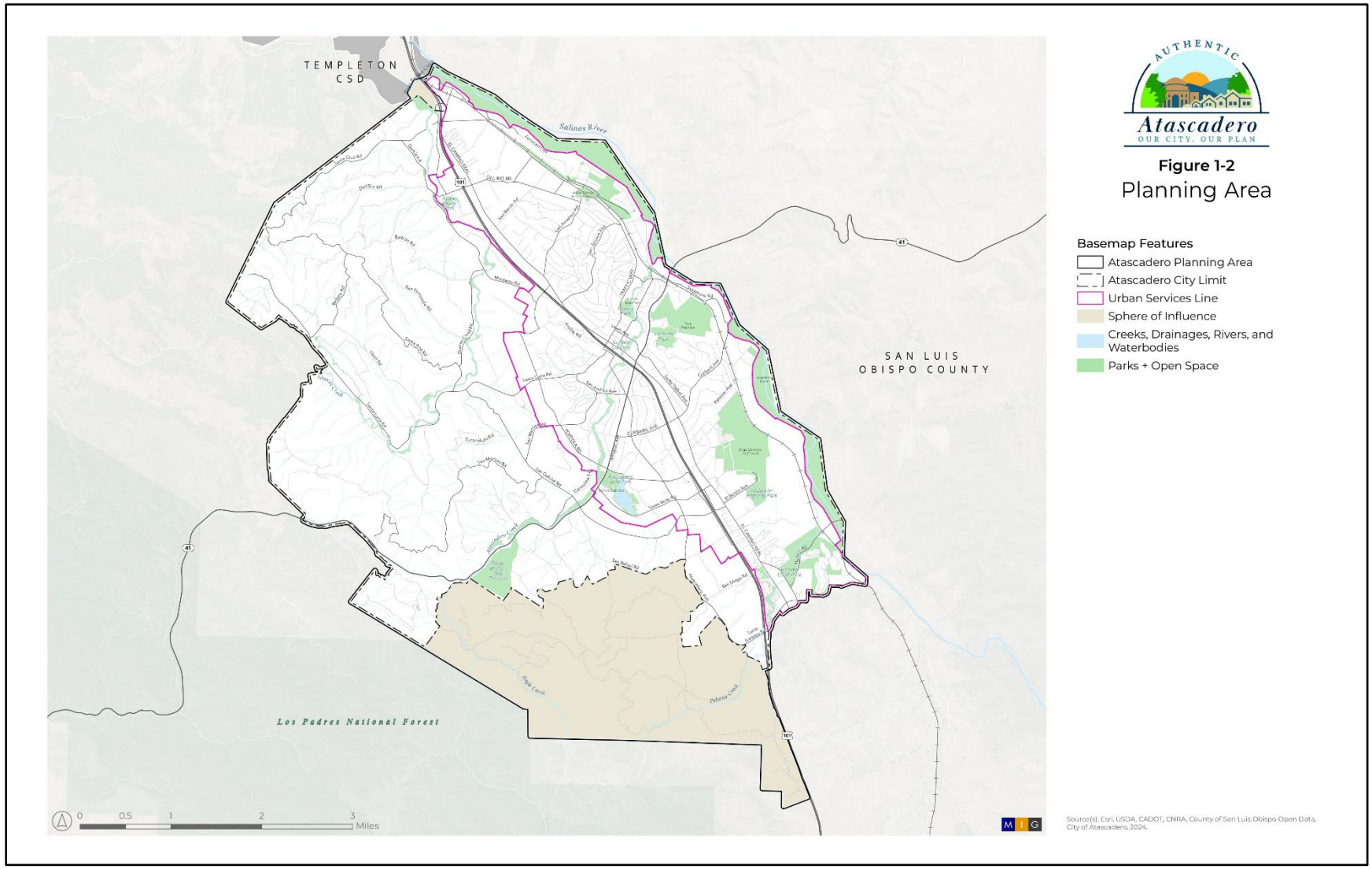
LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Atascadero's existing land use pattern is based on historical land use and planning policies and is influenced by existing topography, natural resources, and circulation patterns.

The Planning Area, which includes the Sphere of Influence (SOI), encompasses approximately 20,218 acres (32 square miles) (Figure 4.9-1). As of 2024, the City included 26.13 square miles of total area and had a population estimated at approximately 30,279 people (City of Atascadero 2024). The dominant land use (by area) in the City is residential. Public recreation, public facility, agriculture, commercial, mixed, and industrial uses are also present throughout the City (Figure 4.9-2). Primary land use categories and their distributions are provided in Table 4.9-1 (City of Atascadero 2024). Whereas the General Plan outlines overall development parameters, the Zoning Ordinance implements these designations through regulations for specific districts and allowed uses.

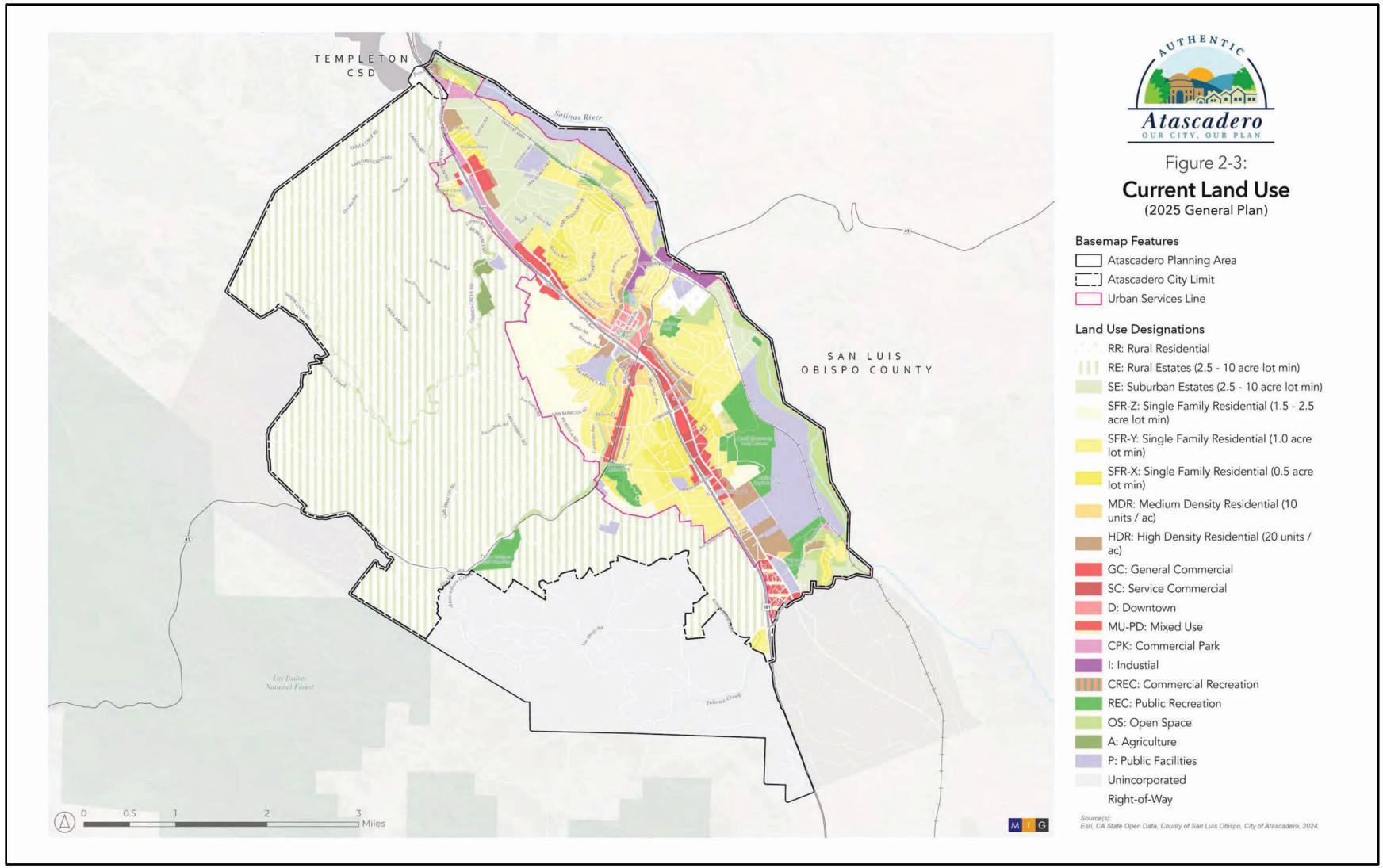
Table 4.9-1. Current Distribution of Land Use Designations in the City

Land Use Designation	Total Acreage within the City (acres)	Percent of Area (%)
Rural Residential/Rural Estate/Suburban Estate	9,333	49.9
Single-Family Residential	2,653	14.2
Medium-Density Residential	203	1.1
High-Density Residential	300	1.6
General Commercial	281	1.5
Downtown	62	0.3
Mixed Use	52	0.3
Commercial Recreation	7	0.0
Service Commercial	42	0.2
Commercial Park	86	0.5
Industrial	77	0.4
Agriculture	44	0.2
Public Facilities	945	5.1
Public Recreation	478	2.6
Open Space	640	3.4
Right-of-Way	132	0.7
Unincorporated (SOI)	3,368	18.0
Total	**18,703**	**100.0**



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.9-1. Planning Area map.



Source: City of Atascadero (2016).

Figure 4.9-2. Current land use map.

Residential Land Use Designations

Rural Residential (RR), Rural Estate (RE), Suburban Estate (SE)

Rural Residential (RR), Rural Estate (RE), and Suburban Estate (SE) designations are intended for detached single-family homes on lots sizes of 2.5 to 10 acres (gross), with allowable accessory rural and livestock uses. Rural Estates (RE) areas are beyond the Urban Services Line (USL) and tend to have larger lots than the Suburban Estates (SE), Rural Residential (RR), and Single-Family Residential (SFR) areas. Densities generally decrease with distance from the urban core to maintain the rural character of the community and preserve the large lots that are a distinguishing feature of Atascadero and respond to topographical and service limitations.

Single-Family Residential (SFR)

The Single-Family Residential (SFR) land use designation is intended for development of detached single-family homes. Within the SFR designation, there are three distinct designations—SFR-Z, SFR-Y, and SFR-X. The minimum lot size and density of these zoning designations varies depending on neighborhood and site characteristics including slope, average neighborhood lot size, soil percolation, adequacy of access, and distance from downtown. Minimum lot size standards are implemented and defined in the zoning ordinance.

Medium-Density Residential (MDR)

Medium-Density Residential (MDR) areas are intended for up to 10 attached or detached residences per acre. In addition to apartments and townhouses, this designation allows mobile home subdivisions and mobile home parks. The minimum lot area is 0.5 acre (net), although smaller lot sizes may be allowed through a planned development overlay process. Zoning standards require adequate parking, setbacks, landscaping, on-site amenity areas, storage, and building and parking area screening from abutting lower-density single-family areas. Maximum densities are reduced based on sloped lots. All development within this district is subject to design standards.

High-Density Residential (HDR)

High-Density Residential (HDR) areas are intended for a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 24 residences per acre, including mobile homes parks. The minimum lot size is 0.5 acre (net), although smaller lot sizes may be allowed through a planned development overlay process and smaller parcels currently exist based on past subdivision. Zoning standards require adequate parking, setbacks, landscaping, on-site amenity areas, storage, and building and parking area screening from abutting lower-density single-family areas. Maximum densities are reduced based on sloped lots. All development within this district is subject to design standards.

Mixed-Use Designations

Mixed-use districts are primarily commercial districts where multifamily residential uses may be appropriate on a conditional basis. All mixed-use designations are within the USL. Mixed-Use designations include the following:

- **General Commercial (CG)** includes office, neighborhood, retail, and tourist commercial zoning districts.
- **Mixed Use (MU)** designation is intended to encourage a mix of retail, office, and residential uses within individual projects to encourage pedestrian orientation and create a synergy between housing and the goods and services needed by surrounding residents.

- **Commercial Recreation (CREC)** designation allows private recreational land uses, including private parks for active and passive recreation, playgrounds, playfields, swimming pools, and golf courses, as well as tourist recreation such as RV parks. Multifamily uses, such as mobile home parks, may be conditionally allowed up to a maximum residential density of 20 dwelling units per acre.

Downtown (D)

The Downtown district focuses on engaging uses that provide both day and evening entertainment, restaurant, retail, office and other similar active uses. Vertical mixed use with residential on upper floors is allowed. The street frontage is activated with larger storefronts and outdoor dining opportunities throughout the district. The Downtown designation includes Downtown Commercial and Downtown Office zoning districts to distinguish between activity nodes.

Nonresidential Designations

Nonresidential land use designations within the City are intended to provide opportunities for businesses, services, amenities, and industry that serve the community, rely on existing infrastructure, and protect residential neighborhoods in appropriate locations. Site-specific zoning requirements (such as screening off-site outdoor storage lighting) are often required to mitigate impacts associated with higher intensity uses. All nonresidential uses are subject to appearance review. Nonresidential land use designations include the following:

- **Service Commercial (SC)** accommodates more intensive uses than allowed in other commercial areas, such as lumberyards, building material supply, wholesaling, storage, auto sales, auto and equipment repair, and printing establishments.
- **Commercial Park (CPK)** applies to areas along the northern portion of El Camino Real and accommodates uses that require large parcels, such as automobile and mobile home sales, factory outlet centers, traveler destination and recreation complexes, artisan and low-intensity manufacturing uses, nurseries, and planned commercial developments.
- **Industrial (IND)** provides for a range of uses from intensive individual operations, such as auto body shops, contractor staging areas, outdoor storage facilities, and manufacturing plants, to lower-intensity businesses in light industrial park developments master planned on large parcels.
- **Agriculture (AG)** is limited to several parcels along Graves Creek that are used for crop production (tree farm).
- **Public Facilities (PUB)** applies to parcels that are publicly owned and/or house quasi-public oriented uses and is intended to meet the public service, institutional, educational, religious, and cultural needs of the community.
- **Public Recreation (REC)** is reserved for public park and recreation facilities available for public use and owned by a public entity.
- **Open Space (OS)** covers areas with environmentally sensitive natural or cultural resources, areas to be used for the managed production of natural resources, and areas subject to natural hazards such as floods or landslides.

SPECIFIC PLANS

Oak Ridge Estates Master Development Plan

The Oak Ridge Estates Master Development Plan from 2003 is a regulatory document that outlines a development plan for the Planned Development Overlay Zone Number 11 (PD-11) area which included a lot line adjustment (LLA-2000-0005) to facilitate the development of single-family parcels within the planned area (City of Atascadero 2003a). The development plan shows the lot lines, roads, and private drive locations and includes site development envelopes and design criteria. The plan area incorporates parcels at the western edge of Atascadero north of SR41. The plan details a variety of lot sizes to accommodate feasible building pads and areas for on-site wastewater systems. Emphasis is placed on preserving natural oak trees and the surrounding environment and integrating homes into rolling coastal hills and scenic landscapes. Infrastructure provisions include internal roads, utilities, and access drives tailored to serve the large-lot layouts while retaining the area's natural beauty.

Woodlands Specific Plan (Las Lomas)

The Woodlands Specific Plan adopted in 2003 is a regulatory document governing development within the SP-1 zoning district (City of Atascadero 2003b). The plan outlines the areas that would be preserved as open space and areas for development of the original 120 acre site. The site is on the southeast end of Atascadero and borders unincorporated areas. The site has been fully developed and includes 278 residential units, mainly small-lot single-family homes. Emphasis is placed on preserving open space and sensitive natural habitats and clustering development to minimize environmental impact. The plan includes parks, trails, and green corridors to promote recreation, connectivity, and healthy lifestyles. Infrastructure improvements cover utilities, roadways, and stormwater management. Design standards aim to create a cohesive community character through consistent architecture, landscaping, signage, and pedestrian amenities.

Del Rio Road Commercial Area Specific Plan

The Del Rio Road Commercial Area Specific Plan, first adopted in 2012 and last amended in 2025, covers approximately 39 acres at the intersection of Del Rio Road and El Camino Real to guide redevelopment in two main components: a tourist serving section and a commercial/mixed-use area (City of Atascadero 2012). The Specific Plan sets design standards, land uses, infrastructure improvements, and circulation strategies tailored to these interconnected parcels. The Master Plan envisions a cohesive commercial center featuring retail, office, light industrial, and mixed-use buildings. It also outlines supporting structures like plazas, parking, shared access drives, and public road extensions. Zoning and General Plan amendments accompanied the plan to allow these uses, with specific conditions governing architecture, landscaping, access design, and safety. A phased implementation approach ties project development to infrastructure upgrades, traffic mitigation, and environmental compliance. The plan aims to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, enhance regional connectivity, and provide community amenities through coordinated, strategic development.

URBAN RESERVE LINE

The Urban Reserve Line (URL) generally coincides with the historic Atascadero Colony boundary. The URL is largely dictated by topographic considerations, existing land use patterns, and community desires to maintain the existing Colony boundary.

The Urban Reserve Area is divided into two subareas—the Urban Services Area and Rural Services Area. The Urban Services Area includes urban and suburban land planned to receive higher levels of services—such as parks, drainage, emergency services, and street maintenance—and is designated by the USL. The 2025 General Plan calls for infill development inside the USL, where services can be provided in a cost-efficient manner.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The City SOI refers to adjacent unincorporated areas that currently, or may in the future, receive City services. The San Luis Obispo County Local Agency Formation Commission (SLOLAFCO) identifies two unincorporated areas outside of the City limits as Atascadero's SOI, totaling approximately 5 square miles (3,466 acres) (see Figure 4.9-1). The most significant of the two SOI areas is Eagle Ranch, abutting the City's southern boundary. Eagle Ranch contains existing Colony lots (452) and is subject to a memorandum of agreement between the County of San Luis Obispo (County) and the City that guides the potential future annexation and development of this area.

4.9.2 Regulatory Setting

4.9.2.1 Federal

There are no federal land use regulations applicable to the project.

4.9.2.2 State

GENERAL PLAN LAW (CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 65300)

California Government Code Section 65300 outlines the essential and thematic criteria for general plans. According to state legislation, every city and county must establish a general plan that addresses the "physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning" (Gov. Code § 65300). The California Supreme Court has referred to a general plan as the "constitution for future development." This plan articulates the community's developmental objectives and represents public policy concerning the allocation of future land uses, encompassing both public and private sectors.

CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 65301

California Government Code Section 65301 mandates that a general plan encompass all land within city limits and any other territory outside its boundaries that in its judgement bears relation to its planning (e.g., an SOI). The jurisdiction has the discretion to decide which areas outside its boundaries should be part of the planning region. California Government Code Section 65860

County or city zoning ordinances must align with the county or city's general plan. As a general law city, Atascadero is obligated to ensure that its zoning aligns with its general plan.

CORTESE-KNOX-HERTZBERG LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION ACT OF 2000

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act) (California Government Code Section 56000 et seq.) establishes procedures for local government changes of organizations, including annexations into a city or special district, incorporation of a city, and city and special district consolidations. The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act delegates these processes to local agency formation commissions (LAFCOs). A LAFCO is a state agency that performs growth management

functions and has approval authority regarding the establishment, expansion, reorganization, and elimination of any city and most types of special districts. LAFCOs establish SOIs for cities and special districts that define the appropriate and probable future jurisdictional boundary and service area of the agency.

4.9.2.3 Regional

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 2023 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is an association of local governments in San Luis Obispo County comprising seven incorporated cities (Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo) and the County, which governs the unincorporated areas of the county. SLOCOG's responsibilities include long-range regional transportation planning and funding for the region, preparation of a regional housing needs allocation report, and preparation of a sustainable communities strategy as part of a regional transportation plan (RTP).

An RTP is the region's long-term vision for the transportation system. As required by state law, this plan is updated every 4 years. The RTP outlines how the region will meet or exceed its greenhouse gas (GHG)-reduction targets by developing more compact, walkable, bike-friendly, transit-oriented communities; preserving important habitat and agricultural areas; and promoting a variety of transportation demand management and system management tools and techniques to maximize the efficiency of the transportation network. Key principles of the plan include locating new employment centers and neighborhoods near transit to reduce vehicle trips and peak congestion, creating communities around transit stations (with small businesses, housing, and restaurants within walking distance to reduce automobile travel) focusing future growth in urban centers and existing cities to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and preserve rural and other natural areas, and preserving established single-family neighborhoods and existing natural and green spaces by accommodating new development within existing urbanized areas and downtown regions (SLOCOG 2023).

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the county region, SLOCOG adopted its most recent *2023–2045 Regional Transportation Plan* (2023 RTP) in June 2023, which demonstrably met Senate Bill 375 targets for 2020 and 2035 (SLOCOG 2023). SLOCOG then submitted the 2023 RTP to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in August 2023. Following adoption, SLOCOG approved Amendment No. 1 to incorporate transit safety performance targets required under the federal Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) regulation. PTASP requires public transportation providers and state departments of transportation to establish safety performance targets addressing measures identified in the National Public Transportation Safety Plan. Amendment No. 1 updated the 2023 RTP to include these transit safety performance targets (SLOCOG 2024). CARB, one of the entities responsible for reviewing and approving an RTP on behalf of the State, identified significant concerns during their review of the 2023 RTP. SLOCOG then prepared an Amendment (Amendment No. 2) to address the issues CARB identified. The Draft Amendment No. 2 was posted for public review in July 2025, and upon SLOCOG Board approval, the 2023 RTP will be amended to address CARB's concerns and then submitted to CARB for review and approval (SLOCOG 2025a).

The 2027 RTP process officially started with the SLOCOG Board of Directors' approval at the December 2024 Board meeting (SLOCOG 2025b).

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

The San Luis Obispo County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) has a goal of providing practical, meaningful, attainable, and cost-effective mitigation solutions to reduce vulnerability to the identified hazards and ultimately reduce both human and financial losses from hazard events (County of San Luis Obispo 2019). This document is updated on a regular 5-year cycle with adoption of the most recent plan slated for early 2026.

SAN LUIS OBISPO LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

SLOLAFCO is responsible for reviewing and approving proposed jurisdictional boundary changes in the county, including the annexation and detachment of territory to and/or from cities and most special districts, incorporations of new cities, formations of new special districts, and consolidations, mergers, and dissolutions of existing districts.

4.9.2.4 Local

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan 2025 set the City's long-term vision and policy framework to guide growth, development, and resource management through 2025 and remains the current guiding document until the 2045 General Plan is adopted. It emphasizes balanced land use and preserving Atascadero's small-town character while accommodating housing, business, and industrial needs (City of Atascadero 2016). The plan prioritizes sustainability, including open space conservation, water resource management, and reducing GHG emissions. It addresses transportation improvements, encouraging multimodal options like biking and walking alongside roadway expansions. Community health and safety are core goals, with policies on emergency preparedness, wildfire risk reduction, and public services. Economic development strategies focus on supporting local businesses, job creation, and tourism. Finally, the plan includes implementation measures, monitoring, and coordination to ensure its goals are met effectively over time.

The City's current General Plan includes the Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation (LOC) Element, Circulation Element, Safety and Noise Element, and Housing Element. Although the 2025 General Plan has been amended several times, including the most recent update of the Housing Element in 2020, the 2025 General Plan has not been comprehensively updated since its adoption in 2002.

Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element

The City provides a comprehensive framework of goals, policies, and programs to guide land use decision making in the LOC Element of the 2025 General Plan. The LOC Element directs new growth toward areas with existing infrastructure, encourages infill and revitalization, and requires compatibility with established neighborhoods and the historic Colony land use pattern. It emphasizes protection of scenic hillsides, native woodlands, and open space, promotes clustering of higher-density uses in Downtown and designated commercial nodes, and establishes guidance for appearance, transitions between land uses, and neighborhood connectivity.

ATASCADERO CODE OF ORDINANCES

The City employs its Zoning Code, outlined in Title 9 of the Atascadero Municipal Code, as the principal mechanism to advance the goals, objectives, and policies of the 2025 General Plan. This code is instrumental in classifying and regulating land use and development within the City, ensuring alignment with the General Plan's land use designations. This code is applicable to all land uses and development projects within Atascadero's jurisdiction. Its primary aim is to execute the general plan, ensure the City

grows in a structured manner, and improve public health, safety, comfort, and overall welfare. It achieves this by establishing rules related to land use, building placement, height, size, and type, as well as the arrangement of open spaces around structures within specified districts. Additionally, it outlines the procedures for the administration and enforcement of these rules and stipulates penalties for any infractions. Projects submitted to the City for review and approval are typically evaluated for their consistency with the established zoning code.

The Subdivision Ordinance of Atascadero, found in Title 11 of the Municipal Code, sets forth the criteria for managing subdivision applications, which include new tract maps, parcel maps, and adjustments to lot lines. Other sections of the municipal code can also provide for implementation of the General Plan such as Title 8: Building, Title 4: Public Safety, Title 7: Public Works, and Title 10: Parks and Recreation where regulations related to energy efficiency, emergency access and site design criteria, and recreational spaces are included to implement the General Plan.

Native Tree Ordinance

The native tree regulations were first enacted by the City in 1998, when the City adopted Ordinance 350, Section 2 into the Municipal Code (Title 9, Chapter 11 – Native Tree Regulations). These rules built upon an earlier 1988 Native Tree Ordinance and guidelines, formalized in a handbook issued that same year. Together, they have governed the protection, maintenance, removal, and replacement of native and heritage trees in Atascadero ever since.

Atascadero's tree regulations protect native and heritage trees by regulating removal, significant pruning, or work within 20 feet of a tree's dripline. for the ordinance regulates the removal of designated deciduous native trees with a trunk diameter of 2 inches or more or designated native evergreens of 4 inches or more, and includes pruning over 25% of a native tree's canopy. Construction projects impacting protected trees must include an arborist's report and a tree protection plan with measures such as fencing and careful trenching. In commercial and multifamily zones, removal always requires a permit and mitigation, whereas single-family zones are exempt unless construction is involved. Tree removal can trigger replacement requirements, mitigation fees, or bonds, and removing a heritage tree requires City Council consideration and approval.

DOWNTOWN REVITILIZATION PLAN

The 2000 *Atascadero Downtown Revitalization Plan* is an area plan adopted by the City that focuses on bringing new life into the historic downtown using the National Trust's Main Street model. The plan implements General plan policy and was developed through community workshops and a dedicated steering committee (Crawford, Multari, Clark, & Mohr. 2000). It outlines strategies such as improving streetscapes, expanding entertainment venues, upgrading parking, attracting anchor tenants, and offering financial incentives to stimulate business and community engagement. A key goal includes repurposing public spaces—like Atascadero Creek corridors and pedestrian bridges—and enhancing visual elements with street trees, decorative paving, lighting, and angled parking. Land use policies urge more intensive downtown development, reuse of underused sites such as the former junior high, and incorporation of upper-floor residential and office space to boost vibrancy. Since its adoption, multiple plan recommendations have been implemented through incorporation into revitalization projects, streetscape enhancements, and zoning code updates.

APPEARANCE REVIEW MANUAL

The *Atascadero Appearance Review Manual* guides the design of new development to maintain the City's desired visual character (City of Atascadero 1987). The manual covers architecture, site layout, landscaping, signage, and how projects relate to their surroundings. The Design Review Committee applies

these standards when reviewing significant nonresidential projects, ensuring compatibility and quality design. The City recently adopted Objective Design Standards for multi-family and mixed-use developments that served as a major update to this document.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The *Downtown Design Guidelines* provide a detailed framework for the revitalization and development of downtown Atascadero, focusing on architectural quality and compatibility with existing structures (City of Atascadero 2001). The guidelines emphasize pedestrian-friendly design, encouraging buildings to face the street and incorporate human-scale architectural elements. Preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings are prioritized, while new infill development should complement the character of downtown. Public spaces like plazas and courtyards are recommended to be welcoming, well-lit, and integrated with the overall streetscape. Landscaping should enhance visual continuity, highlight key areas, and maintain mature trees. The guidelines address building massing, scale, signage, lighting, and the treatment of rear entrances to ensure aesthetic harmony and functionality. Overall, these standards aim to create a cohesive, vibrant downtown that supports economic vitality and community interaction.

ATASCADERO BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Atascadero Bicycle Transportation Plan, adopted in 2010, establishes a framework for creating a connected bicycle system across the City, aligning with regional and state bikeway strategies (City of Atascadero 2010). It identifies infrastructure projects such as new bike lanes, multiuse trails, striping, and signage, along with supportive policies to encourage cycling. Completing the Bicycle Transportation Plan enabled Atascadero to qualify for state and federal active transportation grants, unlocking new funding opportunities. The plan integrates with broader regional plans to ensure seamless bike connectivity beyond the City limits. Its goals include promoting recreation, reducing vehicle traffic and emissions, and enhancing Atascadero's appeal as an outdoor-focused community. The plan outlines both short-term and long-term projects, with several already funded or underway, including streetscape upgrades, bridge replacements, and signal improvements. It also sets measurable targets, such as increasing the bike commuter share per added mile of bike lanes, to track progress and guide future expansion.

4.9.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on land use and planning if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Physically divide an established community.

b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.9.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.9.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

According to the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15000 et seq.), a "project" refers to the whole of an action which has a potential to result in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, which encompasses activities directly undertaken by any public agency including, but not limited to, amendment

of local General Plans or elements thereof (Title 14 CCR). The 2045 General Plan/Zoning Code Update qualifies as a project under CEQA and requires the discretionary approval of the City of Atascadero City Council; therefore, the 2045 General Plan/Zoning Code Update is subject to the environmental review requirements of CEQA (PRC Section 21000 et. seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines. In accordance with Section 15121 (a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the purpose of an EIR is to:

> 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.

In addition, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d) states:

> The EIR shall discuss any inconsistencies between the proposed project and applicable general plans, specific plans, and regional plans.

Based on State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15378), inconsistency with an adopted policy does not constitute an impact unless it may cause either a direct or indirect physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable physical change in the environment.

Therefore, the analysis provided in this section focuses on the goals, plans, policies, and programs that the 2045 General Plan may potentially be inconsistent with and the potential physical impacts on the environment that may result from those potential inconsistencies. Sources used in the assessment of land use and planning impacts include the SLOCOG 2023 RTP, County MJHMP, and SLOLAFCO policies and procedures.

4.9.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project physically divide an established community?

IMPACT LU-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT PHYSICALLY DIVIDE AN ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY. *(NO IMPACT)*

The 2045 General Plan Update applies "Placetypes," which are land use designations used to identify existing and planned land uses throughout the Planning Area and to describe both the primary uses allowed and the overall character of development. Each Placetype is intended to provide guidance on the general pattern of development while allowing flexibility in implementation. While Placetypes establish the overall development framework, detailed development standards such as building height, setbacks, and open space requirements are implemented through the City's Zoning Code (see Chapter 2*, Project Description*).

The 2045 General Plan Update applies Placetypes and establishes goals, policies, and actions to manage population growth and associated development by increasing housing densities and creating more job opportunities within the USL. Growth is focused near the Downtown area, major corridors, and key nodes along El Camino Real to align with the City's objectives. Infrastructure improvements are planned to be made in tandem to support this growth strategy.

No new roadways that would divide the community are planned in the 2045 General Plan Update. Further, the 2045 General Plan Update includes goals, policies, and action intended to improve accessibility throughout the City, as detailed below:

Chapter 3: Land Use and Community Form Element

- **Goal LU-1**. Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
    - **Policy LU-1.2 – Urban Services Line:** Concentrate new and infill development within the USL in areas where utilities and public services exist or are planned.
        - **Action A:** Revisit density and intensity requirements for land use(s) if sewer extends into new areas.
        - **Action B:** Maintain Rural Residential (RR) as the predominant use and limit the subdivision of land beyond the USL.
        - **Action C:** Consider future planned density and intensity when repairing infrastructure and ensure that infrastructure is sized to accommodate future growth.
    - **Policy LU-1.3 – Character and Scale:** Ensure new and infill development complements the character and scale of existing neighborhoods, cultural resources, historic structures, and natural landscapes.
        - **Action A:** Maintain design standards that address the transitions between multifamily and mixed-use development and adjacent lower-density residential zones.
        - **Action B:** Provide parking/loading from secondary streets, wherever possible, to maintain an active frontage along major corridors.
        - **Action C:** Create a transition in density of development on large parcels moving back from El Camino Real.
        - **Action D:** Update or replace the Appearance Review Manual for nonresidential development.
        - **Action E:** Undertake a comprehensive Zoning Code update.
        - **Action F:** Continue abatement programs to remove unsafe buildings and require the cleanup of premises and vacant lots with code violations.
    - **Policy LU-1.4 – Gentle Density Infill.** Allow opportunities for missing middle and gentle density style infill development surrounding mixed-use and commercial corridors.
        - **Action A:** Support the development of multi-family residential, including missing middle housing, in the neighborhoods adjacent to commercial corridors, including the neighborhood bordered by Morro Road, Highway 101, and Portola Road, as a way to increase density and maintain community character.
    - **Policy LU-1.7 – Regional Impacts:** Coordinate with neighboring cities and community services districts, the County, and regional transportation agencies to plan for growth and minimize regional impacts.
        - **Action A:** Continue to coordinate with the County to maintain rural land use patterns, agriculture, and open space uses beyond the City limit.
        - **Action B:** Discourage land use changes by the County within the Colony boundary that would result in more intensive or higher density development, particularly in unincorporated areas and east of the Salinas River.
        - **Action C:** Develop financial agreement(s) with the County to recoup the costs to the City if development occurs beyond the City limit that would rely on City services or infrastructure.
        - **Action D:** Update the County memorandum of understanding requiring City comment on development proposals in the areas between Vineyard Drive and Cuesta Grade, between the ridges east of the Salinas River, and at the Cerro Alto Campground.

- **Policy LU-1.8 – Annexations:** Ensure that growth beyond the City limit serves community needs, enhances fiscal stability, and improves quality of life for community members.
  - **Action A:** Require annexation proposals align with the Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals, and Policies included in the General Plan.
  - **Action B:** The City does not support development outside of the City within the sphere prior to annexation and will require any development in the sphere to provide all development impact fees to the City.
  - **Action C:** Require the approval of a Specific Plan prior to the annexation of the Eagle Ranch property.

The 2045 General Plan Update goals, policies, and actions detailed above would enhance connectivity, mobility, and promote infill development, which would serve to maintain a balanced land use pattern within the City and ensure adequate access throughout the Planning Area. Connectivity would be enhanced by providing residents and employees equitable access to daily necessities, strategically planning for new developments and redevelopments, minimizing conflicts between different land uses, and preserving as well as creating lateral and vertical access points throughout the City with multimodal access options. The 2045 General Plan Update incorporates strategies, goals, and policies that support orderly development without physically dividing established communities. Therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Impact LU-1
Implementation of the proposed general plan and land use and community form element update would provide for orderly development in Atascadero and would not physically divide an established community.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts would occur.

b) Would the project cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

Several regionally and locally adopted land use plans, policies, and regulations would apply to future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update. These would include the SLOCOG 2023 RTP and the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD) 2001 Clean Air Plan (CAP) for San Luis Obispo County and future iterations of these plans (SLOAPCD 2001; SLOCOG 2023). A discussion of the 2045 General Plan Update's consistency with the 2001 CAP is provided in Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy*.

IMPACT LU-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CAUSE A SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT DUE TO A CONFLICT WITH THE 2023 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The SLOCOG 2023 RTP serves as a comprehensive long-term land use and transportation strategy for the San Luis Obispo County region. It outlines seven goals with corresponding policy objectives, aimed at delivering substantial benefits to the region, including improvements in transportation, economic vitality,

safety on the transportation system, social equity, and protecting and enhancing the environment. The 2045 General Plan Update EIR includes goals, policies, and actions related to maintaining and improving the City's circulation system, supporting the City's economic base, safety and emergency preparedness, social equity, and protection of natural resources including the following:

Chapter 3: Land Use and Community Form Element

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic.
    - **Policy LU-1.3: Character and Scale.** Ensure new and infill development complements the character and scale of existing neighborhoods, cultural resources, historic structures, and natural landscapes.
    - **Policy LU-1.7: Regional Impacts**. Coordinate with neighboring cities and community services districts, the County of San Luis Obispo, and regional transportation agencies to plan for growth and minimize regional impacts.
- **Goal LU-2:** Enhanced major corridors that serve regional and local needs by creating focused, distinct, and economically viable nodes.
    - **Policy LU-2.5: Multi-Modal Corridors.** Improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities along El Camino Real and Morro Road. Major corridors should be safe, comfortable, and enjoyable for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike.

Chapter 4: Economic Development Element

- **Goal ED-1:** A sound economic base to sustain the City's unique character through a range of employment and business opportunities and generation of sufficient revenue to support adequate levels of public services, as well as environmental and social quality.
    - **Policy ED-1.1: Business Attraction.** Facilitate establishment of a full range of goods and services desired by Atascadero residents, workers, and visitors.
        - **Action A:** Update and maintain the Zoning Ordinance to promote retail, service, and grocery stores at designated neighborhood nodes.
        - **Action B:** Consider the use of a form based code to guide development in the Innovation/Flex district to respond to changing business trends over time.
        - **Action C:** Ensure that development in commercial and innovation/flex zones is geared to tax-generating uses and/or provides flexible use spaces for evolving trends that allow local businesses to capitalize on emerging economic growth sectors.
        - **Action D:** Encourage and incentivize office and medical uses to locate or expand along Morro Road.
        - **Action E:** Maintain key commercial sites and nodes that prioritize commercial activities and provide spaces for larger-scale commercial uses, technical education facilities, and light-industrial uses.
    - **Policy ED-1.2: Tourism**. Expand tourist-oriented uses in key areas to serve the traveling public, and capitalize on opportunities for tourist destinations that reflect Atascadero's unique character.
    - **Policy ED-1.3: Regional Commercial Centers.** Accommodate commercial centers with regional draws that have visibility from Highway 101.
- **Goal ED-2:** Retention and expansion of existing businesses and attraction of new businesses and industries to increase economic growth, improve the availability of goods and services, and increase opportunities for higher-wage jobs in Atascadero.

- **Policy ED-2.2: Local Job Growth.** Attract new development and enterprises that provide jobs and services for current residents and that build the local jobs base of higher-wage positions.

Chapter 6: Mobility Element

- **Goal MO-1:** A safe, multimodal, interconnected, and efficient circulation system that serves all community members.
  - **Policy MO-1.1: Roadway Improvements.** Plan, fund, and implement circulation improvements consistent with the Mobility Element and Circulation Diagram.
    - **Action C:** Enhance all modes of access and travel within the City. Require frontage improvements consistent with planned facilities when adjacent to new development.
    - **Action E:** Design future roadway extensions and connections to enable reasonably direct paths to destinations.
    - **Action F:** Update development impact fees to ensure fair share payment toward roadway improvements from new development. Include periodic review and updates to fees based on current construction costs.
    - **Action G:** Implement Complete Streets projects, including improved travel lanes, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and upgraded bus stops on El Camino Real.
    - **Action I:** Focus multi-modal improvements, as feasible, on designated connector and backbone rights-of-way through rural west and east side neighborhoods to increase connectivity between rural residential areas and the Downtown core. Connection streets include Portola Road, Atascadero Avenue, Traffic Way, and Santa Lucia Road.
    - **Action J:** Look for opportunities to increase parking and enhance walkability along commercial and multi-family corridors including road diets, bulb-outs, controlled crossings, transit enhancements, and other complete streets features.
  - **Policy MO-1.2: Multimodal Options.** Increase pedestrian and bicycle connections and safety between residential areas and commercial areas along major corridors, parks and recreation opportunities, and neighboring communities.
    - **Action A:** Provide for roadway and intersection improvements along major corridors as outlined in this Mobility Element.
    - **Action B:** Increase safety and access across major corridors and Highway 101.
    - **Action C:** Continue working with the County, SLOCOG, Caltrans, and local agencies to create pedestrian and bicycle access between Atascadero and Templeton.
    - **Action D:** Work with county and SLOCOG to increase multi-modal connectivity between Santa Margarita and Atascadero.
    - **Action E:** Continue to partner with the County, SLOCOG, and Caltrans to improve multimodal safety and mobility adjacent to the City limits in a manner that reflects local priorities.
    - **Action F:** Utilize unbuilt rights-of-way in areas where multi-modal pathways could connect neighborhoods to schools, parks, or commercial activity areas.
    - **Action G:** Develop road standards that support pedestrian use on rural roads, especially on roads that serve as residential connectors to adjacent neighborhoods, schools, and commercial areas.

  - **Policy MO-1.4: Congestion Management and Trip Reduction.** Encourage mixed-use and jobs focused infill development that is served by multi-modal facilities to support reductions in regional and local vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
    - **Action A:** Streamline transportation analysis requirements for infill projects that are consistent with the Land Use and Community Form Element (see Chapter 3).
    - **Action B:** Consider secondary effects of roadway widening to accommodate multimodal accessibility and safety.
    - **Action C:** Minimize driveways and access points along arterial streets whenever possible to reduce the number of conflict points and increase pedestrian and cyclist safety.
    - **Action D:** Encourage mixed-use development with residential and commercial densities high enough to support ridesharing and transit.
    - **Action E:** Support reduced on-site parking requirements where different uses can share parking or where easy access to frequent transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities is available.

- **Goal MO-4:** Safe, functional, and appealing bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian (in rural areas) facilities that allow convenient multi-modal mobility.
  - **Policy MO-4.1: Coordination and Planning.** Provide "backbone" pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian systems that link residential, commercial, recreational, and regional areas.
    - **Action A:** Require developments to provide pedestrian, bicycle, and trail alignments and facilities consistent with adopted City plans and policies.
  - **Policy MO-4.2: Pedestrian Mobility.** Ensure pedestrian safety, enhance pedestrian comfort, and promote walking as an alternative to vehicle travel, with priority in retail districts and multi-family neighborhoods.
    - **Action A:** Develop pedestrian-friendly design standards that apply to all higher density residential and commercial projects and require construction of adequate sidewalks and/or multi-use pathways in new development.
    - **Action D:** Where limited right-of-way width exists, allow modified street sections that maintain parking and pedestrian facilities to the greatest extent possible.
  - **Policy MO-4.3: Bicycle Mobility.** Promote bicycle mobility and increase bicyclist safety with new/upgraded facilities and amenities.
    - **Action A:** Complete Traffic Way bicycle facilities as part of an alternative north-south connection.
    - **Action B:** Support a multi-use path as part of the future Templeton to Atascadero connector. Work with the lead agency to secure easements or other mechanisms to create the necessary connections.
    - **Action D:** Require adequate and safe bicycle parking in conjunction with new development within the Urban Services Line.
    - **Action E:** Create opportunities to utilize unbuilt rights-of-way for pedestrian and bike connections.
  - **Policy MO-4.4: Rural Trails.** Provide for walkways, bikeways, and horse trails without curbs and sidewalks in rural areas.

- **Goal MO-5:** Reliable alternative travel modes that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.
  - **Policy MO-5.2: Public Transit.** Support the evolution of public transit to meet the changing needs for local and regional access, including fixed route and demand responsive service.

Chapter 7: Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element

- **Goal REC-1:** Diverse parks, recreational activities, and leisure experiences for people of all ages.
    - **Policy REC-1.1: Park and Recreation Facilities Planning and Operations.** Provide adequate park and recreation facilities to accommodate current community needs and planned future growth.
- **Goal REC-2:** A network of public trails that provide opportunities to engage with nature, move through the City, and connect to key destinations.
    - **Policy REC-2.1: Trail Connections and Signage.** Provide access to a range of City destinations through a well-thought-out, safe, and integrated multi-modal system.
- **Goal REC-4:** Consideration of biological and watershed resources within the urban areas to provide multiple benefits, with resource areas including oak woodlands, riparian corridors, native trees and plants, and creeks and rivers.
    - **Policy REC-4.1: Natural Resources Protection.** Protect natural and sensitive resource areas to the maximum extent practicable.
        - **Action A:** Enforce all provisions of the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance.
        - **Action B:** Maintain a GIS-based inventory of sensitive habitats and resources, including native trees, watercourse- and wetland-adjacent areas, archaeological resources, and historic sites.
        - **Action C:** Work with nonprofits and community organizations to preserve biologically sensitive areas to increase community resiliency and public access to recreational areas.
        - **Action D:** Require identification of scenic and sensitive lands (creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, critical habitats, etc.) on development applications. Develop and work with applicants to implement avoidance and mitigation measures to minimize impacts.
        - **Action E:** Carefully evaluate public and private projects to require the consideration of trees, watersheds, natural slopes, and other natural features.
    - **Policy REC-4.2: Tree Protection and Replenishment.** Protect and replenish street and native trees.
    - **Policy REC-4.3: Watershed Protection.** Ensure that development along Atascadero Creek, Graves Creeks, the Salinas River, blue line creeks, and natural springs, lakes, and other riparian areas does not interrupt natural flows or adversely impact riparian ecosystems and water quality.
    - **Policy REC-4.5: Agricultural Practices.** Allow agricultural practices, including keeping livestock and farm animals, on parcels designated as Rural Residential and Agriculture, with consideration for the natural environment and residential character.
    - **Policy REC-4.6: Soil Health.** Encourage soil conservation by minimizing grading and preventing erosion.
- **Goal REC-6:** Protection and celebration of Atascadero's rich prehistory and history.
    - **Policy REC-6.1: Cultural Resource Protection.** Protect prehistoric cultural resources from disturbance associated with development.
    - **Policy REC-6.2: Historic Structures and Resources**. Encourage conservation and preservation of places and buildings of historical and architectural significance.

- **Goal REC-7:** Improve air quality and reduced health risks.
    - **Policy REC-7.1: Clean Air.** Support regional efforts to maintain clean air.
        - **Action B:** Adopt circulation policies that encourage vehicle trip reductions consistent with the Mobility Element (see Chapter 6), and support regional programs to maintain clean air.
        - **Action C:** Concentrate new intensive development at identified nodes and commercial corridors to help reduce vehicle trips.
        - **Action D:** Continue to support the development of Park-and-Ride facilities in appropriate locations.

Chapter 9: Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element

- **Goal SEP-1:** A high level of protection from and minimized risk to life in the event of a fire.
    - **Policy SEP-1.1: New Development Risk Reduction.** Promote new development in areas of the community that have lower risk of wildfire hazards and ensure new development in higher risk areas are consistent with Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) standards.
        - **Action C:** Review new development to ensure adequate access for emergency vehicles and compliance with Fire and Building Codes.
        - **Action F:** Ensure at least two evacuation routes for all new residential developments, with roads wide enough for emergency vehicles.
    - **Policy SEP-1.3**: **Wildfire Risk Reduction.** Increase wildfire resiliency using required and voluntary risk reduction regulations and strategies.
        - **Action A:** Adhere to State and local regulations and recommendations, including fire-safe design, of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan that address wildfire risk and vulnerabilities.
        - **Action D:** Identify and implement evacuation procedures in coordination with the City's Emergency Plan.
        - **Action G:** Identify residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes identified and pursue grant funding opportunities to construct emergency access roads.
- **Goal SEP-6:** A community well prepared to respond to and recover from natural and human-caused disasters.
    - **Policy SEP-6.1: Emergency Preparedness and City Response:** Train City staff, coordinate with regional agencies, and implement programs to be prepared for and capable of responding to all emergency events.
        - **Action F:** Consider planned evacuation routes with roadway improvement projects and incorporate identified elements as feasible.
    - **Policy SEP-6.3: Resident Response Programs and Support**. Help prepare and organize residents to respond effectively to disasters.
    - **Policy SEP-6.6: Evacuation Coordination and Investments.** Prioritize investments that expand and enhance evacuation capacity and capabilities.
- **Goal SEP-8:** A robust, well-trained, and highly capable fire protection and emergency response system.
    - **Policy SEP-8.2: Fire Response.** Sustain the ability of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies.

Table 4.9-2 identifies the 2023 RTP goals and policy objectives related to land use and evaluates the 2045 General Plan Update's consistency with these objectives.

Table 4.9-2. Project Consistency with the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan

Policies	Project Consistency
Goal 2 – Mobility: Improve intermodal mobility and accessibility for all people	
Policy Objective 2.1: Provide reliable, integrated, and flexible travel choices across and between modes. **Policy Objective 2.2:** Improve opportunities for citizens and businesses to easily access housing, jobs, goods, and services. **Policy Objective 2.5**: Support cooperative planning activities leading to an integrated intermodal transportation system.	**Potentially Consistent**. The 2045 General Plan Update includes goals, policies, and actions that would promote reliable, integrated, multimodal transportation infrastructure improvements, equitable access for residents and employees to services, housing, employment, retail, services, education, and recreation and promote collaboration with other local and regional agencies to enhance the circulation system and provide more multimodal transportation choices for travelers, including Goal LU-1, Policy LU-1.3, Policy LU-1.7, Goal LU-2, Policy LU-2.5, Goal MO-1, Policy MO-1.1 and its associated actions, Policy MO-1.2 and its associated actions, Goal MO-4, Policy MO-4.1, Policy MO-4.2 and actions A and D, Policy MO-4.3 and its associated actions, and Policy MO-4.4, as detailed above.
Goal 3 – Economy: Support a vibrant, resilient economy	
Policy Objective 3. Support diverse, equitable, and sustained economic growth.	**Potentially Consistent.** The 2045 General Plan Update Economic Development Element includes goals, policies, and actions that would promote diverse, equitable, and sustained economic growth. In particular, Goal ED-1, Policy ED-1.1, Policy ED-1.3, Goal ED-2, and Policy ED-2.2 would provide increased opportunities to attract businesses and establish a means of providing a full range of goods and services to Atascadero residents, workers, and visitors; expand tourist-oriented uses in key areas; promote local job growth; and retain and expand existing established businesses serving the community. The following policies identified in the Land Use and Community Form Element would also support economic growth in the City: Policy LU-2.2, Policy LU-2.4, Goal LU-3, Policy LU-4.1, Policy LU-4.2, and Policy LU-5.1.
Goal 4 – Safety: Improve public safety and security	
Policy Objective 4.3 Improve emergency preparedness, response, and recovery on the transportation system.	**Potentially Consistent:** The 2045 General Plan Update Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element includes goals and policies that would improve emergency preparedness and improve emergency evacuation effectiveness in the event of an emergency, including Goal SEP-1, Policy SEP-1.1 and its associated actions, Policy SEP-1.3 and its associated actions, Goal SEP-6, Policy SEP-6.1, Policy SEP-6.3, Policy SEP-6.6, Goal SEP-8, and Policy SEP-8.2.
Goal 5 – Healthy Communities: Foster livable and healthy communities and promote equity	
Policy Objective 5.1 Expand access to healthy transportation option. **Policy Objective 5.2** Reflect community values while integrating land use and transportation planning to connect communities. **Policy Objective 5.3** Support livability efforts that increase the supply and variety of housing, jobs, and basic services in locations to reduce trips, travel distances, and congestion.	**Potentially Consistent.** The 2045 General Plan Update contains goals, policies, and actions that encourage construction and investment in pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, well-connected transportation systems, and reduction of vehicle congestion, including Goal MO-4, Policy MO-4.1 and its associated actions, Policy MO-4.2 and its associated actions, Policy MO-4.3 and its associated actions, Policy MO-4.4, Goal MO-5, Goal REC-1, Policy REC-1.1, Goal REC-2, and Policy REC-2.1 and its associated actions.

Policies	Project Consistency
Goal 6 – Environment: Protect and enhance the environment	
Policy Objective 6.2 Promote environmental enhancements to preserve historic, cultural, and aesthetic resources. **Policy Objective 6.3** Conserve and protect natural, sensitive, and agricultural resources.	**Potentially Consistent.** The 2045 General Plan Update contains goals, policies, and actions that would serve to protect and preserve cultural, historic, and aesthetic resources and minimize impacts to natural resources, including Goal REC-6, Policy REC-6.1, Policy REC-6.2. Goal REC-4, Policy REC-4.1 and its associated actions, Policy REC-4.2, Policy REC-4.3, Policy REC-4.5, and Policy REC-4.6.

As outlined in Table 4.9-1 above, goals, policies, and actions included in the 2045 General Plan Update are generally consistent with the goals and policies established in the 2023 RTP. The City Council holds the ultimate authority to determine whether the 2045 General Plan Update is consistent with these regional policies. This determination must be based on a comprehensive review of the entire 2045 General Plan Update. For the purposes of this analysis, however, the 2045 General Plan Update has been determined to be consistent with the 2023 RTP, and impacts associated with a potential conflict with this regional plan would be *less than significant*.

Impact LU-2
The project would not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

IMPACT LU-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CAUSE A SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT DUE TO A CONFLICT WITH THE ATASCADERO MUNICIPAL CODE, ADOPTED CITY SPECIFIC PLANS, OR OTHER LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES. *(NO IMPACT)*

City of Atascadero Municipal Code

The City of Atascadero Municipal Code is one of the primary means of implementing the General Plan. Adoption of the 2045 General Plan Update would require a comprehensive review and revision of Title 9, Planning and Zoning and the current Zoning Map to ensure that it is consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update. This review and update is currently being conducted by the City. Specifically, revisions to the Zoning Map will be consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update, incorporating the new land use Placetypes and other relevant design and development standards. Therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

City of Atascadero Specific Plans

The City of Atascadero has adopted several specific plans, as detailed in Section 4.9.1, *Existing Conditions*. These plans provide additional detailed guidance and development standards for specific areas within the City, establishing permitted uses and development standards tailored to each planning area's unique needs. The 2045 General Plan Update Placetypes and land use map were developed to be consistent with the existing land uses and land use designations within these areas. While the 2045 General Plan is generally

consistent with the City's current specific plans, the City will review and, if necessary, update these plans after the project's adoption to address any changes related to land use, density, design, or development standards, as described in the Land Use and Community Form Element:

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
    - **Policy LU-1.6**: **Specific Plans.** Adopt, update, and implement specific plans as necessary to address community needs and changing demographic, economic, and market conditions.
        - **Action A:** Require the preparation of a specific plan for single-family subdivision developments over 100 units to address fiscal and environmental impacts, community benefits, and neighborhood compatibility.
        - **Action B:** Update existing Specific Plans and Overlay Zones to be consistent with the General Plan.
        - **Action C:** Utilize Specific Plans to streamline the development process and incentivize development through modified development standards.

State law requires all area and specific plans to be consistent with the general plan, allowing a "reasonable" period for any required updates (Gov. Code § 65860(c)). This is typically interpreted as 1 year from general plan adoption. As a result, the 2045 General Plan Update would not result in a conflict with any of the City's adopted specific plans, and *no impacts* would occur.

Other Local Plans and Policies

The City of Atascadero Downtown Revitalization Plan, Appearance Review Manual, Downtown Design Guidelines, and Bicycle Transportation Plan would still be in effect following the adoption of the 2045 General Plan Update. These plans would continue to provide guidelines and regulatory frameworks for future development and infrastructure improvements throughout the City, and the 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with any of the specific provisions of these plans or policies, in part because the 2045 General Plan goals, policies, and actions are more general in nature than those of the local plans. For example, the 2045 General Plan Update includes goals and policies pertaining to growth that is compatible with the established land use patterns and community aesthetic, preservation of the City's rural character, and prioritization of a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly downtown. Guidelines identified in the Downtown Revitalization Plan and Downtown Design Guidelines include specific examples of preferable architectural design features related to building façades, canopies, window treatments, and building orientation, mass, and scale. The goals, policies, and actions identified in the 2045 General Plan Update would create an overarching regulatory framework that would continue to be supported by these other local plans and policies. Therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Impact LU-3
The project would not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with the Atascadero Municipal Code, adopted City specific plans, or other local plans and policies.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts would occur.

4.9.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT LU-4: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN ANY CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH LAND USE AND PLANNING. *(NO IMPACT)*

Planned and projected growth in the San Luis Obispo County region, in combination with future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan, may have the potential to have significant cumulative impacts associated with either physical divisions of communities or conflicts with land use goals, plans, or policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects.

As discussed under Impact LU-1 above, the 2045 General Plan promotes infill and strategic development that is compatible with and integrates with existing land uses. It includes goals and policies that foster a connected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, linking neighborhoods and communities within Atascadero. In addition, it includes goals and policies that encourage coordination with other local agencies to ensure that the regional impacts associated with growth are minimized. Therefore, because the 2045 General Plan Update would not divide established neighborhoods or communities and would connect future development with existing neighborhoods or communities, it would not result in any cumulatively considerable impacts associated with dividing communities.

As discussed under Impact LU-2 above, the goals, policies, and actions of the 2045 General Plan Update are generally consistent with the goals and policies of the 2023 RTP. The 2023 RTP and its associated policies would apply to local jurisdictions throughout San Luis Obispo County and address the cumulative land use and planning impacts of future development across the region. Consequently, cumulative impacts associated with conflicts with the 2045 General Plan Update would be *less than significant.*

Lastly, all future development within City limits would be subject to the City Municipal Code and other local plans and policies, as applicable, such as the Downtown Design Guidelines and the Atascadero Bicycle Transportation Plan. As discussed under Impact LU-3, the 2045 General Plan Update goals, policies, and actions would continue to be supported by the guidelines identified in these local plans and would not conflict with any of the provisions within them. Therefore, the project would not result in any cumulatively considerable impacts associated with conflicts with these local plans or policies.

Impact LU-4
The project would not result in any cumulatively considerable impacts associated with land use and planning.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts would occur.

4.10 MINERAL RESOURCES

This section evaluates impacts associated with the 2045 General Plan Update related to mineral resources. The analysis consists of a description of existing conditions of the project site, a summary of the regulatory framework, and an evaluation of potential impacts associated with mineral resources.

4.10.1 Existing Conditions

4.10.1.1 Regional Setting

The City of Atascadero (City) is within the San Luis Obispo-Santa Barbara Production-Consumption (P-C) Region, an area defined by the California Department of Conservation (CDOC) covering 2,062 square miles of western San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties. This region includes significant aggregate resources and active mining operations (CDOC 2017). The 2011 California Geologic Survey (CGS) updated mineral land classification survey identified important deposits of Portland cement concrete (PCC)–grade aggregate along approximately 14 miles of the Salinas River, from southeastern Atascadero to Paso Robles, with an estimated 48 million tons of PCC-grade aggregate in this stretch (CGS 2011a). Construction aggregate is essential for producing concrete, asphalt, plaster, and stucco. Although San Luis Obispo County contains a wide range of mineral resources, relatively few are currently extracted commercially. Local quarries and mines produce basaltic stone, "red rock" for road base, cinnabar (an ore of mercury), petroleum, natural gas, gypsum, clay, and various aggregates. The availability and extraction of sand, gravel, and stone are largely driven by local demand and construction activity. Of these resources, PCC-grade aggregate is the most valuable and scarcest due to its stringent material specifications.

Mineral resources occurring in the immediate project vicinity include sand and gravel along and within the Salinas River and metal ores, including manganese and chromium in the Coast Range west of the Salinas River. Sand and gravel deposits exist along approximately 14 miles of the Salinas River in the Salinas River Resource Area (CDOC 2015). There are no active sand- or gravel-extraction activities within the Planning Area.

The Millhollin Pit (Mine ID 91-40-0001), in the southwestern part of the City, operated as an open-pit rock mine until ceasing operations in October 2011. Following its closure, site reclamation was initiated in accordance with the reclamation plan approved in 1996. The City will finalize the mine's closure process in 2026. Additionally, the Sycamore Road Pit (Mine ID 91-40-0042) is just outside the City's western boundary, and the Rocky Canyon Quarry (Mine ID 91-40-003), which primarily extracts decomposed granite, is approximately 5 miles southeast of the City (CDOC 2016).

CGS designates mineral resource zones (MRZs) to assess the potential for extracting geologic resources, including metals, minerals, and construction aggregates. Areas are classified based on geologic factors, without regard for existing land use and landownership for each P-C Region. The mineral resource areas within the San Luis Obispo-Santa Barbara P-C Region are categorized into one of four MRZs, described below (CDOC 2017).

- **MRZ-1:** Areas where available geologic information indicates a low likelihood for the presence of significant mineral resources.
- **MRZ-2:** Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists. This zone shall be applied to known mineral deposits or where well-developed lines of reasoning, based on economic-geologic principles and adequate data, demonstrate that the likelihood for occurrence of significant mineral deposits is high.

- **MRZ-3:** Areas containing known or inferred mineral occurrences of undetermined mineral resource significance.
- **MRZ-4:** Areas where geologic information does not rule out either the presence or absence of mineral resources.

In Atascadero, several MRZ-1 zones (areas with a low likelihood for the presence of mineral resources) are found along the southwestern City boundary, including the Eagle Ranch area, as well as in central and eastern parts of the City. An MRZ-2 zone (areas with known mineral resources suitable for uses such as PCC) is along the Salinas River and adjacent to the eastern City limit. Figure 4.10-1 depicts these locations in the City.

4.10.2 Regulatory Setting

4.10.2.1 Federal

There are no federal regulations related to mineral resources applicable to the project.

4.10.2.2 State

STATE SURFACE MINING AND RECLAMATION ACT OF 1975

The California State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975 mandates that the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) and CDOC Division of Mines and Geology prepare a mineral resource report for each county. SMARA is administered by the CDOC Division of the Mine Reclamation and requires cooperation from the CGS and SMGB to identify and classify minerals of the state.

SMARA Sections 2761(a) and (b) and 2790 provide for a mineral lands inventory process termed Classification-Designation. The primary objective of the process is to provide local agencies, such as counties and cities, with information on the location, need, and importance of minerals within their respective jurisdictions. It is also the intent of this process—through the adoption of general plan mineral resource management policies—that this information be considered in future local land use planning decisions.

In many regions, large portions of the areas classified as MRZ-2 are already committed to various urban uses that limit or prohibit access to underlying resources. If an area is classified by the SMGB as an area of statewide significance, the lead agency must designate that area in its general plan as having important minerals to be protected pursuant California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 2762(a). If a lead agency has given classified areas such designation, the lead agency shall prepare a statement specifying its reasons prior to permitting a proposed use that would threaten the potential to extract minerals in that area, in accordance with the requirements set forth in PRC Section 2762(d). As an aid to local planning agencies, classification reports prepared for metropolitan areas also identify MRZ-2 areas that have not been urbanized. These non-urbanized areas, called resource sectors, are areas judged to contain a significant deposit of construction-quality aggregate that is available—from a general land-use perspective—to meet future needs of the region. In other words, areas currently permitted for mining and areas found to have land uses compatible with possible mining are identified as sectors.

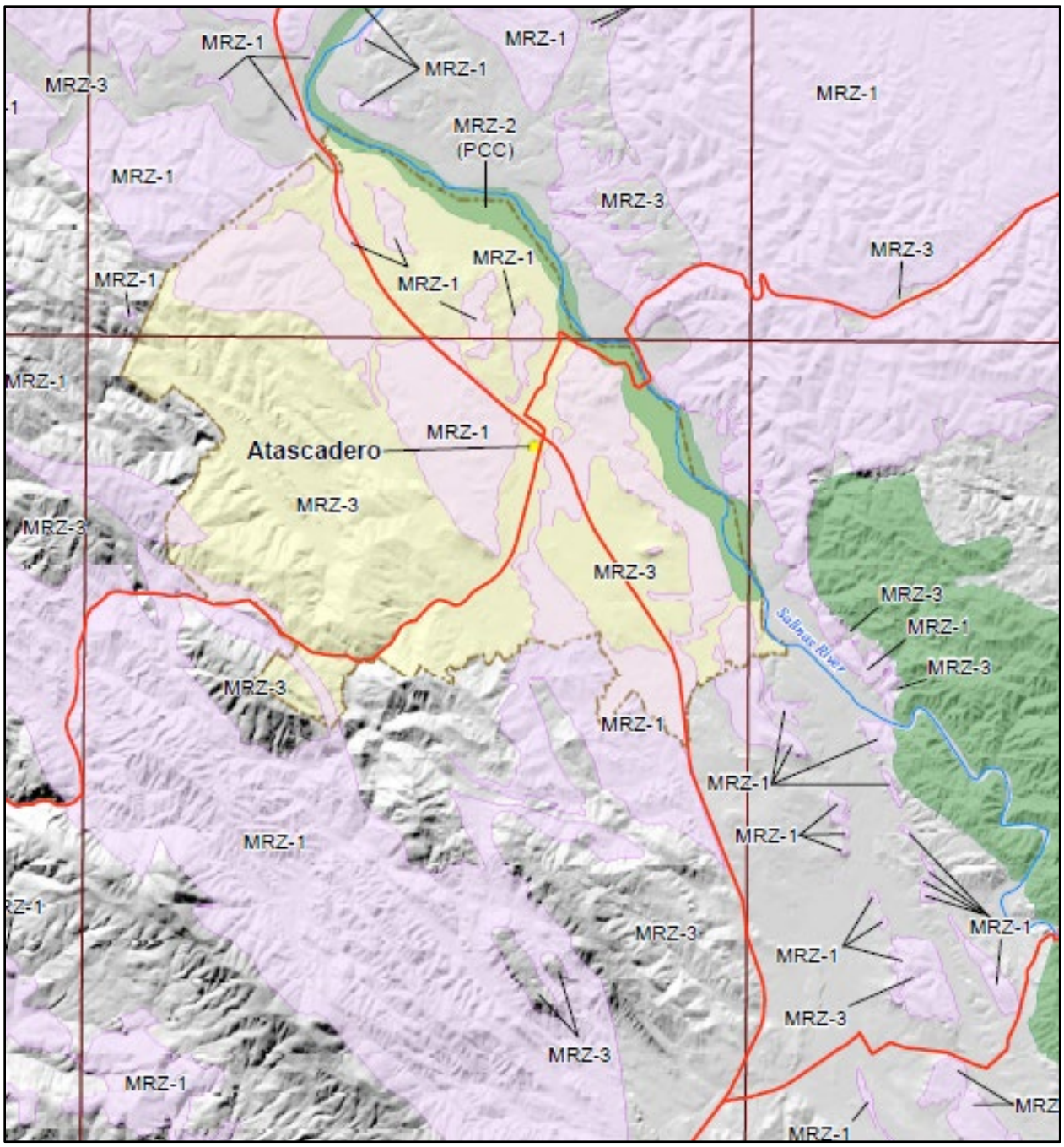


Figure 4.10-1. MRZs within and near the City of Atascadero.

4.10.2.3 Local

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO GENERAL PLAN

The County of San Luis (County) Obispo General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element includes goals, policies, and implementation measures to identify and protect mineral resources (County of San Luis Obispo 2010). Whereas the County's General Plan does not directly influence land within the City, it does apply to lands within the unincorporated county adjacent to land within the City sphere of influence. The following policies included in the County Conservation and Open Space Element are relevant to the proposed project's impact on surrounding mineral resources cumulative impacts related to agricultural land within the county:

- **Policy MN 2.1 Protect Mineral Resources.** Protect mineral and aggregate resources from incompatible uses in designated areas likely to contain significant mineral deposits in order that such deposits may be available for future use. Extract in-stream aggregate materials in a sustainable manner that balances the rate of extraction with the rate of natural replenishment.
- **Policy MN 2.2 Incompatible Development.** Protect existing resource extraction operations from encroachment by incompatible land uses, land use category changes, and land divisions that could hinder resource extraction.

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is composed of several elements, including the Land Use, Open Space and Conservation (LOC); Circulation; Safety and Noise; and Housing Elements. Each includes specific goals, policies, and programs that inform short and long-term decision-making in the community.

Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element

Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to mineral resources included within the LOC Element are listed here:

- **Goal LOC 10.** Conserve energy and resources by preventing or correcting degradation of the environment.
    - **Policy 10.4:** Ensure that development in mineral resource areas is appropriate and compatible with existing uses.
        - **Program 1.** Review extraction proposals for conformity with the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act.
        - **Program 2.** Review the Zoning Ordinance to identify compatibility issues for uses in the vicinity of mining areas, and amend the Ordinance as appropriate.
        - **Program 3.** Carefully evaluate proposals to extract mineral resources from the Salinas River channel to ensure conformity with the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act and all other applicable resource agencies, surface mining criteria contained within the Zoning Ordinance, and flood hazard zoning standards.

CITY OF ATASCADERO CODE OR ORDINANCES

The City's Municipal Code Section 5-9 regulates surface mining operations, as authorized by the State SMARA, and includes regulations for surface mining and reclamation to ensure that mineral resources are recovered efficiently and safely, with minimal disruption to surrounding land uses and environmental values, and that sites are reclaimed to a usable condition that is readily adaptable for alternative land uses.

Surface mining operations in the City require a conditional use permit (CUP) and an approved and funded reclamation plan in all zoning districts where mining is allowed. All mining applications are subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The reclamation plan must be sent to the State Geologist for comment prior to approval by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission must hold a public hearing and take final action to approve, conditionally approve, or deny the CUP or reclamation plan. The Planning Commission's action shall be final, subject to appeal to the City Council.

4.10.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on mineral resources if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state.

b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.10.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.10.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

The project's potential impacts associated with mineral resources were evaluated by use of the environmental checklist questions included in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, included in Section 4.10.3, Thresholds of Significance. Potential impacts were evaluated based on a comprehensive review of the proposed project and all associated goals, policies, and actions, CDOC applicable database information, and all applicable regulatory requirements.

4.10.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

IMPACT MR-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF AVAILABILITY OF A KNOWN MINERAL RESOURCE. *(NO IMPACT)*

The Planning Area includes several mapped MRZs, such as sand and gravel deposits along the Salinas River and metal ores like manganese and chromium in the Coast Range west of the river (see Figure 4.10-1); however, there are currently no active sand- or gravel-extraction operations within the Planning Area. The only former significant extraction site within City limits—the Millhollin Pit—ceased operations in 2011 and completed reclamation in 2024. Other nearby extraction sites, such as the Rocky Canyon Quarry, are outside of the Planning Area.

SMARA and the City Municipal Code (Section 5-9) provide a comprehensive regulatory framework to protect mineral resources and ensure that any proposed mining operations are subject to appropriate permitting, environmental review, and reclamation requirements. The 2045 General Plan Update maintains existing policies and does not propose changes that would facilitate the loss or conversion of these mineral resource areas to incompatible uses. Furthermore, the absence of current extraction activities, combined

with ongoing protection provided by local and state regulations, ensures that mineral resources remain available for future use, if needed.

Given these factors, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region or the residents of the state. Therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Impact MR-1
The project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts would occur.

b) Would the project result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

IMPACT MR-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF AVAILABILITY OF A LOCALLY IMPORTANT MINERAL RESOURCE RECOVERY SITE. *(NO IMPACT)*

As shown in Figure 4.10-1, the Planning Area contains several mapped MRZs, including sand and gravel deposits along the Salinas River and metal ores such as manganese and chromium in the Coast Range west of the Salinas River. The City's current 2025 General Plan and land use maps, as well as CGS (2011b), identify these areas as containing locally important mineral resources, including PCC-grade aggregate deposits along the Salinas River.

Currently, the only mineral extraction site within City limits, the Millhollin Pit, has ceased operations and completed reclamation, and there are no other active mineral resource recovery sites within the Planning Area. Additional sites, such as the Rocky Canyon Quarry, are outside the Planning Area.

Section 5-9 of the Atascadero Municipal Code requires all proposed mining and reclamation activities to obtain a CUP, undergo environmental review under CEQA, and comply with state and local regulations that protect mineral resources and ensure appropriate site reclamation. The 2045 General Plan Update does not include any policies that would change these existing regulatory requirements.

Given the absence of currently active mineral resource recovery sites within the Planning Area, the robust regulatory framework in place, and the ongoing regulatory requirements provided in the City Municipal Code, the project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site as delineated on any local land use plan. Therefore, *no impacts would occur*.

Impact MR-2
The project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts would occur.

4.10.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT MR-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN ANY CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS RELATED TO MINERAL RESOURCES. *(NO IMPACT)*

There are no active mineral extraction operations within the Planning Area, and previously active sites—such as the Millhollin Pit—have been fully reclaimed. The City's Municipal Code and state regulations ensure that any future proposals for mineral resource recovery would be subject to thorough review and oversight. Additionally, the City's infrastructure and capital improvement plans do not identify any projects that would affect the availability of mineral resources or mineral resource recovery sites.

Furthermore, the County continues to update its policies and land use designations to reflect state-identified regionally significant mineral resources, which helps to prevent the closure or loss of important resource sites in the broader region. As a result, the proposed 2045 General Plan Update, in combination with other foreseeable projects, is not expected to result in significant cumulative impacts to mineral resources or mineral resource recovery sites.

The 2045 General Plan Update, when considered together with other regional projects in and around Atascadero, would not result in effects that are cumulatively considerable or significant with respect to mineral resources. Therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Impact MR-3
The project would not result in any cumulatively considerable impacts related to mineral resources.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts would occur.

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4.11 NOISE

The following setting and impact discussion is based, in part, on the *Noise Impact Analysis for City of Atascadero General Plan Update* prepared for the project (EIR Appendix G) (AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting [AMBIENT] 2026). This section includes an in-depth assessment of potential sources of noise generated by the project and the potential for existing sources of noise to disturb proposed land uses.

4.11.1 Existing Conditions

4.11.1.1 Overview of Acoustic Fundamentals

Noise is generally defined as sound that is loud, disagreeable, or unexpected. Sound is mechanical energy transmitted in the form of a wave due to a disturbance or vibration and is described in terms of both amplitude and frequency.

Amplitude is defined as the difference between ambient air pressure and the peak pressure of a sound wave. Amplitude is measured in decibels (dB) on a logarithmic scale and is interpreted by the human ear as corresponding to varying degrees of loudness. Because the decibel scale is logarithmic, sound levels cannot be added using ordinary arithmetic. For example, when two identical sources each produce sound at 65 dB, the combined sound level at a given distance would be 68 dB, not 130 dB, as doubling the sound energy results in a 3-dB increase. Similarly, three sources of equal loudness would result in a 5-dB increase. Laboratory measurements indicate that a 10-dB increase in amplitude is perceived as a doubling of loudness, while a 3-dB change represents the minimum audible difference perceptible to the average person (AMBIENT 2026).

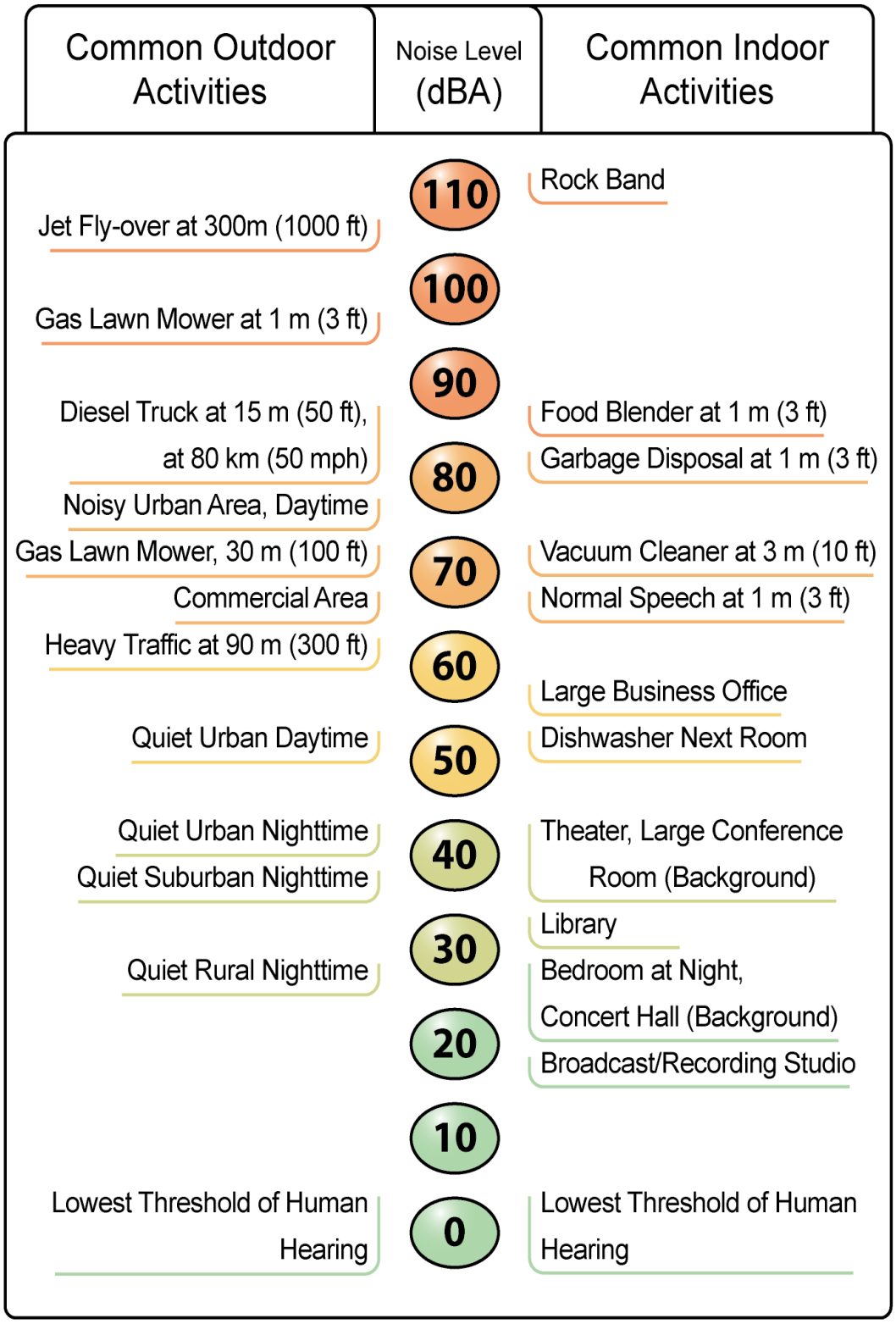
Frequency refers to the number of pressure wave fluctuations per second and is measured in hertz (Hz), with one Hz equal to one cycle per second. The human ear does not respond equally to all frequencies and is generally more sensitive to sounds in the higher portion of the audible range. Sound waves below 16 Hz or above 20,000 Hz are inaudible to humans. To account for this variation in sensitivity, environmental noise is typically measured using A-weighted decibels (dBA). On this scale, the normal range of human hearing extends from approximately 10 dBA to 140 dBA (AMBIENT 2026). Common community noise sources and associated noise levels (in dBA) are depicted in Figure 4.11-1.

4.11.1.2 Sound Propagation and Attenuation

GEOMETRIC SPREADING

Noise sources are generally characterized as either a localized source (i.e., point source) or a line source. Examples of point sources include construction equipment, vehicle horns, alarms, and amplified sound systems. Examples of line sources include trains and on-road vehicular traffic. Sound from a point source propagates uniformly outward in a spherical pattern.

For a point source, sound levels generally decrease (attenuate) at a rate of approximately 6 dBs for each doubling of distance from the source, depending on ground surface characteristics. For acoustically hard sites (i.e., sites with a reflective surface between the source and the receiver), no excess ground attenuation is assumed. Parking lots and bodies of water are examples of hard surfaces which generally attenuate at this rate. For acoustically absorptive or soft sites (i.e., those sites with an absorptive ground surface between the source and the receiver, such as soft dirt, grass, or scattered bushes and trees), an excess ground-attenuation value of 1.5 dB per doubling of distance is normally assumed. When soft surfaces are present, the excess ground attenuation for soft surfaces generally results in an overall attenuation rate of approximately 7.5 dB per doubling of distance from the point source (AMBIENT 2026).



Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Figure 4.11-1. Common Noise Levels

On-road vehicle traffic consists of several localized noise sources on a defined path, and hence can be treated as a line source, which approximates the effect of several point sources. Noise from a line source propagates outward in a cylindrical pattern, often referred to as cylindrical spreading. Sound levels for line sources attenuate at a rate of approximately 3 dB for each doubling of distance for hard sites and approximately 4.5 dB per doubling of distance for soft sites (AMBIENT 2026).

ATMOSPHERIC EFFECTS

Receptors located downwind from a source can be exposed to increased noise levels relative to calm conditions, whereas locations upwind can have lowered noise levels. Sound levels can be increased at large distances (e.g., more than 500 feet) from the highway due to atmospheric temperature inversion (i.e., increasing temperature with elevation). Other factors such as air temperature, humidity, and turbulence can also have significant effects (AMBIENT 2026).

SHIELDING BY NATURAL OR HUMAN-MADE FEATURES

A large object or barrier in the path between a noise source and a receiver can substantially attenuate noise levels at the receiver. The amount of attenuation provided by shielding depends on the size of the object and the frequency content of the noise source. Natural terrain features (e.g., hills and dense woods) and human-made features (e.g., buildings and walls) can substantially reduce noise levels. Walls are often constructed between a source and a receiver specifically to reduce noise. A barrier that breaks the line of sight between a source and a receiver will typically result in minimum noise reduction of 5 dB. Taller barriers provide increased noise reduction (AMBIENT 2026).

Noise reductions afforded by building construction can vary depending on construction materials and techniques. Standard construction practices typically provide approximately 15 dBA exterior-to-interior noise reductions for building facades, with windows open, and approximately 20-25 dBA, with windows closed. With compliance with current building construction and insulation requirements, exterior-to-interior noise reductions typically average approximately 25 dBA. The absorptive characteristics of interior rooms, such as carpeted floors, draperies and furniture, can result in further reductions in interior noise (AMBIENT 2026).

4.11.1.3 Human Response to Noise

The human response to environmental noise is subjective and varies considerably from individual to individual. Noise in the community has often been cited as a health problem, not in terms of actual physiological damage, such as hearing impairment, but in terms of inhibiting general well-being and contributing to undue stress and annoyance (AMBIENT 2026). The health effects of noise in the community arise from interference with human activities, including sleep, speech, recreation, and tasks that demand concentration or coordination. Hearing loss can occur at the highest noise intensity levels. When community noise interferes with human activities or contributes to stress, public annoyance with the noise source increases. The acceptability of noise and the threat to public well-being are the basis for land use planning policies preventing exposure to excessive community noise levels.

Unfortunately, there is no completely satisfactory way to measure the subjective effects of noise or of the corresponding reactions of annoyance and dissatisfaction. This is primarily because of the wide variation in individual thresholds of annoyance and habituation to noise over differing individual experiences with noise. Thus, an important way of determining a person's subjective reaction to a new noise is the comparison of it to the existing environment to which one has adapted: the so-called "ambient" environment. In general, the more a new noise exceeds the previously existing ambient noise level, the less acceptable the new noise will be judged. Regarding increases in A-weighted noise levels, knowledge of the following relationships will be helpful in understanding this analysis (AMBIENT 2026):

- Changes of 1 dB cannot be perceived by humans, except in carefully controlled laboratory experiments;
- Outside of the laboratory, a 3-dB change is considered a just-perceivable difference;
- A change in level of at least 5 dB is required before any noticeable change in community response would be expected. An increase of 5 dB is typically considered substantial;
- A 10-dB change is subjectively heard as an approximate doubling in loudness and would almost certainly cause an adverse change in community response.

A limitation of using a single noise-level increase value to evaluate noise impacts, as discussed above, is that it fails to account for pre-development noise conditions. With this in mind, the Federal Interagency Committee on Noise (FICON) developed guidance to be used for the assessment of project-generated increases in noise levels that take into account the ambient noise level. The FICON recommendations are based upon studies that relate aircraft noise levels to the percentage of persons highly annoyed by aircraft noise. Although the FICON recommendations were specifically developed to assess aircraft noise impacts, these recommendations are often used in environmental noise impact assessments involving the use of cumulative noise exposure metrics, such as the average-daily noise level (i.e., community noise equivalent level [CNEL], day-night average sound level [L_{dn}]). FICON-recommended noise evaluation criteria are summarized in Table 4.11-1 (AMBIENT 2026).

Table 4.11-1. Federal Interagency Committee on Noise Recommended Criteria for Evaluation of Increases in Ambient Noise Levels

Ambient Noise Level Without Project	Increase Required for Significant Impact
<60 dB	5.0 dB, or greater
60–65 dB	3.0 dB, or greater
>65 dB	1.5 dB, or greater

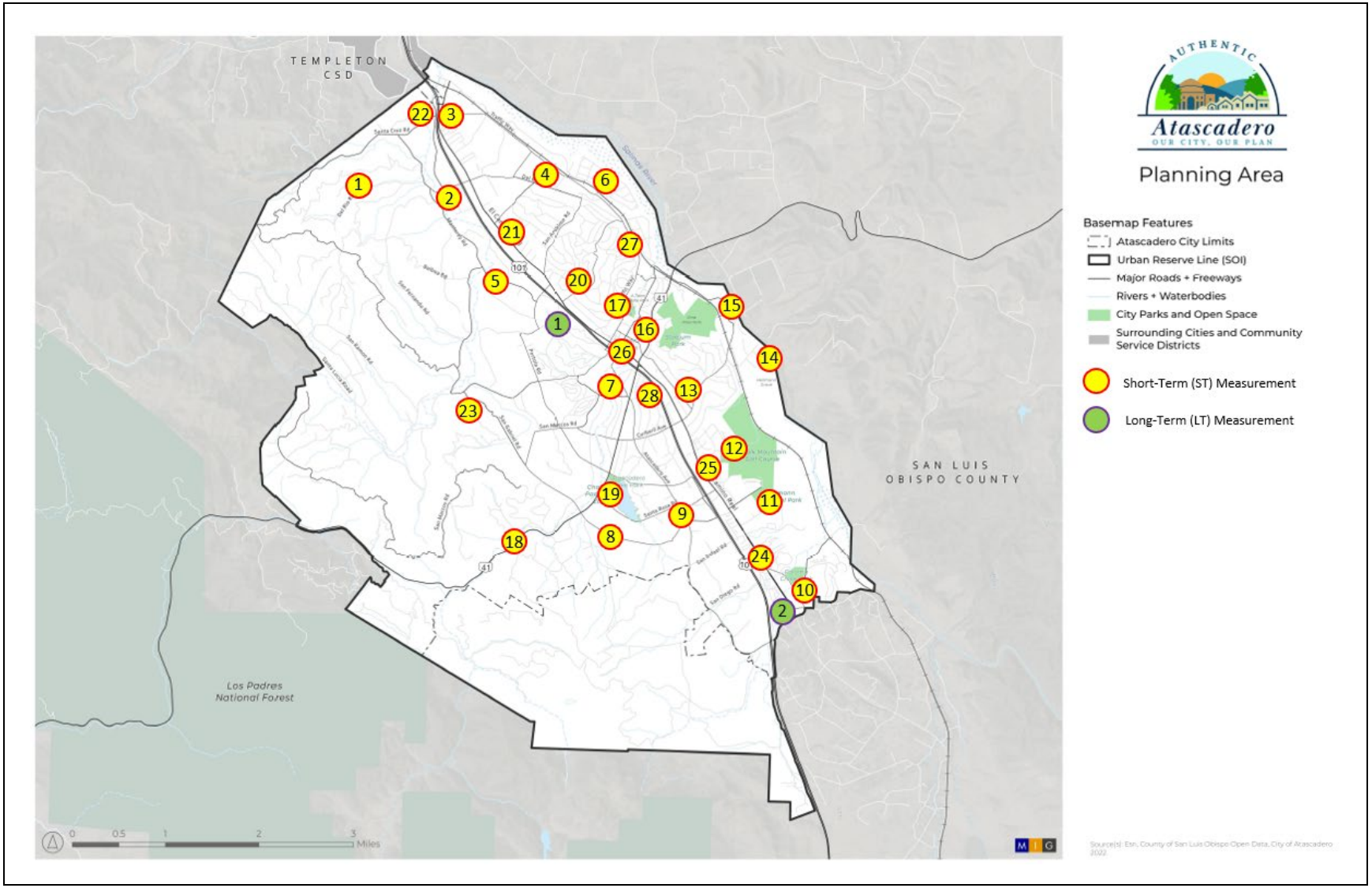
Source: AMBIENT (2026).

As depicted in Table 4.11-1, an increase in the traffic noise level of 5.0, or greater, would typically be considered to result in increased levels of annoyance where existing ambient noise levels are less than 60 dB. Within areas where the ambient noise level ranges from 60 to 65 dB, increased levels of annoyance would be anticipated at increases of 3 dB, or greater. Increases of 1.5 dB, or greater, could result in increased levels of annoyance in areas where the ambient noise level exceeds 65 dB. The rationale for the FICON-recommended criteria is that as ambient noise levels increase, a smaller increase in noise resulting from a project is sufficient to cause significant increases in annoyance (AMBIENT 2026). These criteria are commonly applied for analysis of environmental noise impacts.

4.11.1.4 Existing Noise Environment

MONITORING

Short-term (10-minute) and long-term (24-hour) noise level measurements were conducted from October 10, 2022, through October 13, 2022, for the purposes of documenting and measuring the existing noise environment at various locations throughout the City. Measurement locations were selected near major noise sources and other locations of interest within the Planning Area, as shown in Figure 4.11-2.



Refer to Tables 4.11-2, 4.11-3, and 4.11-4 for corresponding noise measurement data.

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Figure 4.11-2. Ambient noise measurement locations.

SHORT-TERM AMBIENT NOISE MEASUREMENTS

Twenty-eight short-term measurements were conducted. Short-term ambient noise measurement locations and corresponding measured average-hourly noise levels (in dBA equivalent continuous sound level [L_{eq}]) are summarized in Table 4.11-2. Noise measurement locations are depicted in Figure 4.11-2.

As noted in Table 4.11-2, daytime noise levels ranged from approximately 40 to 73 dBA L_{eq}. Ambient noise levels are largely influenced by vehicle traffic on area roadways. To a lesser extent, aircraft overflights and other noise sources within the community (e.g., landscaping, industrial activities, construction activities) also contribute to the ambient noise environment (AMBIENT 2026).

LONG-TERM AMBIENT NOISE MEASUREMENTS

Two long-term measurements were conducted, which are identified as LT-1 and LT-2 in Figure 4.11-2. Noise measurement location LT-1 was located approximately 110 feet west of U.S. Route 101 (U.S. 101), near San Palo Road. Noise measurement location LT-2 was approximately 500 feet east of U.S. 101 and 300 feet west of El Camino Real. Measured ambient noise levels for noise measurement location LT-1 are depicted in Figure 4.11-3 and summarized in Table 4.11-3. Measured ambient noise levels for location LT-2 are depicted in Figure 4.11-3 and summarized in Table 4.11-4.

As noted in Table 4.11-3, measured ambient noise levels at location LT-1 ranged from approximately 68 dBA L_{eq} during the nighttime hours to a high of approximately 81 dBA L_{eq} during the daytime hours. Average-daily noise levels at location LT-1 measured 81 dBA CNEL/L_{dn}. As noted in Table 4.11-4, measured ambient noise levels at location LT-2 ranged from approximately 48 dBA L_{eq} during the nighttime hours to a high of approximately 58 dBA L_{eq} during the daytime hours. Average-daily noise levels at location LT-2 measured 57 dBA CNEL/L_{dn}. In general, nighttime noise levels are typically 5 to 10 dB lower than daytime noise levels (AMBIENT 2026).

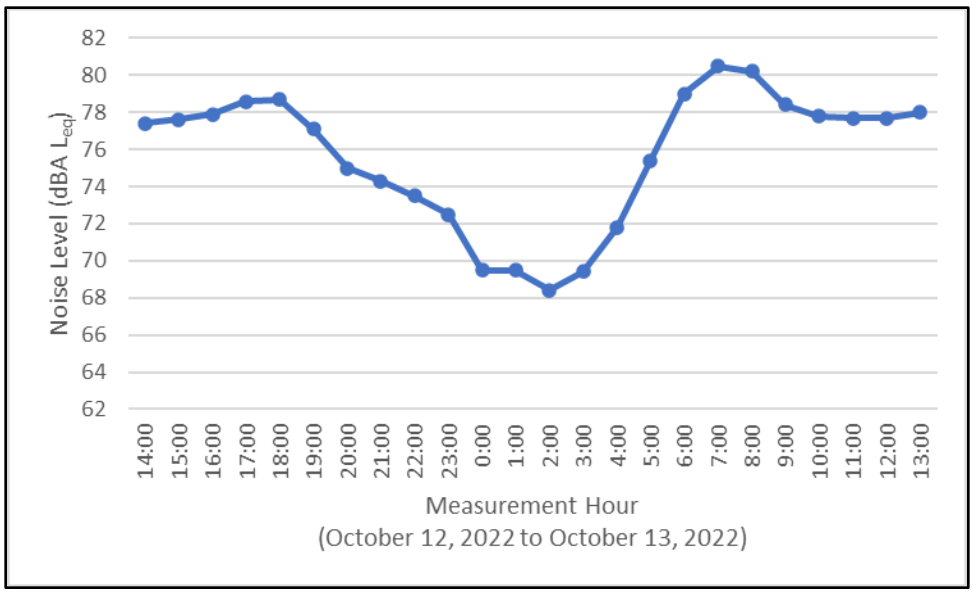
Table 4.11-2. Summary of Short-Term Measured Ambient Noise Levels

Measurement	Location	Measurement Period	Primary Noise Sources	Noise Level (dBA L_{eq})
October 10, 2022				
ST1	7800 Del Rio Road	10:41–10:51	Birds, electrical equipment	44.3
ST2	Apple Valley Park	11:03–11:13	Birds, Traffic, People Walking on Path	45.3
ST3	5400 Santa Cruz Road	11:50–12:00	Distant traffic, birds	57.7
ST4	San Benito Elementary School	12:10–12:20	Birds, truck passby	50.3
ST5	Monterey Road Elementary School	12:32–12:42	Traffic, birds	63.2
ST6	The Lakes Lake	12:57–13:07	Birds	41.5
ST7	High School Hill Road	15:08–15:18	Traffic, dogs	52.6
October 11, 2022				
ST8	Hope Lutheran Church	10:02–10:12	Traffic, propeller plane overflight, dogs, birds	50.7
ST9	9600 Atascadero Avenue	10:26–10:36	Traffic, birds	60.5
ST10	Paloma Creek Park	10:47–10:57	Distant traffic, children, birds	44.4
ST11	Heilmann Regional Park	11:10–11:20	Traffic, golf cart, birds, squirrels	40.4
ST12	8500 El Corte Road	11:31–11:41	Traffic	52.5
ST13	Pueblo Avenue/Sombrilla Avenue	11:53–12:03	Traffic, conversation, propeller plane overflight, dogs	53.5
ST14	7700 Aragon Road	12:16–12:26	Dogs, birds	49.6
ST15	7100 Sycamore Road	12:40–12:50	Traffic, birds, children, sheep/goat	64.7
ST16	5454 CA-41 Parking	13:03–13:13	Traffic	64.8
ST17	Traffic Way Park	13:24–13:34	Traffic	57.8
October 12, 2022				
ST18	12500 CA-41	10:51–11:01	Traffic	67.9
ST19	Atascadero Lake Park	11:25–11:35	Traffic	63.9
ST20	Nogales Avenue/Lobos Avenue	11:56–12:06	Traffic, birds, dog, distant power tool	53.4
ST21	3300 El Camino Real	12:19–12:29	Traffic	68.2
ST22	1000 San Ramon Road	13:24–13:34	Traffic	71.2
ST23	6000 San Gabriel Road	14:06–14:16	Traffic, propeller plane overflight	56.8

Measurement	Location	Measurement Period	Primary Noise Sources	Noise Level (dBA L_{eq})
October 13, 2022				
ST24	10700 El Camino Real	10:40–10:50	Traffic	66.9
ST25	8965 El Camino Real	11:00–11:10	Traffic	71.7
ST26	Sunken Gardens	11:22–11:32	Traffic, water fountain	58.3
ST27	4890 Alamo Avenue	11:45–11:55	Dogs, vehicle passby	56.0
ST28	6050 Marchant Avenue	12:56–13:06	Traffic	73.1

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Note: Noise measurements were conducted from October 10 to 13, 2022. See Figure 4.11-2 for noise measurement locations.



Source: AMBIENT (2026).

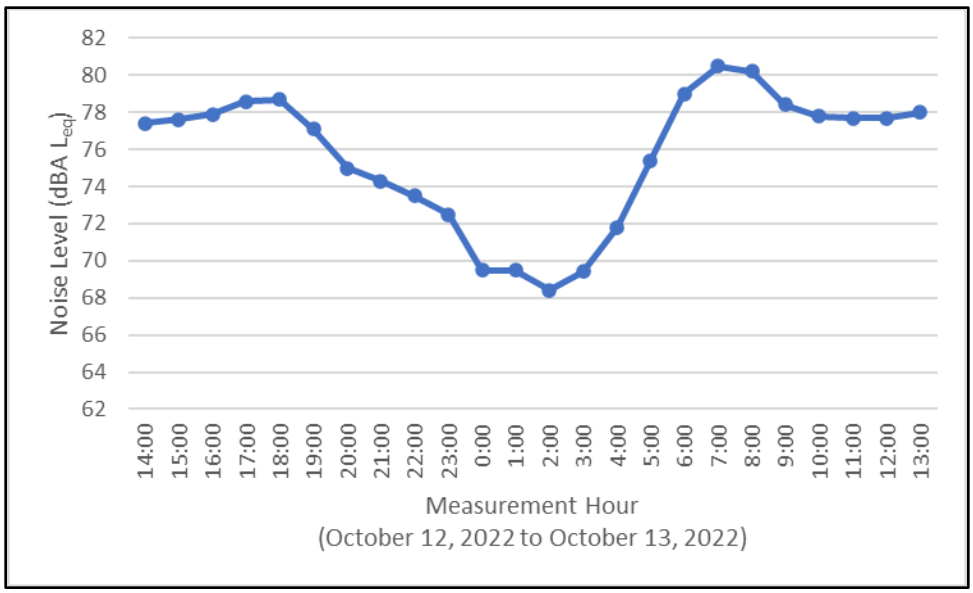
Figure 4.11-3. Measured long-term noise levels at measurement location LT-1.

Table 4.11-3. Measured Long-Term Noise Levels – Measurement Location LT-1

Measurement Hour	Noise Level (dBA L_{eq})	Measurement Hour	Noise Level (dBA L_{eq})
14:00	77.4	2:00	68.4
15:00	77.6	3:00	69.4
16:00	77.9	4:00	71.8
17:00	78.6	5:00	75.4
18:00	78.7	6:00	79
19:00	77.1	7:00	80.5
20:00	75	8:00	80.2
21:00	74.3	9:00	78.4
22:00	73.5	10:00	77.8
23:00	72.5	11:00	77.7
0:00	69.5	12:00	77.7
1:00	69.5	13:00	78

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Notes: Average-daily noise level measured 81 dBA CNEL/L_{dn}. Refer to Figure 4.11-2 for noise measurement locations.



Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Figure 4.11-4. Measured long-term noise levels at measurement location LT-2.

Table 4.11-4. Measured Long-Term Noise Levels – Measurement Location LT-2

Measurement Hour	Noise Level (dBA L_{eq})	Measurement Hour	Noise Level (dBA L_{eq})
15:00	55.7	3:00	47.7
16:00	57.5	4:00	49.3
17:00	54.9	5:00	49.3
18:00	53.3	6:00	53.9
19:00	53.8	7:00	53.5
20:00	52	8:00	52.7
21:00	51.2	9:00	52.4
22:00	50.3	10:00	54.5
23:00	49.7	11:00	55.8
0:00	48.1	12:00	53.4
1:00	48.6	13:00	52
2:00	47.5	14:00	52.3

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Notes: Average-daily noise level measured 57 dBA CNEL/L_{dn}. Refer to Figure 4.11-2 for noise measurement locations.

NOISE SOURCES

Surface Transportation Sources

Roadway Vehicular Traffic

Noise from vehicular traffic on area roadways is a primary source of ambient noise in the Planning Area. Major sources of roadway traffic noise within the City of Atascadero include U.S. 101 and State Route 41 (SR 41). To a lesser extent, other major roadways, such as El Camino Real, also contribute to ambient

traffic noise levels. Existing noise-sensitive land uses located along these traffic corridors consist predominantly of residential land uses, the nearest of which are generally located approximately 50 feet from the near-travel-lane centerline of U.S. 101 and approximately 27 feet from the near-travel-lane centerline of SR 41. Other noise-sensitive land uses generally located along these corridors include, but are not limited to, places of worship, hotels, and recreational uses.

Traffic noise levels were calculated using the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Roadway Noise Prediction Model (FHWA RD-77-108) based on average-daily traffic (ADT) volumes obtained from the traffic analysis prepared for the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update (AMBIENT 2026). Predicted existing traffic noise levels and distances to traffic noise contours for major roadway segments are summarized in Table 4.11-5. Based on the modeling conducted, existing traffic noise levels along area roadways range from approximately 61 to 79 dBA CNEL at 50 feet from the near-travel-lane centerline. Existing transportation noise contours for major roadway segments within the City of Atascadero are depicted in Figure 4.11-5.

Table 4.11-5. Existing Roadway Traffic Noise Levels and Contour Distances

Roadway Segment	ADT Volumes[1]	CNEL at 50 feet from Near-Travel-Lane Centerline	Distance to CNEL Contour (feet from road centerline)		
			70	65	60
U.S. 101: Santa Barbara Road to Santa Rosa Road	55,000	78.7	313	670	1,441
U.S. 101: Santa Rosa Road to Curbaril Avenue	55,000	78.7	313	670	1,441
U.S. 101: Curbaril Avenue to SR-41	55,000	78.7	313	670	1,441
U.S. 101: SR-41 to Traffic Way	63,000	77.5	261	557	1,196
U.S. 101: Traffic Way to San Anselmo Road	63,000	77.5	261	557	1,196
U.S. 101: San Anselmo Road to Del Rio Road	63,000	77.5	261	557	1,196
U.S. 101: Del Rio Road to San Ramon Road	65,000	77.6	266	568	1,221
U.S. 101: San Ramon Road to Vineyard Road	65,000	77.6	262	558	1,221
SR-41: Atascadero Avenue to Curbaril Avenue	10,200	67.3	WR	95	201
SR-41: Santa Rosa Road to Curbaril Avenue	11,100	67.6	WR	100	212
SR-41: US 101 to Atascadero Avenue	13,700	66.1	WR	80	169
SR-41: Santa Ysabel Avenue to Mercedes Avenue	6,300	66.3	WR	68	145
SR-41: Rocky Canyon Road to Mercedes Avenue	5,600	67.7	WR	85	182
El Camino Real: San Ramon Road to Del Rio Road	10,200	66.0	WR	98	295
El Camino Real: Del Rio Road to Rosario Avenue	11,100	66.3	WR	105	321
El Camino Real: Rosario Avenue to SR-41	13,700	61.1	WR	WR	100
El Camino Real: SR-41 to San Diego Road	6,300	63.9	WR	65	184
El Camino Real: San Diego Road to Santa Barbara Road	5,600	63.4	WR	59	164

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Notes: WR = Contour is located within road right-of-way

[1] Traffic volumes were derived from the traffic analysis prepared for this project (AMBIENT 2026). Does not include shielding from intervening structures or terrain.

Railroad Traffic

The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) runs north-south through the City near the western City limits, with a portion of the tracks being adjacent to Traffic Way. Depending on demand, approximately five trains pass through the City daily, including three freight trains and two passenger trains (Amtrak Coast Starlight). Existing noise-sensitive land uses located along the UPRR corridor consist predominantly of residential land uses, the nearest of which are generally located approximately 25 feet from the UPRR track centerline. Another noise-sensitive land use located nearby includes Chalk Mountain Golf Course, which is located approximately 70 feet from the track centerline.

Existing train noise levels and distance to noise contours are summarized in Table 4.11-6. Based on a conservative estimate of 5 trains per day, average-daily noise levels along the railroad corridor would be approximately 66 dBA CNEL at 100 feet from the rail corridor centerline. Train noise events can also be a source of intermittent noise, including noise generated by locomotive engines, wheel squeal, and warning horns. These instantaneous noise events can contribute to increased levels of annoyance to occupants of nearby noise-sensitive land uses. Existing transportation noise contours within the City of Atascadero are depicted in Figure 4.11-5.

Table 4.11-6. Existing Railroad Traffic Noise Levels

Train Type	Number of Trains/Day	CNEL at 100 feet from Railroad Track Centerline	Distance to CNEL Contours (feet from railroad track centerline)		
			70	65	60
Freight and Passenger	5	66	51	108	233

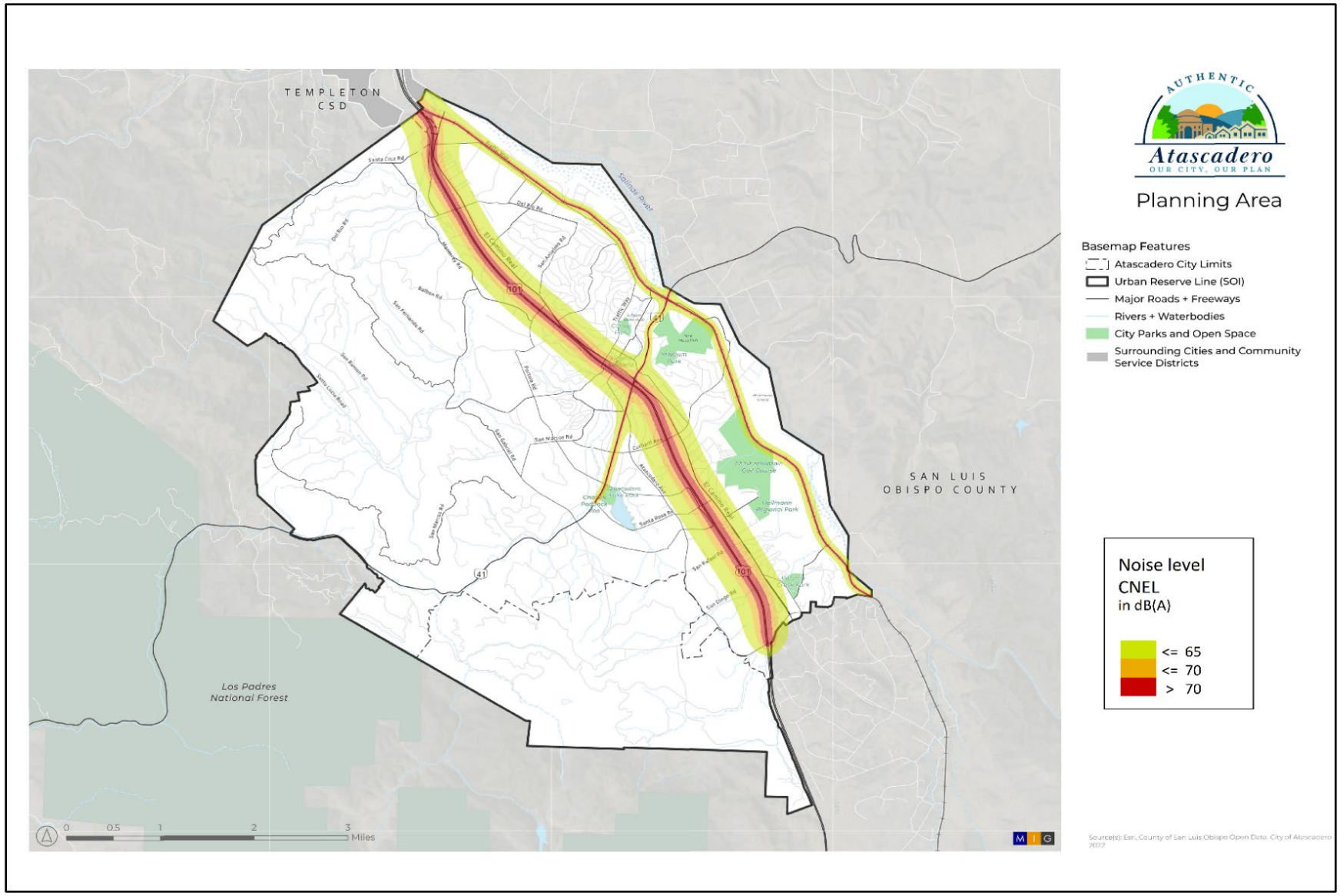
Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Notes: UPRR freight trains distributed equally over a 24-hour period. Does not include shielding provided by intervening terrain or structures. Does not include shielding from intervening structures or terrain. Projected railroad noise contours are depicted in Figure 4.11-5.

Non-Transportation Sources

Within the City, major non-transportation noise sources consist predominantly of industrial and commercial land uses. Many industrial processes produce noise, even when the best available noise control technology is applied. Noise exposures within industrial facilities are controlled by federal and state employee health and safety regulations (i.e., regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor and the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health). Exterior noise levels that affect neighboring parcels are typically subject to local standards. Commercial, recreational, and public facility activities can also produce noise that may affect adjacent noise-sensitive land uses. These noise sources can be continuous or intermittent and may contain tonal components that are annoying to individuals who live nearby. For instance, emergency-use sirens and backup alarms are often considered nuisance noise sources but may not occur frequently enough to be considered incompatible with noise-sensitive land uses. In addition, noise generation from fixed noise sources may vary based upon climate conditions, time of day, and existing ambient noise levels.

From a land use planning perspective, stationary-source noise control issues focus on two goals: (1) preventing the introduction of new noise-producing uses in noise-sensitive areas; and (2) preventing encroachment of noise-sensitive uses upon existing noise-producing facilities. The first goal can be achieved by applying noise performance standards to proposed new noise producing uses. The second goal can be met by requiring new noise-sensitive uses near noise-producing facilities to include noise-reduction measures to ensure compliance with noise performance standards. Each of these goals stresses the importance of avoiding the location of new uses that may be incompatible with adjoining uses.



Predicted noise contours do not include shielding from intervening structures or terrain.

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Figure 4.11-5. Existing Major Transportation Noise Contours.

The following discussions of existing non-transportation noise sources in the community are intended to be representative of the sources and relative noise levels associated with such uses. The average-hourly noise levels (in dBA L_{eq}) discussed for these sources provide an indication of the noise levels that can generally be expected to occur over an extended period of time. The L_{eq} noise levels do not necessarily reflect possible intermittent high noise levels associated with the various uses but are useful for general planning purposes. Actual noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive receptors would vary depending on the operational characteristics of the facility, meteorological conditions, and the physical landscape.

Non-transportation noise sources within the City consist predominantly of commercial and industrial uses. To a somewhat lesser extent, other non-transportation noise sources would also include automotive/equipment repair and maintenance facilities and construction activities. Noise levels associated with some of the more common non-transportation noise sources located throughout the community are discussed in more detail, as follows:

Commercial and Industrial Uses

Within the Planning Area, commercial and industrial land uses are located primarily along major roadways and the UPRR corridor. Noise sources commonly associated with these land uses include truck traffic, loading dock activities, heavy-equipment operation, and building mechanical systems. There are no major industrial and commercial operations (i.e. recycling centers, truck distribution centers, and food and agricultural products processing) within the Planning Area and primary noise sources are associated with vehicle transportation along Highway 101, Highway 41 and El Camino Real. Various other activities, such as loading dock activities, can result in temporary or intermittent increases in ambient noise levels. In general, noise levels associated with these uses can range from approximately 55 to 85 dBA L_{eq} at 50 feet.

Noise levels associated with commercial and industrial land uses can vary depending on various factors, including site conditions, equipment operated, and the specific activities being conducted. As a result, actual noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive receptors varies depending on the above-mentioned conditions and other influences, such as location, distance from source, shielding provided by intervening terrain and structures, and ground attenuation rates. For this reason, noise generated by proposed commercial and industrial uses and impacts to nearby noise-sensitive land uses currently requires a site-specific analysis and compliance with municipal code standards.

Other Non-Transportation Noise Sources

Various other non-transportation noise sources can contribute to noticeable increases in ambient noise levels. Such sources would include, but are not limited to, recreational uses or events, particularly those that utilize amplified sound systems (e.g., sporting events, concerts, festivals, public actions, animal/vehicle exhibitions, etc.); automotive repair facilities; building mechanical systems, and landscape maintenance activities. Recreational uses and events are generally centered within the commercial and downtown area of the City with some events held at the Lake Park and the Zoo. Daytime sports are also hosted at multiple City parks and school grounds including Paloma Park and the Colony Park Community Center. Automotive repair businesses are generally located along El Camino Real and Traffic way in the Commercial Service and Industrial zoning districts. Landscape maintenance spreads throughout the City, both in residential and commercial areas. Noise generated by such sources is often directional and can vary depending on site and operational characteristics.

Concerts and Live Music

Outdoor live music, festivals, and concert events are hosted at several locations within the City; such as, the Atascadero Lake Park, the Sunken Gardens, and The Plaza. Noise levels associated with live music and concerts can vary depending on musical style (e.g., rock, pop, metal, hip-hop, classical, etc.) and amplification. Additionally, noise generated from amplification (speakers) is directional, which can greatly affect operational noise levels at offsite locations.

Landscape Maintenance

Landscape maintenance activities often result in sporadic and intermittent increases in ambient noise levels. Equipment used for landscape maintenance often includes the use of power mowers and leaf blowers. Leaf blowers and gasoline-powered lawnmowers can result in intermittent noise levels of up to approximately 100 dBA at 3 feet (AMBIENT 2026). Resultant exterior noise levels could reach intermittent levels of approximately 75 dBA maximum sound level (L_{max}) at 50 feet. The use of leaf blowers, particularly when used during the more noise-sensitive evening and nighttime hours, may result in increased levels of annoyance.

Automotive Maintenance and Repair

Typical automotive maintenance and repair activities often include the use of pneumatic tools, air compressors, and power generators. These uses are generally clustered along El Camino Real within the existing Commercial Service zoned areas as well as along Traffic Way in the Industrial zoning district. Other equipment operations such as the use of power hand tools (e.g., sanders, drills, grinders, pneumatic wrenches, etc.), typically generate less noise. The use of air compressors, power generators, and pneumatic tools can generate noise levels of up to approximately 85 dBA at 50 feet. Noise levels generated by the use of hand-held tools, such as sanders, drills, and grinders, typically average between 63 and 87 dBA at 3 feet. The use of multiple hand tools, such as grinders being used on metal, can generate levels of 87 to 97 dBA at 3 feet (AMBIENT 2026). Noise levels associated with these facilities would be dependent on the specific activities performed and source/facility characteristics.

Construction Activities

Construction noise typically occurs intermittently and varies depending upon the nature or phase (e.g., demolition/land clearing, grading, and excavation, erection) of construction. Noise generated by construction equipment, including pile drivers, material handling equipment, pavers, jackhammers, and portable generators, can result in intermittent and prolonged increases in ambient noise levels. Although construction noise impacts are generally short-term, they can result in increased levels of annoyance to occupants of nearby residential dwellings. In general, noise levels generated by construction activities can range from approximately 71 to 83 dBA L_{eq} at 50 feet from the source.

Noise-generating construction activities are currently regulated through implementation of the City's noise ordinance, which generally limits these activities to the less noise-sensitive daytime hours (AMBIENT 2026).

4.11.1.5 Noise-Sensitive Land Uses

Noise-sensitive land uses are generally considered to include those uses that would result in noise exposure that could cause health-related risks to individuals. Places where quietness is essential are also considered noise-sensitive uses. Residential dwellings are of primary concern because of the potential for increased and prolonged exposure of individuals to both interior and exterior noise levels. Other land uses such as parks, historic sites, cemeteries, and recreation areas are also considered potentially sensitive to increases

in exterior noise levels. In addition, schools, places of assembly, hotels, libraries, and other facilities where maintaining low interior noise levels is essential are classified as noise-sensitive land uses.

The following noise-sensitive land uses have been identified within the Planning Area:

- Residential land uses, including single-family units and multifamily units
- Schools
- Atascadero State Hospital
- Assisted living/care facilities
- Places of worship
- Hotels and lodging
- Community parks
- San Luis Obispo County Public Library

4.11.2 Regulatory Setting

4.11.2.1 Federal

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

In 1974, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Noise Abatement and Control published a report entitled *Information on Levels of Environmental Noise Requisite to Protect Public Health and Welfare with an Adequate Margin of Safety*. Although this document does not constitute EPA regulations or standards, it is useful in identifying noise levels at which increased levels of annoyance would be anticipated. Based on an annual-average day-night noise level (expressed as L_{dn} or DNL), the document states that "undue interference with activity and annoyance" will not occur if outdoor noise levels in residential areas are below 55 dBA L_{dn} and indoor levels are below 45 dBA L_{dn} (AMBIENT 2026).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines for the acceptability of residential land uses are set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 24, Part 51, "Environmental Criteria and Standards." These guidelines identify an average-daily noise exposure of 65 dBA L_{dn}, or less, as acceptable for residential development. Exterior noise levels of 65 to 75 dBA L_{dn} are considered normally acceptable, provided appropriate sound attenuation is provided to reduce interior noise levels to within acceptable levels. Exterior noise levels above 75 dBA L_{dn} are considered unacceptable. The goal of the interior noise levels for residential, hotel, and hospital/nursing home uses is 45 dBA L_{dn}. These guidelines apply only to new construction supported by HUD grants and are not binding upon local communities (AMBIENT 2026).

TRAIN HORN RULE

Under the federal train horn rule (49 CFR Part 222), locomotive engineers must begin to sound train horns at least 15 seconds, and no more than 20 seconds, in advance of all public grade crossings. In general, depending on train speed, train horns are often sounded within one-quarter mile of a grade crossing. Local communities may reduce the effects of train horns by establishing "quiet zones," which typically incorporate measures to reduce public risk caused by the absence of horn sounding (AMBIENT 2026). Neither the City nor the County has established railroad quiet zones in the Planning Area.

4.11.2.2 State

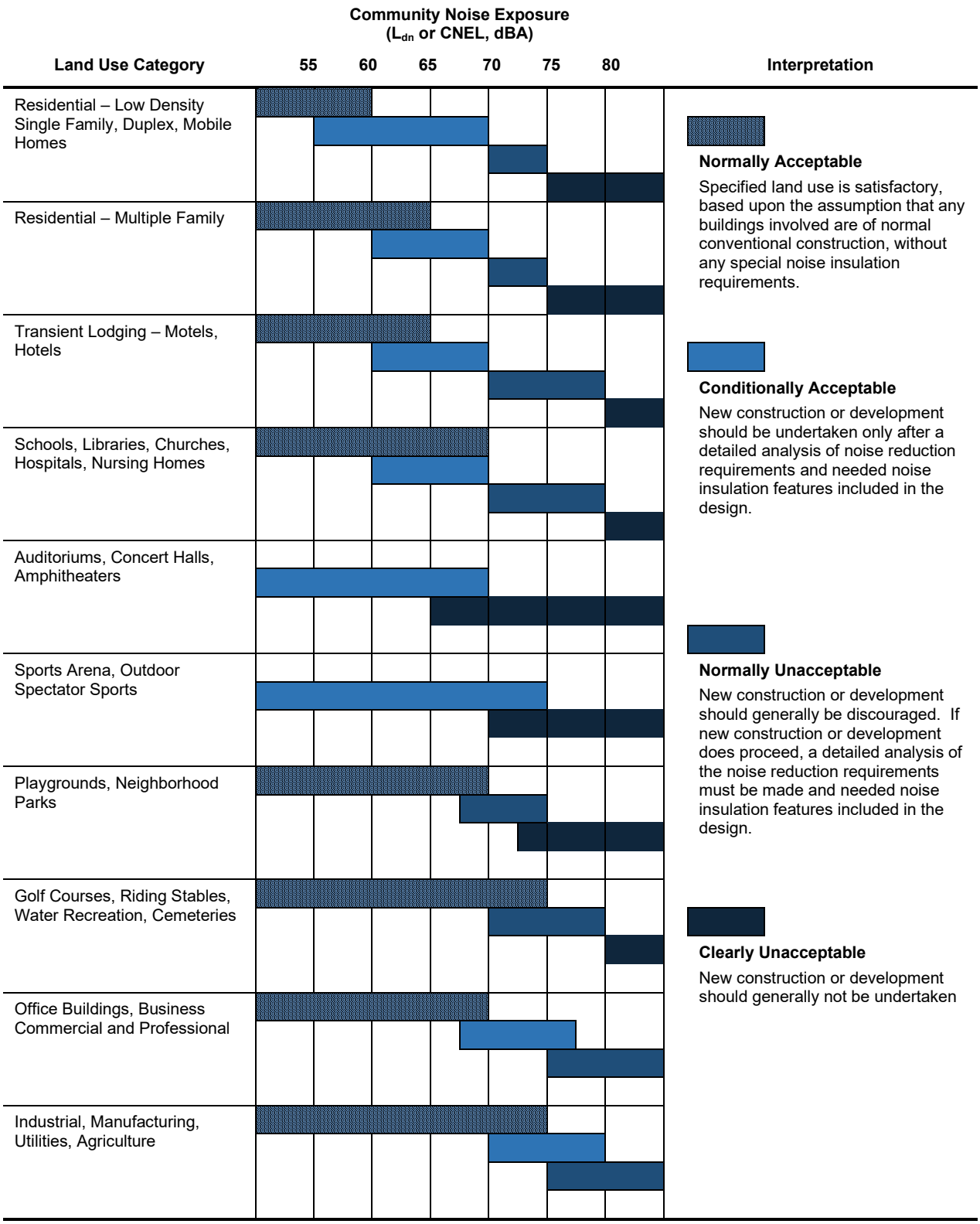
CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE

Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations contains standards for allowable interior noise levels associated with exterior noise sources (California Building Code [CBC], 1998 edition, Volume 1, Appendix Chapter 12, Section 1208A). The standards apply to new hotels, motels, dormitories, apartment houses, and dwellings other than detached single-family residences. The standards specify that interior noise levels attributable to exterior sources shall not exceed 45 dBA CNEL within any habitable room. Proposed multi-family residential structures to be located where the CNEL exceeds 60 dBA shall require an acoustical analysis showing that the proposed building design would achieve the prescribed allowable interior noise standard.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA GENERAL PLAN GUIDELINES

The *State of California General Plan Guidelines*, published by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (now referred to as the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation), provides guidance for the acceptability of new land uses within specific noise environments. The goal of these recommended noise standards is, in part, to allow for a "normally acceptable" interior noise level of 45 dBA CNEL. For instance, assuming an average exterior-to-interior noise reduction of 15 dBA (with windows partially open), an exterior noise level of 60 dBA CNEL for residential land uses, or less, would be sufficient to achieve an interior noise level of 45 dBA CNEL. Higher exterior noise levels may be allowed provided that noise-reduction measures are incorporated to achieve acceptable interior noise levels. Within "conditionally acceptable" exterior noise environments, conventional construction with incorporation of fresh air circulation systems sufficient to allow windows to remain closed would normally suffice. Compliance with current building code requirements and with windows closed, exterior-to-interior noise reductions typically average approximately 25 dBA, or more. The State's guidelines can be modified to reflect communities' sensitivities to noise. The State recommended noise criteria for land use compatibility are summarized in Table 4.11-7 (AMBIENT 2026).

Table 4.11-7. State of California Land Use Compatibility Noise Criteria



Source: AMBIENT (2026).

4.11.2.3 Local

CITY OF ATASCADERO GENERAL PLAN 2025

Safety and Noise Element

The *Atascadero General Plan Safety and Noise Element*, Chapter IV, Section B, identifies exterior average-daily noise standards for the primary purpose of ensuring the compatibility of proposed land uses within exterior noise environments and ensures that noise levels at adjacent land uses do not exceed acceptable levels. These standards are also designed to protect existing land uses, including transportation and industry, from encroaching on urban uses. These noise standards are largely consistent with those identified in the State of California's *General Plan Guidelines*, as discussed above, and summarized in Table 4.11-8 and Table 4.11-9 (AMBIENT 2026).

Table 4.11-8. Maximum Allowable Noise Exposure — Transportation Noise Sources

	Outdoor Activity Areas[1]	Interior Spaces	
Land Use	(L_{dn}/CNEL dB)	(L_{dn}/CNEL dB)	(L_{eq}, dB)[2]
Residential	60[3]	45	--
Transient Lodging	60[3]	45	--
Hospitals, Nursing Homes	60[3]	45	--
Theaters, Auditoriums, Music Halls	--	--	35
Churches, Meeting Halls, Office Buildings	60[3]	--	45
Schools, Libraries, Museums	--	--	45
Playgrounds, Neighborhood Parks	70	--	--

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Notes:

[1] Where the location of outdoor activity areas is unknown, the exterior noise level standards shall be applied to the property line of the receiving land use.

[2] As determined for a typical worst-case hour during periods of use.

[3] Where it is not possible to reduce noise in outdoor activity areas to 60 dB L_{dn}/CNEL or less using a practical application of the best-available noise reduction measures, an exterior noise level of up to 65 L_{dn}/CNEL may be allowed provided that available exterior noise level reduction measures have been implemented and interior noise levels are in compliance with this table.

Table 4.11-9. Allowable Noise Exposure — Stationary Noise Sources

	Daytime	Nighttime
Noise Metric[1]	(7:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.)	(9:00 p.m.–7:00 a.m.)
Hourly Equivalent (L_{eq} dB)[2]	50	45
Maximum Level (dB)[2]	70	65
Maximum Impulse Level (dB)[3]	65	60

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Notes:

[1] As determined at the property line of the receiving land use. When determining the effectiveness of noise mitigation measures, the standards may be applied on the receptor side of the noise barriers or other property line noise mitigation measures.

[2] Sound level measurements shall be made with slow meter response.

[3] Sound level measurements shall be made with fast meter response.

The 2025 General Plan presents the following five goals for the Noise Element:

- **Goal SFN 6:** Protect the citizens of Atascadero from harmful and annoying effects of exposure to excessive noise.
- **Goal SFN 7:** Protect the economic base of Atascadero by preventing incompatible land uses from encroaching upon existing or planned noise-producing uses.
- **Goal SFN 8:** Preserve the tranquility of residential areas by preventing the encroachment of noise-producing sources.
- **Goal SFN 9:** Educate residents of Atascadero concerning the effects of exposure to excessive noise and the methods available for minimizing such exposure.
- **Goal SFN 10:** Avoid or reduce noise impacts through site planning and project design, giving second preference to the use of noise barriers and/or structural modifications to buildings containing noise-sensitive land uses.

The following policies have been adopted by the City to accomplish the goals presented in the Noise Element:

- **Standard Noise Levels**
  - **Policy 1:** The noise standards in this chapter represent maximum acceptable noise levels. New development should minimize noise exposure and noise generation. The City shall maintain a Noise Ordinance that implements the requirements of the Noise Element.
- **Transportation Noise Sources:**
  - **Policy 2:** New development of noise-sensitive land uses shall not be permitted in areas exposed to existing or projected future levels of noise from transportation noise sources which exceed 60 dB or CNEL (70 L_d/CNEL for playgrounds and neighborhood parks) unless the project design includes effective mitigation measures to reduce noise in outdoor activity areas and interior spaces to or below the levels specified for the given land use in Table 8-2.
  - **Policy 3:** Noise created by new transportation noise sources, including roadway improvement projects, shall be mitigated so as not to exceed the levels specified in Table 8-2 within the outdoor activity areas and interior spaces of existing noise sensitive land uses.
- **Stationary Noise Sources:**
  - **Policy 4:** New development of noise-sensitive land uses shall not be permitted where the noise level due to existing stationary noise sources will exceed the noise level standards of Table 8-3 unless effective noise mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design of the development to reduce noise exposure to or below the levels specified in Table 8-3.
  - **Policy 5:** Noise created by new proposed stationary noise sources or existing stationary noise sources which undergo modifications that may increase noise levels shall be mitigated so as not to exceed the noise level standards of Table 8-3 on lands designated for noise-sensitive uses. This policy does not apply to noise levels associated with agricultural operations.
- **Existing and Cumulative Noise Impacts**
  - **Policy 6:** The City shall consider implementing mitigation measures where existing noise levels produce significant noise impacts to noise sensitive land uses or where new development may result in cumulative increases of noise upon noise-sensitive land uses.

ATASCADERO MUNICIPAL CODE

The existing Municipal Code (Title 9, *Planning and Zoning*; Chapter 14, *Noise*) includes various provisions intended to protect community residents from prolonged unnecessary, excessive, and annoying sound levels that are detrimental to public health, welfare, and safety, or are contrary to the public interest. Examples of noise sources subject to the City's municipal code include, but are not limited to, industrial and commercial machinery and equipment, pumps, fans, compressors, generators, air conditioners, and refrigeration equipment (AMBIENT 2026).

Noise sources associated with construction-related activities are typically exempt from the City's ordinance provided that the activities do not take place before the hours of seven a.m. or after nine p.m. or by special permit from the Community Development Director. Various other activities are also exempt, including, but not limited to, school entertainment and athletic events, mobile sources associated with agricultural activities, and emergency response activities (AMBIENT 2026).

In addition, the City's noise ordinance sets exterior and interior (Title 9, Sections 9-14.05 and 9-14.06, respectively) noise level standards. The City's exterior noise level standards are summarized in Table 4.11-10, and interior noise level standards are summarized in Table 4.11-11. The exterior noise level standards are applied at the property line of the receiving land use. Where practical, the microphone shall be positioned three to five feet above the ground and away from reflective surfaces. The interior standards applied within the affected dwelling unit, when both the source and receiver are residential land uses. The reported interior noise level shall be determined by taking the arithmetic average of the readings taken at the various microphone locations (AMBIENT 2026).

Table 4.11-10. City of Atascadero Municipal Code Exterior Noise Level Standards

Noise Metric[1]	Daytime (7:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.)	Nighttime (9:00 p.m.–7:00 a.m.)
Hourly Equivalent (L_{eq} dB)[2, 3]	50	45
Maximum Level (dB)[2, 3]	70	65

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

[1] It is unlawful for any person at any location within the incorporated area of the City to create any noise, or to allow the creation of any noise, on property owned, leased, occupied, or otherwise controlled by such person which causes the exterior noise level when measured at any affected single or multiple-family residence, school, hospital, church or public library situated in the City to exceed the noise level standards as set forth in the table.

[2] In the event the measured ambient noise level exceeds the applicable noise level standard in any category above, the applicable standard shall be adjusted so as to equal the ambient noise level.

[3] Each of the noise level standards specified above shall be reduced by five (5) dB for simple tone noises, noises consisting primarily of speech or music, or for recurring impulsive noises.

Table 4.11-11. City of Atascadero Municipal Code Interior Noise Level Standards

Noise Metric[1]	Daytime (7:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.)	Nighttime (9:00 p.m.–7:00 a.m.)
Hourly Equivalent (L_{eq} dB)[2, 3]	40	35
Maximum Level (dB)[2, 3]	60	55

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

[1] It is unlawful for any person at any location within the incorporated area of the City to create any noise, or to allow the creation of any noise, on property owned, leased, occupied, or otherwise controlled by such person which causes the exterior noise level when measured at any affected single or multiple-family residence, school, hospital, church or public library situated in the City to exceed the noise level standards as set forth in the table.

[2] In the event the measured ambient noise level exceeds the applicable noise level standard in any category above, the applicable standard shall be adjusted so as to equal the ambient noise level.

[3] Each of the noise level standards specified above shall be reduced by five (5) dB for simple tone noises, noises consisting primarily of speech or music, or for recurring impulsive noises.

4.11.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by the California Environmental Quality Act and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on noise if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies.

b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.

c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.11.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.11.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

The following impact assessment is based, in part, on the *Noise Impact Analysis for the City of Atascadero General Plan Update* prepared by AMBIENT (AMBIENT 2026), the *Safety & Noise Element* of the Atascadero 2025 General Plan, and the City's Municipal Code. A significant impact related to noise would occur if the proposed project would result in an increase in short- or long-term environmental noise within the vicinity of the project or if the proposed project would generate groundborne noise or vibration in a manner that could cause disturbance to historic buildings or humans.

The *Noise Impact Analysis* used a combination of existing literature and general application of accepted noise thresholds to determine the impact of ambient noise levels resulting from and on development within the Planning Area. Short-term and long-term impacts associated with transportation and non-transportation noise sources are qualitatively assessed based on potential increases in ambient noise levels anticipated to occur at noise-sensitive land uses based on implementation of the 2045 General Plan and associated Zoning Code Update. Traffic noise levels along major area roadways are estimated using the FHWA Highway Traffic Noise Prediction model (FHWA-RD-77-108). The FHWA modeling is based upon the Calveno noise-emission factors for automobiles and medium- and heavy-duty trucks. Input data used in the model includes ADT volumes, day/night percentages of automobiles and medium- and heavy-duty trucks, vehicle speeds, ground attenuation factors, roadway widths, and ground elevation data. Traffic volumes for major roadway segments within the City were derived from the traffic analysis prepared for this project (AMBIENT 2026).

Predicted train noise levels and corresponding distances to noise contours for the UPRR railroad corridor are calculated in accordance with Federal Transit Administration Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment guidance (AMBIENT 2026). Train noise levels are quantified taking into account passenger and freight train traffic along the UPRR corridor, with the sounding of train horns.

4.11.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project generate a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

IMPACT N-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT GENERATE A SUBSTANTIAL TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT INCREASE IN AMBIENT NOISE LEVELS IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROJECT IN EXCESS OF STANDARDS ESTABLISHED IN THE LOCAL GENERAL PLAN OR NOISE ORDINANCE, OR APPLICABLE STANDARDS OF OTHER AGENCIES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update includes noise standards for transportation noise sources and non-transportation noise sources (Tables 4.11-12 and 4.11-13).

Table 4.11-12. Atascadero 2045 General Plan Maximum Allowable Noise Standards for Transportation Noise Sources

Noise Sensitive Land Use	Interior Occupied Spaces (dBA)		Outdoor Activity Areas (dBA)[1]
	CNEL	L_{eq}[6]	
Residential	45[4]	--	65[2, 3]
Mixed-Use Residential	45[4]	--	--
Convalescent Care Facilities, Hospitals	45[4]	--	70[2, 3]
Transient Lodging	45	--	65[2, 3]
Schools, Libraries, Museums and Places of Worship	--	45	--
Playgrounds, Neighborhood Parks	--	--	70[5]
Office Buildings	--	45	70[3]

Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

[1.] To be applied at outdoor activity areas. Where the location of outdoor activity areas is unknown, the exterior noise level standard shall be applied at the property line of the receiving land use.

[2.] Where it is not possible to reduce exterior noise levels to 65 dBA CNEL, or less, an exterior noise level of 70 dBA CNEL may be allowed provided that an acoustical analysis has been prepared for the project to identify available exterior noise-reduction measures to be incorporated and interior noise levels are in compliance with this table. For multi-family development, the exterior noise standard may be applied at a designated on-site outdoor common-use area in lieu of individual unit patios or balconies.

[3.] Where outdoor activity areas are not included in the project design, only the interior noise level standard shall apply.

[4.] In locations where railroad noise is the predominant noise source, the interior noise standard for residential land uses shall be reduced by 5 dB to account for the increased potential for sleep disruption to building occupants.

[5.] Where quiet is a basis for use.

[6.] This standard is intended to apply to land uses with operational hours predominantly during the daytime hours. The interior noise standard applies to a typical worst-case hour during the period of use.

Table 4.11-13. Atascadero 2045 General Plan Maximum Allowable Noise Standards for Non-Transportation Noise Sources

Noise Metric	Daytime (7:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.)	Evening (7:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.)	Nighttime (10:00 p.m.–7:00 a.m.)
Exterior Noise Standards[1,2]			
Hourly Equivalent (L_{eq} dBA)[3, 5]	55	50	45
Maximum Level (L_{max} dBA)[4, 5]	75	70	65
Interior Noise Standards[6]			
Hourly Equivalent (L_{eq} dBA)[3, 5]	45	40	35
Maximum Level (L_{max} dBA)[4, 5]	60	55	45

Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

1. As determined at the outdoor activity area of the receiving noise-sensitive land use. Where the location of outdoor activity areas is unknown, the exterior noise level standard shall be applied at the property line of the receiving land use. In the event the measured ambient noise level exceeds the applicable noise level standard the applicable standard shall be adjusted so as to equal the ambient noise level.

2. Exterior noise standards are to be applied in noise-sensitive outdoor activity areas. Excludes mixed-use residential and school playgrounds.

3. L_{eq} = Average or "Equivalent" noise level during the worst-case operational hour of use. Sound level measurements shall be made with slow meter response.

4. L_{max} = Highest measured sound level occurring during a given interval of time (e.g., 1 hour). Sound level measurements shall be made with fast meter response.

5. Where the noise source in question consists of speech or music, or is impulsive in nature, or contains a pure tone, the noise standards are reduced by 5 dB.

6. As determined within occupied areas of the receiving noise-sensitive structure. In the event the measured ambient noise level exceeds the applicable noise level standard the applicable standard shall be adjusted so as to equal the ambient noise level.

Short-term construction and long-term operational noise impacts associated with implementation of the project are discussed below.

Short-term Exposure to Construction Noise

Construction noise typically occurs intermittently and varies depending upon the nature or phase (e.g., demolition/land clearing, grading and excavation, erection) of construction. Noise generated by construction equipment, including earth movers, material handlers, and portable generators, can reach high levels. Temporary increases in ambient noise levels, particularly during the nighttime hours, could result in increased levels of annoyance and potential sleep disruption. Although noise ranges are similar for all construction phases, the grading phase tends to involve the most equipment and results in slightly higher average hourly noise levels. Typical noise levels for individual pieces of construction equipment and distances to predicted noise contours are summarized in Table 4.11-14. As depicted, individual equipment noise levels typically range from approximately 74 to 88 dBA L_{eq} at 50 feet. Typical operating cycles may involve 2 minutes of full power, followed by 3 or 4 minutes at lower settings. Intermittent noise levels can range from approximately 77 to 95 dBA L_{max}, the loudest of which include the use of pile drivers and impact devices (e.g., hoe rams, impact hammers) (AMBIENT 2026).

Assuming a construction noise level of 88 dBA L_{eq} and an average attenuation rate of 6 dBA per doubling of distance from the source, exterior noise levels at sensitive receptors located within approximately 1,330 feet of the construction activity could reach and/or exceed 60 dBA L_{eq}. Depending on distances from nearby noise-sensitive land uses, the specific construction activities conducted, and intervening shielding, construction activities may result in temporary and periodic increases in ambient noise levels at nearby receptors and exceed the Maximum Allowable Noise Standards set forth in the 2045 General Plan and City Noise Ordinance. Of particular concern are activities that occur during the evening and nighttime hours. Construction activities that occur during these more noise-sensitive hours may result in increased levels of annoyance and potential sleep disruption to occupants of nearby residential dwellings. As a result, future

development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could have the potential to cause a substantial temporary or periodic rise in ambient noise levels in the Planning Area above existing conditions and could expose individuals to, or generate, noise levels that exceed standards established in the 2045 General Plan or Noise Ordinance, as well as applicable standards of other agencies or neighboring jurisdictions.

Table 4.11-14. Typical Individual Construction Equipment Noise Levels

Equipment	Typical Noise Level (dBA) 50 feet from Source		Distance to Noise Contours (feet, dBA L_{eq})		
	L_{max}	L_{eq}	70 dBA	65 dBA	60 dBA
Air Compressor	80	76	105	187	334
Auger/Rock Drill	85	78	133	236	420
Backhoe/Front End Loader	80	76	105	187	334
Blasting	94	74	83	149	265
Boring Hydraulic Jack/Power Unit	80	77	118	210	374
Compactor (Ground)	80	73	74	133	236
Concrete Batch Plant	83	75	94	167	297
Concrete Mixer Truck	85	81	187	334	594
Concrete Mixer (Vibratory)	80	73	74	133	236
Concrete Pump Truck	82	75	94	167	297
Concrete Saw	90	83	236	420	748
Crane	85	77	118	210	374
Dozer/Grader/Excavator/Scraper	85	81	187	334	594
Drill Rig Truck	84	77	118	210	374
Generator	82	79	149	265	472
Gradall	85	81	187	334	594
Hydraulic Break Ram	90	80	167	297	529
Jack Hammer	85	78	133	236	420
Impact Hammer/Hoe Ram (Mounted)	90	83	236	420	748
Pavement Scarifier/Roller	85	78	133	236	420
Paver	85	82	210	374	667
Pile Driver (Impact/Vibratory)	95	88	420	748	1,330
Pneumatic Tools	85	82	210	374	667
Pumps	77	74	83	149	265
Truck (Dump/Flat Bed)	84	80	167	297	529

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

The *2045 General Plan Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element* includes the following goal, policy and action item aimed at reducing construction noise:

- **Goal SEP-5:** Neighborhoods that maintain a strong quality of life while supporting a vibrant and thriving economy.
    - **Policy SEP-5.1: Noise Ordinance.** Maintain and update the City's Noise Ordinance to balance the economic, social, and rural vision of Atascadero.
        - **Action A:** Update the Noise Ordinance to incorporate construction best management practices to minimize construction noise when construction activities would be located within 1,000 feet of noise-sensitive land uses.

Construction activities in the City of Atascadero are generally permitted between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., and construction occurring outside of these hours requires approval from the Community Development Director pursuant to the City's Municipal Code (Atascadero Municipal Code Section 9-14.03(c)). Compliance with the City's Municipal Code and implementation of 2045 General Plan Policy SEP-5.1, Action A would reduce the potential for construction noise to exceed applicable standards. The City's Noise Ordinance regulates the hours during which construction activities may occur and effectively limits construction noise exposure during more noise-sensitive evening and nighttime periods. In addition, Policy SEP-5.1, Action A calls for updates to the Noise Ordinance to incorporate construction best management practices (BMPs) that minimize construction noise when activities occur within 1,000 feet of noise-sensitive land uses. These measures would limit the timing of construction activities and require the use of noise-reduction practices to minimize noise exposure at nearby receptors. Due to the short-term and intermittent frequency of construction noise, and the required compliance with the City's municipal code and 2045 General Plan Policy SEP-5.1, Action A, construction noise level increases would not result in a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in excess of standards established in the 2045 General Plan or noise ordinance. As a result, this impact would be *less than significant*.

Long-term Exposure to Non-Transportation Noise

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would allow for the future development of new residential, commercial, and industrial land uses within the City limits. Potential noise/land use conflicts would occur at the interface between planned residential and commercial land uses due to noise sources typically associated with commercial and industrial activities, such as rooftop-mounted HVAC equipment, delivery trucks, car washes, equipment/vehicle repair, and amplified sound. The 2045 General Plan identifies maximum allowable noise standards for transportation noise sources (see Table 4.11-12). In addition, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would also include noise standards for non-transportation noise sources (see Table 4.11-13). While the 2045 General Plan follows the land use patterns existing today, addition development is likely to occur, including densification of residential uses with the urban core and intensification of commercial and mixed-use development to support the City's economic goals. Depending on the uses proposed and the location of nearby noise-sensitive land uses, predicted non-transportation levels could potentially exceed the City's noise standards.

The *2045 General Plan Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element* includes the following goal and policies that would help to further reduce criteria noise impacts on receptors:

- **Goal SEP-5:** Neighborhoods that maintain a strong quality of life while supporting a vibrant and thriving economy.
    - **Policy SEP-5.1: Noise Ordinance.** Maintain and update the City's Noise Ordinance to balance the economic, social, and rural vision of Atascadero.
    - **Policy SEP-5.2: Land Use Compatibility.** Prevent noise-sensitive land uses from encroaching upon existing or planned noise-producing uses, such as permitted industrial businesses and commercial activities, to allow businesses enterprises to thrive.

- **Policy SEP-5.3: Residential Noise Reduction.** Preserve the tranquility of rural single-family residential areas by preventing the encroachment of noise-producing uses.
- **Policy SEP-5.4: Site Planning.** Avoid or reduce noise impacts through site planning, project design, and implementation of the California Building Code and Health and Safety Code.
- **Policy SEP-5.7: Stationary Noise.** Reduce the impacts of stationary noise sources.

Compliance with these policies and with the City's Noise Ordinance, which sets maximum noise level standards for exterior and interior noise based on time of time, would ensure specific projects adhere to the allowable noise levels and would mitigate any significant noise nuisance from commercial activities, rooftop-mounted HVAC equipment, delivery trucks, car washes, and amplified sound. Therefore, implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not result in ambient noise level environments at noise-sensitive uses that exceed the City's maximum allowable noise exposure standards set forth in Tables 4.11-12 and 4.11-13 (AMBIENT 2026). Therefore, future noise/land use conflicts between planned residential and commercial land would be *less than significant*.

Long-term Exposure to Transportation Noise

Major noise sources in the Planning Area consist predominantly of vehicle traffic on area roadways. Major roadway segments in the City include, but are not limited to, U.S. 101, SR 41, and El Camino Real. As previously discussed, rail traffic along the UPRR also contributes to transportation noise levels in the community. Roadway traffic noise and UPRR noise impacts are discussed in greater detail, as follows:

Roadway Traffic Noise

Traffic noise levels were estimated using the FHWA Highway Traffic Noise Prediction model (FHWA-RD-77-108) for existing and future cumulative (year 2045) conditions. Predicted future cumulative traffic noise levels and distances to projected noise contours are summarized in Table 4.11-15. It is important to note that predicted noise contours are approximate and do not take into account shielding or reflection of noise due to intervening terrain or structures. As a result, predicted noise contours should be considered to represent bands of similar noise exposure along roadway segments, rather than absolute lines of demarcation. Although these predicted noise contours are not considered site-specific, they are useful for determining potential land use conflicts.

Predicted increases in future cumulative traffic noise levels, in comparison to existing traffic noise levels, are summarized in Table 4.11-16. As shown in Table 4.11-16, the following five roadway segments of U.S. 101 would result in significant increases in traffic noise: SR-41 to Traffic Way, Traffic Way to San Anselmo Road, San Anselmo Road to Del Rio Road, Del Rio Road to San Ramon Road, and San Ramon Road to Vineyard Road. Therefore, under future cumulative conditions with buildout of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update and in comparison, to existing conditions, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would contribute to significant increases in traffic noise levels along various roadway segments, including portions of U.S. 101 (see Table 4.11-16). Development pursuant to the 2045 General plan and associated Zoning Code Update will focus new development within the existing urban core of the City. This includes areas along Morro Rd (Highway 41) and El Camino Real. The proposed land uses include allowances for mixed-use development along these key corridors, potentially expanding residential uses within these areas. Based on these factors, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update could be exposed to traffic noise levels in excess of the City's noise standards for land use compatibility (see Table 4.11-7) (AMBIENT 2026). This impact would be *potentially significant*.

Table 4.11-15. 2045 General Plan Buildout Roadway Traffic Noise Levels and Contour Distances

Road Segment	ADT Volumes[1]	Speed (mph)	CNEL at 50 feet from Near Travel-Lane Centerline	Distance to CNEL Contour (feet)		
				70 dBA	65 dBA	60 dBA
U.S. 101: Santa Barbara Road to Santa Rosa Road	63,000	65	79.3	341	731	1,573
U.S. 101: Santa Rosa Road to Curbaril Avenue	64,000	65	79.4	345	739	1,589
U.S. 101: Curbaril Avenue to SR-41	63,000	65	79.3	341	731	1,573
U.S. 101: SR-41 to Traffic Way	73,000	65	80	376	806	1,735
U.S. 101: Traffic Way to San Anselmo Road	72,000	65	79.9	373	799	1,719
U.S. 101: San Anselmo Road to Del Rio Road	68,000	65	79.6	359	769	1,655
U.S. 101: Del Rio Road to San Ramon Road	70,000	65	79.8	366	784	1,687
U.S. 101: San Ramon Road to Vineyard Road	71,000	65	79.8	369	791	1,703
SR-41: Atascadero Avenue to Curbaril Avenue	13,900	45	68.6	56	116	246
SR-41: Santa Rosa Road to Curbaril Avenue	13,400	45	68.5	55	113	241
SR-41: US 101 to Atascadero Avenue	17,500	35	67.2	WR	94	199
SR-41: Santa Ysabel Avenue to Mercedes Avenue	8,300	45	67.5	WR	81	175
SR-41: Rocky Canyon Road to Mercedes Avenue	7,700	55	69.1	WR	105	226
El Camino Real: San Ramon Road to Del Rio Road	13,900	45	67.3	WR	130	401
El Camino Real: Del Rio Road to Rosario Avenue	13,400	45	67.2	WR	126	387
El Camino Real: Rosario Avenue to SR-41	17,500	25	62.2	WR	WR	126
El Camino Real: SR-41 to San Diego Road	8,300	45	65.1	WR	81	241
El Camino Real: San Diego Road to Santa Barbara Road	7,700	45	64.8	WR	76	224

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Notes: mph = miles per hour; WR = Contour is located within road right-of-way
Predicted 2045 roadway traffic noise contours for U.S. 101 and SR-41 are depicted in Figure 4.11-4.

[1] Traffic volumes were derived from the traffic analysis prepared for this project (AMBIENT 2026). Does not include shielding provided by intervening terrain or structures

Table 4.11-16. Traffic Noise Levels – Existing Compared to 2045 General Plan

Roadway Segment	CNEL at 50 feet from Near-Travel-Lane Centerline			
	Existing Conditions	2045 General Plan Buildout	Increase[1]	Potentially Significant?[2]
U.S. 101: Santa Barbara Road to Santa Rosa Road	78.7	79.3	0.6	No
U.S. 101: Santa Rosa Road to Curbaril Avenue	78.7	79.4	0.7	No
U.S. 101: Curbaril Avenue to SR-41	78.7	79.3	0.6	No
U.S. 101: SR-41 to Traffic Way	77.5	80.0	2.5	**Yes**
U.S. 101: Traffic Way to San Anselmo Road	77.5	79.9	2.4	**Yes**
U.S. 101: San Anselmo Road to Del Rio Road	77.5	79.6	2.1	**Yes**
U.S. 101: Del Rio Road to San Ramon Road	77.6	79.8	2.2	**Yes**
U.S. 101: San Ramon Road to Vineyard Road	77.6	79.8	2.2	**Yes**
SR-41: Atascadero Avenue to Curbaril Avenue	67.3	68.6	1.3	No
SR-41: Santa Rosa Road to Curbaril Avenue	67.6	68.5	0.9	No
SR-41: US 101 to Atascadero Avenue	66.1	67.2	1.1	No
SR-41: Santa Ysabel Avenue to Mercedes Avenue	66.3	67.5	1.2	No
SR-41: Rocky Canyon Road to Mercedes Avenue	67.7	69.1	1.4	No
El Camino Real: San Ramon Road to Del Rio Road	66.0	67.3	1.3	No
El Camino Real: Del Rio Road to Rosario Avenue	66.3	67.2	0.9	No
El Camino Real: Rosario Avenue to SR-41	61.1	62.2	1.1	No
El Camino Real: SR-41 to San Diego Road	63.9	65.1	1.2	No
El Camino Real: San Diego Road to Santa Barbara Road	63.4	64.8	1.4	No

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

[1] Significant increases are based on the following thresholds (see Table 4.11-1):

- 5.0, or greater, where the existing noise level is less than 60 dBA
- 3.0, or greater, where the existing noise level is 60-65 dBA
- 1.5, or greater, where the existing noise level is greater than 65 dBA

[2] Traffic noise levels were calculated based on traffic volumes derived from the traffic analysis prepared for this project, see Table 4.11-15.

Railroad Traffic Noise

As described in Section 4.11.1, *Existing Conditions*, the UPRR runs north-south through the City near the western City limits with a portion of the tracks adjacent to Traffic Way. Depending on demand, approximately five trains pass through the City on a daily basis including three freight trains and two passenger trains (Amtrak Coast Starlight). By 2045, freight trains traveling along this corridor could potentially increase, depending on future demand. However, projected future train volumes along the UPRR are currently not available.

Predicted train noise levels and distance to noise contours are summarized in Table 4.11-17. Based on a conservative estimate of 5 trains per day, average-daily noise levels along the railroad corridor would be approximately 66 dBA CNEL at 100 feet from the rail corridor centerline. Although the proposed 2045 General Plan would not result in an increase in train traffic, the development of future land uses near the train tracks and could be exposed to train noise levels in excess of the State's noise standards for land use compatibility (see Table 4.11-7). Train noise events can also be a source of intermittent noise, including noise generated by locomotive engines, wheel squeal, and warning horns. These instantaneous noise events

could contribute to increased levels of annoyance to occupants of nearby noise-sensitive land uses. Land uses permitted along the rail corridor under the proposed 2045 General Plan are primarily industrial and employment-oriented uses, similar to existing development patterns. Existing residential areas located near the rail corridor would generally remain the same as today, and the proposed 2045 General Plan does not designate new residential land uses immediately adjacent to the tracks.

Table 4.11-17. Predicted Railroad Traffic Noise Levels

Train Type	Number of Trains/Day	CNEL at 100 feet from Railroad Track Centerline	Distance to CNEL Contours (feet from railroad track centerline)		
			70	65	60
Freight and Passenger	5	66	51	108	233

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Notes: UPRR freight trains distributed equally over a 24-hour period. Does not include shielding provided by intervening terrain or structures. Does not include shielding from intervening structures or terrain. Projected railroad noise contours are depicted in Figure 4.11-6.

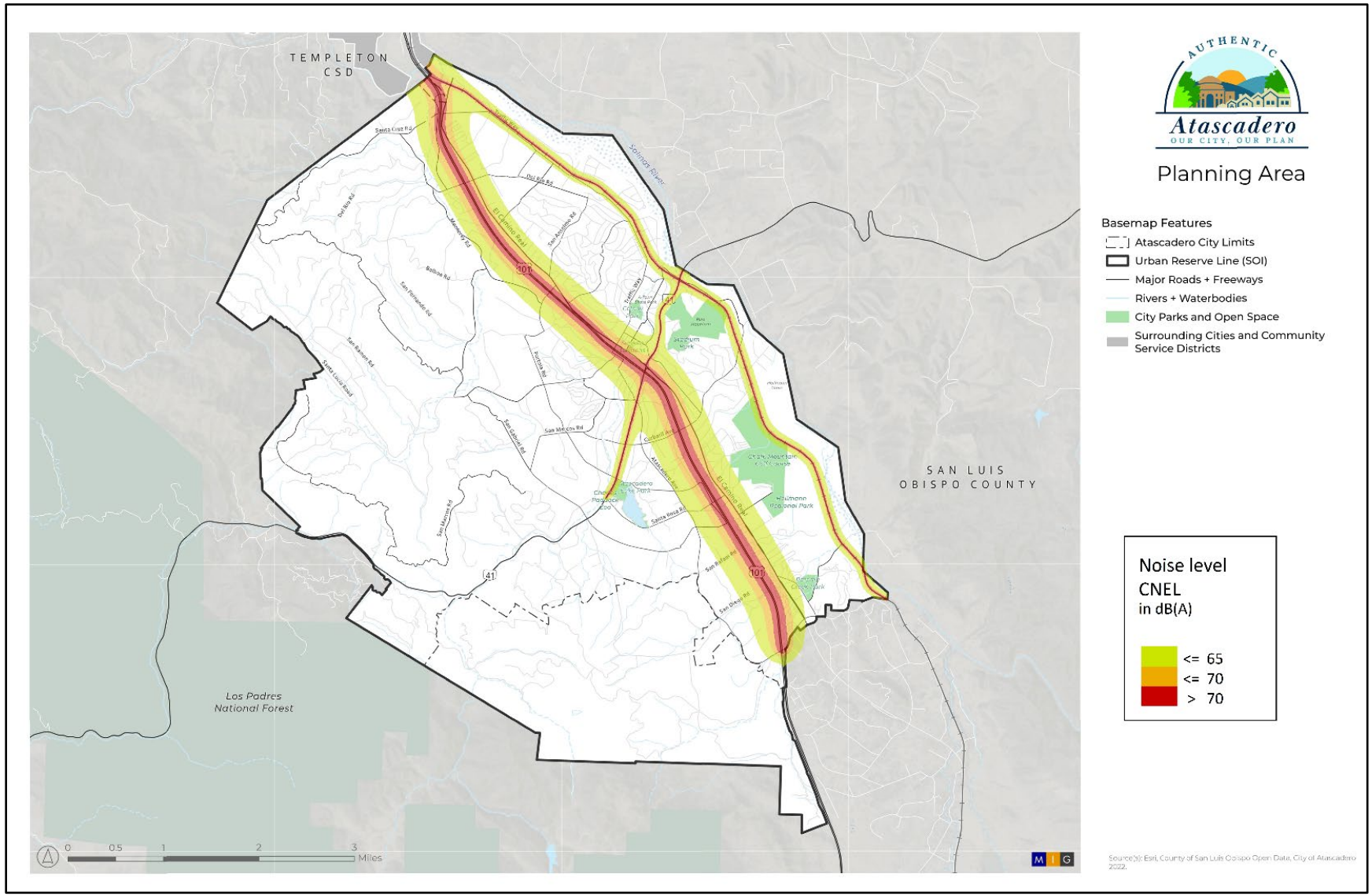
The *2045 General Plan Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element* includes the following policies that would help to further reduce potential transportation noise impacts to noise-sensitive land uses:

- **Policy SEP-5.2: Land Use Compatibility.** Prevent noise-sensitive land uses from encroaching upon existing or planned noise-producing uses, such as permitted industrial businesses and commercial activities, to allow businesses enterprises to thrive.
- **Policy SEP-5.3: Residential Noise Reduction.** Preserve the tranquility of rural single-family residential areas by preventing the encroachment of noise-producing uses.
- **Policy SEP-5.4: Site Planning.** Avoid or reduce noise impacts through site planning, project design, and implementation of the California Building Code and Health and Safety Code.
- **Policy SEP-5.6: Transportation Noise.** Reduce the impacts of transportation-related noise.

The *2045 General Plan Mobility Element* includes the following policies that would help to further reduce potential transportation noise impacts to noise-sensitive land uses:

- **Policy MO-1.2: Multimodal Options.** Increase pedestrian and bicycle connections and safety between residential areas and commercial areas along major corridors, parks and recreation opportunities, and neighboring communities.
- **Policy MO-1.3: Regional Facilities.** Provide regional roadway facilities that minimize through traffic intrusion on local streets and mitigate impacts on local traffic.
- **Policy MO-1.6: Truck Routes.** Ensure the new and existing business that use large trucks as a core part of their operations, more than just routine delivery, minimize maintenance impacts on City infrastructure and noise impacts on residents.

Short term construction noise, long term non transportation noise, and railroad traffic noise would not result in a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in excess of standards established in the 2045 General Plan or the City's Noise Ordinance. However, the traffic noise analysis identified that buildout of the 2045 General Plan could contribute to increases in roadway traffic noise along certain segments of U.S. 101 that exceed the applicable significance thresholds when compared to existing conditions. As a result, long-term roadway traffic noise represents a potentially significant impact.



Note: Predicted noise contours do not include shielding from intervening structures or terrain.

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Figure 4.11-6. Future noise contours – major surface transportation noise sources.

Although impacts related to short-term construction noise, long-term non-transportation noise, and long-term railroad transportation noise would be less than significant for the project, long-term transportation noise related to roadways has the potential to result in substantial temporary or permanent increases in ambient noise levels in excess of the 2045 General Plan and the City's Noise Ordinance. Implementation of the 2045 General Plan policies would reduce potential long-term transportation noise impacts related to roadways to less than significant. Policies SEP-5.2, SEP-5.3, SEP-5.4, and SEP-5.6 require consideration of noise compatibility during land use planning, site design, and project review to avoid or reduce transportation noise exposure at noise sensitive land uses. In addition, the 2045 General Plan Mobility Element policies MO-1.2, MO-1.3, MO-1.4, and MO-1.6 promote multimodal transportation options, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and manage truck routes to minimize traffic related noise in residential areas. Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be subject to review for project-related noise impacts and incorporate necessary noise-reduction measures, including those required by the CBC. Noise-reduction measures typically implemented to reduce traffic noise include increased insulation, setbacks, and construction of sound barriers. Additionally, General Plan policies MO-1.2, MO-1.3 and MO-1.6 promote alternative means of transportation and minimize noise impacts to residents associated with heavy truck traffic. Implementation of these policies and actions would reduce impacts associated with implementation of the project. In addition, the 2045 General Plan includes noise standards for transportation noise sources (see Table 4.11-12). These standards would be maintained, adopted, and implemented through the Zoning Code Update, which would incorporate the applicable noise limits and require consistency with the General Plan noise standards during project review. With implementation of the proposed 2045 General Plan policies, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact N-1
The project would not generate a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residuals impacts related to substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies would be considered less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

IMPACT N-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT GENERATE EXCESSIVE GROUNDBORNE VIBRATION OR GROUNDBORNE NOISE LEVELS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The effects of ground vibration can vary from no perceptible effects at the lowest levels, low rumbling sounds and detectable vibrations at moderate levels, and slight damage to nearby structures at the highest levels. At the highest levels of vibration, damage to structures is primarily architectural (e.g., loosening and cracking of plaster or stucco coatings) and rarely results in structural damage. The effects of ground

vibration are influenced by the duration of the vibration and the distance from the vibration source. Table 4.11-18 summarizes the potential effects of various groundborne vibration levels.

Table 4.11-18. Summary of Groundborne Vibration Levels and Potential Effects

Vibration Level (in/sec ppv)[1]	Human Reaction	Effect on Buildings
0.006–0.019	Threshold of perception; possibility of intrusion.	Vibrations unlikely to cause damage of any type.
0.08	Vibrations readily perceptible.	Recommended upper level of the vibration to which ruins and ancient monuments should be subjected.
0.10	Level at which continuous vibrations begin to annoy people.	Virtually no risk of architectural damage to normal buildings.
0.20	Vibrations annoying to people in buildings (this agrees with the levels established for people standing on bridges and subjected to relative short periods of vibrations).	Threshold at which there is a risk of architectural damage to fragile buildings.
0.4–0.6	Vibrations considered unpleasant by people subjected to continuous vibrations and unacceptable to some people walking on bridges.	Potential risk of architectural damage may occur at levels above 0.3 in/sec ppv for historic-era or older buildings, particularly in order or more fragile residential structures, and above 0.5 in/sec ppv for newer structures.

Source: AMBIENT (2026).

Note: in/sec = inches per second; ppv = peak-particle velocity

[1] The vibration levels are based on peak particle velocity in the vertical direction for continuous vibration sources, which includes most construction activities

There are no federal, state, or local regulatory standards for vibration; however, various criteria have been established to assist in the evaluation of vibration impacts. For instance, Caltrans has developed vibration criteria based on human perception and structural damage risks. For newer structures, Caltrans considers a peak-particle velocity (ppv) threshold of 0.5 inches per second (in/sec) to be the level at which architectural damage (i.e., minor cracking of plaster walls and ceilings) to normal structures may occur. Below 0.10 in/sec there is "virtually no risk of 'architectural' damage to normal buildings." Damage to historic or ancient buildings could occur at levels of 0.08 in/sec ppv. In terms of human annoyance, continuous vibrations in excess of 0.1 in/sec ppv are identified by Caltrans as the minimum level perceptible level for ground vibration. Short periods of ground vibration in excess of 0.2 in/sec ppv can be expected to result in increased levels of annoyance to people within buildings (AMBIENT 2026).

Groundborne vibration sources located within the Planning Area that could potentially affect future development resulting from implementation of the project would be primarily associated with construction activities. Apart from pavement breaking and pile driving, construction activities and related equipment typically generate groundborne vibration levels of less than 0.2 in/sec, which is the architectural damage risk threshold recommended by Caltrans (AMBIENT 2026). Based on Caltrans measurement data, use of off-road tractors, dozers, earthmovers, and haul trucks generates groundborne vibration levels of less than 0.10 in/sec, or one half of the architectural damage risk level, at 10 feet. The highest vibration level associated with a pavement breaker was 2.88 in/sec at 10 feet. During pile driving, vibration levels near the source depend mainly on the soil's penetration resistance as well as the type of pile driver used. Impact pile drivers tend to generate higher vibration levels than vibratory or drilled piles. Groundborne vibration levels of pile drivers can range from approximately 0.17 to 1.5 in/sec ppv. Caltrans indicates that the distance to the 0.2 in/sec ppv criterion for pile driving activities would occur at a distance of approximately 50 feet. However, with construction-generated noise levels, pile driving can result in a high potential for human annoyance from vibrations, and pile-driving activities are typically considered as potentially significant if these activities are performed within 200 feet of occupied structures (AMBIENT 2026).

The *2045 General Plan Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element* includes the following policy and action item that would help to reduce potential excessive groundborne noise levels:

- **Policy SEP-5.1: Noise Ordinance.** Maintain and update the City's Noise Ordinance to balance the economic, social, and rural vision of Atascadero.
    - **Action A:** Update the Noise Ordinance to incorporate construction BMPs to minimize construction noise when construction activities would be located within 1,000 feet of noise-sensitive land uses.

Standard construction BMPs, such as maintaining equipment in good working condition, locating stationary equipment away from sensitive receptors, and avoiding high-vibration construction methods where feasible, would help reduce groundborne vibration levels during construction. In addition, compliance with the City's Noise Ordinance, which generally limits construction activities to daytime hours (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.; Atascadero Municipal Code Section 9-14.03(c)), would reduce the potential for construction-related groundborne vibration to affect nearby sensitive receptors during nighttime periods when occupants are more likely to be present and disturbance would be more noticeable. Due to the short-term nature of construction vibrations, the intermittent frequency of construction vibrations, and the required compliance with the City's hourly restrictions related to construction activities, construction vibration level increases would not result in exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration that would result in a significant increase in annoyance. By restricting the hours of construction to avoid vibrations during times when it could potentially be more of a nuisance, the impact of new construction vibration is reduced. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact N-2
The project would not generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels would be considered less than significant (Class III).

c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

IMPACT N-3: THE PROJECT IS NOT LOCATED WITHIN THE VICINITY OF A PRIVATE AIRSTRIP OR AN AIRPORT LAND USE PLAN OR WITHIN TWO MILES OF A PUBLIC AIRPORT OR PUBLIC USE AIRPORT AND WOULD NOT EXPOSE PEOPLE RESIDING OR WORKING IN THE PROJECT AREA TO EXCESSIVE NOISE LEVELS. *(NO IMPACT)*

The Planning Area is not located within an airport land use plan or within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport and would not result in impacts related to exposure of people to excessive aircraft-related noise levels. Therefore, *no impacts* would occur.

Impact N-3
The project is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or within two miles of a public airport or public use airport and would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
There are no residual impacts related to exposure of people to excessive aircraft-related noise levels (No impact).

4.11.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT N-4: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACT TO NOISE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Noise impacts are generally localized and depend on site specific factors such as proximity to transportation corridors, existing ambient noise levels, land use compatibility, and the nature and timing of noise generating activities. While multiple development projects within a region may contribute incrementally to overall ambient noise levels, noise does not typically accumulate in a manner that fundamentally alters the regional acoustic environment. Instead, potential impacts are most appropriately evaluated at the project level where specific noise sources may affect sensitive receptors and applicable standards can be addressed through design and regulatory compliance.

The cumulative noise setting includes existing and projected growth within the Planning Area. Major contributors to the cumulative noise environment include vehicular traffic on regional and local roadways, rail traffic along the UPRR corridor, construction activities associated with new development, and ongoing commercial and industrial operations. As described in the discussion for Impact N-1, ambient noise levels within the Planning Area are already influenced primarily by transportation sources particularly U.S. 101, SR 41 and El Camino Real with localized contributions from rail operations and non-transportation sources.

All future development resulting from the implementation of the project would be required to comply with the *2045 General Plan Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element,* the City's municipal code, the CBC, and State regulations regarding land use compatibility and noise standards. Construction-related noise, while potentially noticeable on a cumulative basis due to overlapping development activities, would be temporary and intermittent in nature. Compliance with the City's municipal code, including restrictions on construction hours and implementation of construction BMPs, would limit the potential for cumulative construction noise to result in substantial increases in ambient noise levels or prolonged disturbance to sensitive receptors.

Long term cumulative transportation noise increases associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update were evaluated using accepted modeling methodologies and significance criteria that account for existing ambient noise conditions (see Table 4.11-16). Under future cumulative conditions with buildout of the 2045 General Plan and in comparison, to existing conditions, the 2045 General Plan would contribute to significant increases in traffic noise levels along various roadway segments, including potions of U.S. 101 (see Table 4.11-16); however, where increases could occur, 2045 General Plan policies related to land use compatibility site planning and transportation demand reduction would further minimize cumulative effects.

Implementation of the City's regulatory framework along with the policies and actions contained in the 2045 General Plan, would ensure that potential noise impacts are addressed incrementally and would not be combined to create a significant cumulative effect. Therefore, cumulative noise impacts associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be *less than significant*.

Impact N-4
The project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact to noise.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts related to cumulative impacts related to noise impacts would be considered less than significant (Class III).

4.12 POPULATION AND HOUSING

This section provides information on the existing population, housing, and employment statistics and trends within the City of Atascadero, County of San Luis Obispo, and the state and evaluates the potential effects of the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update on these factors.

4.12.1 Existing Conditions

4.12.1.1 Population

Based on the 2060 Regional Growth Forecast prepared by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), San Luis Obispo County's population grew 14.5% from 246,681 people in 2000 to 282,424 in 2020. From 2000 to 2009, San Luis Obispo County's population grew at an average of 1.0% per year, the same average as the state and nation. Between 2010 and 2019, the San Luis Obispo County's population growth rate averaged 0.6%, which was lower than the state and nation's average of 0.7%. Subsequently, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted population growth trends and the ability to accurately calculate population data. California's growth rate was negative during the early years of the pandemic. In 2020, for the first time in 30 years, San Luis Obispo County's population growth rate was negative. From 2020 to 2025, the average annual population growth rate for the SLOCOG region was −0.2%. As of 2025, San Luis Obispo County's population has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. Latest estimates for 2025 estimate San Luis Obispo County's population to be approximately 279,337 people, while in 2019 the region had 282,935 people (SLOCOG 2025).

The City of Atascadero's population trends from 2000 to 2024 are provided below in Table 4.12-1, alongside the County of San Luis Obispo's population trends over the same time frame. In 2024, the California Department of Finance (CDOF) reported Atascadero's population at 30,279 residents (City of Atascadero 2020). Atascadero is the third largest incorporated city in San Luis Obispo County accounting for approximately 11% of the County's total population (SLOCOG 2025). The City of Atascadero population grew 7% between 2010 to 2018, with an average annual growth rate of just under 1%. Growth in Atascadero during this period was slower than growth seen in Paso Robles (10%) but more than in the City of San Luis Obispo (5%) and County of San Luis Obispo (6%) during the same period (City of Atascadero 2020).

Table 4.12-1. City of Atascadero and County of San Luis Obispo Population Trends 2000 to 2024

Population	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2024
Atascadero	26,411	27,497	28,310	30,432	30,800	30,279
Atascadero Average Annual Growth (%)	–	0.82	0.59	1.5	0.24	−0.34
San Luis Obispo County – Countywide	246,681	259,213	269,637	279,620	282,424	278,469
County Average Annual Growth (%)	–	1.02	0.80	0.73	0.20	-0.35

Source: SLOCOG (2025).

According to the SLOCOG 2060 Regional Growth Forecast, the population of the City of Atascadero is projected to increase to 31,841 residents by 2040, which is an approximately 5.2% increase from the City's 2024 population (an annual growth rate of 0.33%). The 2050 population projection for the City of Atascadero is 32,342 residents (SLOCOG 2025).

4.12.1.2 Housing

HOUSING SUPPLY

Single-family homes make up more than three-quarters of Atascadero's housing stock. The variety of housing types has remained stable over the period from 2010 to 2018, with slight growth in single-family homes and multifamily units (Table 4.12-2).

Table 4.12-2. Trends in Housing Type

Housing Type	2010		2020	
	Units	Percent (%)	Units	Percent (%)
Single-Family Detached	8,068	72	8,563	70
Single-Family Attached	427	4	538	4
Multifamily 2–4 Units	1,030	9	1,078	9
Multifamily 5+ Units	1,241	11	1,443	12
Mobile Homes	517	5	533	4
Other (e.g., RV Park)	0	0	0	0
Total Units	11,283	100	12,155	100

Source: City of Atascadero (2020).

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Household composition and size are often interrelated and are indicators of the types of housing appropriate for Atascadero residents. Most "householders" (head of household) in Atascadero are between the ages of 35 to 65 years old, although the proportion of householders in this age group decreased by 6% from 2010 to 2018. From 2010 to 2018, the number of householders over the age of 65 increased from 22% to 25%. The percentage of family households fell slightly from 69% in 2010 to 68% in 2018. The average household size increased from 2.51 in 2010 to 2.56 in 2018 (City of Atascadero 2020).

Census data show that higher-paying managerial/professional jobs are decreasing among Atascadero residents, while typically lower-paying service jobs are increasing. In 2018, 33% of Atascadero residents held managerial/professional jobs, representing a 7% decrease in this job category from 2010 compared with a 4% increase in service jobs during that same time (City of Atascadero 2020). According to the U.S. Census, the median household income in Atascadero increased from $65,479 in 2010 to $69,587 in 2018. The largest increase occurred within the $100,000 or more income brackets. The less than $10,000 income category also grew by 1% between 2010 and 2018 (City of Atascadero 2020).

Certain groups have more challenges finding decent, affordable housing due to their special circumstances. Special circumstances may be related to one's income-earning potential, family characteristics, the presence of physical or mental disabilities, or age-related health issues. As a result, certain groups typically earn lower incomes and have higher rates of overpayment for housing or live in overcrowded housing, including senior citizens, persons with disabilities, large families, single-parent families, farmworkers, and people in need of emergency shelter (City of Atascadero 2020).

HOUSING COST AND AFFORDABILITY

According to the U.S. Census, the median household income in Atascadero increased from $65,479 in 2010 to $88,830 in 2023 (City of Atascadero 2020; U.S. Census Bureau 2024). According to data collected by CoreLogic, the median sale price of all homes (single-family units and condominium units) sold in Atascadero was $702,000 as of November 2025, which was approximately 6% lower than the previous year (Redfin 2025).

Realtor.com data can be used to compare median home prices in Atascadero and neighboring cities in October 2025. Median home sales prices in Atascadero are shown to be lower than neighboring cities and the County (Realtor.com 2025). According to U.S. Census data, the median rent in Atascadero from 2019 to 2023 was $1,855 per month (U.S. Census Bureau 2024). The median rents in Atascadero are slightly lower than the surrounding county median rents as estimated by Realtor.com (Realtor.com).

Homes priced at the 2025 median sales prices of $702,000 for Atascadero are affordable only to households in the upper end of the moderate-income range (Redfin 2025). Thus, homeownership is challenging for many moderate-income households and out of range for low-, very low- and extremely low-income households. Average rents are affordable for moderate-income households but are unaffordable without overpayment or overcrowding for households earning at the low-, very low- and extremely low-income levels.

JOBS-TO-HOUSING RATIO

A jurisdiction's jobs-to-housing ratio is a key indicator of both availability of jobs within an area and availability of local housing. The jobs-to-housing balance is a planning tool used to review whether a community has a healthy balance between jobs and the housing supply available to potentially house workers for those jobs. This balance may be impacted by the match between wage levels and housing costs, whether all workers in a house have employment in the community in which they live, whether preferences are met within the community for either housing or employment, and whether options are available nearby for either housing or employment. As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the City's total employment in 2024 was 9,729 jobs, resulting in a jobs-to-housing ratio of 0.77 (MIG 2025). This means that there are more housing units in Atascadero than jobs. Atascadero is considered a "bedroom community" due to the high percentage of residents who commute outside of the City for work. Commute patterns, demographic shifts, and homeownership trends (i.e., low residential turnover rates and lower median home sale prices compared to neighboring cities) continue to compound the demand for housing in Atascadero.

4.12.1.3 Employment

The major industries employing Atascadero residents are shown in Table 4.12-3 below. From 2010 to 2018, the total number of employed residents increased from 12,828 to 15,361 (City of Atascadero 2020). As of 2018, the education, health, and social services industry accounted for the largest share of Atascadero employment, accounting for 28%, a 1% decrease from 2010. Retail trade is the second largest industry, offering 12% of total jobs, followed closely by professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services at 10% of the jobs, a 35% increase from 2000. Retail trade and finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing both had two-percent job losses from 2010 to 2018. The SLOCOG 2060 Regional Growth Forecast estimates employment in Atascadero to increase to 12,988 jobs by 2050 (SLOCOG 2025).

Table 4.12-3. City of Atascadero Employment by Industry

Employment Sector	2010		2020		Percent Change
Educational, health and social services	3,717	29.0%	3,781	24.1%	−4.90%
Retail trade	1,418	11.5%	2,162	13.8%	2.30%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	1,317	10.3%	1,323	8.4%	−1.90%
Construction	1,129	8.8%	1,330	8.5%	−0.30%
Public administration	1,089	8.5%	1,210	7.7%	−0.80%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	821	6.4%	1,529	9.7%	3.30%
Manufacturing	760	5.9%	1,191	7.6%	1.70%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	691	5.4%	727	4.6%	−0.80%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	641	5.0%	634	4.0%	−1.00%
Other services	583	4.5%	912	5.8%	1.3%
Wholesale trade	268	2.1%	228	1.5%	−0.60%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	180	1.4%	158	1.0%	−0.40%
Information	151	1.2%	520	3.3%	2.10%
Total	**12,765**		**15,705**		

Source: City of Atascadero (2020).

Census data show that higher-paying managerial/professional jobs are decreasing among Atascadero residents, whereas typically lower-paying service jobs are increasing. In 2018, 33% of Atascadero residents held managerial/professional jobs, representing a 7% decrease in this job category from 2010 compared with a 4% increase in service jobs during that same time (City of Atascadero 2020).

4.12.2 Regulatory Setting

Population and housing for the project area are governed primarily by state and local regulations that would apply to future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan. Relevant state and local regulations that are directly relevant to the project are summarized below.

4.12.2.1 Federal

There are no federal regulations related to population and housing applicable to the project.

4.12.2.2 State

CALIFORNIA HOUSING LAW

The California State Housing Element Law (California Government Code Sections 65580–65589.8), enacted in 1969, recognizes the vital role local governments play in the supply and affordability of housing. Local governments in California are required to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the jurisdiction, including a housing element. The Housing Element Law requires local governments to adequately plan to meet the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community within a given planning period. The law acknowledges that for the private

market to adequately address housing needs and demand, local governments must adopt land use plans and regulatory systems that provide opportunities for, and do not unduly constrain, housing development. The Housing Element Law also requires the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to review local housing elements for compliance with state law and to report its written findings to the local government.

CALIFORNIA SENATE BILL 9 (URBAN DWELLING UNITS/URBAN SUBDIVISIONS)

On September 16, 2021, the Governor approved Senate Bill (SB) 9 (amending Government Code Section 66452.6; adding Government Code Sections 65852.21 and 66411.7). The goal of this bill is to help combat the housing crisis by encouraging small-scale residential development on eligible lots through streamlining the process for construction of up to two primary dwellings and/or subdivision of an existing lot. As such, this bill has two main components:

a. Development Component (Construction of Two Primary Dwellings): Construct up to two primary dwellings on an eligible lot; and

b. Subdivision Component (Lot Split): Subdivide an eligible lot of at least 2,400 square feet into two lots.

An applicant may use one or both components of SB 9. If only the development component is used, an eligible lot could qualify to be established with up to for total dwelling units as prescribed by state law. Figures 4.12-1a and 4.12-1b provide examples of the maximum residential development potential based on various development scenarios. The examples listed below are not exhaustive, as other combinations of dwelling unit types are possible.

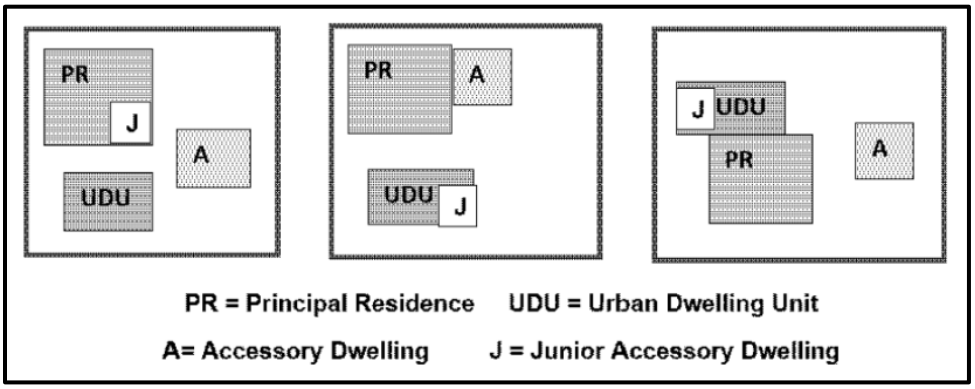


Figure 4.12-1a. Development potential without subdivision.

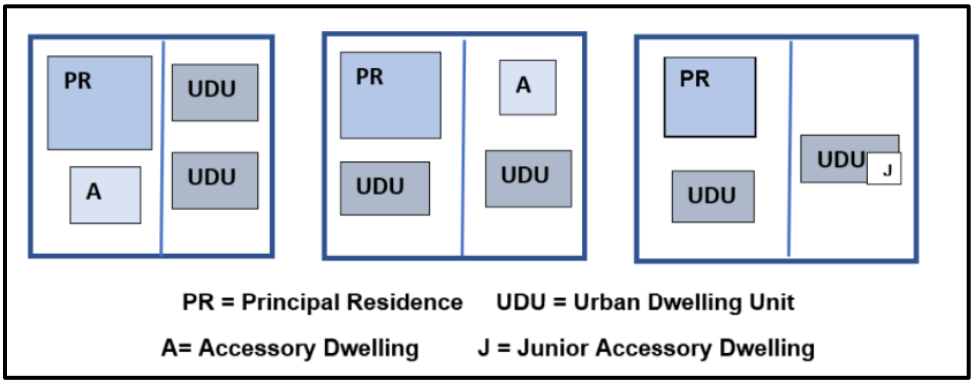


Figure 4.12-1b. Development potential with subdivision.

Eligibility criteria include requirements that the urban lot split would not require the demolition or alteration of housing that is subject to a recorded covenant, ordinance, or law that restricts rents to levels affordable to persons and families of moderate-, low-, or very low-income; that the parcel is within a single-family residential zone and within a designated urbanized area; and that the parcel is not located within a historic district, is not included on the State Historic Resources Inventory, and is not within a site that is legally designated or listed as a city or county landmark or historic property or district (California Legislative Information 2020).

A portion of Atascadero is considered an urbanized area for the purposes of SB 9 development and subdivisions, determined by a census boundary designated by the U.S. Census Bureau. SB 9 development is allowed in areas of Atascadero that are designated Residential Single-Family and outside of specified exclusion areas, such as historic districts, flood hazard areas, critical habitat, and wildlife areas. The City has also enacted health and safety standards with their adopted SB 9 ordinances related to portions of the City within the urbanized area that do not have access to City sewer services or cannot meet minimum emergency evacuation standards. These standards ensure that SB 9 units meet all basic health and safety standards. State ownership regulations and lack of sewer availability remain limiting factors to more widespread use; however, Atascadero's larger parcel sizes allow implementation of this law to a greater degree than surrounding urbanized communities. The City has implemented some SB 9-related unit development and subdivision; however, within the context of overall population growth, SB 9 development remains minor and within population projections and anticipated annual growth rates identified for the 2045 General Plan planning period.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT LAW CALIFORNIA SENATE BILL 13

On October 9, 2019, SB 13 was signed into law (recodified at Government Code Section 66310–66342 by SB 477 (2024)). This and subsequent bills have expanded on previous state law requiring local agencies, by ministerial approval, to provide for the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in single-family and multifamily residential zones in accordance with specified standards and conditions. State ADU law prohibits local agencies from requiring the replacement of parking spaces if a garage, carport, or covered parking is demolished to construct an ADU; establishing a minimum square footage requirement for either an attached or detached ADU that prohibits an efficiency unit; and establishing a maximum square footage requirement for either an attached or detached ADU that is less than 850 square feet or less than 1,000 square feet if the ADU contains more than one bedroom. The law includes several other provisions intended to relax previous restrictions associated with ADU development such as prohibiting impact fees for the construction of ADUs less than or equal to 750 square feet or of junior ADUs less than or equal to 500 square feet of interior livable space, ministerial approval timelines, and allowing jurisdictions to include ADU construction in the housing element requirement for identifying adequate housing sites (California Legislative Information 2019).

CALIFORNIA REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION

State Housing Element Law requires SLOCOG and other regional councils of government in California, in consultation with HCD, to "determine the existing and projected need for housing for each region" and to determine each jurisdiction's share of the regional housing need in the region (Government Code Sections 65584–65584.01). SLOCOG's region encompasses all of San Luis Obispo County, including its seven incorporated cities: Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo. SLOCOG has the responsibility of overseeing the assessment by identifying measures to gauge housing demand and comparing those numbers against socioeconomic factors throughout the region.

SLOCOG's "6th Cycle" Regional Housing Needs Plan set a target for the creation of 10,810 new dwelling units for the region over the 2020 to 2028 planning period. The County and each of the seven cities, including Atascadero, adopted 2020 to 2028 Housing Elements showing how they will meet their share of regional housing needs. The County's share is 3,256 new dwelling units, of which 1,170 (58.1%) must be affordable to very low-, low-, and moderate-income households. Atascadero's share of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation is 832 units of which 478 are required to be in various categories of affordability (203 very low; 131 low; 144 moderate).

HOUSING CRISIS ACT (SENATE BILL 330 AND SENATE BILL 8)

The Housing Crisis Act of 2019, SB 330, was signed into law by Governor Newsom on October 9, 2019, and went into effect on January 1, 2020. The bill established a statewide housing emergency for 5 years, until January 1, 2025, and was enacted to help reach Governor Newsom's goal of creating 3.5 million new housing units by 2025. Senate Bill 8 was signed into law in 2021, effectively extending the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 from January 1, 2025 to January 1, 2030.

The purpose of enacting the Housing Crisis Act is to suspend certain restrictions on new housing developments and expedite the permitting of housing developments. SB 330 aims to increase certainty in the development process, speeding the review of new housing development projects, preserving existing affordable housing, and preventing certain zoning actions that reduce the availability of housing. During the duration of the statewide housing emergency (January 1, 2020–January 1, 2030), SB 330 does the following:

- Prohibits legislative actions that reduce the zoned capacity for housing. (i.e., "downzoning");
- Prohibits approval of housing development project that result in a net loss of potential housing units;
- Prohibits imposing or enforcing new non-objective design standards established after January 1, 2020 (any subjective standards in place as of January 1, 2020, and any objective process are not affected by this bill);
- Clarifies the Permit Streamlining Act regarding the review of development applications for completeness; and
- Shortens required permit review timeframes and limits the number of public hearings for housing projects that meet all applicable objective zoning standards to five public hearings, including continuances and most appeals.

STATE HOUSING ELEMENT STATUTES

California's State Housing Element Statutes require every city and county to adopt a housing element as part of its general plan, ensuring adequate opportunities to meet the housing needs of all economic segments of the community. First enacted in 1969 and regularly updated by the State Legislature, these statutes establish a framework for planning and accommodating future housing growth in response to California's ongoing housing challenges. The purpose of the Housing Element Statutes is to promote the development of safe, decent, and affordable housing for all Californians by mandating that local governments assess current and projected housing needs, identify adequate sites for housing, and implement policies and programs to facilitate housing production.

The statutes require local governments to update their housing elements every eight years, subject to review and certification by the HCD. The housing element must include an assessment of housing needs, an inventory of suitable land, analysis of constraints to housing development, and goals, policies, and programs to meet the identified housing needs. Local governments must also demonstrate how they will accommodate

their share of the regional housing needs assigned by the state. Failure to comply with housing element requirements can result in penalties, including loss of eligibility for certain state funding, and streamlined permitting.

During each housing element cycle, State Housing Element Statutes require local governments to do the following:

- Assess current and future housing needs for all income levels;
- Identify and zone adequate sites to accommodate housing needs;
- Remove or mitigate governmental and nongovernmental constraints to housing development;
- Analyze special housing needs; and
- Adopt and implement policies and programs to facilitate the development of a variety of housing types, including affordable and special needs housing.

4.12.2.3 Local

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS DETERMINATION AND ALLOCATION

San Luis Obispo County's Regional Housing Needs Determination (RHND) is an assessment process mandated by the State of California to ensure that cities and counties plan for enough housing to meet the needs of their current and future residents. The RHND process is governed by state law and overseen by the HCD, which allocates a share of the region's projected housing needs to each local jurisdiction in the county. The RHND assessment process results in a final allocation of regional need to individual local jurisdictions called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) (California Government Code Sections 65584–65584.07).

SLOCOG is responsible for determining the proportional share of the region's RHNA for all jurisdictions within San Luis Obispo County. The RHNA cycle typically occurs every eight years, in alignment with the state-mandated housing element update schedule. During each cycle, SLOCOG receives a total housing need number from HCD, which is then distributed among the county's cities and unincorporated areas based on factors such as jobs-housing balance, infrastructure considerations, and existing housing needs.

Each jurisdiction must then demonstrate in its housing element how it will accommodate its assigned allocation. During each assessment cycle, the San Luis Obispo County RHND process requires local governments to do the following:

- Identify and zone adequate sites to accommodate the assigned housing need;
- Update their housing element to reflect the RHNA;
- Implement policies and programs to facilitate housing production and address barriers to development.

4.12.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on population and housing if the effects exceed the significance criteria described in State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G:

a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure).

b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.12.4, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.12.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

The State CEQA Guidelines require an EIR to discuss any inconsistencies between the proposed project and applicable general plans, specific plans, and regional plans (14 Cal Code Regs §15125(d)). Population and housing trends in the City were evaluated by reviewing the most current data available from the U.S. Census Bureau, CDOF, the current local planning documents and compared against regional thresholds established by SLOCOG 2050 Growth Forecasts. Under CEQA, a social or economic change by itself generally is not considered a significant effect on the environment, but a social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant (14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15382).

Population growth impacts are typically evaluated based on two primary considerations: the magnitude of growth and whether the growth is anticipated within existing planning frameworks. Specifically, analysis considers whether the project would result in substantial population growth relative to baseline conditions and whether such growth is planned for in applicable local and regional land use, housing, and infrastructure planning documents, which indicate whether necessary services and facilities have been anticipated.

4.12.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

IMPACT PH-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT INDUCE SUBSTANTIAL UNPLANNED POPULATION GROWTH IN AN AREA, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The project would replace the City's current 2025 General Plan and would establish land use designations (Placetypes), define the types of development that can occur throughout the City, and identify goals, policies, and actions to guide future development associated with community buildout through the planning horizon year of 2045.

As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the 2045 General Plan is anticipated to guide sustainable population growth throughout the planning period and includes City population and employment growth projections based on land capacity, ability to expand infrastructure, and anticipated growth rates for both residential and commercial sectors. The City's forecasted population for the 2045 General Plan planning period (through 2045) is 37,279, reflecting a 22% increase over the 20-year planning period, or approximately 0.97% per year. Similarly, the number of dwelling units is projected to increase from 12,660 in 2024 to 15,550 by 2045. Employment is expected to increase from 9,729 jobs in 2024 to 12,914 jobs in

2045, improving the City's jobs/housing ratio from 0.77 to 0.83. Table 4.12-4 depicts forecasted growth under the 2045 General Plan.

Table 4.12-4. General Plan Forecasted Growth

Type	Baseline	General Plan Horizon Year (2045)	Net Change (2024–2045)
Dwelling Units (Total)	12,660	15,550	2,890
Single-family Units	*9,786*	*9,991*	*205*
Multifamily Units	*2,874*	*5,559*	*2,685*
Population[1]	30,683	37,279	6,596
Employees	9,729	12,914	3,185
Jobs/Housing Ratio[2]	0.77	0.83	0.06

Notes:

[1] Population includes group quarters (1,318) at Atascadero State Hospital.

[2] Jobs/housing ratio is an equation used to determine how many jobs are available in a community relative to the number of dwelling units (homes). The policy approach assumes that a "balanced community" has a 1:1 ratio, which strives to match the number of local jobs to the number of available housing units. This approach does not require residents to work in town; rather, it looks to provide the opportunity for residents to have jobs within the community.

To determine whether the population growth associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be considered substantial, it was evaluated in comparison to baseline conditions under the 2025 General Plan. Overall, the anticipated population growth in the City through 2045 is similar to but less than the SLOCOG population growth projections for the City. SLOCOG population growth projections are based on the existing land use patterns of the City, historic population trends, and the policy framework provided under the 2025 General Plan. Accordingly, the SLOCOG population projects reflect baseline conditions for population growth. Because the population growth associated with community buildout under the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update does not exceed the baseline population growth projections, the project would not result in a substantial population growth in the area.

The second component of evaluating impacts of population growth is determining whether such growth is planned for in applicable local and regional land use, housing, and infrastructure planning documents. The Land Use and Community Form Element of the 2045 General Plan includes goals, policies, and actions intended to guide future growth in a manner that would preserve the City's existing rural character and land use patterns, focus development where adequate services can be provided, minimize impacts on natural resources, and maximize efficient use of transportation and utility infrastructure in anticipation of projected population growth, including those listed below:

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
    - **Policy LU-1.2: Urban Services Line (USL).** Concentrate new and infill development within the USL in areas where utilities and public services exist or are planned.
        - **Action A:** Revisit density and intensity requirements for land use(s) if sewer extends into new areas.
        - **Action B:** Maintain Rural Residential as the predominant use and limit the subdivision of land beyond the USL.
        - **Action C:** Consider future planned density and intensity when repairing infrastructure and ensure that infrastructure is sized to accommodate future growth.

- **Policy LU-1.4: Gentle Density Infill.** Allow opportunities for missing middle and gentle density style infill development surrounding mixed-use and commercial corridors.
  - **Action A:** Support the development of multifamily residential, including missing middle housing, in the neighborhoods adjacent to commercial corridors, including the neighborhood bordered by Morro Road, Highway 101, and Portola Road, as a way to increase density and maintain community character.
- **Policy LU-1.6: Specific Plans.** Adopt, update, and implement specific plans as necessary to address community needs and changing demographic, economic, and market conditions.
  - **Action A:** Require the preparation of a specific plan for single-family subdivision developments over 100 units to address fiscal and environmental impacts, community benefits, and neighborhood compatibility.
  - **Action B:** Update existing Specific Plans and Overlay Zones to be consistent with the General Plan.
  - **Action C:** Utilize Specific Plans to streamline the development process and incentivize development through modified development standards.
- **Policy LU-1.8: Annexations.** Ensure that growth beyond the City limit serves community needs, enhances fiscal stability, and improves quality of life for community members.
  - **Action A:** Require annexation proposals align with the Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals, and Policies included in this General Plan.
  - **Action B:** Oppose all development within the sphere of influence the site prior to annexation.
  - **Action C:** Require the approval of a Specific Plan prior to the annexation of the Eagle Ranch property.

- **Goal LU-2:** Enhanced major corridors that serve regional and local needs by creating focused, distinct, and economically viable nodes
  - **Policy LU-2.3: Mid-block Infill.** Promote flexible land use patterns in areas between activity nodes along El Camino Real and support increased residential densities adjacent to and along commercial corridors to support commercial business activity and growth
    - **Action A:** Encourage infill mixed-use development between commercial nodes along El Camino Real to support the economic vitality of commercial centers.
    - **Action B:** Explore flexibility in standards for mixed-use development on commercially zoned mid-block infill lots where commercial use potential is limited.
    - **Action C:** Increase residential density in areas adjacent to key commercial nodes to support commercial viability and economic vitality.
    - **Action D:** Consider utilizing Development Agreements to allow for mid-block multifamily development in exchange for commercial development/redevelopment at key locations
  - **Policy LU-2.4: Mixed-Use Areas.** Create mixed-use districts in locations that benefit from the synergy of commercial and residential uses.
    - **Action C:** Prioritize land uses in mixed-use areas that generate tax revenue, attract economic activity, create jobs, and cater to residents and short-term visitors.

  - **Policy LU-2.5: Multi-Modal Corridors.** Improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities along El Camino Real and Morro Road. Major corridors should be safe, comfortable, and enjoyable for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike.
    - **Action C:** Adopt plan lines for new neighborhood streets that allow for and support orderly development with increased residential density.
    - **Action G:** Find locations for safe mid-block crossings on El Camino Real to connect neighborhoods and commercial centers.

- **Goal LU-3:** A new professional office, retail, and employment area focused on (but not limited to) the medical industry, including research and development uses
  - **Policy LU-3.2: Increased residential density.** Increase residential density within and adjacent to the Morro Rod corridor to support commercial and office viability.
    - **Action A:** Support higher-density multifamily development between Morro Road and Atascadero Creek.
    - **Action B:** Develop standards for horizontal and vertical mixed use along Morro Road.

- **Goal LU-5:** A Downtown core celebrated by the community, with places to shop, be entertained, live, gather outside, learn, and engage in civic discourse
  - **Policy LU-5.2: Highest Density Residential/Mixed Use.** Foster a dynamic Downtown environment by concentrating larger mixed-use projects, higher-density residential development, employment opportunities, and amenities Downtown.
    - **Action A:** Focus the highest density and intensity development within the Downtown core.
    - **Action B:** Create a discretionary review process for increased height and create standards to ensure that City Hall remains the most prominent structure Downtown.
    - **Action C:** Track vacant and underutilized sites. Compile, maintain, and publish an inventory of publicly owned vacant sites that may be developed to serve community needs.

The goals, policies, and actions of the 2045 General Plan noted above will ensure that projected growth in the City is managed and occurs in a manner consistent with community values and available resources. This includes focusing growth in areas of existing lower-density development where services and utilities can support additional growth. Growth projections remain in line with historic growth rates for the City and the region as a whole. Focusing on infill development and preservation of more rural areas both within and adjacent to the planning area ensures managed growth and supports development with access to existing infrastructure.

Projected population growth in the City of Atascadero pursuant to the 2045 General Plan has been anticipated and incorporated into other local and regional infrastructure planning efforts. As described above, regional population forecasts prepared by SLOCOG for the regional transportation plan for the City exceeds those associated with buildout under the City's 2045 General Plan, indicating that planned regional transportation infrastructure is designed to accommodate growth at least equal to, and in some cases greater than that expected under the 2045 General Plan. In addition, utility planning documents account for similar growth levels. As described in the Utilities section of this EIR (Section 4.15), the Atascadero Mutual Water Company's Urban Water Management Plan includes population projections consistent with anticipated community growth under the 2045 General Plan, and the City regularly evaluates the capacity and condition of its wastewater treatment plant and collection system, with improvements planned and implemented as development occurs and the community approaches buildout pursuant with the 2045 General Plan.

Based on the analysis provided above, the project would not result in substantial or unplanned population growth. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact PH-1
The project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly or indirectly.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

IMPACT PH-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT DISPLACE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF EXISTING PEOPLE OR HOUSING, NECESSITATING THE CONSTRUCTION OF REPLACEMENT HOUSING ELSEWHERE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would guide future development in Atascadero through the year 2045, that would allow for an increase of approximately 6,596 new residents and 2,890 new dwelling units. Any displacement of existing people or housing created by development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be speculative, due to the proposed project consisting of establishment of land use designations (Placetypes) and policies to guide future development, rather than any specific development proposal; however, the 2045 General Plan includes policies encouraging infill development which would reduce development pressure on the periphery of the City, maintain established land use patterns, and all future development would be required to be consistent with the goals, policies, and actions of the currently adopted City of Atascadero Housing Element. The Housing Element includes the following goals and policies to ensure preservation and development of housing for all income levels:

- **Goal HOS 1:** Provide adequate sites for housing development to accommodate a range of housing by type, size, location, price, and tenure.
    - **Policy 1.1:** Implement land use policies and standards that allow for a range of residential densities and products that will provide households of all types and income levels the opportunity to find suitable ownership or rental housing.
    - **Policy 1.2:** Facilitate the development of accessory dwelling units on single-family parcels where adequate services can be provided.
    - **Policy 1.3:** Encourage the production of housing, with particular emphasis on housing affordable to persons with disabilities, elderly, large families, female-headed households with children, and homeless individuals
    - **Policy 1.4:** Encourage the development of residential units that are accessible to persons with disabilities or are adaptable for conversion to residential use by persons with disabilities.

  - **Policy 1.5:** Encourage the creation of "missing middle" housing, such as duplexes, twin-homes, modular housing, and other similar types of housing that are affordable by design and available for rent and for sale.

- **Goal HOS 2:** Promote diverse and high-quality housing opportunities to meet the needs of all economic segments of the community.
  - **Policy 2.1:** Facilitate housing development that is affordable to lower-income households by providing technical assistance, regulatory incentives and concessions, and financial resources as funding permits.
  - **Policy 2.2:** Continue to utilize federal and state subsidies, as well as City resources, to the fullest extent possible, to assist in meeting the housing needs of lower-income residents, including extremely low-income residents.
  - **Policy 2.3:** Encourage new housing, including mixed-use projects in appropriate commercial land use areas to assist in meeting the needs of all household types in the City.
  - **Policy 2.4:** Support regional efforts to address homelessness.
- **Goal HOS 3:** Reduce or remove governmental and nongovernmental constraints to the development, improvement, and maintenance of housing where feasible and legally permissible.
  - **Policy 3.4:** Help lower development costs where feasible, especially for low- and moderate-income housing units.
- **Goal HOS 4:** Protect and conserve the existing housing stock and neighborhoods, including the City's affordable housing stock.
  - **Policy 4.1:** Encourage conservation and preservation of neighborhoods and sound housing.
  - **Policy 4.2:** Promote and preserve affordable housing.
- **Goal HOS 5:** Affirmatively further equal and fair access to sound, affordable housing for all persons.
  - **Policy 5.1:** Affirmatively further fair housing related to the sale, rental, and financing of housing to avoid discrimination based on race, religion, age, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, color, familial status, or disability, or any other arbitrary factor.
  - **Policy 5.2:** Assist in the enforcement of state and federal fair housing and anti-discrimination laws by assisting organizations that receive and investigate fair housing allegations and refer possible violations of fair housing laws to enforcing agencies.
  - **Policy 5.3:** Promote and affirmatively further fair housing opportunities and promote housing options throughout the community for all persons.
  - **Policy 5.4:** Ensure that persons with disabilities have adequate access to housing.

Based on the goals, policies, and actions of the 2045 General Plan and City projections associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan, the 2045 General Plan and associated Zoning Code Update would protect the existing housing stock within the City and result in a net increase in housing availability within the City. As the General Plan focuses on infill development and maintains current land use patterns, development according to 2045 General Plan goals and policies is unlikely to result in the substantial demolition of housing or displacement of existing residences. Therefore, based on the proposed goals, policies, and actions of the 2045 General Plan as implemented by the Zoning Code Update and the policies set forth in the adopted Housing Element, the proposed project would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere, and this impact would be *less than significant*.

Impact PH-2
The project would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.12.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT PH-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS RELATED TO POPULATION AND HOUSING. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

As described above, the implementation of the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would not contribute to the displacement of existing residences in the City. The 2045 General Plan goals and policies focus on infill development and increasing density to meet the economic and housing needs of the City within the planning period. The 2045 General Plan does not propose any significant changes in land use patterns that would result in the displacement of existing persons or necessitate the expansion of housing elsewhere. Additionally, growth facilitated by the 2045 General Plan would occur within the bounds of the City's Planning Area and policies included in the 2045 General Plan would guide development to avoid adverse environmental effects. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan and associated Zoning Code Update would not contribute to cumulative impacts related to displacement in the greater cumulative impact analysis area (San Luis Obispo County) and would not result in significant cumulative population growth impacts beyond the Planning Area and the population impacts of the proposed 2045 General Plan would not be cumulatively considerable (*less than significant*).

Impact PH-3
The project would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to population and housing.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

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4.13 PUBLIC SERVICES AND RECREATION

This section evaluates the potential effects of the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update on public services including fire protection, police services, and schools, as well as parks and recreational resources. It outlines the regulatory context and existing conditions, establishes the criteria for determining the significance of impacts, analyzes possible effects on public services and parks and recreation. Impacts associated with municipal water, wastewater, and solid waste services are discussed in Section 4.15, *Utilities and Service Systems*.

4.13.1 Existing Conditions

4.13.1.1 Public Services

The City provides a wide range of public services to support residents, businesses, and institutions. The Public Works Department oversees street maintenance, stormwater management, sewage collection and treatment, and the upkeep of City-owned parks and recreational facilities, trails, and municipal buildings. The City provides law enforcement, fire protection, recreation programs, and zoo programs, while public education is provided through the Atascadero Unified School District (AUSD) and library services are operated by the San Luis Obispo County Public Libraries (SLO County Public Libraries) system.

FIRE PROTECTION

Atascadero Fire & Emergency Services (Fire Department) provides comprehensive emergency response services, responding to about 3,500 calls per year and handling incidents such as medical emergencies, building and wildland fires, vehicle accidents, hazardous material situations, technical rescues, and various public assistance calls. The Fire Department operates two fire stations, Fire Station 1 located at 6005 Lewis Avenue, and Fire Station 2, located at 9801 West Front. The Fire Department's apparatus consists of five fire engines, three command vehicles, one ladder truck, one 4x4 ambulance, and one technical rescue unit (City of Atascadero 2025a).

Staffing

The Fire Department has a full-time staff that includes 19 firefighters, a Fire Chief, a Battalion Chief of Community Risk Reduction, a Battalion Chief of Operations, and an Administrative Assistant. Thirteen of the firefighters assigned to engine duty are certified Paramedics. The Department is responsible for serving and protecting a community of approximately 30,000 residents across 26.7 square miles, in addition to areas covered under aid agreements. The administrative staff, made up of the Fire Chief, both Battalion Chiefs, and the Administrative Assistant, currently works from the administration office located at City Hall at 6500 Palma Avenue (City of Atascadero 2025a).

Aid Agreements

The Fire Department is a participant in the California Master Mutual Aid System, enabling coordinated emergency response across the state. Additionally, the department holds a service contract with the United States Forest Service, an automatic aid agreement with the San Luis Obispo County Fire Department and collaborates through automatic aid arrangements with Atascadero State Hospital Fire Department, Templeton Fire Department, and Paso Robles Fire Department (City of Atascadero 2025a).

POLICE PROTECTION

The Atascadero Police Department (APD) delivers comprehensive law enforcement services to the community, including criminal investigations, crime prevention initiatives, traffic enforcement, support for victims and injured individuals, and programs focused on youth engagement. Each patrol vehicle is equipped with an Automatic External Defibrillator. The department operates from its main headquarters at 5505 El Camino Real. All police operations are based at this central facility as there are no additional stations within the City.

Staffing

The APD currently employs 38 full-time employees, one part-time employee, and 32 volunteers. The breakdown of employees is as follows (City of Atascadero 2025b):

- 28 Sworn Personnel
- 10 Civilian Employees
- 26 Volunteers
- 6 Police Explorers

The APD is divided into four divisions: Investigations, Communications, Code Enforcement, and Patrol, as described below (City of Atascadero 2025b).

- **Investigations Unit:** The APD Investigations Unit conducts in-depth follow-up investigations on felony cases and manages duties such as crime registrant tracking, secondhand dealer licensing, and acting as the department liaison. Staffed by one Sergeant, three Detectives, and one Code Enforcement Officer, all personnel are cross-trained to investigate crimes against property and persons, either independently or as a team. The Unit collaborates closely with other law enforcement agencies and support organizations at the county, state, and federal levels.
- **Patrol Division:** The Patrol Division forms the core of the department's operations, staffed by Sergeants, Corporals, Patrol Officers, and Cadets. Patrol personnel respond to calls for service, conduct traffic enforcement and collision investigations, and perform proactive patrols throughout the community. They also lead initial investigations into criminal activity and ensure a visible police presence to maintain public safety.
- **Code Enforcement Division:** Code Enforcement is responsible for the prevention, detection, investigation, and enforcement of violations relating to public health, safety, welfare, public works, business activities and consumer protection, building standards, land use, and municipal affairs. The division's staff includes a Code Enforcement Officer who works within the Investigations Unit. The division's efforts uphold City codes and maintain a safe, attractive environment for residents and businesses.
- **Public Safety Dispatchers Unit:** The Public Safety Dispatchers Unit at the APD consists of seven Public Safety Dispatchers and one Lead Dispatcher. They handle all emergency 911 and non-emergency calls, dispatching police, fire, and medical personnel. All dispatchers are certified emergency medical dispatchers, able to provide lifesaving instructions until help arrives. In addition to call handling and dispatching, they process department records and reports and assist citizens at the front desk.

PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES PROJECTS

The City is in the process of undertaking significant upgrades to its public safety infrastructure, including rebuilding Fire Station No. 1 with a modern, 16,556-square-foot facility that features expanded fire

department capacity and a dedicated, fully equipped Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Fire Station No. 2 will also be expanded and renovated to match the safety and quality standards of Station No. 1, with improvements to living quarters, restrooms, and decontamination facilities. The APD Police Headquarters will receive essential updates such as new roof and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) repairs, security enhancements, interior refreshes, and a new dispatch building. Demolition and construction of these facilities will begin following final design approvals, with fire personnel relocated to temporary accommodations to maintain operational continuity. Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin Spring 2026 (City of Atascadero 2025c).

In addition, the Fire Department also has future plans to construct a third fire station in the U.S. Route 101 (U.S. 101)/Del Rio area of the City to ensure appropriate response times throughout the City with potential anticipated future growth (MIG 2025).

SCHOOLS

AUSD provides educational services to the City of Atascadero as well as the neighboring communities of Carrisa Plains, Creston, Pozo/Parkhill, and Santa Margarita. The district includes a total of 12 schools: seven elementary schools serving grades K-5, two middle schools, one high school, and two alternative high schools (Ed Data 2025). Table 4.13-1 presents enrollment figures for schools within the AUSD.

Table 4.13-1. Atascadero Unified School District Summary (2024-2025)

School	Grades	Enrollment
Atascadero Choices in Education Academy (ACE)	9–12	159
Atascadero High School	9–12	1,157
Atascadero Middle School	6–8	845
Carrisa Plains Elementary School	K–5	21
Creston Elementary School	K–5	61
Fine Arts Academy	4–8	238
Monterey Road Elementary School	K–5	382
Paloma Creek High School	11–12	55
San Benito Elementary School	K–5	403
San Gabriel Elementary School	K–5	360
Santa Margarita Elementary School	K–5	297
Santa Rosa Road Academic Academy	K–5	377

Source: Ed Data (2025).

Additionally, the City is home to two private schools: Brookside Christian Academy, serving students from kindergarten through 12th grade, and Children's House Montessori School, which offers pre-primary programs through 6th grade.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The County of San Luis Obispo (County) Public Libraries System governs and administers fourteen community libraries, including one in the incorporated City of Atascadero, the Atascadero Library. The library is located near the center of the City at 6555 Capistrano Way and shares a facility with the San Luis Obispo Assessor and Clerk-Recorder's Office. County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries is primarily funded through property taxes (County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries 2023). In addition to

Atascadero, the County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries System includes branches in the following cities and communities San Luis Obispo, Arroyo Grande, Morro Bay, Los Osos, Nipomo, Cambria, Creston, San Miguel, Santa Margarita, Oceano, Shell Beach, Shandon, and Cayucos.

All County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries cardholders have access to the website, catalog, and online digital collection that includes downloadable eBooks, audiobooks and streaming media. Materials can be requested to be delivered to any location. The County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries adopted a 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, which was prepared by the Library Management Team. The plan focuses on maintaining exceptional core services, reimagining library spaces, cultivating innovation, strengthening community connections, delivering outstanding user experiences, and ensuring financial health (County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries 2019). Relocated to its current facility in 2014, the library offers 14,420 square feet of space and is open to the public for 36 hours each week.

4.13.1.2 Recreation

The City of Atascadero manages seven parks, offering a variety of recreational spaces and green areas. These parks differ in size, layout, intended use, and the range of facilities and amenities available, providing residents with diverse recreational experiences throughout the City. In addition to City parks, San Luis Obispo County operates a regional park (Heilmann Park including the Jim Green trail) and a golf course (Chalk Mountain Golf Course) within Atascadero's City limits. The Atascadero Land Preservation Society (ALPS) also manages a nature preserve and an open space preserve. As of 2024, the City owns and operates seven public parks (totaling approximately 226 acres) and several recreational facilities, including the Colony Park Community Center, A-town Skate Park, Pavilion on the Lake, and the Central Coast Zoo providing space for residents and visitors to enjoy passive and active forms of recreation (MIG 2025).

The Salinas River also offers recreation opportunities and is available for public access. While not maintained by a particular entity, much of the river on the City side is on land owned by the Atascadero Mutual Water Company. This area has multiple trails accessed by the public and is part of the De Anza trail system. The Salinas River is not included in the chart below based on the less defined nature of the area with respect to acreage, jurisdiction, and location, however, this asset remains a top priority recreational and open space area.

LOCAL PARKS

Table 4.13-2 summarizes the recreational facilities within the City.

Table 4.13-2. Existing City Public Recreation Facilities

Park Name	Agency	Location	Acres	Facilities
Adobe Springs Nature Preserve	ALPS	3660 Traffic Way	5.03	
A-town Skate Park	City	5493 Traffic Way	0.79	Indoor skate and scoot park
Apple Valley Park	City	1980 San Ramon	5.51	BBQ grills, pedestrian and bicycle multi-use paths
Atascadero Lake Park & Central Coast Zoo	City	9305 Pismo Avenue	52.45	Pedestrian and bicycle multi-use paths, playground, BBQ areas, horseshoe pits, fishing, Faces of Freedom Veterans Memorial, Central Coast Zoo
Chalk Mountain Golf Course	SLO County	10000 El Bordo Avenue	218.3	18-hole golf course
Colony Park	City	5599 Traffic Way	11.13	Community/teen center, fields, playground, indoor and outdoor basketball courts, pickleball courts, BBQ grills, picnic areas
Heilmann Regional Park	SLO County	94000 El Bordo Avenue	48.91	BBQ grills, disc golf, dog park, horseshoe pits, lighted pickleball courts, picnic areas, playgrounds, public restrooms, sand volleyball courts, lighted tennis courts, Jim Green trail
Paloma Creek Park	City	11665 Viejo Camino	22.31	Multi-purpose sports fields, lighted softball fields, little-league fields, sand volleyball court, playground, equestrian facilities
Stadium Park	ALPS/City	Atascadero	139.09	Trails
Sunken Gardens	City	6505 El Camino Real	1.80	Walking paths, garden, fountains
Three Bridges Oak Preserve	ALPS	9930 Carmelita Avenue	100.53	Trails
Total Parks Acreage			**624.32 *acres***	

Source: City of Atascadero 2024.

Park System Management and Maintenance

City of Atascadero Community Services Department – Recreation Division

The Recreation Division is dedicated to providing and facilitating programs, special events, and services that enhance the quality of life, well-being, and economic vitality of the Atascadero community. This commitment is realized through a wide range of recreational, leisure, cultural, social, and educational services and facilities. Division resources are managed to promote health, foster community engagement, and contribute to the City's economic growth (City of Atascadero 2025d).

City of Atascadero Public Works Department – Parks Maintenance Division

The Parks Maintenance Division is responsible for the upkeep of City parks, trees, medians, and grounds. This includes maintaining the Atascadero Lake Park Complex with playground equipment, barbeques, picnic areas, the lake, and surrounding grounds, the Paloma Creek Park Sports Complex and Playground, Colony Park, A-town Skate Park, Sunken Gardens, and the City Administration grounds. Additionally, the division oversees the maintenance of City parking lots and planters (City of Atascadero 2025e).

Atascadero Land Preservation Society

ALPS is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving environmental open space, undeveloped land, and native trees in Atascadero. As a land trust, ALPS acquires property through grants, donations, and gifts, making these lands available to the public for passive recreation and educational opportunities (Atascadero Land Preservation Society 2025).

DETERMINING PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS

Due to an increase in urban and suburban populations in the 1960s and 1970s, the 1983 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) park standards were established to guide communities in planning for future park demands. Table 4.13-3 identifies the national park standards.

Table 4.13-3. National Recreation and Park Association Park Standards

Classification	Acres / 1,000 people	Size Range	Population Served	Service Area
Neighborhood Parks	1–2	15+ acres	One neighborhood (approximately 5,000 people)	1/4–1/5 miles
Community Parks	5-8	25+ acres	Several neighborhoods	1–2 miles
Regional Metropolitan Parks	5–10	200+ acres	Several communities	1 hour driving time
Regional Park Reserve	Variable	1,000+ acres	Several communities	1 hour driving time
Special Areas	No Applicable Standard	Includes linear parks, trails, beaches, golf courses, historical sites, flood plains, coastal accessways, etc.		
Conservancy (Natural Areas)	No Applicable Standard	Protection and management of the natural/cultural environments with recreational use as a secondary objective.		

Source: County of San Luis Obispo (2006).

The NRPA park standards provide a starting point for assessing the current need for parks within a community and recommends developing individual local standards for assessing the need for parkland (County of San Luis Obispo 2006).

For park land, level of service (LOS) is typically expressed as the number of park acres available per 1,000 residents. This ratio is calculated using current park inventory and population data to assess whether existing acreage meets community needs. In Atascadero, park access standards are established by Goal LOC 11 of the 2025 General Plan, which directs the City to acquire or dedicate park land at a rate of 5 acres per 1,000 residents, in alignment with the Quimby Act. As of 2024, the City owns and operates seven public parks, totaling approximately 226 acres. Based on a 2024 population of 30,683, the City provides more than 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents and therefore exceeds the City's target LOS standards for park land.

Capital Improvement Projects

The capital projects section of the FY 2023-2025 budget details funding for all major construction, improvement, and repair projects. The 2023-2025 capital projects identified are based on priorities established by the City's current Capital Improvement Plan and City staff. Through the Capital Improvement Plan, the City systematically plans, schedules, and finances capital projects to ensure cost-effectiveness and conformance with policy. The following parks projects, identified for repair and enhancements, are included on the 2023- 2025 capital projects list (MIG 2024).

Atascadero Creek to Lake Pipeline Repairs

Repair and rehabilitation to the 1950s-era pipeline that diverts water from Atascadero Creek to Atascadero Lake.

Parking Lot and Trail Repairs

Various maintenance, repair, and reconstruction of parking lot and trail pavements at park facilities, including Paloma Park, A-town Skate Park, the Colony Park Community Center, Zoo, Pavilion, SR 41 Multipurpose Trail, and other internal park trails and walkways.

Lake Park Pier and Pedestrian Pathway Improvements

Improvements to the wooden pier and pedestrian pathway between the pier and paddleboat concessionaire. Work includes construction of an ADA-compliant stairway/ramp, widening the concrete sidewalk, and replacement of the lake pier railing and decking. This project was completed in 2025.

Regional Park and Recreation Planning Projects

Templeton-Atascadero Connector

The SLO County Parks Planning Division is responsible for the planning, design, and construction of park and recreation facilities in SLO County. The proposed project will create a new Class I multiuse trail connecting Templeton and Atascadero, offering a safer alternative to the current route along the U.S. 101 shoulder. The trail will run from North Ferrocarril Road at Atascadero's northern edge to the intersection of Vineyard Drive and Main Street in Templeton, following the Salinas River, crossing the Union Pacific Railroad via a new pedestrian bridge or undercrossing, and continuing along Main Street to Templeton Road. Spanning Supervisorial Districts 2 and 5, the project aims to improve safety for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users (MIG 2024). Alternative alignments are also being considered to facilitate feasibility.

Salinas River Trail Master Plan

Funded by Caltrans, the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments and San Luis Obispo County collaborated on the 2014 Salinas River Trail Conceptual Master Plan, which outlines both short- and long-term alignments for a 35-mile trail corridor between Santa Margarita and San Miguel. Designed to guide development, foster partnerships, and promote consistency across trail segments, the plan provides an overview of the area's geographic conditions, offers recommendations, sets design standards and guidelines, and includes cost estimates. The designated trail corridor parallels the Salinas River throughout San Luis Obispo County and is also referenced in the County's Parks and Recreation Element (MIG 2024).

4.13.2 Regulatory Setting

4.13.2.1 Federal

There are no federal regulations related to recreation applicable to the project.

4.13.2.2 State

CALIFORNIA FIRE CODE

The California Fire Code (CFC) is the official fire code for the State of California and its political subdivisions, incorporating the International Fire Code with amendments specific to California. Codified in 24 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 24, Part 9, the CFC is updated and published every three years by the California Building Standards Commission to reflect current best practices in fire safety and prevention. While the CFC establishes minimum statewide standards, local jurisdictions may adopt more stringent requirements based on unique local conditions. The code includes comprehensive provisions for emergency planning and preparedness, fire protection systems, fire service access, hazardous materials management, fire flow requirements, and the placement and distribution of fire hydrants.

LEROY F. GREENE SCHOOL FACILITIES ACT OF 1998

The Leroy F. Greene School Facilities Act of 1998 (AB 331) authorizes a state bond to provide funds for school facilities within the state in order to modernize facilities, develop new facilities, employ additional staff members, and provide hardship funding. In order for the state to provide these funds, the state requires payment of school fees on all new development types (California Education Code Section 17620), typically payable at the time of building permits.

CALIFORNIA BUILDING STANDARDS

The California Building Standards Code (CCR Title 24) is a compilation of three types of building standards from three different origins:

- Building standards that have been adopted by state agencies without change from building standards contained in national and international model codes.
- Building standards that have been adopted and adapted from the national and international model code standards to meet California conditions.
- Building standards, authorized by the California legislature, that constitute extensive additions not covered by the model codes that have been adopted to address particular California concerns.

CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

In accordance with California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 1.5, Chapter 7 CCR (Fire Prevention and CCR Title 8 Sections 1920 General Requirements and 3219 Maintenance) and 6773 (Fire Protection and Fire Equipment), the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration has established minimum standards for fire suppression and emergency medical services. The standards include but are not limited to guidelines on the handling of highly combustible materials, fire hosing sizing requirements, restrictions on the use of compressed air, access roads, and the testing, maintenance, and use of all firefighting and emergency medical equipment.

CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE

State fire regulations are set forth in Sections 13000 et seq. of the California Health and Safety Code, which includes regulations for building standards (as set forth in the California Building Code), fire protection and notification systems, fire protection devices such as extinguishers, smoke alarms, high-rise building, childcare facility standards, and fire suppression training.

THE QUIMBY ACT

The Quimby Act (AB 1191) authorizes the legislative body of a county or city to require the dedication of land or to impose fees for park and recreational purposes as a condition of the approval of a tentative or parcel subdivision map if specified requirements are met. Existing law requires fees collected to be committed within 5 years after the payment of fees or issuance of building permits on half of the lots created by the subdivision, whichever occurs later. Existing law also requires fees not committed to be distributed and paid to the then record owners of the subdivision, as specified. The Quimby Act requires provision of a minimum of 3 acres of park area per 1,000 persons residing within a subdivision, and specifies acceptable uses and expenditures of such funds.

4.13.2.3 Local

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is composed of several elements, including the Land Use, Open Space and Conservation (LOC); Circulation; Safety and Noise; and Housing Elements. Each includes specific goals, policies, and programs that inform short and long-term decision-making in the community.

Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element

Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to noise included within the LOC Element are listed here:

- **Goal LOC 11:** Provide an adequate supply of City park facilities to all Atascadero residents.
    - **Policy 11.1:** Acquire park land needed for future development of park and recreation facilities and ensure that park improvements are consistent with adopted master plans to accommodate future growth.
    - **Policy 11.2:** Encourage joint use of school facilities for public recreation purposes.
    - **Policy 11.3:** Encourage Park development on or adjacent to schools where appropriate.
    - **Policy 11.4:** Encourage cooperative park and facility development programs.
    - **Policy 11.5:** Develop a method of financing park and recreational facilities and services throughout the City using a variety of revenue sources.
- **Goal LOC 12:** Provide a wide range of recreational activities and leisure experiences for all age groups, designed to foster a healthy community for residents and visitors.
    - **Policy 12.1:** Provide specialized recreation opportunities based on projected needs and standards identified in parks master plans.
    - **Policy 12.2:** Emphasize the importance of recreation facilities as community resources.
    - **Policy 12.3:** Develop and implement a program to improve water quality in Atascadero Lake with specific water quality standards to be provided in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Safety and Noise Element

Goals, policies, and programs pertinent to noise included within the Safety Element are listed here:

- **Goal SFN 3.** Reduce the threat to life, structures, and the environment caused by fire.
    - **Policy 3.1:** Carefully site and configure new development in higher fire risk areas
        - **Program 2.** Require Fire Department and Atascadero Mutual Water Company review of subdivision design to ensure adequate fire flows and access for emergency vehicles, and compliance of structures with Fire and Building Codes.

- **Policy 3.3:** Sustain the ability of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies.
  - **Program 1.** Prepare, adopt, and maintain standards of coverage for the Fire Department specific to the geography of Atascadero
  - **Program 2.** Maintain mutual aid agreements with other fire and emergency service agencies in rural areas of the community
  - **Program 3.** Train Fire Department personnel in wildfire risk assessment.
  - **Program 4.** Maintain a fire-related GIS database to assist decision-makers with analyzing development proposals, and update the database when new CDF/County Fire Department fire hazard severity maps become available.
  - **Program 5.** Develop GIS based fuel load mapping in conjunction with the native tree mapping program.
  - **Program 6.** Provide ongoing fire prevention public education programs.
  - **Program 7.** Develop and codify uniform standards for maximum slope of streets, driveways, and fire access roads for all new development.
  - **Program 8.** Continue to cooperate with the Atascadero Mutual Water Company to improve and expand fire flows and hydrant locations.
- **Policy 3.4:** Adopt programs to reduce the impacts of fires.
  - **Program 5.** Require Fire Department review of development plans to assure adequacy of access for equipment, water supplies, construction standards, and vegetation clearance.
  - **Program 9.** Support the Memorandum of Understanding between the Atascadero City Fire Department and the Air Pollution Control District that allows burning within the Urban Reserve Line of Atascadero where a fire hazard is present and the vegetation cannot be abated by any other means or other alternatives.

ATASCADERO CODE OF ORDINANCES

Section 4.7 Fire Code

The City of Atascadero Fire Code adopts the 2025 CFC (excluding Appendices A, J, L and M) and the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface Code (excluding all Appendices), along with local amendments. Key local changes include stricter fire truck access standards, expanded sprinkler requirements, and specific safety standards for kitchens and alarms. The code also prohibits private water tanks for fire protection, sets driveway and emergency access standards, and requires wildfire-resistant construction in high-risk areas. Additional provisions cover appeals, false alarms, emergency exits, and solar panel installations.

Section 2.11 Police Department

The Municipal Code outlines the structure and responsibilities of the Police Department, establishing the office of Chief of Police and detailing the appointment process by the City Manager with City Council approval. The Chief oversees law enforcement and department operations under the City Manager's supervision. The code also requires the City to follow California POST standards for recruitment and training of police officers and dispatchers, ensuring compliance with state regulations.

Section 8.3 Building Code

The Atascadero Building Code is based on the California Building Code, with local amendments to address community needs. It removes or revises certain chapters and appendices, and exempts minor structures like small sheds and fences from permit requirements. The code streamlines geotechnical and foundation

requirements for small residential projects, while maintaining safety through oversight by the Chief Building Official. These local changes ensure building regulations reflect Atascadero's specific conditions while upholding safety and quality standards.

Title 10 Parks and Recreation

The Municipal Code sets guidelines for how City parks and recreational areas are used and managed. These rules are designed to protect public safety, preserve natural resources, and ensure that parks remain clean, safe, and enjoyable for everyone. The regulations cover topics such as park hours, permitted activities, use of park facilities, environmental protection, animal control, and the authority of park staff. They also outline restrictions on certain activities and establish penalties for violations to help maintain a positive experience for all park visitors.

4.13.3 Thresholds of Significance

4.13.3.1 Public Services

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by the California Environmental Quality Act and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on public services if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

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

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.13.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, specifically Section 4.13.5.1, *Public Services*, below.

4.13.3.2 Recreation

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on recreation if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.

b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.13.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, specifically Section 4.13.5.2, *Recreation*, below.

4.13.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

The following impact assessment evaluates the potential for future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and associated Zoning Code Update to result in the need for new or physically altered public service facilities and associated environmental impacts. The project would have a significant environmental impact if it were to directly result in the need for new or expanded public service facilities. The project's potential to result in the need for new or physically altered public service facilities was evaluated by determining if growth associated with the project would exceed service goals established by the City and applicable agencies.

4.13.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

4.13.5.1 Public Services

a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

Fire Protection

IMPACT PS-1: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY RESULT IN ADVERSE PHYSICAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROVISION OF NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED FACILITIES FOR FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

New development in the City of Atascadero associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be served by the Atascadero Fire Department. To address current and future public safety needs, the City has initiated the Public Safety Facilities Upgrade Project, which includes replacement of Fire Station No. 1 and major improvements to Fire Station No. 2. Both fire stations were built prior to current building codes and are no longer considered adequate to meet operational or structural standards.

Following the approval of Measure D-20 by City voters, a comprehensive planning process was launched, including a needs assessment and evaluation of options for upgrading or reconstructing existing facilities. Although the City initially explored building a combined public safety facility at the former National Guard Armory site, plans shifted to rebuilding Fire Station No. 1 at its current location and rehabilitating Fire Station No. 2 and Police Headquarters due to site acquisition challenges. The project will provide a new, modern Fire Station No. 1 and EOC, expand and upgrade Fire Station No. 2 to meet current safety and operational standards, and renovate Police Headquarters to support efficient operations and emergency response. These improvements are intended to ensure that public safety facilities can support Atascadero's growing population and evolving service needs, while minimizing environmental impacts by utilizing existing sites and upgrading current infrastructure (City of Atascadero 2025). Fire protection facility improvements associated with the City's Public Safety Facilities Upgrade Project were evaluated pursuant to CEQA during the design phase of the project. In addition, the Fire Department also has future plans to construct a third fire station in the U.S. 101/Del Rio area of the City to ensure appropriate response times throughout the City based on anticipated future growth (MIG 2025).

The City's development impact fees are collected from project developers during the permit process. These fees are applicable to new development being proposed within the City, including residential and nonresidential developments, and are used to fund public infrastructure improvement projects pursuant to the City's current adopted impact fee study. Accordingly, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be subject to payment of development impact fees, which would be used to fund future improvements to the City's emergency response facilities. The City's impact fees are analyzed by staff through detailed nexus studies and reviewed and adopted by the City Council.

In addition to the City's planned fire projection infrastructure projects and development impact fees, the following goals, policies, and actions identified in the 2045 General Plan would serve to reduce impacts from future development on fire protection service facilities and services in the Planning Area:

- **Policy LU-1.4: Gentle Density Infill.** Allow opportunities for missing middle and gentle density style infill development surrounding mixed-use and commercial corridors.
    - **Action A:** Support the development of multi-family residential, including missing middle housing, in the neighborhoods adjacent to commercial corridors, including the neighborhood bordered by Morro Road, Highway 101, and Portola Road, as a way to increase density and maintain community character.
- **Goal SEP-1:** A high level of protection from and minimized risk to life in the event of a fire
    - **Policy SEP-1.1: New Development Risk Reduction.** Promote new development in areas of the community that have lower risk of wildfire hazards and ensure new development in higher risk areas are consistent with Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) standards.
    - **Policy SEP-1.2: Fire Impact Reduction.** Implement programs and policies that minimize risks to life and property posed by fires.
    - **Policy SEP-1.3: Wildfire Risk Reduction.** Increase wildfire resiliency using required and voluntary risk reduction regulations and strategies.
    - **Policy SEP-1.5: Vegetation Management Strategies.** Implement vegetation management strategies and enhanced roadway standards in fire-prone areas through the City's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
    - **Policy SEP-1.6: Community Outreach and Education.** Ensure all community members and businesses are informed and empowered to address fire hazard vulnerabilities.
    - **Policy SEP-1.7: Redevelopment after Fire.** Use lessons learned from major fire events to minimize future loss of life and property damage within high fire zones.
- **Goal SEP-6:** A community well prepared to respond to and recover from natural and human-caused disasters
    - **Policy SEP-6.1: Emergency Preparedness and City Response:** Train City staff, coordinate with regional agencies, and implement programs to be prepared for and capable of responding to all emergency events.
    - **Policy SEP-6.3: Resident Response Programs and Support.** Help prepare and organize residents to respond effectively to disasters.
    - **Policy SEP-6.4: Inter-Agency and Media Coordination.** Coordinate with San Luis Obispo County and State agencies, news media, and others working to reduce the risks of disasters through effective preparedness, response, and recovery.
    - **Policy SEP-6.5: Database Maintenance.** Expand and update the database of safety-related information and convey that information to the public and decision makers.
    - **Policy SEP-6.6: Evacuation Coordination and Investments.** Prioritize investments that expand and enhance evacuation capacity and capabilities.

- **Goal SEP-8:** A robust, well-trained, and highly capable fire protection and emergency response system
    - **Policy SEP-8.1: Facilities and Equipment.** Plan for adequate facilities, equipment, and personnel to meet firefighting demands.
        - **Action A:** Develop and maintain a Fire Department strategic plan.
        - **Action B:** Continue to plan for future facility, equipment, communication system, and personnel requirements.
    - **Policy SEP-8.2: Fire Response.** Sustain the ability of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies.
        - **Action A:** Prepare, adopt, and maintain standards of coverage for the Fire Department.
        - **Action B:** Maintain a fire-related GIS database to assist decision-makers with analyzing development proposals and to assist with fire response and planning. Update the database as new fire hazard severity maps become available.

Based on implementation of the City's Public Safety Facilities Upgrade Project, continued use of development impact fees to fund future improvements and construction of new facilities, and the goals, policies, and actions identified in the 2045 General Plan, project impacts on local fire protection services would be less than significant. Focusing on infill development encourages development closer to the City's urban area where response times are lower and the wildland interface is minimized or eliminated. Fire protection facility improvements associated with the City's Public Safety Facilities Upgrade Project were evaluated pursuant to CEQA during the design phase of that project, and future construction of fire protection facilities, such as a new fire station in the U.S. 101/Del Rio area, would be subject to review under CEQA at the time the construction of such facilities are proposed. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact PS-1
The project would potentially result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered facilities for fire protection services.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

Police Protection

IMPACT PS-2: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY RESULT IN ADVERSE PHYSICAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROVISION OF NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED FACILITIES FOR POLICE PROTECTION SERVICES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

New development in the City of Atascadero associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be served by the APD. To address current and future public safety needs, the City has approved the Public Safety Facilities Upgrade Project which includes major improvements to the Police Headquarters. This project would assist the APD's goals to meet modern policing and emergency response

requirements with upgraded equipment and building efficiencies that support readiness. An increase in the City's population and demand for APD resources could place additional strain on staff capacity. However, while staffing would need to increase both to meet desired levels of service and proportionally as population grows, the Police Headquarters is being renovated to address modern policing standards and maximize operational efficiencies. Essential elements of the renovations include roof repair/rehabilitation, HVAC upgrades as necessary, parking area security upgrades, refreshed interior finishes, restroom/locker room improvements, a new detached 1,300 sq ft dispatch building. In addition, growth is focused within the City's urbanized areas, and no growth beyond the current City boundary is proposed, maintaining the existing service area.

The City's development impact fees are collected from project developers during the permit process. These fees are applicable for new development being proposed within the City, including residential and nonresidential developments, and are used to fund public infrastructure improvement projects pursuant to the City's current adopted impact fee study. Accordingly, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan, as implemented through the Zoning Code Update, would be subject to payment of development impact fees, which would be used to fund future improvements to the City's police station and increase staff capacity. The City's impact fees are analyzed by staff through detailed nexus studies and reviewed and adopted by the City Council.

In addition to the City's planned police protection facility improvement projects and development impact fees, the following goals, policies, and actions identified in the 2045 General Plan would reduce impacts to police protection service facilities and services in the Planning Area:

- **Policy LU-1.4: Gentle Density Infill.** Allow opportunities for missing middle and gentle density style infill development surrounding mixed-use and commercial corridors.
    - **Action A:** Support the development of multi-family residential, including missing middle housing, in the neighborhoods adjacent to commercial corridors, including the neighborhood bordered by Morro Road, Highway 101, and Portola Road, as a way to increase density and maintain community character.
- **Goal SEP-7:** Responsive police services that deter and respond to crime and support a safe and secure community
    - **Policy SEP-7.1: Equipment and Training.** Develop, maintain, and implement a Police Department Master Plan that guides the provision of equipment, facilities, training, and operations centers.
        - **Action A:** Establish internal and operational goals for the Department based on assessment of needs, as directed by the City Council.
        - **Action B:** Produce a Master Plan which includes guiding sections on equipment, facilities, training, and operations.
    - **Policy SEP-7.3: Response Times.** Identify, monitor, and achieve appropriate minimum police response times for all call priority levels.
        - **Action A:** Establish goals for police response times based on priority levels.
        - **Action B:** Identify and implement strategies and tools needed to monitor police response times.
        - **Action C:** Implement a strategy to improve police response times, if needed, and maintain an ongoing assessment of response times.
    - **Policy SEP-7.4: Inter-Agency Coordination.** Coordinate with local, regional, State, and Federal criminal justice agencies to promote regional cooperation in the delivery of police services.

- **Action A:** Identify and coordinate with relevant agencies, including both current and potential future partners.
- **Action B:** Establish and maintain a system for ongoing and case-specific communications.

Based on implementation of the City's Public Safety Facilities Upgrade Project, continued use of development impact fees to fund future improvements and construction of new facilities, and the goals, policies, and actions identified in the 2045 General Plan, project impacts on local police protection services would be less than significant. Focusing on infill development encourages development closer to the City's urban area where response times are lower and population growth is minimized in the more rural areas. Police protection facility improvements associated with the City's Public Safety Facilities Upgrade Project were evaluated pursuant to CEQA during the design phase of that project, and these improvements would ensure that the APD has sufficient staffing, facilities, and equipment to maintain acceptable service levels throughout the 2045 General Plan planning period. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact PS-2
The project would potentially result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered facilities for police protection services.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

Schools

IMPACT PS-3: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY RESULT IN ADVERSE PHYSICAL IMPACTS RELATED TO THE NEED FOR NEW OR MODIFIED SCHOOL FACILITIES, THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHICH COULD CAUSE NOTABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

A significant impact would result if, in order for the AUSD to adequately serve residents in the Planning Area, increased school enrollment would require the construction of new facilities or the expansion of existing schools, the construction or operation of which would cause significant environmental impacts.

The 2010 AUSD Facilities Master Plan recognized a significant decrease in enrollment from 2000 to 2010, losing 17.31 percent of its student population. In the report, AUSD projected that this trend would continue over the next several years. By the 2026-27 school year, the trend of enrollment is anticipated to reverse and student enrollment is projected to reach 5,460. The most recent 2024-25 school year had 4,338 students enrolled in the district, approximately 20% below the future projected total (AUSD 2010). Because AUSD has been experiencing declining enrollment, most of the facilities needs of the AUSD include modernization and reconstruction of existing facilities, rather than expansion or construction of new facilities. Exceptions would include the planned construction of several specialized facilities on the Atascadero High School campus, such as new facilities for agriculture, medical, hospitality, and performing arts programs (AUSD 2010). Funding sources for these improvements include State School Facilities Program funding (pursuant to Senate Bill 50), school impact fees, and tax override pursuant to Education Code 17408 and prior passage of Proposition 13 (AUSD 2010).

Those seeking permits for new residential development must pay school impact fees as outlined in the most current fee schedule adopted by the School District during the building permit process. According to Government Code Section 65995, state law specifies that the payment of these fees is the sole means for mitigating impacts on schools; no further mitigation measures may be required. By paying the impact fees, potential impacts on schools would be considered less than significant. Additionally, AUSD is responsible for conducting environmental review for any newly constructed or expanded school facilities.

In addition to the planned school facilities improvements and current funding sources, the 2045 General Plan contains goals, policies, and action items to support educational facilities including the following:

- **Goal PSI-1:** Continued reliable public infrastructure and services that support orderly and desired growth
    - **Policy PSI-1.7: Coordination between Agencies.** Encourage independent public agencies to consult and coordinate with the City on their development projects.
        - **Action B:** Support the efforts of public and private K-12 schools, post-high school, and trades educational facilities to provide diverse and high-quality learning opportunities, and ensure such facilities integrate well into neighborhoods and districts.

Based on the projected enrollment trends, the existing capacity of AUSD facilities, and the regulatory framework established by state law and local policies, it is anticipated that future development within the Planning Area would not necessitate the construction of new school facilities or the expansion of existing schools in a manner that would result in significant environmental impacts. Compliance with the established school development impact fee requirements ensures that any potential impacts are appropriately mitigated. Furthermore, any future school facility projects would be subject to their own environmental review processes. Therefore, impacts to school facilities resulting from the proposed project would be *less than significant*.

Impact PS-3
The project would potentially result in significant adverse physical impacts related to the need for new or modified school facilities, the construction of which could cause notable environmental effects.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

Parks

IMPACT PS-4: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY RESULT IN ADVERSE PHYSICAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE NEED FOR NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED PARKS FACILITIES, THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHICH COULD CAUSE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

As outlined in Section 4.13.1, *Existing Conditions*, the City owns and operates seven public parks (totaling approximately 226 acres) and several recreational facilities, including the Colony Park Community Center,

A-town Skate Park, Pavilion on the Lake, and Central Coast Zoo that provide space for residents and visitors to enjoy passive and active forms of recreation. Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan is projected to increase the City's population by 6,596 residents over the course of the 20-year planning period, which would increase the demand for parks and recreational amenities within the City. Goal LOC 11 of the 2025 General Plan, directs the City to acquire or dedicate park land at a rate of 5 acres per 1,000 residents, in alignment with the Quimby Act, while the 2045 General Plan has a policy that encourages the acquisition of parkland and open space beyond the required Quimby Act parkland ratio. Based on a projected population of 37,279 in 2045, Atascadero is projected to exceed its parkland LOS standard of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents on a Citywide basis through 2045.

The 2045 General Plan *Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element* identifies goals, policies, and actions that would guide local planning and development to address and minimize potential impacts on park availability and facility quality stemming from future growth.

- **Goal REC-1:** Diverse parks, recreational activities, and leisure experiences for people of all ages
    - **Policy REC-1.1: Park and Recreation Facilities Planning and Operations.** Provide adequate park and recreation facilities to accommodate current community needs and planned future growth.
        - **Action A:** Update the comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to provide for long-term needs.
        - **Action B:** Prepare and maintain individual master plans for major City park facilities that include a programming component and management requirements.
        - **Action C:** Provide diverse recreation opportunities citywide for residents and visitors, including multi-purpose sports complexes, sports courts, play areas for children, equestrian trails, bikeways, jogging paths, hiking trails, and community centers.
        - **Action D:** Acquire and improve a neighborhood park site in northern Atascadero.
        - **Action E:** If future development is approved for the Eagle Ranch property, require the development of publicly accessible parks, recreational facilities, equestrian facilities, and trails, including a link toward the Los Padres National Forest land to the west.
        - **Action F:** Encourage the acquisition of parkland and open space beyond the Quimby Act ratio of five acres per 1,000 residents.
    - **Policy REC-1.2: Interagency Coordination.** Work with State, regional, and local agencies to plan for, acquire, and expand park and recreation facilities and amenities in Atascadero.
        - **Action A:** Pursue expansion of sports fields in the area to the east of Paloma Park, and/or execute a long-term agreement with the State to acquire or lease the site. Analyze potential expansion into a regional sports facility.
        - **Action B:** Work with the Atascadero Unified School District to formulate a program for joint use of facilities to attain a system of school-park complexes, and execute necessary agreements to allocate maintenance and operation costs for joint use.
        - **Action C:** Work with the County and other agencies to acquire and develop parks and facilities.
    - **REC-1.3: Park and Recreation Financing.** Develop a method of financing park and recreational facilities and services using a variety of revenue sources.
        - **Action A:** Acquire parkland through developer dedications, development impact fees, or other financing mechanisms.

  - **Action B:** Work with community partners on maintenance of facilities, parklands, and trails.
  - **Action C:** Use development impact and/or in-lieu fees to fund park and recreation facilities of all sizes.
  - **Action D:** Finance park operations in part through user fees.
- **Policy REC-1.4: Specialized Recreation.** Provide specialized recreation opportunities based on projected needs and standards identified in Park Master Plan(s).
  - **Action A:** Plan for funding on-going operations and maintenance to finance development of facilities that support specialized recreation.
  - **Action B:** Promote the Zoo, Atascadero Lake Park, and other City parks as unique and valuable attractions.
  - **Action C:** Support equestrian staging areas and trail systems, including the De Anza trail along the Salinas River.

Additionally, the Municipal Code requires resident amenity areas as a part of residential multi-family and mixed-use developments per Municipal Code Sections 9-3.262 (*Property Development Standards – RMF*) and 9-3.331 (*Mixed Use Residential*). Municipal Code Section 9-3.262 (*Property Development Standards – RMF*) requires that residential multi-family developments provide outdoor recreation or gathering spaces sized at 200 square feet per unit, with specific requirements for the proportion, size, and type of private versus common open space depending on the project's total units. All common open spaces must meet minimum accessibility and dimension standards and include a required number of amenities. Municipal Code 9-3.331 (*Mixed Use Residential*) requires that mixed-use projects must provide recreational or gathering open space at 30 square feet per unit, with exemptions for small projects in commercial or downtown zones; smaller developments (up to 49 units) can use private or common spaces, while larger ones (50+ units) must provide at least half as common open space. Private and common spaces must meet minimum size, accessibility, and location standards, and common areas must be large enough for gathering and not just serve as walkways or unsuitable spaces.

As previously discussed, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update is expected to increase demand for recreational facilities, which would necessitate the development or expansion of such amenities. At this stage, the specific timing, location, and characteristics of these new or upgraded facilities remain unknown, so the detailed environmental impacts related to their construction and use cannot be known at this time. Any new park or recreational facility would undergo environmental review pursuant to CEQA and would be subject to applicable policies intended to minimize potential impacts. Permitting and review processes in accordance with City requirements would further ensure that environmental impacts are identified and addressed appropriately. Because this EIR provides a program-level assessment and does not analyze individual future projects, the overall impact is considered *less than significant*, and no mitigation measures are warranted at this time.

Impact PS-4
The project would potentially result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the need for new or physically altered parks facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

Other Public Facilities

IMPACT PS-5: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY RESULT IN ADVERSE PHYSICAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE NEED FOR NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED LIBRARY FACILITIES, THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHICH COULD CAUSE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

A significant impact would result if increased demand on library services would require the construction of new facilities or the expansion of existing library facilities, the construction or operation of which would cause significant environmental impacts. It is projected that by 2045, the horizon year of the proposed project, 2,890 new housing units would be developed, and the population would increase by 6,596 residents. This is anticipated to result in an increased demand on library services within the Planning Area. Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be subject to payment of City development impact fees, which would be used to fund future improvements to library facilities, as needed.

The 2045 General Plan *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* contains goals, policies, and actions that require local planning and development decisions to consider and mitigate impacts that potential future development could have on library facilities. The following goal and policy would also serve to reduce impacts to library facilities and services in the City.

- **Goal PSI-1:** Continued reliable public infrastructure and services that support orderly and desired growth.
    - **Policy PSI-1.6: Public Libraries.** Coordinate with the San Luis Obispo Public Libraries to maintain the local library, with continuing access for all residents to modern, high-quality resources and programs.

Any future construction of new library facilities would undergo a project-specific environmental review in accordance with CEQA requirements to identify and address potential impacts. As noted in Section 4.13.1, Existing Conditions, the County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries participates in a county-wide inter-library exchange program, allowing materials to be delivered to any branch, and offers an extensive online digital collection with eBooks, audiobooks, and streaming media. These resources broaden access to library services beyond a single physical location, helping the Atascadero Library enhance its offerings and reduce potential impacts from the proposed project. It is anticipated that population growth resulting from the project would occur gradually over the next 20 years. Any need for library facility expansions would be evaluated as development progresses. Based on the payment of development impact fees and compliance with the 2045 General Plan as implemented by the Zoning Code Update, the project would result in *less*

than significant impacts related to new or expanded library facilities, and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Impact PS-5
The project would potentially result in adverse physical impacts associated with the need for new or physically altered library facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.13.5.2 Recreation

a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

IMPACT REC-1: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY INCREASE THE USE OF EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD AND REGIONAL PARKS OR OTHER RECREATIONAL FACILITIES SUCH THAT SUBSTANTIAL PHYSICAL DETERIORATION OF THE FACILITY WOULD OCCUR OR BE ACCELERATED. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The City's population as of 2024 was 30,683, and the City's forecasted population for the General Plan Update planning period (through 2045) is 37,279, reflecting a 22% increase over the 20-year planning period, or approximately 0.97% per year. An increase in Atascadero's population would lead to greater demand for both neighborhood and regional parks, potentially contributing to increased rates of wear and tear on these facilities. The 2045 General Plan identifies specific goals, policies, and actions designed to support and maintain parkland, as well as requirements for parkland dedication and/or fees for new residential projects, as outlined in the Atascadero Municipal Code and described in Section 4.13.2, Regulatory Setting. These measures would ensure that individual parks and recreational amenities are adequately maintained and that increased demand for parks and recreational facilities resulting from new development is offset by the provision of new park and recreation facilities. The Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element further requires that planning and development decisions address and mitigate impacts on existing parks and facility quality. As detailed in impact discussion Impact PS 4, the 2045 General Plan includes several proposed policies and actions that focus on maintaining parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces, safeguarding the public's investment. Because development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be subject to payment of Quimby fees and development impact fees and would be subject to these goals and policies of the 2045 General Plan and Atascadero Municipal Code, as updated through the associated Zoning Code Update, impacts would be *less than significant*, and mitigation measures are not necessary.

Impact REC-1
The project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

IMPACT REC-2: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT INCLUDE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES OR REQUIRE THE CONSTRUCTION OR EXPANSION OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES WHICH MIGHT HAVE AN ADVERSE PHYSICAL EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT. *(NO IMPACT)*

Potential impacts associated with future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan resulting in the need for expanded or new parks and recreational facilities is discussed under PS Impact 4, above. The 2045 General Plan identifies opportunities to improve existing and create new linkages to parks and recreational amenities that would improve the quality of life for residents and visitors. The 2045 General Plan does not include any specific proposal or plan to acquire new parkland or develop new recreational facilities. Therefore, *no impacts* would occur related to the construction or expansion of recreational facilities.

Impact REC-2
The project would not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
No impacts would occur.

4.13.6 Cumulative Impacts

4.13.6.1 Public Services

IMPACT PS-6: THE PROJECT WOULD HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS RELATED TO PUBLIC SERVICES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Public services in Atascadero are delivered by the City, such as Atascadero Fire and Emergency Services and APD, and supporting agencies, including AUSD and the County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries. Future growth is expected to increase demand for these services, which may necessitate upgrades, expansion, or new facilities to maintain acceptable service levels and response times.

As described in this section, the City has planned significant improvements to public safety infrastructure, including the rebuilding and expansion of fire stations and police headquarters. The City also coordinates with the school district and County library division to ensure future needs are addressed. State law and local regulations, including development impact fees and facility standards, require new development to contribute to the funding and provision of adequate public services.

Implementation of 2045 General Plan goals, policies, and actions, such as maintaining mutual aid agreements, updating master plans, and coordinating with regional partner agencies, will help ensure that public services continue to meet community needs without causing substantial adverse physical impacts on the environment. The timing, location, and characteristics of any new or expanded facilities will be determined as development occurs, with each project subject to environmental review.

Overall, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact to public services, and cumulative impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact PS-6
The project would have the potential to result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to public services.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.13.6.2 Recreation

IMPACT REC-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS RELATED TO RECREATION. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Parks and recreation services in the City are primarily provided by the City, with regional facilities managed by San Luis Obispo County and the ALPS. Anticipated future population growth would increase demand for parks and recreational facilities across the City and region.

As described under impact discussion PS Impact 4 and REC Impact 1, State law permits jurisdictions to require new development to contribute to park improvements through development impact fees or land dedication, and the City's Municipal Code, as maintained with the Zoning Code Update, outlines requirements for such contributions. Implementation of the 2045 General Plan policies and actions would also help ensure that adequate parkland and recreational amenities are provided as development occurs.

The specific location, size, and characteristics of additional recreational facilities would be determined as future development projects are proposed. Each new park or facility would be subject to project-specific environmental review. As a result, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact related to parks and recreational facilities, and cumulative impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact REC-3
The project would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to recreation.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.14 TRANSPORTATION

This section evaluates the proposed project's potential impact on the local and regional transportation system in the Planning Area, including potential impacts related to vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The analysis in this section is based, in part, on the *CEQA Transportation Memorandum for the Atascadero General Plan Update* prepared by Central Coast Transportation Consulting (CCTC) in July 2025 (Appendix J) and in part, on the *2045 General Plan Existing Conditions Report – Chapter 4: Transportation and Mobility* prepared by MIG, Inc. (MIG) (Appendix I) (CCTC 2025; MIG 2023).

4.14.1 Existing Conditions

4.14.1.1 Historic Context

The current circulation network was laid out in the 1913 Atascadero Colony plan (MIG 2025). The network consists of radial routes emanating from the Atascadero Administrative Building, supported by a series of arterial rings to convey traffic to outlying areas. Farther from the civic core, the streets follow the topography, resulting in winding, narrow, tree-lined streets that have become a defining part of the City's character. The radial street pattern was interrupted in 1954 with the construction of U.S. Route (U.S.) 101, which bisects the civic core and limits east-west travel to eight crossings (MIG 2025). The Colony plan centralized all civic, social, educational, administrative, and commercial activities at the Civic Center. Commercial development has since spread along El Camino Real, and residential neighborhoods extended east of El Camino Real and west of U.S. 101, which has increased demand for travel beyond the original colony era vision (MIG 2025).

4.14.1.2 Roadway Network

This section describes the existing roadway network in Atascadero. Figure 4.14-1 identifies roadways and roadway classifications within Atascadero.

FREEWAYS

Freeways are intercity or interregional connections designed for high-volume, high-speed traffic. Freeways have controlled access, with limited cross traffic and connections via interchanges. There is one freeway, U.S. 101, that provides regional access to and from Atascadero. U.S. 101 is also the through truck route system that runs through Atascadero. Although the state highway rights-of-way (ROWs) are managed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the City identifies opportunities to improve facilities along the freeway on- and off-ramps (MIG 2025).

ARTERIAL STREETS

Arterial streets provide for circulation between major activity centers and residential areas within the City and beyond. They are also the main point of access to freeways and serve as major corridors supporting growth. Arterial street ROWs typically range from 80 to 100 feet. Major arterials usually carry the highest volumes and/or longest trip in the City. Major arterials in Atascadero include El Camino Real and Morro Road/ California State Route 41 (SR 41) (MIG 2025). Minor arterials typically interconnect with and augment the major arterial system and serve trips of moderate length. Minor arterials include Atascadero Avenue, Halcon Road, Portola Road, Santa Barbara Road, Santa Rosa Road, Traffic Way, and portions of Curbaril Avenue, Del Rio Road, San Anselmo Road, Santa Cruz Road, and Santa Lucia Avenue (MIG 2025).

COLLECTOR STREETS

Collectors channel traffic from residential or commercial areas to arterials. Residences, office and commercial, and public activities typically front on to them. They are usually two-lane streets, with ROWs typically ranging from 40 to 60 feet. Collectors are divided into two categories, depending on the area and type of topography. Urban collectors serve commercial and higher density areas. Urban roads generally provide on-street parking, as well as sidewalks and bike lanes. Rural collectors serve areas that typically have larger parcels and are generally narrower due to lower volumes and limited need to accommodate on-street parking. Rural roadway cross sections vary depending on topography but may have walkable shoulders, bike lanes, and/or multiuse pathways to provide multimodal connections to other destinations (MIG 2025).

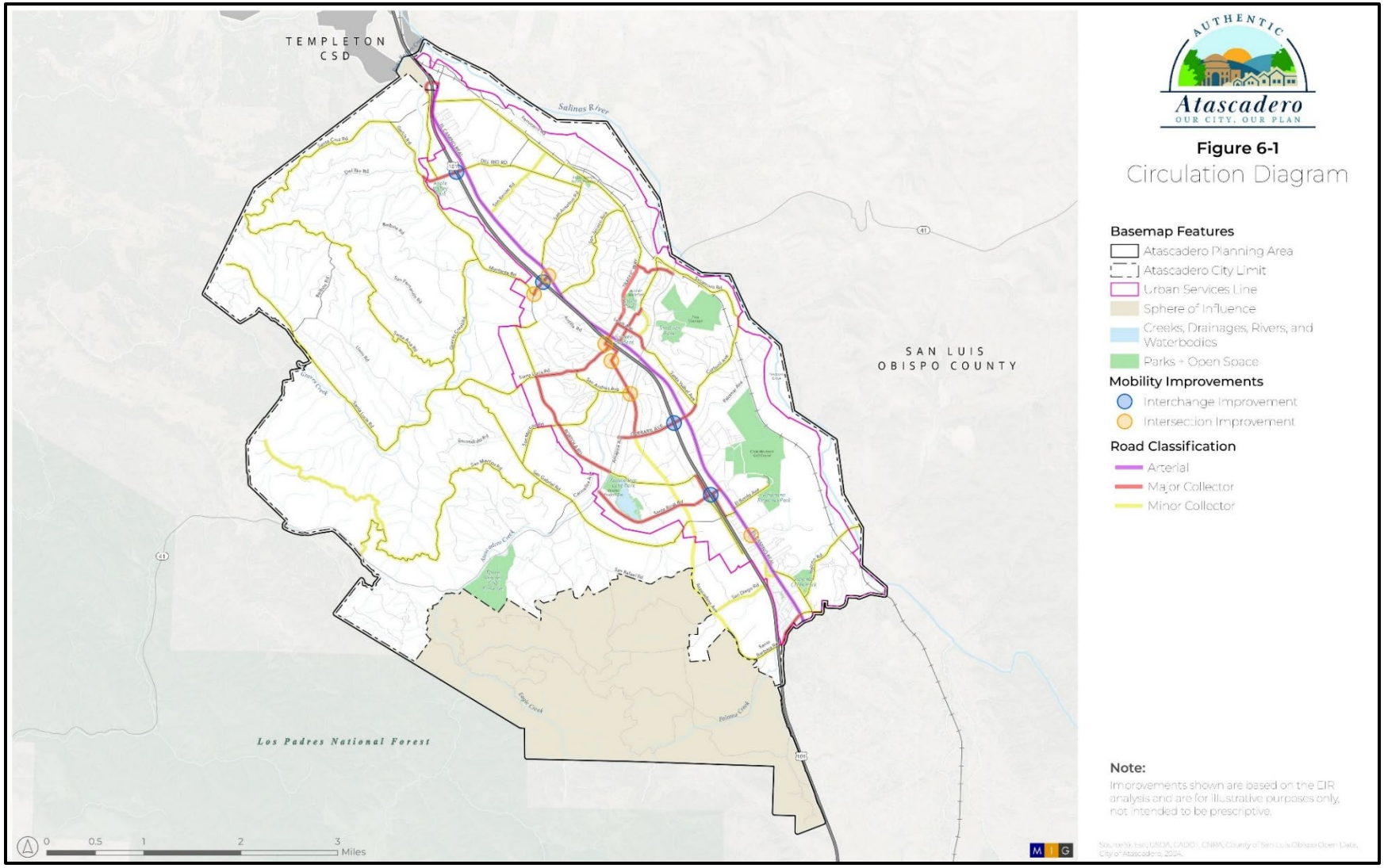
LOCAL STREETS

Local streets provide access to adjoining land uses and typically provide narrower travel lanes and may or may not have dedicated bike lanes. They typically serve rural and single-family residential land uses, with ROWs ranging from an average of 36 to 40 feet (MIG 2025).

4.14.1.3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Network

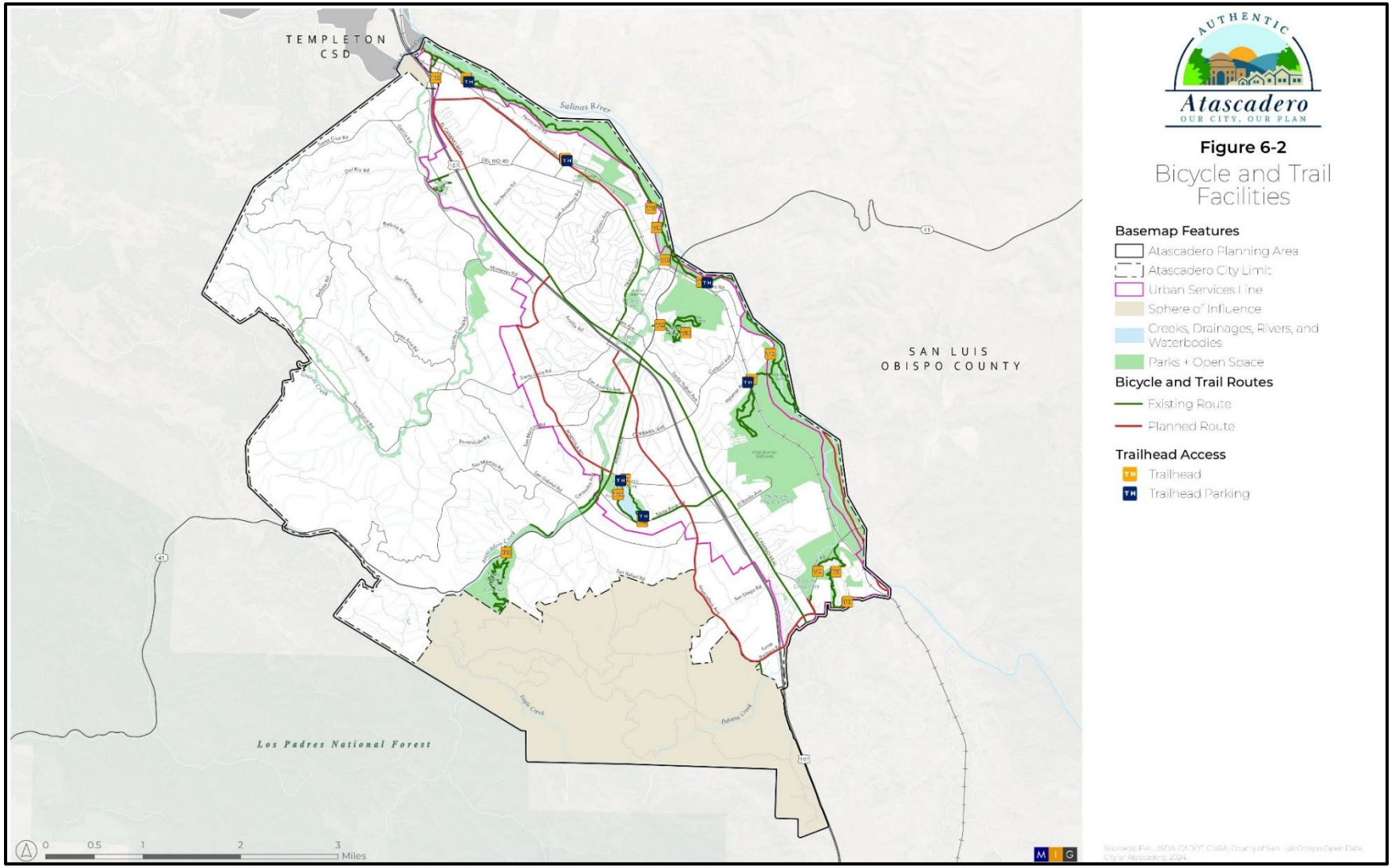
Atascadero's climate, topography, and development patterns in mixed-use, multifamily, and smaller-lot single-family areas are conducive to recreational and commuter bicycle trips; however, the bicycle commute mode share in the City is lower than the statewide average (1.6% vs. 3.1%), due to a limited and incomplete bicycle network (MIG 2024). Most bike facilities in Atascadero consist of Class II bikeways that are typically located along major arterials such as El Camino Real, portions of Traffic Way, and SR 41/Morro Road. Figure 4.14-2 shows planned and existing bike and trail routes in Atascadero by type of facility. Additionally, the Juan Bautisa de Anza Trail is a 1,200-mile historical trail and multimodal facility that connects Nogales, Arizona, with San Francisco, California, and runs along the eastern edge of Atascadero (U.S. Forest Service 2025).

The City's steep topography and low-density land uses on the west side and east side periphery discourage destination walking, but the higher densities and mix of uses along and adjacent to the El Camino Real and Morro Road corridors generally support walking. Walking is hindered in more residential and rural neighborhoods due to topography, physical constraints, sidewalk gaps, and limited east-west crossings. Approximately 4.5% of local commute trips in Atascadero are made by walking, substantially higher than the statewide average of 2.7% (MIG 2025). Although community data indicates that walking is a more common mode of commute in Atascadero when compared to the state average, factors such as steep topography, missing sidewalks, and narrow U.S. 101 interchanges are areas of concern for many pedestrians (MIG 2025).



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.14-1. Atascadero circulation system map.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.14-2. Bike and trail facilities.

4.14.1.4 Transit Network

The City of Atascadero is served by both national and regional transportation agencies and providers. This section provides an overview of the various agencies and service providers.

AMTRAK

Amtrak provides scheduled, national transit service via bus connections within Atascadero. Service is offered through two daily buses, one northward toward San Jose, and one southward toward Los Angeles. The only Amtrak bus stop within Atascadero is at the Transit Center at 6000 Capistrano Avenue in Downtown Atascadero.

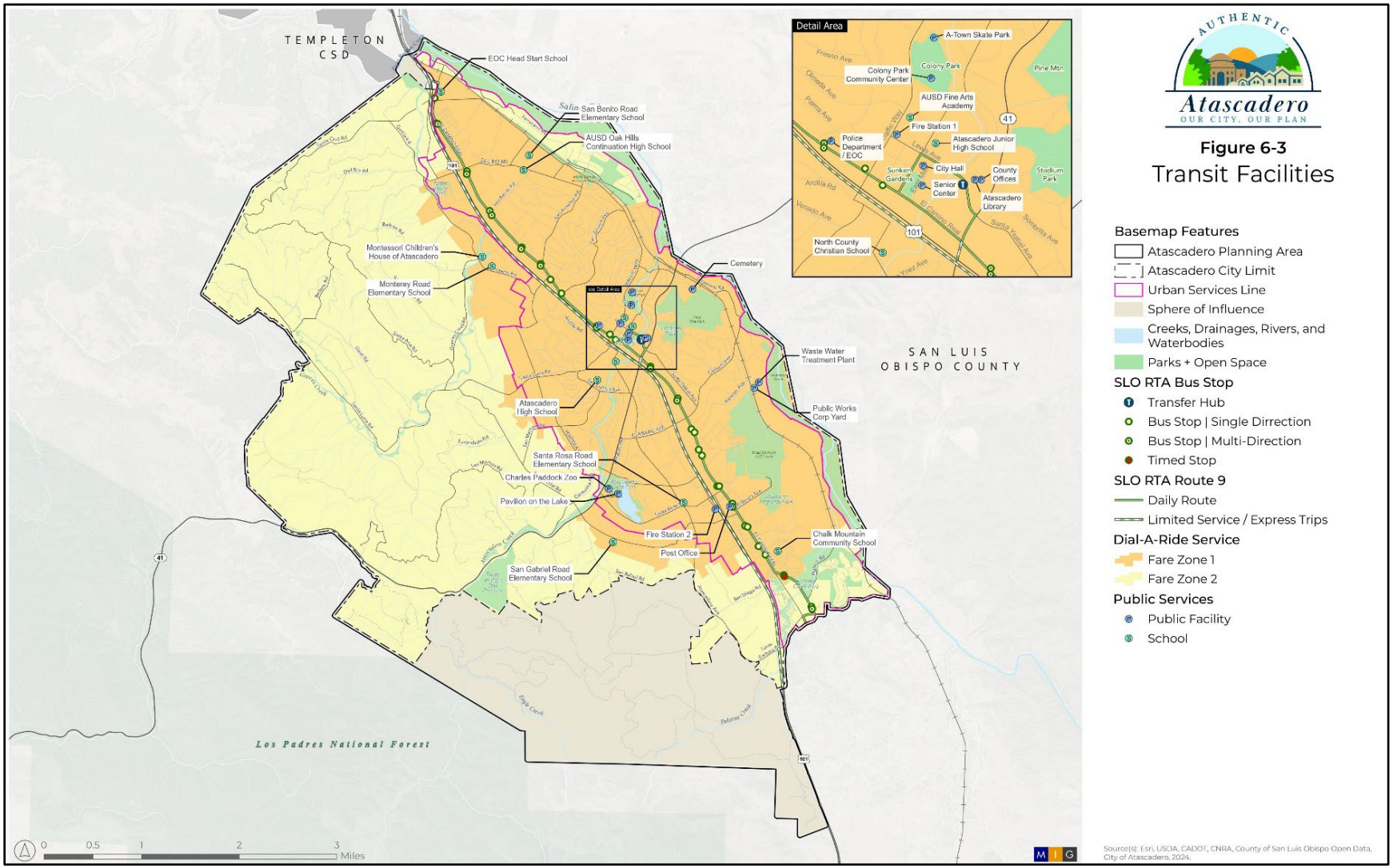
DIAL-A-RIDE

Dial-A-Ride provides scheduled, door-to-door transit service via minibus within Atascadero. Service is limited to weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and costs are based on service zones. Fare Zone 1consists of the City core and higher-density neighborhoods. This service is cheaper than in Fare Zone 2; the destinations served are primarily in the eastern portion of the City, serving locations along U.S. 101 and east SR 41. Fare Zone 2 includes more rural residential areas, primarily in the western area of the City where fewer citizens live. Two other locations in Templeton are included in this zone, Twin Cities Hospital and Medical Offices, on Las Tablas Road and Trader Joe's on Vineyard Drive. Figure 4.14-3 shows the Dial-A-Ride zones within City limits. Discounted rates are available for seniors, disabled persons, and Medicare card holders. Additionally, all services follow Title IV regulations, which require accommodations for any passenger regardless of identity. Responses to this regulation are emphasized with the use of wheelchair lifts and bike racks on the vehicle (City of Atascadero 2026).

REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

The San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLORTA) serves Atascadero with Route 9, which provides hourly and express fixed-route bus service between San Miguel and San Luis Obispo. It includes stops in Paso Robles, Atascadero, Templeton, and Santa Margarita. SLORTA Route 9 provides timed stops at Viejo Camino at Bocina Lane and at the Atascadero Transit Center in downtown near the junction of U.S. 101 and SR 41 (SLORTA 2026a). SLORTA Route 9 additionally provides numerous un-timed stops on El Camino Real, as shown in Figure 4.14-3. All buses have ramps and are wheelchair accessible.

Runabout Paratransit is a county-wide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)–compliant paratransit service. All vehicles are wheelchair accessible and can accommodate additional personal items, including mobility aids, groceries, and packages. Riders must be ADA-certified to qualify (SLORTA 2026b).



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.14-3. Transit network.

RIDE-ON TRANSPORTATION

Ride-On Transportation is a nonprofit organization that provides transportation services in San Luis Obispo County. It encompasses both the county's Consolidated Transportation Service Agency and Transportation Management Association (Ride-On Transportation 2020). Ride-On Transportation provides specialized regional transportation services, including:

- **Access Shuttle:** A door-to-door transit service in San Luis Obispo County for low-income individuals who do not have access to public transit. Service is limited to two round-trip rides per month. Riders must be eligible to ride.
- **Community Interaction Program:** Door-to-door transportation for riders with developmental disabilities. Rides must be requested in advance and services are limited to after 5:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday and on weekends.
- **Medi-Cal and CenCal Shuttle:** Free transportation to medical appointments for individuals who cannot use public transit.
- **Senior Go:** Curb-to-curb transportation within local communities with no set timetables or routes. Vehicles are equipped to support mobility-impaired passengers. Ride requests can be made within a week of the trip by calling the number provided. Hours are limited to 9:00 am to 5:00 p.m. weekdays, with a base fare of $2.50 that increases with distance.
- **Veteran Express Shuttle:** Door-to-door transportation for veterans in San Luis Obispo County to local veteran's clinics. Reservations must be made in advance and service is limited to once per month.

4.14.2 Regulatory Setting

4.14.2.1 Federal

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION'S SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH AND SAFE SYSTEM ROADWAY DESIGN HIERARCHY

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Safe System Roadway Design Hierarchy is a framework intended to guide transportation agencies in selecting and prioritizing roadway design strategies that reduce traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. The hierarchy supports the FHWA Safe System Approach (SSA), which emphasizes designing transportation systems that anticipate human error and minimize the severity of crashes when they occur. The Safe System Roadway Design Hierarchy organizes engineering and infrastructure countermeasures into four tiers based on how strongly they align with Safe System principles, with higher tiers prioritizing strategies that remove or separate roadway conflicts and reduce crash energy. Lower-tier strategies focus on providing information to roadway users so they can respond appropriately to potential hazards. The hierarchy is intended to help agencies incorporate Safe System principles into transportation planning and project development and to encourage implementation of proven safety countermeasures and Complete Streets strategies that improve safety for all roadway users (FHWA 2024).

4.14.2.2 State

CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2050 (CTP 2050)

The CTP 2050 is a statewide, long-range transportation policy plan designed to meet California's future mobility needs and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The plan envisions a fully integrated, multimodal, sustainable transportation system that supports economic vitality, protects natural resources, promotes the health and well-being of all Californians, and meets people's needs equitably (Caltrans 2020).

CALTRANS AUTHORITY OVER THE STATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Caltrans is responsible for the planning, design, construction and maintenance of all interstate freeways and state routes. It builds, maintains, and operates the state highway system in California with a goal to facilitate the safe and efficient use of the state transportation system for all users. Caltrans sets standards in its 2020 Transportation Impact Study Guide that focus on the VMT metric. The document is intended to be a reference and informational document that aligns with the standards and thresholds established in the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LUCI) (formerly known as the Office of Planning and Research) *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* (dated December 2018). This document is available to be used by local governments to uniformly review transportation analysis and assess the operational standards of Caltrans-maintained facilities. The 2020 Transportation Impact Study Guide acts as a replacement for the 2002 Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies but is only intended for use with local land use projects and plans, not for transportation projects on the state highway system.

COMPLETE STREETS ACT

The Complete Streets Act was signed into law as Assembly Bill (AB) 1358 in 2008. It requires that cities and other public agencies incorporate "complete street" policies and principles into their General Plans and updates within Circulation Elements, so that the plan addresses the needs of all users, including bicyclists and pedestrians. Caltrans Deputy Directive 64 (DD-64-R1 October 2008) embraces the Complete Streets Act and its incorporation into all phases of state highway projects, from planning to construction to maintenance and repair (Caltrans 2008).

ASSEMBLY BILL 2911 (2018) AND THE SUBDIVISION REVIEW PROGRAM

Following the 2017 fire season, AB 2911 was adopted to improve fire safety in subdivision developments. The Subdivision Review Program was formed pursuant to Assembly Bill 2911, which added Section 4290.5 to the Public Resources Code (PRC). PRC Section 4290.5 requires the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, in consultation with the State Fire Marshal, to survey local governments including counties, cities, and fire districts to identify existing subdivisions located in State Responsibility Areas or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones that are without a secondary means of egress route and are at significant fire risk. Through this Subdivision Review Program, the Board, in consultation with the State Fire Marshal and local governments, would develop recommendations to create secondary access to the subdivision, improvements to existing access roads, and other fire safety measures (California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection 2026).

ASSEMBLY BILL 32 AND SENATE BILL 375

With the passage of AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, the State of California committed itself to reducing statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 (California Air Resources Board [CARB] 2018). On December 11, 2008, CARB adopted its Scoping Plan for AB 32, which was subsequently updated in 2013, 2017, and 2022. This scoping plan included the approval of SB 375 as the means for achieving regional transportation related GHG targets.

Senate Bill (SB) 375 provides guidance on how curbing emissions from cars and light trucks can help the State comply with AB 32. There are five major components to SB 375. First, regional GHG emissions targets: CARB's Regional Targets Advisory Committee guides the adoption of targets to be met by 2020 and 2035 for each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the state. These targets, which MPOs may propose themselves, are updated every 8 years in conjunction with the revision schedule of Housing and Circulation Elements (Land Use Associates 2010).

Second, MPOs are required to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) that provides a plan for meeting regional targets. The SCS and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) must be consistent with each other, including action items and financing decisions. If the SCS does not meet the regional target, the MPO must produce an Alternative Planning Strategy that details an alternative plan to meet the target. The RTP and SCS are further described below (Land Use Associates 2010).

Third, SB 375 requires that regional housing elements and transportation plans be synchronized on 8-year schedules. In addition, RHNA allocation numbers must conform to the SCS. If local jurisdictions are required to rezone land as a result of changes in the housing element, rezoning must take place within 3 years (Land Use Associates 2010).

Fourth, SB 375 provides California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining incentives for preferred development types. Certain residential or mixed-use projects qualify if they conform to the SCS. Transit-oriented developments also qualify if they: 1) are at least 50% residential, 2) meet density requirements, and 3) are within 0.5 mile of a transit stop. The degree of CEQA streamlining is based on the degree of compliance with these development preferences (Land Use Associates 2010).

Finally, MPOs must use transportation and air emissions modeling techniques consistent with guidelines prepared by the California Transportation Commission (CTC). Regional transportation planning agencies, cities, and counties are encouraged, but not required, to use travel demand models consistent with the CTC guidelines (CTC 2024).

SENATE BILL 743

SB 743, which was signed into law in 2013, directed LUCI (formerly the Governor's Office of Planning and Research) to develop revisions to the CEQA Guidelines by July 1, 2014, to establish new criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts and define alternative metrics instead of traffic level of service. SB 743 requires the new criteria to "promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses." It also states that alternative measures of transportation impacts may include "vehicle miles traveled, vehicle miles traveled per capita, automobile trip generation rates, or automobile trips generated." SB 743 changes the way that public agencies evaluate the transportation impacts of projects under CEQA by recognizing that roadway congestion, while an inconvenience to drivers, is not itself an environmental impact (PRC Section 21099(b)(2)).

4.14.2.3 Regional

2023 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) serves as both the Regional Transportation Planning Agency and MPO for San Luis Obispo County and incorporated cities (including Atascadero). SLOCOG allocates federal and state transportation funds as an association of local governments within the region.

SLOCOG is required to prepare and adopt an RTP every 4 years. The RTP outlines regional transportation policies and identifies projects and funding to support transportation needs. The 2023 RTP serves as the region's long-range plan and SCS through the year 2045. The RTP provides a collective vision for the region's future balancing transportation and housing needs with social, economic, and environmental goals. The RTP identified and tested projected growth for the San Luis Obispo County region to include 42,000 new residents, 18,000 new homes, and 18,000 new jobs between 2015 and 2045. The RTP also identified four constrained projects in Atascadero, including improvements to the U.S. 101/Del Rio Road interchange, replacement of the Via Avenue bridge over Atascadero Creek, installation of a pedestrian hybrid beacon at the El Camino Real/East Mall intersection, and implementation of Phase 2 of the planned SR 41 complete streets improvements from El Camino Real to San Gabriel Road (SLOCOG 2023).

4.14.2.4 Local

CITY OF ATASCADERO GENERAL PLAN 2025

The Circulation Element of the 2025 General Plan provides a long-range plan for the City to accommodate the transportation of people and goods within Atascadero using a structured network of highways, streets, pathways, and trails, which includes all modes of transportation such as transit, bicycles, pedestrians, and equestrians in addition to motorized vehicles. Circulation policies and programs have been developed to achieve consistency with the other elements of the General Plan, to reflect current community desires, and to provide a safe and efficient circulation system (City of Atascadero 2016). Relevant goals from the current Circulation Element include:

- **CIR 1:** Provide a balanced, safe, and efficient circulation system that serves all segments of the community, and is designed and constructed to preserve rural character.
- **CIR 2:** Provide for walkways, horse trails, and bikeways without curbs and sidewalks in rural areas. Provide a comprehensive system of routes to schools and parks, which include creek-side trails.
- **CIR 3:** Provide and promote alternative modes of travel to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by providing viable transit alternatives.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND FUTURE ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

The City of Atascadero has established a traffic impact fee (TIF) and 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) program to fund road improvement projects that are identified in the current Circulation Element to accommodate build-out of the General Plan Land Use Plan (City of Atascadero 2016). The Circulation Element identifies a system of "backbone" facilities that are formally referred to as the "Circulation System Facilities." Under California State Law, a local agency shall adopt a 5-year CIP that identifies the location, size, timing and financing of capital facilities needed to serve the General Plan's growth projections (City of Atascadero 2016). The City's most recently approved CIP was in 2025.

The City has adopted a TIF in 2007 to provide a funding mechanism for the CIP. Together, the CIP and TIF program create a comprehensive and enforceable program intended to mitigate the impacts of new development through the imposition of proportionate share impact fees to ensure the mitigation of traffic impacts caused by new developments; however, it should be noted that Atascadero's TIF fee is subsidized and based on outdated costs and does not cover the full cost of the anticipated projects.

ATASCADERO BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The *Atascadero Bicycle Transportation Plan* provides a blueprint for the development of bicycle facilities within Atascadero with goals of encouraging recreational cycling by residents and visitors (City of Atascadero 2010). The plan documents existing bicycle facilities and shows opportunities for additional improvements in the short and long term.

LOCAL ROAD SAFETY PLAN

The Local Road Safety Plan (LRSP) systematically evaluates collision data on City streets to identify high-priority roadway safety issues (MIG 2023). This analysis supports the development of appropriate countermeasures to best address safety priorities. More than one-third of collisions in the City had a primary collision factor of unsafe speed, which corresponds to a ranking of 13th highest number of speeding-related collisions out of 94 similar-sized cities in California. In addition to unsafe speeds, the LRSP focuses on collisions associated with lane departures, traffic signals, lighting, driving under the influence, pedestrian safety, and bicycle safety.

STATE ROUTE 41 CORRIDOR STUDY

A Complete Streets Feasibility Study was completed for SR 41 between El Camino Real and the City's western limits (MIG 2023). The study evaluated potential improvements to the roadway that would improve safety for all modes of transportation while continuing to provide access to businesses. Improvements to bicycle and pedestrian access along Atascadero Avenue was added to the plan. The final plan included proposed Class IV protected bikeways on each side of the corridor. A portion of the improvements were completed in 2025.

THE EL CAMINO PLAN

The El Camino Plan evaluated two disconnected segments of El Camino Real on either side of downtown Atascadero (MIG 2023). The northern segment is 1.2 miles long and extends from San Anselmo Road to Madera Place. The southern segment is 1.9 miles long and extends from San Gabriel Road to SR 41. The plan notes that with 100 feet of ROW available there are opportunities to reallocate roadway space to better serve bicycles and pedestrians. The plan provided possible solutions and design concepts for segments of El Camino Real for future consideration as plans for specific areas were contemplated.

INTERCHANGE OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENT STUDY

The Interchange Operation Improvement Study evaluated traffic operations at six key U.S. 101 interchanges within the City (MIG 2023). It includes near-term and long-term improvement recommendations for the interchanges, with a focus on improving capacity and safety by changing traffic control. Roundabouts were recommended at many of the ramp terminals, which may not be realistic based on current design standards and parameters. Further study to determine alternatives specific to each interchange, such as bridge widening, needs to be completed to inform future planning efforts.

ATASCADERO MUNICIPAL CODE

The City of Atascadero Municipal Code provides a compilation of the City laws on various subject matters, arranged by title, chapter, and section. In terms of traffic regulation, the Municipal Code includes general traffic provisions, rules for stopping, standing, and parking, private streets and parking lot regulations, and pedestrian and passengers. These provisions are also implemented through adopted engineering standards, both addressing street design and emergency access standards.

4.14.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on transportation if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below.

a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b).

c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).

d) Result in inadequate emergency access.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.14.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.14.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

LUCI's General Plan Guidelines note that "When a new general plan or revision is being considered, the EIR must evaluate the proposed plans or revision's effects on both the existing physical environment and the environment envisioned by an adopted plan." Accordingly, this analysis compares build-out conditions under the current general plan with build-out conditions under the proposed general plan to determine project-specific impacts.

The analysis of the project's VMT impacts in this section is based on the CEQA Transportation Memorandum prepared by CCTC in July 2025 (Appendix J). As discussed in Section 4.14.2, *Regulatory Setting*, state law replaced level of service with VMT as the appropriate metric to evaluate transportation impacts under CEQA. VMT quantifies the total amount of vehicle miles driven within a certain area. One car driving 1 mile generates one VMT.

Travel forecasts are typically prepared using travel demand models (TDMs), which use land use and roadway network inputs to forecast future travel. The SLOCOG TDM was used to estimate VMT and forecast traffic levels under existing and project conditions. The SLOCOG TDM uses different land use categories than the project's land use model. To account for this, the projected growth as a result of the project was input into the SLOCOG TDM Traffic Analysis Zone structure, and land use model categories were apportioned into the TDM land use categories. This approach results in conservatively high VMT and traffic level projections, as the land use model reflects maximum development potential for each parcel under the project, whereas TDM forecasts are typically discounted to reflect the reality that most parcels will not be built out to their maximum development potential. For both land use and transportation projects, Section 15064.3(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines states that projects that reduce VMT in comparison with existing conditions should be presumed to have a less than significant transportation impact; however, Section 15064.3 also states that vehicle miles traveled exceeding an applicable threshold of significance may indicate a significant impact. The City of Atascadero has not yet adopted significance thresholds for evaluating potential VMT impacts. In the absence of a locally adopted threshold, the LUCI published a *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* (Technical Advisory). The Technical Advisory recommends analyzing VMT outcomes of land use plans across the full area over which the plan may substantively affect travel patterns, including beyond the boundary of the plan or jurisdiction's geography. The Technical Advisory recommends that general plans may have a significant impact on transportation if proposed new residential, office, or retail land uses would in aggregate exceed a threshold of 15% lower per capita or per employee VMT than existing development. The Technical Advisory includes evidence connecting this level of reduction to the State's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.

In addition to analyzing the project's impacts on VMT, this section also qualitatively assesses the project's potential impacts related to the circulation system, geometric hazards, land use compatibility, and emergency access at a programmatic level.

4.14.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

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

IMPACT TR-1: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH A PROGRAM, PLAN, ORDINANCE, OR POLICY ADDRESSING THE CIRCULATION SYSTEM INCLUDING TRANSIT, ROADWAY, BICYCLE, AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Relevant programs, plans, ordinances, and policies applicable to the 2045 General Plan and implementing Zoning Code Update would include the 2023 RTP/SCS, City Bicycle Transportation Plan, and SR 41 Corridor Study. An evaluation of the project's consistency with the 2023 RTP/SCS has been provided in Section 4.9, *Land Use and Planning*. Based on that evaluation, the project was determined to be consistent with the goals and policies of the 2023 RTP. The project's consistency with the other relevant programs, plans, and policies pertaining to the circulation system are provided below.

Atascadero Bicycle Transportation Plan

The Bicycle Transportation Plan provides a blueprint for the development of a comprehensive bicycling system that facilitates bicycle transportation by community members both within the City and to and from neighboring cities (City of Atascadero 2010). The Bicycle Transportation Plan includes two distinct types of recommendations: infrastructure improvements, such as new bikeways or walkways, and policy recommendations, including recommendations for safety education programs, tourism marketing, and guidelines for infrastructure maintenance and upgrades. As stated in the Bicycle Transportation Plan, the policies included therein would ensure that the City continues to increase safety and livability, reduce bicyclist accidents, mitigate traffic and parking congestion, facilitate affordable mobility, attract tourists, and encourage healthy transportation choices.

The 2045 General Plan Mobility Element does not identify specific infrastructure improvement projects, therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, consistency with the Bicycle Transportation Plan focuses on consistency with the policy recommendations of the plan. The 2045 General Plan Mobility Element identifies bicycle mobility as a priority for the City, highlighting the need for expansion of the bicycle network and creating improved connections to schools, commercial areas, and other destinations. The 2045 General Plan Mobility Element includes several goals, policies, and actions that would promote an efficient, accessible, and safe multimodal transportation network:

- **Goal MO-1:** A safe, multimodal, interconnected, and efficient circulation system that serves all community members.
    - **Policy MO-1.1: Roadway Improvements.** Plan, fund, and implement circulation improvements consistent with the Mobility Element and Circulation Diagram.
        - **Action C:** Enhance all modes of access and travel within the City. Require frontage improvements consistent with planned facilities when adjacent to new development.
        - **Action E:** Design future roadway extensions and connections to enable reasonably direct paths to destinations.
        - **Action G:** Implement Complete Streets projects, including improved travel lanes, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and upgraded bus stops on El Camino Real.

  - **Action I:** Focus multi-modal improvements, as feasible, on designated connector and backbone rights-of-way through rural west and east side neighborhoods to increase connectivity between rural residential areas and the Downtown core. Connection streets include Portola Road, Atascadero Avenue, Traffic Way, and Santa Lucia Road.
- **Policy MO-1.2: Multimodal Options.** Increase pedestrian and bicycle connections and safety between residential areas and commercial areas along major corridors, parks and recreation opportunities, and neighboring communities.
  - **Action A:** Provide for roadway and intersection improvements along major corridors as outlined in this Mobility Element.
  - **Action B:** Increase safety and access across major corridors and Highway 101.
  - **Action C:** Continue working with the County, SLOCOG, Caltrans, and local agencies to create pedestrian and bicycle access between Atascadero and Templeton.
  - **Action D:** Work with county and SLOCOG to increase multi-modal connectivity between Santa Margarita and Atascadero.
  - **Action E:** Continue to partner with the County, SLOCOG, and Caltrans to improve multimodal safety and mobility adjacent to the City limits in a manner that reflects local priorities.
  - **Action F:** Utilize unbuilt rights-of-way in areas where multi-modal pathways could connect neighborhoods to schools, parks, or commercial activity areas.
  - **Action G:** Develop road standards that support pedestrian use on rural roads, especially on roads that serve as residential connectors to adjacent neighborhoods, schools, and commercial areas.
- **Policy MO-1.3: Regional Facilities.** Provide regional roadway facilities that minimize through traffic intrusion on local streets and mitigate impacts on local traffic.
  - **Action A:** Support regional planning efforts to identify improvements and projects that align with multi-modal and VMT reduction goals, such as the North County US 101 Multi-modal Plan, and ensure that plans are geared toward support of grant funding efforts.
  - **Action B:** Coordinate transportation planning efforts with local, regional, State, and Federal agencies to maintain and upgrade State roadways and prioritize improvements to improve safety and multimodal connectivity.
  - **Action C:** Identify key arterial and collector streets and seek funding to provide multimodal connectivity.
  - **Action D:** Balance commercial goods movement with the health and quality of life priorities of the community by routing heavy truck traffic away from residential zones and promoting safety at rail crossings.
- **Policy MO-1.4: Congestion Management and Trip Reduction.** Encourage mixed-use and jobs focused infill development that is served by multi-modal facilities to support reductions in regional and local vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
  - **Action B:** Consider secondary effects of roadway widening to accommodate multimodal accessibility and safety.
  - **Action C:** Minimize driveways and access points along arterial streets whenever possible to reduce the number of conflict points and increase pedestrian and cyclist safety.

  - **Action E:** Support reduced on-site parking requirements where different uses can share parking or where easy access to frequent transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities is available.

- **Goal MO-4:** Safe, functional, and appealing bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian (in rural areas) facilities that allow convenient multi-modal mobility.
  - **Policy MO-4.1: Coordination and Planning.** Provide "backbone" pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian systems that link residential, commercial, recreational, and regional areas.
    - **Action A:** Require developments to provide pedestrian, bicycle, and trail alignments and facilities consistent with adopted City plans and policies.
    - **Action B:** Adopt and maintain a Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Equestrian Transportation Plan.
    - **Action C:** Identify a multi-modal network that provides connections between major destinations like schools, commercial nodes, community and park facilities, and the Salinas River. Use creek corridors where feasible to make those connections.
  - **Policy MO-4.3: Bicycle Mobility.** Promote bicycle mobility and increase bicyclist safety with new/upgraded facilities and amenities.
    - **Action A:** Complete Traffic Way bicycle facilities as part of an alternative north-south connection.
    - **Action B:** Support a multi-use path as part of the future Templeton to Atascadero connector. Work with the lead agency to secure easements or other mechanisms to create the necessary connections.
    - **Action C:** Complete bicycle and pedestrian improvements along El Camino Real and Highway 41.
    - **Action D:** Require adequate and safe bicycle parking in conjunction with new development within the Urban Services Line.
    - **Action E:** Create opportunities to utilize unbuilt rights-of-way for pedestrian and bike connections.
  - **Policy MO-4.5: School and Park Connections.** Provide a comprehensive system of routes to schools and parks.
    - **Action A:** In conjunction with the Safe Routes to School Program, adopt and maintain a pedestrian and bike system map identifying the locations of connections to key facilities. The system may consist of continuous routes that connect higher density neighborhoods, schools, parks, shopping areas, and workplaces and may also include facilities on identified rural collector streets and adjacent to creeks.
    - **Action B:** In conjunction with the Safe Routes to School Program, implement street improvements connecting and adjacent to schools.
    - **Action C:** Evaluate and update school zones to prioritize enhancements that benefit safe routes to schools.

All future development associated with community build-out pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be evaluated for consistency with the goals, policies, and actions set forth in the 2045 General Plan. Through implementation of the goals, policies, and actions detailed above, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be consistent with the recommendations, policies, and intent of the Bicycle Transportation Plan and *no impacts* would occur.

Local Road Safety Plan

The purpose of the Bicycle Transportation Plan overlaps with the LRSP, which evaluates collision data on city streets to identify high-priority roadway safety issues. The LRSP focuses on unsafe speeds and collisions associated from lane departures, traffic signals, lighting, driving under the influence, pedestrian safety, and bicycle safety.

Based on the policies and actions identified above, the 2045 General Plan would not conflict with the LRSP, and *no impacts* would occur.

In addition to the 2045 General Plan policy and action items listed above, the following also support the LRSP's focus on improving the safety of mobility conditions:

- **Goal MO-3:** Rebuilt and/or upgraded Highway 101 interchanges that enhance safety, improve functionalities for all users, and promote continued economic growth and prosperity in Atascadero
    - **Policy MO-3.1: Caltrans Information Sharing and Coordination.** Prepare and disseminate pertinent safety, operational, and community information to Caltrans related to the performance of Highway 101 interchanges to support funding of improvements.
        - **Action B:** Understand emergency response issues related to the current design of the Highway 101 interchanges, including a mitigation plan that studies scenarios where one or more interchange(s) are damaged in a catastrophic event.
        - **Action C:** Share pertinent community comments, concerns, and ideas related to Highway 101 interchanges gathered during Atascadero community discussions with Caltrans District 5 staff.

The El Camino Plan

The El Camino Real Plan identifies opportunities to reallocate roadway space within the ROW to better accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and other roadway users. The plan presents potential roadway reconfigurations and streetscape improvements that would increase accessibility and comfort for non-motorized users while maintaining roadway functionality.

Because the El Camino Real Plan primarily provides conceptual design options and planning guidance rather than identifying specific, committed infrastructure projects, consistency with the plan focuses on whether the 2045 General Plan supports the plan's overall objectives of improving multimodal access, safety, and connectivity along the El Camino Real corridor. The 2045 General Plan Mobility Element emphasizes the importance of enhancing multimodal transportation options and improving connections between neighborhoods, commercial areas, and community destinations. The El Camino Plan is consistent with the goals, policies, and actions that support improvements to multimodal infrastructure previously listed in this section.

State Route 41 Corridor Study

The Complete Streets Feasibility Study included proposed Class IV protected bikeways on each side of the SR 41/Morro Rd corridor in addition to completion of sidewalks and pedestrian facilities along the corridor. The 2045 General Plan contains two policies along with action items that support this joint effort with Caltrans:

- **Policy MO-1.1: Roadway Improvements.** Plan, fund, and implement circulation improvements consistent with the Mobility Element and Circulation Diagram.
    - **Action H:** Work with Caltrans to implement Complete Streets projects, including curb, gutter, and sidewalk improvements, on Highway 41.

- **Policy MO-4.3: Bicycle Mobility.** Promote bicycle mobility and increase bicyclist safety with new/upgraded facilities and amenities.
    - **Action C:** Complete bicycle and pedestrian improvements along El Camino Real and Highway 41.

Based on the policies and actions identified above, the 2045 General Plan would not conflict with the SR 41 Corridor Study, and *no impacts* would occur.

The 2045 General Plan includes policies to improve multimodal operations and safety conditions throughout the Planning Area, supporting adopted plans and programs; therefore, impacts related to conflicts with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system would be *less than significant*.

Impact TR-1
The project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual Impacts would less than significant.

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

IMPACT TR-2: THE PROJECT WOULD EXCEED APPLICABLE THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE ASSOCIATED WITH VMT. *(SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT [CLASS I])*

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3 describes specific considerations for evaluating a project's transportation impacts and identifies VMT as the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts in accordance with SB 743. Section 15064.3(b) specifically grants lead agencies the discretion to choose the most appropriate methodology to evaluate a project's VMT, including whether to express the change in absolute terms, per capita, per household, or other measure.

As described under Section 4.14.4, *Impact Assessment and Methodology*, the SLOCOG TDM was used to estimate VMT and forecast traffic levels under existing and project conditions. Table 4.14-1 summarizes the 2045 General Plan's effects on regional VMT compared to existing baseline conditions and build-out conditions under the 2025 General Plan.

Table 4.14-1. Regional VMT Effects

Metric	Scenario (Horizon Year)		
	Baseline (2015)	**2025 General Plan Build-Out (2045)**	**Proposed General Plan Build-Out (2045)**
Total Regional VMT[1]	8,796,917	11,203,335	11,348,867
Population	271,859	302,069	307,885
Total Employment	115,190	135,808	138,978
Service Population (Population + Employees)	387,049	437,977	446,863
Regional VMT/Service Population	*22.73*	*25.58*	*25.40*
Residential VMT	4,040,055	4,398,052	4,474,989
Residential VMT/Population	*14.86*	*14.56*	*14.53*
Commute VMT	1,367,961	1,474,183	1,515,782
Commute VMT/Employee	*11.88*	*10.85*	*10.91*

Source: CCTC (2025).

Note:

[1] Total regional VMT reflects daily automobile VMT within the San Luis Obispo County region. Residential VMT reflects all home-based productions. Commute VMT reflects home-based work attractions.

As shown in Table 4.14-1, total regional VMT increases under both the 2025 General Plan and the 2045 General Plan; however, this effect generally reflects an increase in overall regional population and employment, therefore, total regional VMT does not provide a meaningful 'apples to apples' comparison between current and proposed plans. A more appropriate metric is an efficiency metric of regional VMT per service population. Service population refers to the sum of population and employment. On a regional basis, the 2045 General Plan would result in fewer regional VMT per service population than the 2025 General Plan, which indicates that the 2045 General Plan is more VMT efficient than the 2025 General Plan (CCTC 2025).

Table 4.14-2 summarizes the effects of the 2045 General Plan within Atascadero compared to existing baseline conditions and build-out conditions under the 2025 General Plan.

Table 4.14-2. Project Effects on VMT within Atascadero

Metric	Scenario (Horizon Year)		
	Baseline (2015)	**2025 General Plan Build-Out (2045)**	**Proposed General Plan Build-Out (2045)**
Population	29,906	31,352	37,176
Total Employment	8,985	10,315	13,386
Residential VMT	556,552	542,924	602,702
Residential VMT/Population	*18.61*	*17.32*	*16.21*
Commute VMT	125,563	132,501	166,441
Commute VMT/Population	*13.98*	*12.85*	*12.43*

Source: CCTC (2025).

Notes:

* Residential VMT reflects all home-based productions. Commute VMT reflects home-based work attractions.

As described under section 4.14.4 above, the Technical Advisory published by LUCI recommends that general plans may have a significant impact on transportation if proposed new residential, office, or retail land uses would in aggregate exceed a threshold of 15% lower per capita or per employee VMT than existing development. The baseline residential VMT per capita in the region is 14.86, which means that a threshold of 15% below the regional average for this metric would be 12.63 residential VMT per capita. The baseline commute VMT per employee in the region is 11.88, which means that a threshold of 15% below the regional average for this metric would be 10.09 commute VMT per employee. Based on the results of the SLOCOG TDM, residential VMT per capita and commute VMT per employee under all scenarios would exceed the respective LUCI significance thresholds (CCTC 2025).

In summary, the City of Atascadero generates residential and employment-based VMT at levels that are above LUCI's recommended thresholds under baseline conditions, under the 2025 General Plan, and under the 2045 General Plan. It is important to note that TDMs produce planning-level forecasts of travel primarily based on land use and network inputs. While the SLOCOG model offers some sensitivity to urban design, it is a coarse tool that does not fully reflect the VMT-reducing effects of compact, mixed-use urban design that is supported by the 2045 General Plan (CCTC 2025). The City's large geographic area and existing low-density development patterns require longer vehicle trips and reduce non-automobile travel options. The 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update focuses growth in more VMT-efficient areas at higher densities and with more travel options, which results in producing fewer VMT per capita and per employment than the 2025 General Plan (CCTC 2025).

Although the 2045 General Plan would exceed LUCI significance thresholds associated with VMT, the following policies and actions included in the 2045 General Plan would minimize impacts associated with VMT to the greatest extent feasible:

- **Policy MO-1.1: Roadway Improvements.** Plan, fund, and implement circulation improvements consistent with the Mobility Element and Circulation Diagram.
    - **Action A:** Maintain an updated Capital Improvement Plan and pursue construction of circulation system improvements on a prioritized basis.
    - **Action B:** Require that right-of-way dedications and road improvements required of new development be consistent with the approved concept plans, plan line setbacks, and other adopted circulation studies.
    - **Action C:** Enhance all modes of access and travel within the City. Require frontage improvements consistent with planned facilities when adjacent to new development.
    - **Action D:** Preserve options for future transportation facilities in advance of development by such means as identifying routes, reserving rights-of-way, establishing setbacks to accommodate future road widths, and limiting direct parcel access along arterials.
    - **Action E:** Design future roadway extensions and connections to enable reasonably direct paths to destinations.
    - **Action F:** Update development impact fees to ensure fair share payment toward roadway improvements from new development. Include periodic review and updates to fees based on current construction costs.
    - **Action G:** Implement Complete Streets projects, including improved travel lanes, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and upgraded bus stops on El Camino Real.
    - **Action H:** Work with Caltrans to implement Complete Streets projects, including curb, gutter, and sidewalk improvements, on Highway 41.
    - **Action I:** Focus multi-modal improvements, as feasible, on designated connector and backbone rights-of-way through rural west and east side neighborhoods to increase connectivity between rural residential areas and the Downtown core. Connection streets include Portola Road, Atascadero Avenue, Traffic Way, and Santa Lucia Road.

  - **Action J:** Look for opportunities to increase parking and enhance walkability along commercial and multi-family corridors including road diets, bulb-outs, controlled crossings, transit enhancements, and other complete streets features.
  - **Action K:** Seek funding (e.g., grants, development requirements) for roadway construction projects that complete unbuilt rights-of-way (e.g., missing roadway gaps), especially those that will reduce emergency response times and/or provide key evacuation routes.

- **Policy MO-1.2: Multimodal Options.** Increase pedestrian and bicycle connections and safety between residential areas and commercial areas along major corridors, parks and recreation opportunities, and neighboring communities.
  - **Action A:** Provide for roadway and intersection improvements along major corridors as outlined in this Mobility Element.
  - **Action B:** Increase safety and access across major corridors and Highway 101.
  - **Action C:** Continue working with the County, SLOCOG, Caltrans, and local agencies to create pedestrian and bicycle access between Atascadero and Templeton.
  - **Action D:** Work with county and SLOCOG to increase multi-modal connectivity between Santa Margarita and Atascadero.
  - **Action E:** Continue to partner with the County, SLOCOG, and Caltrans to improve multimodal safety and mobility adjacent to the City limits in a manner that reflects local priorities.
  - **Action F:** Utilize unbuilt rights-of-way in areas where multi-modal pathways could connect neighborhoods to schools, parks, or commercial activity areas.
  - **Action G:** Develop road standards that support pedestrian use on rural roads, especially on roads that serve as residential connectors to adjacent neighborhoods, schools, and commercial areas.

- **Policy MO-1.3: Regional Facilities.** Provide regional roadway facilities that minimize through traffic intrusion on local streets and mitigate impacts on local traffic.
  - **Action A:** Support regional planning efforts to identify improvements and projects that align with multi-modal and VMT reduction goals, such as the North County US 101 Multi-Modal Plan, and ensure that plans are geared toward support of grant funding efforts.
  - **Action B:** Coordinate transportation planning efforts with local, regional, State, and Federal agencies to maintain and upgrade State roadways and prioritize improvements to improve safety and multimodal connectivity.
  - **Action C:** Identify key arterial and collector streets and seek funding to provide multimodal connectivity.
  - **Action D:** Balance commercial goods movement with the health and quality of life priorities of the community by routing heavy truck traffic away from residential zones and promoting safety at rail crossings.
  - **Action E:** Update the City's Capital Facilities Fees consistent with the requirements of AB 1600 and include fair share fees toward Caltrans facilities and multimodal improvements.
  - **Action F:** As freeway overcrossings are replaced, work with Caltrans to ensure that bridges can accommodate turn lanes, sidewalks, and bike facilities.
  - **Action G:** Develop concept plans and plan lines for interchange corridors and seek funding opportunities to construct improvements.

- **Policy MO-1.4: Congestion Management and Trip Reduction.** Encourage mixed-use and jobs focused infill development that is served by multi-modal facilities to support reductions in regional and local vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

  - **Action A:** Streamline transportation analysis requirements for infill projects that are consistent with the Land Use and Community Form Element (see Chapter 3).
  - **Action B:** Consider secondary effects of roadway widening to accommodate multimodal accessibility and safety.
  - **Action C:** Minimize driveways and access points along arterial streets whenever possible to reduce the number of conflict points and increase pedestrian and cyclist safety.
  - **Action D:** Encourage mixed-use development with residential and commercial densities high enough to support ridesharing and transit.
  - **Action E:** Support reduced on-site parking requirements where different uses can share parking or where easy access to frequent transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities is available.

- **Policy MO-4.1: Coordination and Planning.** Provide "backbone" pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian systems that link residential, commercial, recreational, and regional areas.
  - **Action A:** Require developments to provide pedestrian, bicycle, and trail alignments and facilities consistent with adopted City plans and policies.
  - **Action B:** Adopt and maintain a Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Equestrian Transportation Plan.
  - **Action C:** Identify a multi-modal network that provides connections between major destinations like schools, commercial nodes, community and park facilities, and the Salinas River. Use creek corridors where feasible to make those connections.

- **Policy MO-4.2: Pedestrian Mobility.** Ensure pedestrian safety, enhance pedestrian comfort, and promote walking as an alternative to vehicle travel, with priority in retail districts and multi-family neighborhoods.
  - **Action A:** Develop pedestrian-friendly design standards that apply to all higher density residential and commercial projects and require construction of adequate sidewalks and/or multi-use pathways in new development.
  - **Action B:** Consider pedestrian usage when rehabilitating existing roads.
  - **Action C:** Ensure that drainage control does not preclude multimodal opportunities.
  - **Action D:** Where limited right-of-way width exists, allow modified street sections that maintain parking and pedestrian facilities to the greatest extent possible.
  - **Action E:** Provide wider sidewalks at commercial nodes and areas of higher pedestrian use.
  - **Action F:** Enhance and maintain streetscapes, especially along commercial and higher density residential corridors to create an enjoyable, safe, and comfortable experience for pedestrians.
  - **Action G:** Implement walkable shoulders and/or trails, where feasible, in single-family areas with lot sizes of one-half acre and larger. Develop flexible design standards appropriate for the varied topography and prioritize streets identified as part of the key backbone network.
  - **Action H:** Provide enhanced pedestrian crossings of El Camino Real, Traffic Way, and other major corridors where appropriate to support pedestrian safety and non-vehicular connections within the City.

- **Policy MO-4.3: Bicycle Mobility.** Promote bicycle mobility and increase bicyclist safety with new/upgraded facilities and amenities.
  - **Action A:** Complete Traffic Way bicycle facilities as part of an alternative north-south connection.

  - **Action B:** Support a multi-use path as part of the future Templeton to Atascadero connector. Work with the lead agency to secure easements or other mechanisms to create the necessary connections.
  - **Action C:** Complete bicycle and pedestrian improvements along El Camino Real and Highway 41.
  - **Action D:** Require adequate and safe bicycle parking in conjunction with new development within the Urban Services Line.
  - **Action E:** Create opportunities to utilize unbuilt rights-of-way for pedestrian and bike connections.

- **Policy MO-4.4: Rural Trails.** Provide for walkways, bikeways, and horse trails without curbs and sidewalks in rural areas.
  - **Action A:** Work with the National Park service and other interested agencies and organizations to complete and formalize the De Anza Trail. Prioritize access to and protection/expansion of the historic trail.
  - **Action B:** Review road abandonment requests for their potential as trails.
  - **Action C:** Coordinate local bikeway and trail projects with regional projects whenever possible.
  - **Action D:** Develop a Trail Master Plan for Atascadero Creek between Three Bridges Oak Preserve and the Salinas River.
  - **Action E:** Provide and enhance a system of pedestrian and equestrian trailhead access points to the Salinas River corridor. Work with the State, SLO County, and Atascadero Mutual Water Company to provide trailhead access.
  - **Action F:** Support trail connections to the nearby communities of Templeton, Paso Robles, and Santa Margarita.

- **Policy MO-4.5: School and Park Connections.** Provide a comprehensive system of routes to schools and parks.
  - **Action A:** In conjunction with the Safe Routes to School Program, adopt and maintain a pedestrian and bike system map identifying the locations of connections to key facilities. The system may consist of continuous routes that connect higher density neighborhoods, schools, parks, shopping areas, and workplaces and may also include facilities on identified rural collector streets and adjacent to creeks.
  - **Action B:** In conjunction with the Safe Routes to School Program, implement street improvements connecting and adjacent to schools.
  - **Action C:** Evaluate and update school zones to prioritize enhancements that benefit safe routes to schools.

- **Policy MO-5.1: Single-Occupancy Vehicle Alternatives.** Promote alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel, particularly for commute trips.
  - **Action A:** Seek funding for programs that promote transit, ridesharing, bicycling and walking.
  - **Action B:** Support efforts to provide rideshare service to Downtown and major shopping and employment centers.

- **Policy MO-5.2: Public Transit.** Support the evolution of public transit to meet the changing needs for local and regional access, including fixed route and demand responsive service.
  - **Action A:** Work with the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLORTA) to encourage use of local and regional public transit.

  - **Action B:** Provide fixed-routed transit with bus shelters along El Camino Real.
  - **Action C:** Support and encourage the use and expansion of Park & Ride facilities and other rideshare infrastructure.

- **Policy MO-5.3: County TDM Requirements.** Seek alternatives that bring Atascadero closer to compliance with Transportation Demand Management program requirements of the San Luis Obispo County Clean Air Plan to reduce peak period trip generation.
  - **Action A:** Support programs that encourage employers to promote alternatives to driving alone to work, such as carpooling, walking, biking, transit, and considering slight adjustments to work schedules to incentivize alternatives.
- **Policy MO-6.1: Changing Mobile Technology.** Encourage the use of mobile or other electronic devices with similar on-demand hailing functions, particularly for seniors, persons with disabilities, and other mobility challenged people.
  - **Action A:** Manage curb space to efficiently balance parking needs, passenger pick-up and drop-off, commercial goods deliveries, and multimodal access.
- **Policy MO-6.2: Autonomous Vehicles.** Update, when warranted, transportation systems and policies as autonomous and automated vehicles and their attendant facilities are developed locally and regionally.
  - **Action A:** Develop an Autonomous Vehicles Master Plan that includes operational requirements, pilot programs, and/or incentives that will allow the technology to be incrementally deployed in the City while ensuring proper safety measures are in place to ensure they operate on specific, safe streets.
- **Policy MO-6.3: Performance Analysis Measures.** Utilize technology to create performance measures to interpret data metrics of vehicles, bicycling, walking, and transit usage within streets, sidewalks, and public facilities.
  - **Action A:** Work with local universities and transportation agencies to capture mobility user data as part of student research projects.

As described above, future development associated with community build-out pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would exceed the VMT significance thresholds identified by the LUCI, resulting in a significant impact; however, the 2045 General Plan focuses future growth in more VMT-efficient areas at higher densities and with more travel options, which results in producing fewer VMT per capita and per employment than the 2025 General Plan and includes policies and actions that would minimize and reduce VMT associated with future development to the maximum extent feasible. Other factors contributing to the exceedance of the VMT thresholds, such as the City's large geographic area and existing low-density development patterns, cannot be feasibly mitigated. Therefore, impacts would be *significant and unavoidable*.

Impact TR-2
The project would exceed applicable thresholds of significance associated with VMT.
Mitigation Measures
No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

c) Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

IMPACT TR-3: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE HAZARDS DUE TO A GEOMETRIC DESIGN FEATURE OR INCOMPATIBLE USES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would likely involve the construction of new streets and roadways within residential subdivisions and master planned commercial developments. While the proposed project does not grant entitlements for any specific project or future development, improvements would be needed to accommodate new housing and employment within the Urban Services Line area. Since the project involves adoption of a long-range plan with policy-level guidance and corresponding updates to the Zoning Code consistent with those policies, the detailed design of individual future developments and new transportation facilities cannot be known at this stage. However, future development associated with community build-out pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be subject to multiple levels of review as part of and separate from project-level environmental review pursuant to CEQA, including project-specific transportation analyses, and for consistency with proposed General Plan policies and actions, the City's Municipal Code, and adopted engineering standards. These include the policies and associated actions identified under Impact TR-2 (specifically Policy MO-1.1, MO-1.2, MO-1.4, MO-4.2, and MO-4.3), and Municipal Code provisions governing construction and design of new roadways and development, including:

- Title 4 Public Safety:
    - Chapter 4-2 Traffic Regulation
- Title 7 Public Works:
    - Chapter 7-12 Encroachment on Public Property
- Title 9 Planning and Zoning:
    - Chapter 9-4 General Site Design and Development Standards
- Title 11 Subdivisions:
    - Chapter 11-6 Subdivision Design

Adherence with these existing and proposed regulations, which would be enforced through the review and entitlement process that all proposed future development would be subject to, would ensure that construction and operation of future development under the proposed General Plan would not increase hazards due to geometric design features. Furthermore, the project includes various improvements to the circulation system (see Figure 4.14-1) that would improve safety and multimodal operations, which would further reduce transportation-related hazards in Atascadero.

Moreover, all future public access improvements would be required to comply with applicable State and Federal laws, such as Caltrans roadway design standards and the Caltrans Transportation Impact Study Guide (2020) for projects affecting the state highway system, the Complete Streets Act (Assembly Bill 1358), and other applicable State transportation policies, in addition to adopted engineering standards. Roadway planning and design would also generally follow nationally recognized safety guidance, such as the FHWA SSA and Safe System Roadway Design Hierarchy for speed management and roadway safety.

In addition to these multimodal improvements, the project would replace land use designations with "Placetypes," which would identify allowable land uses by parcel throughout the Planning Area. Each Placetype category would define both the primary uses of land allowed, and the character of those uses. Most of these Placetypes correspond to and reflect existing and long-established land use designations such as Rural Residential, Commercial, and Industrial. Although three new Placetypes (High-Density Multifamily, Mixed Use, and Innovation/Flex) would be established as part of the project that would result in greater intensity of use, the location of these new Placetypes would be entirely within the Urban Services Line (USL) area where greater intensity of use can be accommodated, and these new Placetypes were designed and sited to maintain Atascadero's historic Colony pattern and character. Outside of the USL, rural residential would remain the predominant Placetype. As such, future development associated with community build-out pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would not introduce any incompatible uses that could substantially increase transportation-related hazards and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact TR-3
The project would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

IMPACT TR-4: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN INADEQUATE EMERGENCY ACCESS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

As discussed under Impact TR-3, the implementation of the project would likely involve the construction of new streets and roadways within residential subdivisions and larger master planned commercial developments. Although the new streets or modifications to the existing streets have not yet been planned, design would be required to comply with numerous policies and actions in the 2045 General Plan designed to improve operation of the City's circulation system, which emergency vehicles rely on to provide emergency services. In addition to the policies and actions identified in the 2045 General Plan's Mobility Element (see Impact TR-2), the Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element of the 2045 General Plan includes policies and actions designed specifically to improve emergency service performance during emergencies; these policies and actions include:

- **Policy SEP-1.1: New Development Risk Reduction.** Promote new development in areas of the community that have lower risk of wildfire hazards and ensure new development in higher risk areas are consistent with Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) standards.
    - **Action C:** Review new development to ensure adequate access for emergency vehicles and compliance with Fire and Building Codes.
    - **Action F:** Ensure at least two evacuation routes for all new residential developments, with roads wide enough for emergency vehicles.
- **Policy SEP-1.2: Fire Impact Reduction.** Implement programs and policies that minimize risks to life and property posed by fires.

  - **Action C:** Consider updating the Zoning Code to require conditions on land uses that serve mobility-limited persons, such as assisted care facilities or small group homes, to prepare and maintain detailed evacuation plans in the event of wildfires and other catastrophic events.

- **Policy SEP-1.3: Wildfire Risk Reduction.** Increase wildfire resiliency using required and voluntary risk reduction regulations and strategies.
  - **Action D:** Identify and implement evacuation procedures in coordination with the City's Emergency Plan.
  - **Action G:** Identify residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes identified and pursue grant funding opportunities to construct emergency access roads.

- **Policy SEP-1.5: Vegetation Management Strategies.** Implement vegetation management strategies and enhanced roadway standards in fire-prone areas through the City's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
  - **Action C:** Enhance roadside safety and access for emergency services by implementing rigorous vegetation clearance.

- **Policy SEP-2.7: Dam Failure.** Minimize the risk of dam failure.
  - **Action C:** Maintain a dam failure evacuation plan to guide public officials that includes use of the emergency alert system to notify the public.

- **Policy SEP-3.4: Radiation Exposure Reduction.** Support San Luis Obispo County efforts to maintain a high level of radiation emergency preparedness.
  - **Action A:** Coordinate with the County and PG&E to review and update information about emergency preparedness and evacuations.

- **Policy SEP-6.1: Emergency Preparedness and City Response:** Train City staff, coordinate with regional agencies, and implement programs to be prepared for and capable of responding to all emergency events.
  - **Action F:** Consider planned evacuation routes with roadway improvement projects and incorporate identified elements as feasible.

- **Policy SEP-6.3: Resident Response Programs and Support.** Help prepare and organize residents to respond effectively to disasters.
  - **Action C:** Maintain and update, as needed, the emergency evacuation program for Atascadero neighborhoods.

- **Policy SEP-6.6: Evacuation Coordination and Investments.** Prioritize investments that expand and enhance evacuation capacity and capabilities.
  - **Action A:** Seek funding to improve existing single-access residential neighborhoods so they include additional access routes or other provisions to increase evacuation safety.
  - **Action B:** Analyze the capacity, viability, and safety of evacuation routes for hazard areas in Atascadero, and incorporate the results into City emergency operations and disaster recovery plans.

- **Policy SEP-7.3: Response Times.** Identify, monitor, and achieve appropriate minimum police response times for all call priority levels.
  - **Action A:** Establish goals for police response times based on priority levels.
  - **Action B:** Identify and implement strategies and tools needed to monitor police response times.

  - **Action C:** Implement a strategy to improve police response times, if needed, and maintain an ongoing assessment of response times.

- **Policy SEP-8.2: Fire Response.** Sustain the ability of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies.
  - **Action A:** Prepare, adopt, and maintain standards of coverage for the Fire Department.
  - **Action B:** Maintain a fire-related GIS database to assist decision-makers with analyzing development proposals and to assist with fire response and planning. Update the database as new fire hazard severity maps become available.

In addition to these policies and actions, future development associated with community build-out pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be subject to the Municipal Code provisions governing construction, including roadway closures (Chapter 7-12, Encroachment on Public Property), as well as roadway and development design (see Impact TR-3). Adherence with the 2045 General Plan policies and Municipal Code provisions, which would be enforced through the review and entitlement process that all proposed future development would be subject to, would be required to be reviewed and approved by the Fire Department, Police Department, and Engineering Division which would ensure that construction and operation of future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would not result in inadequate emergency access and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact TR-4
The project would not result in inadequate emergency access.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.14.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT TR-5: THE PROJECT WOULD RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH VMT. *(SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT [CLASS I])*

The geographic area of cumulative analysis for all transportation impacts, with the exception of VMT, is the City of Atascadero and its surrounding sphere of influence (i.e., the Planning Area) and the regional roadway network with connections to the Planning Area.

Cumulative impacts associated with conflicts to existing plans or programs associated with the circulation system would depend on the degree to which surrounding community development and/or regional transportation projects would influence the City's circulation system, and the degree to which future community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would influence the regional transportation network with connections to the Planning Area. As discussed in Section 2.1, *Project Location*, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would only apply to land located within City limits. The analysis of project impacts accounts for all future development allowed within City limits associated with community build-out pursuant to the 2045 General Plan. There are no other incorporated cities within the immediate vicinity of the City of Atascadero nor any proposed projects of sufficient scale in the regional roadway network

with connections to the Planning Area that would affect the analysis of project impacts provided in Section 4.14.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*. For the purposes of this analysis, projects of "sufficient scale" would generally include major regional infrastructure improvements (such as new highway facilities or substantial capacity expansions) or large master-planned developments that would generate substantial new travel demand affecting the regional network serving Atascadero. No such projects have been identified in adopted regional plans or available planning documents that would reasonably be expected to alter the transportation conditions assumed in the analysis. Moreover, given the topography surrounding Atascadero, which consists of hilly and steep mountainous terrain, it is not reasonably foreseeable that growth at a scale or proximity that could contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact associated with conflicts with applicable plans or policies pertaining to the City's circulation system would occur within the 2045 horizon year. Furthermore, cumulative impacts related to the geometric design, land use compatibility, and emergency access are typically localized in all but the most extreme circumstances, and none of the land uses or densities that would be allowed under the proposed 2045 General Plan would have the potential to significantly impact these factors beyond City limits.

The geographic area of analysis for cumulative VMT impacts includes San Luis Obispo County, with the acknowledgement that VMT significance thresholds are established within the statewide regulatory context with the intent of helping to achieve statewide greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets. The analysis in Section 4.14.5 considered the project's potential to impact VMT at a regional level using the SLOCOG TDM, which factors in projected growth across the entire county. As documented under Impact TR-2, build-out pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would improve both residential and commute VMT on a per capita basis at a regional level when compared with build-out pursuant to the 2025 General Plan, however, it would exceed applicable VMT significance thresholds identified by LUCI. The Technical Advisory published by LUCI includes evidence connecting the LUCI VMT significance thresholds to the State's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. Therefore, the project's exceedance of the LUCI VMT thresholds would have the potential to be detrimental to the State's goals related to reducing VMT as a method of achieving its greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. As described under Impact TR-2 above, this impact would be minimized to the greatest extent feasible through the 2045 General Plan's emphasis on focusing future growth in VMT-efficient areas and through incorporation of its policies and actions; however, impacts would still be significant, and no feasible mitigation measures have been identified that could mitigate the remaining factors contributing to the exceedance of the LUCI thresholds, such as the large geographic area of the City or the existing low-density development pattern within the City. Therefore, the project's exceedance of the LUCI VMT thresholds would be cumulatively considerable and impacts would be *significant and unavoidable*.

Impact TR-5
The project would result in cumulatively considerable impacts associated with VMT.
Mitigation Measures
No feasible mitigation measures have been identified.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).

4.15 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

This section describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions within the Planning Area related to utilities and public service systems and evaluates the potential impacts to utilities and service systems that could result from future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update. It should be noted that this section includes evaluation of potential impacts associated with the physical construction of utility facilities and ensuring utility services have adequate capacity to serve future development. Potential impacts associated with consumption of energy resources (e.g., electricity, natural gas) is discussed in Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy*. In addition, potential cumulative impacts related to stormwater drainage are evaluated and discussed in Section 4.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.

4.15.1 Existing Conditions

Atascadero is served by a comprehensive network of utilities and services. Municipal water services are provided by Atascadero Mutual Water Company (AMWC), which supplies the City through an extensive system of wells and distribution infrastructure. The City maintains wastewater collection and treatment facilities and storm drainage facilities. The stormwater system eventually discharges into natural drainage courses, while treated wastewater recharges the groundwater basin through infiltration. Electricity services in the Planning Area are provided by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and Central Coast Community Energy (3CE). Natural gas services are provided by Southern California Gas Company. Telecommunications infrastructure in Atascadero includes broadband, fiber-optic, wireless, and other emerging technologies that connect residents and businesses to regional and global communication networks.

4.15.1.1 Atascadero Mutual Water Company

AMWC has provided domestic and irrigation water to the Atascadero community since its inception in 1913. As a mutual water company, all landowners within the service area are shareholders in the company. AMWC's water system currently serves a population of over 30,000 through a network of approximately 250 miles of pipelines, with pipe sizes ranging from 4 to 24 inches. The system includes nine storage tanks (ranging from 120,000 to 4.8 million gallons [MG]), 17 active wells, eight booster stations, five treatment buildings, and 20 pressure-reducing stations. AMWC also participates in the Nacimiento Water Project (NWP) which is available to supplement water supply and groundwater recharge efforts. Water service is provided to more than 10,000 customer connections, supported by 1,900 valves and 1,700 fire hydrants (AMWC 2025a) The boundary of the AMWC service area extends beyond the City limits, including all parcels of the original Atascadero Colony, as shown in Figure 4.15-1.

As included in the discussion for *Impact HYD-2*, in Section 4-8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, AMWC's 2020 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) demonstrates that the system has adequate water supplies to meet existing and projected demands during normal, single dry, and multiple dry years (AMWC 2021). The UWMP projected a service area population of 38,460 by 2045, which is comparable to the City's 2045 General Plan forecast of 38,112. Although the UWMP demand projections did not fully account for future land use changes associated with the General Plan Update, the similar population assumptions indicate that the UWMP's supply reliability analysis remains a reasonable basis for evaluating long-term water availability. Overall, AMWC's groundwater-based system, supplemented by the NWP, is expected to reliably meet projected water demands through 2045 under a range of hydrologic conditions (AMWC 2021).

HISTORIC WATER DEMAND

Land uses that are provided water by the AMWC include single-family residential, multi-family residential, commercial, and industrial uses, as well as dedicated landscape irrigation. The water distribution system also experiences water losses, which factor in to yearly water usage. Table 4.15-1 below provides historical water usage by customer type and distribution system losses from 2015 through 2020.

Table 4.15-1. Atascadero Mutual Water Company Historic Water Usage

	Water Use (MG)					
Use Type	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Single-Family Residential	993	1,015	1,088	1,140	1,056	1,164
Multi-Family Residential	127	127	132	138	135	142
Commercial	112	118	129	131	126	124
Industrial	1	1	1	2	1	1
Landscape	104	105	124	126	115	121
Losses	102	106	168	115	170	174
Total	**1,439**	**1,472**	**1,642**	**1,652**	**1,603**	**1,726**

Source: AMWC (2021).

AMWC does not currently have any water usage restrictions in place since the AMWC Board rescinded the water shortage condition on March 8, 2017. However, AMWC does enforce permanent water use prohibitions as required by State law and regulations, including prohibition of water use related to wasteful use of water, plumbing leaks, runoff from landscape surfaces, outdoor watering hours/days limitations, and irrigation after rain events (AMWC 2021).

WATER SUPPLY SOURCES

Table 4.15-2 summarizes the sources and volumes of water used annually by the AMWC in 2020, including surface water imported through the NWP.

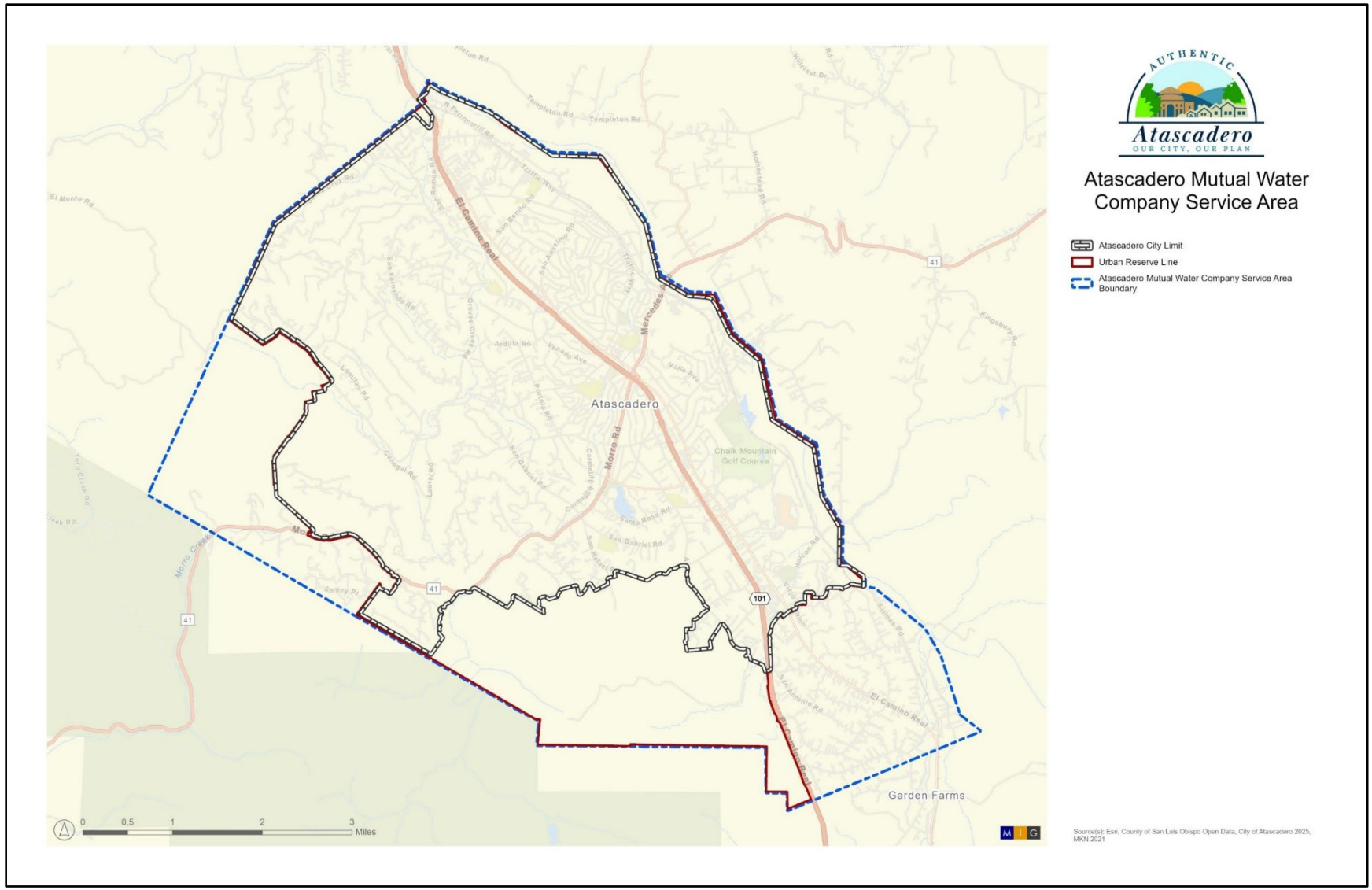
Table 4.15-2. Atascadero Mutual Water Company Current Water Supply Availability (2020)

Water Supply	**Additional Detail on Water Supply**	**Actual Volume (MG)**
Groundwater	Atascadero Basin	1,128
Surface water	Salinas River Underflow (Groundwater under the influence of surface water)	599
Total (MG)		**1,727**

Source: AMWC (2021).

[1] Groundwater pumped from the Atascadero Basin includes imported water from the NWP that is used to recharge the basin.

According to the UWMP, AMWC has contracts for 3,244 acre-feet per year (AFY) from the NWP, of which they use 2,000 AFY to assist with groundwater recharge efforts and do not take the remaining allocation. This allocation is intended to supplement or offset future groundwater pumping from the Atascadero Basin. (AMWC 2021).



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.15-1. AMWC service area.

Atascadero Groundwater Basin

The Atascadero Area Subbasin, also known locally as the "Atascadero Basin" and identified by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as Basin No. 3-004.11, is situated in northern San Luis Obispo County. It stretches along the Salinas River corridor, running from Santa Margarita in the south up to Highway 46 in the north. This basin was previously included within the Paso Robles Area Subbasin, which was recognized as a high priority area under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) due to groundwater resource challenges. In 2016, the Atascadero Basin was officially separated from the Paso Robles Area Subbasin after it was found that the Rinconada Fault serves as a substantial barrier to groundwater movement (Atascadero Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency [ABGSA] 2022).

In response to SGMA requirements, several local entities including the County of San Luis Obispo, Templeton Community Service District, City of Atascadero, City of Paso Robles, AMWC, and others collaborated to establish a groundwater sustainability agency (GSA). This agency was tasked with developing a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) tailored for the Atascadero Basin.

DWR downgraded the Atascadero Basin's priority status to "very low" in May 2018, lifting the SGMA compliance mandate however, the GSA chose to remain proactive and continues to manage groundwater resources in the basin. The Atascadero Basin GSP was adopted by the Executive Committee in 2022. The GSP has since been submitted for review to the California DWR (ABGSA 2025).

Nacimiento Water Project

AMWC has contracted for a 3,244 AFY from the NWP, which transports raw water from Lake Nacimiento in Monterey County to various communities in San Luis Obispo County. Currently, AMWC receives 2,000 AFY from the NWP to recharge the Atascadero Basin on an as-needed basis. AMWC has the flexibility to obtain its full NWP subscription over a four-month period, allowing for maximum deliveries during the peak summer demand season (AMWC 2021).

The NWP supply is assumed to be 100% reliable, as documented in the final *Nacimiento Water Project Environmental Impact Report* dated December 2003 and prepared by Marine Research Specialists (2003). These analyses concluded that the NWP can be considered fully reliable, even under historical drought conditions observed over the past 40 years. As a result, AMWC assumes that 100% of its supplemental NWP supply will be available in both single dry and multiple dry years (AMWC 2021).

4.15.1.2 Wastewater

The City owns and operates the Atascadero Water Reclamation Facility (WRF), which provides wastewater collection and treatment services for approximately 5,000 parcels that cover an estimated 1,900 acres. The remaining properties within the City use private septic systems due to topographical and cost constraints of extending infrastructure. The collection network includes over 63 miles of gravity pipelines and 6.8 miles of force mains, with 12 lift stations throughout the City conveying wastewater to the WRF, which has a current treatment capacity of 1.4 million gallons per day (MGD) (Carollo Engineers, Inc. 2025).

The City of Atascadero proactively manages inflow and infiltration in the wastewater collection system, as stormwater and groundwater can enter the system during rainfall events and temporarily increase flows. System capacity is managed using hydraulic modeling that incorporates historical flows, rainfall data, and growth projections. Average dry weather flow at the WRF has held steady at approximately 1.2 MGD over the past six years, but peak flows can rise significantly during major rainfall events due to inflow and infiltration (I/I), as seen in January 2023 when daily flows reached 4.54 MGD (Carollo Engineers, Inc. 2025). The Draft Wastewater Collection System Master Plan confirms that current wastewater treatment demand can be met without expanding the WRF, and near-term demand can likely be met with interim

improvements. Future capacity will be accommodated through long-term planning provisions and significant large-scale WRF improvements incorporated into the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) (Carollo 2025). Assuming the recommendations outlined in the Wastewater Collection System Master Plan are implemented and no capacity constraints exist within the collection system, the system is projected to accommodate an average dry weather flow of 3.09 MGD and peak wet weather flows of up to 12.9 MGD by 2045 (Carollo Engineers, Inc. 2025). Planning criteria such as allowable flow depths and pipe slopes serve as the basis for identifying existing system deficiencies and to size future improvements.

As existing wastewater conveyance pipelines age, their physical condition deteriorates and the probability of failure increases. While the conditions and longevity of existing pipelines is most accurately determined by physical inspections, the City also uses desktop analysis to estimate how long existing pipelines may last before they need to be replaced based on their age. The City currently funds wastewater pipeline rehabilitation and replacement through annual budgets for manhole repair and trenching, and for sanitary sewer work tied to pavement projects (Carollo 2025).

To address current and future needs, the City relies on its Wastewater Collection System Master Plan to guide capital improvements, including upsizing pipelines, expanding lift stations, and extending service to areas served by septic systems that have been identified as priority areas by the City in the Local Agency Management Program (LAMP). Ongoing flow monitoring and condition assessments support the development of a comprehensive CIP, ensuring the wastewater system can reliably serve Atascadero's community.

4.15.1.3 Stormwater

The City Public Works Department maintains public storm drainage facilities in the City to accommodate stormwater runoff; these lines and other engineered drainage structures empty into storm drains or natural drainage courses. The City is enrolled in the Phase II Municipal Stormwater Program, which is managed by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and requires the City to develop a plan to reduce or eliminate stormwater pollution.

The project site is located within the Atascadero watershed, which is part of the Central Coast hydrologic region as defined by the DWR. The Atascadero watershed includes Atascadero Creek, Graves Creek, and numerous other small tributaries of the Salinas River, which serves as the primary water source for the City. The watershed originates at the top of Cuesta Ridge and is bounded by the Santa Lucia mountain range to the west and the La Panza mountain range to the east (AMWC 2025b). The Atascadero watershed is discussed in detail in Section 4.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.

4.15.1.4 Solid Waste

The City contracts with private service providers for solid waste services in the City. Atascadero Waste Management provides solid waste, recycling, and organic waste collection services, and Waste Connections operates the Chicago Grade Landfill & Recycling that the City utilizes for solid waste disposal.

Solid waste generated in the City of Atascadero, including that collected by Atascadero Waste Management, is currently disposed of at the Chicago Grade Landfill & Recycling located outside City limits, approximately 2 miles east of the City. The landfill is classified by the SWRCB as a Class III waste management unit, approved for discharge of nonhazardous municipal solid waste. The landfill accepts non-hazardous waste from residential curbside collections, as well as commercial and industrial sources, along with demolition and construction debris and used tires that meet Class III landfill requirements. The facility also has a 4.5-acre recycling area where activities such as tire shredding, metal processing, and wood waste grinding take place. The landfill has a maximum permitted capacity of 10,548,980 cubic yards and a maximum permitted throughput of 500 tons of solid waste per day through December 31, 2039.

As of May 1, 2025, the landfill had a remaining capacity of 4,078,523 cubic yards, or approximately 39% of the maximum permitted capacity (California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery [CalRecycle] 2025).

4.15.2 Regulatory Setting

4.15.2.1 Federal

SAFE WATER DRINKING ACT

The Safe Water Drinking Act authorizes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to set national health-based standards for drinking water to protect against both naturally occurring and human-made contaminants that may be found in drinking water. The USEPA, individual states, and water systems work in coordination to ensure that these standards are met. The 1996 amendments enhanced the existing law by recognizing source water protection, operator training, funding for water system improvements, and public information as important components of safe drinking water.

FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT OF 1972 (CLEAN WATER ACT)

The Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into "waters of the United States." The Act specifies a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory tools to sharply reduce direct pollutant discharges into waterways, finance municipal wastewater treatment facilities, and manage polluted runoff. Some of these tools include Total Maximum Daily Loads, water quality certification, and regulations on discharge of dredge or fill material. For more details, see Section 4-8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.

NATIONAL POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM

The CWA was amended in 1987 to include urban and stormwater runoff, which required many cities to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for stormwater conveyance system discharges. Section 402(p) of the CWA prohibits discharges of pollutants contained in stormwater runoff, except in compliance with a NPDES permit. For more details, see Section 4-8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.

Telecommunications Act of 1966

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 represented the first major overhaul of telecommunications law in nearly 62 years. The purpose of the law was to promote competition across communications markets by allowing companies to enter and compete in multiple communications sectors. The Act applies broadly to telecommunications services, including local and long-distance telephone service, cable programming and other video services, broadcast services, and services provided to schools. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is responsible for implementing the law and establishing rules to support fair competition in the telecommunications industry. Through regulatory proceedings and rulemaking, the FCC works to open local phone markets, increase competition in long-distance services, and oversee the transition to a more competitive communications marketplace.

4.15.2.2 State

THE SUBDIVISION MAP ACT (CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 66410 ET SEQ.)

Title 7, Division 2 of the California Government Code (referred to as the Subdivision Map Act) describes general provisions, procedures, and requirements for the division of land, including the provision of public services and roadway and utilities improvements.

URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT PLANNING ACT (CALIFORNIA WATER CODE SECTION 10610 ET SEQ.)

The Urban Water Management Planning Act was developed to support suppliers' long-term resource planning and to ensure that adequate water supplies are available to meet existing and future water needs. It establishes the requirement that every urban water supplier (a supplier providing water for municipal purposes either directly or indirectly to 3,000 customers or supplying more than 3,000 AF of water annually) shall prepare and adopt a UWMP. Each plan shall include a description of the service area, existing and planned sources of water available to the supplier, how much water the agency has on a reliable basis, how much it needs for the foreseeable future, what the agency's strategy is for meeting its water needs, the challenges facing the agency, and any other information necessary to provide a general understanding of the agency's plan. In addition, every urban water supplier shall prepare and adopt a water shortage contingency plan as part of its UWMP that includes, but is not limited to, an analysis of water supply reliability over a 20-year planning time frame, the procedures used in conducting an annual water supply and demand assessment, define standard water shortage levels corresponding to progressive ranges of up to 50% shortages and greater than 50% shortages, and shortage response actions that align with the defined shortage levels.

CALIFORNIA SENATE BILL X7-7

The Water Conservation Act of 2009 (SB X7-7) was enacted in November 2009 and required that all water suppliers increase their water use efficiency, setting a goal to reduce urban per capita water use by 20% by 2020. It continues to mandate reporting, sets efficiency targets for residential and commercial landscapes, encourages water budgets, and compels agricultural suppliers to measure deliveries and plan for water conservation. The DWR and SWRCB are responsible for overseeing the implementation of SB X7-7.

CALIFORNIA SENATE BILL 610 (2001)

SB 610 requires an assessment of whether available water supplies are sufficient to serve the demand generated by a proposed project, as well as the reasonably foreseeable cumulative demand in the region over the next 20 years under average normal year, single dry year, and multiple dry year conditions. Under SB 610, water assessments must be furnished to local governments for inclusion in any environmental documentation for certain projects (as defined in California Water Code Section 10912[a]) subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

For the purposes of SB 610, "project" means any of the following:

- A proposed residential development of more than 500 dwelling units.
- A proposed shopping center or business establishment employing more than 1,000 persons or having more than 500,000 square feet of floor space.
- A proposed commercial office building employing more than 1,000 persons or having more than 250,000 square feet of floor space.

- A proposed hotel or motel, or both, having more than 500 rooms.
- A proposed industrial, manufacturing, or processing plant, or industrial park planned to house more than 1,000 persons, occupying more than 40 acres of land, or having more than 650,000 square feet of floor area.
- A mixed-use project that includes one or more of the projects specified in this subdivision.
- A project that would demand an amount of water equivalent to, or greater than, the amount of water required by a 500-dwelling unit project.

SENATE BILL 221 (2001)

Enacted in 2001, SB 221, which was codified in the State Water Code, beginning with Section 10910, requires that the legislative body of a city or county, which is empowered to approve, disapprove, or conditionally approve a subdivision map, must condition such approval upon proof of sufficient water supply. The term "sufficient water supply" is defined in SB 221 as the total water supplies available during normal, single-dry, and multiple-dry years within a 20-year projection that would meet the projected demand associated with the proposed subdivision. The definition of sufficient water supply also includes the requirement that sufficient water encompass not only the proposed subdivision, but also existing and planned future uses, including agricultural and industrial uses.

CALIFORNIA INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1989 (AB 939)

The California Integrated Waste Management Act was enacted to reduce, recycle, and reuse solid waste generated in the state to the maximum extent feasible (Public Resources Code [PRC] Sections 40050–40063). Specifically, the act requires counties and cities to adopt a Source Reduction and Recycling Element of their Waste Management Plans to describe actions to be implemented to achieve waste reduction goals (PRC Section 41750).

CALIFORNIA SOLID WASTE REUSE AND RECYCLING ACCESS ACT OF 1991 (AB 1327)

The California Solid Waste Reuse and Recycling Access Act requires each local jurisdiction to adopt an ordinance requiring commercial, industrial, or institutional buildings, marinas, or residential buildings having five or more living units to provide an adequate storage area for the collection and removal of recyclable materials (PRC Chapter 18). The sizes of these storage areas are to be determined by the appropriate jurisdictions' ordinance. If no such ordinance exists with the jurisdiction, the CalRecycle model ordinance shall take effect (PRC Section 42911).

MANDATORY COMMERCIAL RECYCLING PROGRAM (AB 341) (2012)

AB 341 directed CalRecycle to develop and adopt regulations for mandatory commercial recycling. AB 341 requires all commercial businesses and public entities that generate 4 cubic yards or more of waste per week to have a recycling program in place.

MANDATORY COMMERCIAL ORGANICS RECYCLING (AB 1826) (2014)

AB 1826 requires that commercial enterprises that generate certain amounts of organic and solid waste weekly participate in composting programs. The law includes escalating thresholds to ease businesses into commercial organic recycling.

SHORT-LIVED CLIMATE POLLUTANTS (SB 1383) (2016)

SB 1383 is a statewide effort to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants by reducing organic waste disposal to 50% by 2020 and 75% by 2025. Organic waste in landfills emits 20% of the state's methane, a climate super pollutant 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Fairfield complies with SB 1383's seven program elements, including providing organics collection services to all residents and businesses, establishing edible food recovery programs, conducting education and outreach to community, procuring recyclable and recovered organic products, securing access to recycling and edible food recovery capacity, and monitoring compliance and conducting enforcement.

CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION WASTE MATERIALS DIVERSION REQUIREMENTS (SB 1374) (2002)

The Construction and Demolition Waste Materials Diversion Requirements (SB 1374) added Section 42912 to the PRC requiring public agencies to include in their annual AB 939 report a summary of the progress made in diverting construction and demolition waste (PRC Section 42912). The legislation also requires that CalRecycle adopt a model ordinance for diverting 50% to 75% of all construction and demolition waste from landfills (PRC Section 42912).

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates several key utility industries in the state, including telecommunications, energy, transportation safety, and water services. In the telecommunications sector, the CPUC develops and implements policies governing telephone communications and broadband markets. These policies are intended to promote fair competition and ensure that residents have affordable and universal access to essential telecommunications services. Through its regulatory oversight, the CPUC helps maintain reliable communications infrastructure while supporting equitable access to telecommunications services throughout California.

4.15.2.3 Local

CITY OF ATASCADERO 2025 GENERAL PLAN

The Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element includes goals, policies, and action items for the provision and maintenance of public utilities, facilities, and services in the City (City of Atascadero 2016). The following policy and action items are relative to utility connection guidelines in the City:

- **LOC Policy 1.1:** Preserve the rural atmosphere of the community and assure "elbow room" in areas designated for lower density development by guiding new development into the Urban Core to conform to the historic Colony land use patterns of the City and to respect the natural environment, hillside areas, and existing neighborhoods.
    - **Program 7:** Within the Urban Core encourage infill development or the revitalization or reuse of land already committed to urban development where utilities and public services exist.
- **LOC Policy 1.3:** Enhance the rural character and appearance of the City, including commercial corridors, gateways and public facilities.
    - **Program 10:** The City will develop standards and undergrounding districts to require the undergrounding of existing utilities within the Urban Core.
    - **Program 11:** New utilities will be undergrounded in all proposed subdivisions and development projects.

The Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element contains the following policy and action items relative to wastewater services and treatment in the City:

- **LOC Policy 8.4:** Review and regulate all proposed on-site wastewater disposal systems to protect public health and water quality.
    - **Program 3:** The City's Sewer Master Plan shall address sewering areas with a high concentration of existing lots below 1/2 acre and areas with extremely severe soil percolation constraints.

The Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element contains the following policy and action items relative to stormwater control in the City:

- **LOC Policy 8.5:** The City shall implement a storm water control program consistent with the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Program (Phase II).
    - **Program 1:** Adopt and implement an Urban Storm Water Quality Management and Discharge Control ordinance.
    - **Program 2:** Include design guidelines to minimize impervious surfaces and decrease off-site storm flows in the Appearance Review Manual.
    - **Program 3:** New development shall be required to maintain historic off-site storm flows unless improvements are made that maintain historic downstream and upstream flows.
    - **Program 4:** The City will develop a storm water master plan including shared detention facilities.
    - **Program 5:** Require Erosion Control Plans and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) for development on sites of 1-acre or more and on smaller sites with slopes over 10%.
    - **Program 6:** The City will continue to notify project applicants and actively inspect sediment and erosion control mitigation measures from October 15 to April 15 of each year.

The Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element contains the following policy and action items relative to solid waste disposal in the City:

- **LOC Policy 10.1:** Ensure efficient and adequate solid waste disposal by reducing waste volumes through recycling and other methods.
    - **Program 1:** Pursuant to State law, institute a program to achieve maximum recycling of waste products generated by the community to prolong the useful life of landfill.
    - **Program 2:** Continue to reduce solid waste through source reduction, curbside recycling, green waste collection, and recovery, in cooperation with the Integrated Waste Management Board (SLO IWMA).
    - **Program 3:** Develop effective and efficient recycling programs for multi-family developments and businesses.
    - **Program 4:** Encourage recycling programs at City facilities, projects, and programs to the maximum extent feasible.
    - **Program 5:** Support actions which conserve energy and encourage energy conservation. Consumption of non-renewable resources should be minimized. Renewable resources should be recycled or replenished.

The Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element contains the following policy and action items relative to public services in the City:

- **LOC Policy 15.1:** Growth should be directed to areas where services can be provided in a cost-effective manner.
- **LOC Policy 15.2:** Maintain an updated Capital Improvements Program (CIP) that forecasts needs at least five years into the future and conforms to General Plan policies and programs.
- **LOC Policy 15.3:** Ensure that adequate service capacity and facilities exist prior to approving new development.
    - **Program 1:** Coordinate with the Atascadero Municipal Water Company to provide for adequate facilities and water supplies.
    - **Program 2:** Require all new projects and new development requiring domestic water to be served by the Atascadero Municipal Water Company unless a waiver is granted by the Planning Commission through a Conditional Use Permit.
    - **Program 3:** Coordinate with other local and regional public service providers to identify and ensure adequate service levels for all public services and facilities.
    - **Program 4:** Update the municipal code to require new single-family residential development on lots within 200-feet of an existing public sewer system to be required to extend and connect to the public sewer when topographically possible.
    - **Program 5:** Continue to support regional planning for solid and hazardous waste disposal.
- **LOC Policy 15.4:** Extend services only when the City has funding for additional improvements identified in the CIP.
    - **Program 1:** Include in the CIP a prioritized list of projects, timing, cost estimates, responsible department, and funding sources.
- **LOC Policy 15.6:** Ensure that new development pays the cost of providing and/or installing all capital facilities needed to support it, including the infrastructure necessary to attract high-tech and professional support businesses.
    - **Program 1:** Continue to condition approval of new development on collection of impact fees and/or construction of facilities, as appropriate, adequate to fund facilities to serve new development.
- **LOC Policy 15.7:** Continue to support effective regional planning for solid and hazardous waste disposal.
    - **Program 1:** Continue to require solid waste collection within the City.
    - **Program 2:** Maintain on going communication with solid waste disposal service providers.
- **LOC Policy 15.10:** Require public agency and private utilities development projects in the City to conform to City site improvement standards.
    - **Program 1:** Support expansion of Atascadero State Hospital facilities and functions only when impacts can be adequately mitigated.
    - **Program 2:** Require all local utilities to notify the City of projects and comply with all applicable ordinances.

CITY OF ATASCADERO MUNICIPAL CODE

Chapter 7-3, Sewer Connection Availability and Requirements of Title 7, Public Works, of the Atascadero Municipal Code establishes the standards and procedures for connecting properties to the City's public sewer system. These regulations specify when a public sewer is considered available. Properties with available public sewer access must connect in the event of septic system failure, or prior to certain building

modifications or additions. New buildings must also connect to the public sewer before occupancy, unless an exception is granted. In areas where on-site sewage disposal is prohibited by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, connection to the public sewer is mandatory.

Chapter 7-13, Stormwater Pollution Prevention, includes regulations for stormwater and non-stormwater discharges into and from the storm drain system, established construction and post-construction stormwater management requirements, and provides additional enforcement authority for violations.

Chapter 6-4, Solid Waste, Recyclable Materials, and Organic Materials Management, establishes requirements for the storage, collection, and disposal of solid waste, recyclables, and organic materials within the City. The chapter sets forth responsibilities for property owners, occupants, businesses, and haulers to ensure safe and sanitary waste management. The ordinance outlines specific collection, labeling, and storage requirements for single-family, multifamily, and commercial premises and explains the enforcement procedures for violations.

CENTRAL COAST POST-CONSTRUCTION STORMWATER REQUIREMENTS

The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB) establishes requirements that prescribe the discharge limits and establish water quality objectives through the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin (CCRWQCB 2024). The CCRWQCB defines post-construction requirements for the Central Coast Region to help maintain water quality and the hydrologic health of the watersheds. These requirements are based on the project's type, size, and regional location.

URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

The AMWC 2020 UWMP was developed in compliance with the Urban Water Management Planning Act. The UWMP provides an overview of the City's water system and supply sources, and details both past and anticipated water usage in relation to available supplies and expected demand under typical conditions. Chapter 8 of the UWMP includes an Urban Water Shortage Contingency Plan, outlining strategies for responding to extended drought periods or significant reductions in water supply (AMWC 2021).

ATASCADERO GROUNDWATER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Atascadero GSP outlines the proactive management approach adopted for the Atascadero Basin, despite its designation as a very-low priority basin under the SGMA. The GSP characterizes basin conditions, establishes measurable management objectives to protect the interests of all groundwater users, and identifies projects and management actions designed to ensure future sustainability (GEI Consultants, Inc. 2025).

WASTEWATER COLLECTION SYSTEM MASTER PLAN – DRAFT

The City of Atascadero Wastewater Collection System Master Plan Update was developed to support the City's long-term infrastructure planning and ensure that its wastewater collection system can reliably serve both current and future needs. The plan requires the City to regularly assess and document its service area, existing collection and treatment facilities, projected wastewater flows based on growth and land use, and the overall condition and capacity of the system. It establishes a framework for identifying and prioritizing necessary capital improvements, optimizing the use of existing infrastructure, expanding service to new developments and areas currently served by septic systems identified as priority areas in the City's LAMP, and maintaining compliance with state and federal regulations. The plan also incorporates a risk-based asset management strategy to evaluate the probability and consequence of failure for system components and recommends ongoing inspection, maintenance, and periodic updates to ensure the system remains resilient, efficient, and protective of public health and the environment over a 20-year planning horizon (Carollo 2025).

4.15.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on utilities and service systems if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

a) 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.

b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years.

c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments.

d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals.

e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste.

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.15.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.15.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

Assessment of impacts associated with utilities and service systems was based on a review of information and conditions about the City, analysis provided in the *City of Atascadero Wastewater Collection System Master Plan Update* (MNS Engineers, Inc., and MKN & Associates, Inc. 2015), City of Atascadero Draft Wastewater Collection System Master Plan (dated March 2025) (Carollo Engineers), *Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin* (CCRWQCB 2024), *2020 Urban Water Management Plan* (AMWC 2021), *Wastewater Collection System Master Plan March 2025 Draft* (Carollo 2025), and City information regarding utilities. Projected demand on utility service systems was compared to projected available supply and capacity to determine potential impacts associated with new or modified utility infrastructure required to serve future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update.

4.15.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project 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?

IMPACT USS-1: THE PROJECT WOULD REQUIRE THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW OR EXPANDED WATER, WASTEWATER, STORMWATER, ELECTRIC POWER, NATURAL GAS, AND/OR TELECOMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHICH COULD CAUSE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Water

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would result in an increased demand for water services. Increased demand for water services may have the potential to result in the need for construction of new water infrastructure associated with acquisition of additional sources of water, increased water storage, and/or new or upgraded water conveyance infrastructure; as described below.

As described in Section 4.15.1.1 and summarized in Table 4.15-3, AMWC's water supply portfolio consists of imported water from the NWP that is currently used to recharge the Atascadero Basin with a maximum current allocation of 1,058 MGY and groundwater pumping from the Salinas River Underflow and the Atascadero Basin with a maximum supply capacity of 4,223 MGY to serve demands (AMWC 2021). AMWC's production strategy to serve future customer demands is to pump from the Salinas River Underflow (alluvial wells) to the fullest extent possible, and supplement demands from the Atascadero Basin (deep wells) if demands exceed the alluvial pumping capabilities. AMWC does not anticipate being involved in any planned or potential future water projects or programs to increase its water supply over existing sources based on anticipated future need projections (AMWC 2021). Therefore, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would not result in construction of new water infrastructure associated with acquisition of and/or connections to new water supply sources and *no impacts* would occur.

The 2020 UWMP projected future groundwater budget period (2020–2045) identifies an average annual increase in groundwater storage of 800-acre feet per year. During the 2045 General Plan Update planning period (2025 to 2045), additional areas for above-ground or below-ground storage (such as tanks), or groundwater recharge areas, may be identified to expand water storage (MIG 2025). Potential environmental impacts associated with proposed water storage infrastructure would be evaluated and mitigated as necessary as part of the City's permitting and environmental review processes, including reviews for consistency with the policies of the 2045 General Plan Update and Municipal Code—which will be incorporated in the Zoning Code Update—and CEQA. Therefore, based on applicable regulatory requirements, construction of future water storage infrastructure would not result in significant environmental impacts, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Future development pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would generally occur in developed areas of the City with existing water infrastructure. Buildout of the 2045 General Plan would increase population and development intensity relative to existing conditions, consistent with the City's projected population growth. This growth would increase overall water demand

and may require localized improvements to the existing water-distribution system to maintain adequate service pressures and fire flow capacity. In particular, the land use changes and higher allowable residential and mixed-use densities within the Urban Core and other designated growth areas could incrementally increase demand on existing pipelines, storage facilities, and pumping infrastructure. Potential environmental impacts associated with these improvements would be evaluated and mitigated as necessary as part of the City's permitting and environmental review processes, including reviews for consistency with the policies of the 2045 General Plan Update, Municipal Code standards, and CEQA. In addition, water utility mains are typically located within existing roadway rights-of-way in areas that have been previously disturbed and/or paved. Therefore, based on applicable regulatory requirements, construction of future water main infrastructure improvements would not result in significant environmental impacts, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Wastewater

As described above in Section 4.15.1.1, the City owns and operates the Atascadero WRF. The City of Atascadero proactively manages inflow and infiltration in the collection system, as stormwater and groundwater can enter the system during rainfall events and temporarily increase flows. The City utilizes its Wastewater Collection System Master Plan and Wastewater Treatment Facility Master Plan to guide the development of a comprehensive CIP, ensuring that both the collection system and treatment facility can efficiently and reliably serve the community as it grows. A draft updated Wastewater Collection System Master Plan was released in March 2025. The Draft Wastewater Collection System Master Plan confirms that current wastewater treatment demand can be met without expanding the WRF, and near-term demand can likely be met with interim improvements. Future capacity will be accommodated through long-term planning provisions and significant large-scale WRF improvements incorporated into the City's CIP. (Carollo 2025).

The CIP for Atascadero's wastewater system identifies a number of future planned wastewater system improvement projects and is organized based on the urgency and timing of each project, including whether improvements address existing deficiencies or future needs, the severity of the issues, and the prioritizing project efficiency by dovetailing projects with the City's paving schedule. Projects are grouped into near-term (2026–2030), intermediate-term (2031–2035), and long-term (beyond 2035) phases, with costs spread over two years for each project. Projects were also developed for the five LAMP areas, areas currently served by on-site septic systems that have been identified as priority areas in the City's LAMP. The City is currently exploring grant sources to partially fund these projects (Carollo 2025).

Potential environmental impacts associated with CIP projects, including upsizing or replacing existing wastewater pipelines and other planned wastewater system improvement projects, would be evaluated and mitigated as necessary as part of the City's permitting and environmental review processes, including reviews for consistency with the policies of the 2045 General Plan Update, Municipal Code, and CEQA. In addition, wastewater conveyance pipelines are typically located within existing roadway rights-of-way in areas that have been previously disturbed and/or paved. Therefore, based on future construction of wastewater infrastructure being subject to environmental review and mitigation requirements, potential impacts would be *less than significant*.

Stormwater Drainage

New development or redevelopment associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would increase the amount of impervious surfaces within the Planning Area due to new structures, parking facilities, and other related site improvements, potentially resulting in higher stormwater runoff that could challenge the capacity of existing drainage systems. The City maintains storm drain master plans and capital improvement programs that are designed to accommodate future growth and ensure adequate expansion of the stormwater system as needed. State

regulations also require that a majority of increased stormwater be retained and/or detained on-site to limit run-off in excess of existing conditions. In addition, the *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* of the 2045 General Plan includes a goal, policies, and actions associated with managing stormwater and planning for stormwater system improvements:

- **Goal PSI-4:** Minimized flood risks via a well-functioning stormwater management system.
    - **Policy PSI-4.1: Stormwater Drainage Planning.** Plan comprehensively for stormwater drainage, considering the age of the City's system and emerging needs based on targeted growth areas and areas of concern.
        - **Program A:** Prepare, implement, and keep current a stormwater drainage master plan. Identify infrastructure in need of significant improvements or capacity upgrades.
        - **Program B:** Require improvement and ongoing maintenance of private stormwater drainage and retention areas as a condition of development approval.
        - **Action C:** Identify and collect development impact fees needed to pay for mitigation of regional stormwater drainage impacts for new development.
        - **Action D:** Require implementation of best management practices for new development to reduce discharges of nonpoint-source pollutants to the storm drain system.
        - **Action E:** Require implementation of post-construction structural control measures for new development to mitigate and treat additional stormwater runoff created by new impervious surfaces
        - **Action F:** Consider adopting watershed management plan(s) and implementation mechanisms in Downtown to facilitate off-site stormwater management aimed at maximizing development potential.
    - **Policy PSI-4.2: Stormwater Management.** Manage stormwater drainage in a manner that protects and enhances natural drainage areas as habitat and outdoor places people enjoy.
        - **Action A:** Establish guidelines or standards for drainage improvements in natural areas that respond to applicable Federal and State requirements.

As described in Section 4.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, future development would be subject to the City's Municipal Code requirements and SWRCB regulations that require development projects to be designed in a manner to collect and retain stormwater runoff onsite and not result in excess flows that would necessitate expansion of existing stormwater infrastructure. In the event that new development still results in the need for new or expanded stormwater infrastructure, the environmental impacts associated with upgrading or expanding the City's stormwater drainage system facilities to serve future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be evaluated and mitigated as necessary as part of the City's permitting and environmental review processes, including reviews for consistency with the policies of the 2045 General Plan Update, the City's Municipal Code, and CEQA. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

NATURAL GAS, ELECTRICITY, AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update that would occur within developed areas would be served by existing natural gas and electricity infrastructure within the Planning Area. Any future development that would require new or upgraded electricity and/or natural gas infrastructure would be required to be designed in accordance with the standards of the service provider (e.g., PG&E, SoCalGas) responsible for distribution infrastructure and applicable regulations including the California Public Utilities Code and regulations established by the CPUC, and would be subject to permitting and environmental review by the City. In

addition, the *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* of the 2045 General Plan includes the following policy and programs to ensure adequate and renewable utility service:

- **Policy PSI-1.3: Private Utility Service.** Ensure that adequate private utility service capacity and facilities exist prior to approving new development.
    - **Action A:** Coordinate with electric power, natural gas, and telecommunications service providers to identify and ensure adequate service levels for existing and planned development.
    - **Action B:** Require that private utilities development projects conform to City site improvement standards and applicable ordinances.
- **Goal PSI-6:** Increased development and use of clean, renewable energy systems
    - **Policy PSI-6.1: Onsite Renewable Energy.** Facilitate the installation of onsite renewable energy systems for residences and places of business.
    - **Policy PSI-6.2: Energy Efficient Planning and Building Design.** Encourage energy-efficient site planning and building design/construction.
        - **Action A:** Implement streamlined building permit review processes for onsite energy systems.
        - **Action B:** Continue to implement the California Green Building Standards.

Similar to electric and natural gas infrastructure, Atascadero has existing infrastructure for telecommunications (landline services, internet, cellular phone service, cable television, etc.) that would be available to serve future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update. Based on the location of future proposed development and availability of existing services, future extensions or upgrades to telecommunications infrastructure may be proposed to ensure reliable service for future residents and businesses. Plans for new telephone and/or cable lines would be submitted alongside final tract maps and improvement plans for each phase of development, and would be subject to City review and approval, including environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

In addition, the *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* of the 2045 General Plan includes the following policy and programs associated with upgraded telecommunications infrastructure:

- **Goal PSI-7:** Increased access to modern and affordable telecommunications infrastructure and service throughout Atascadero.
    - **Policy PSI-7.1: Telecommunication System Upgrades.** Facilitate the installation of and/or upgrades to private telecommunication systems that better connect Atascadero businesses, residents, and students to the world.
        - **Program A:** Encourage private investment in high-speed broadband telecommunications infrastructure that serves major commercial, business, and educational corridors.
        - **Program B:** Encourage private investment in wireless telecommunications infrastructure that efficiently and affordably connects rural residential neighborhoods, especially in the western half of Atascadero.
        - **Program C:** Facilitate and support the development of infrastructure necessary for all residents to use and benefit from new communication technologies.
        - **Program D:** Monitor information technology development to ensure compatibility with City infrastructure.
        - **Program E:** Strive to expand opportunities for all citizens to participate in City governance through use of communication technologies.
        - **Program F:** Continue to make essential City documents available for immediate retrieval by electronic transfer technologies.

Based on future natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications systems upgrades required review and compliance with State and local regulations, permitting requirements, and environmental review pursuant to CEQA, environmental impacts associated with the construction of these facilities would be *less than significant*.

Impact USS-1
The project would require the construction of new or expanded water, wastewater, stormwater, electric power, natural gas, and/or telecommunications facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

IMPACT USS-2: THE PROJECT WOULD HAVE SUFFICIENT WATER SUPPLIES AVAILABLE TO SERVE REASONABLY FORESEEABLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT DURING NORMAL, DRY, AND MULTIPLE DRY YEARS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update would result in an increased demand for municipal water services as the number of housing units increases and commercial development intensifies. As part of preparation of the 2020 UWMP, AMWC reviewed several relevant planning documents to estimate projected population growth within the service area through 2045, including the SLOCOG's 2050 Regional Growth Forecast for San Luis Obispo County; the City of Atascadero 2025 General Plan and estimated growth projections aligned with the 2045 Plan update; and SLOCOG's San Luis Obispo County 2040 Population, Housing, and Employment Forecast. The 2020 UWMP assumed an estimated future population of the AMWC service area through 2045 to be 38,460 people, based on a growth rate of 0.77%, which is consistent with the high growth rate scenarios for both San Luis Obispo Council of Governments plans described above.

AMWC's supply portfolio includes both local groundwater and supplemental water from the NWP. AMWC has contracted for 3,244 AFY from the NWP, with 2,000 AFY currently used to recharge the Atascadero Basin as needed and the flexibility to utilize the full allocation during peak demand periods. The NWP supply is considered 100% reliable, including during single dry and multiple dry years, based on reliability analyses and historical drought conditions (AMWC 2021). In 2020, AMWC's total volume of water supplied was approximately 1,727 MG per year, composed of 1,128 MG from groundwater and 599 MG from surface water. Projected water use is expected to increase over time, with total use estimated at 1,801 MG in 2025 and rising to 2,140 MG by 2045. These projections account for ongoing groundwater management, NWP recharge and draw up to the full allocation, and surface water contributions (AMWC 2021).

Table 4.15-3 compares AMWC supply projections in 5-year increments from 2025 through 2045.

Table 4.15-3. Atascadero Mutual Water Company Projected Minimum Water Supply to Meet Demand

		Reasonably Available Volume (MG)				
Water Supply	**Description**	**2025**	**2030**	**2035**	**2040**	**2045**
Groundwater	Atascadero Basin	792	840	871	906	942
Surface water	Salinas River Underflow	1,009	1,068	1,109	1,152	1,198
Total		**1,801**	**1,908**	**1,980**	**2,058**	**2,140**

Source: AMWC (2021).

[1] Groundwater pumped from the Atascadero Basin includes imported water from the NWP that is used to recharge the basin.

Annual water demand within the AMWC service area was projected to increase in proportion to the population projected by San Luis Obispo Council of Governments for the City of Atascadero and surrounding area. Water demand for the AMWC service area was projected through 2045 based on historic gallons per capita per day trends, mandatory water use prohibitions required by State laws and regulations, and required water use reduction targets established by SB X7-7. These projections are shown in Table 4.15-4 (AMWC 2021).

Table 4.15-4. Atascadero Mutual Water Company Projected Water Demand

	Projected Water Use (MG)				
Use Type	**2025**	**2030**	**2035**	**2040**	**2045**
Single-Family Residential	1,221	1,293	1,342	1,395	1,450
Multi-Family Residential	152	161	167	174	181
Commercial	142	151	156	162	169
Industrial	2	1	1	2	2
Landscape	132	140	146	151	157
Losses	152	162	168	174	181
Total	**1,801**	**1,908**	**1,980**	**2,058**	**2,140**

Source: AMWC (2021).

As shown in Table 4.15-3 above, total annual water demand for the AMWC service area in 2045 is projected to be 2,140 MG, which meets the projected water supply projected for 2045 (AMWC 2021). While the 2020 UWMP's water demand forecasts did not fully account for future changes in land use or other factors associated with the 2045 General Plan, the buildout projections in the 2045 General Plan are comparable to the growth assumptions used in the 2020 UWMP and as a result, the analysis and conclusions of the 2020 UWMP still provide a valuable reference for evaluating long-term water supply availability. Given the reliable groundwater sources managed by AMWC, and the demonstrated supply resilience outlined in the 2020 UWMP, Atascadero is well-positioned to meet current and projected water demands for the planning period (through 2045) under a range of hydrologic conditions (AMWC 2021).

On an annual basis, AMWC has demonstrated the ability to provide sufficient supplies to meet demand during normal, single-dry, and multiple-dry year periods. Historical annual pumping has not been greatly affected by drought, and the NWP supply could be used to augment local supplies and improve reliability during dry years. Although future increases in irrigation demand due to climate change are possible, these effects could be mitigated through water conservation and the provision of recycled water (AMWC 2021).

As discussed in Impact USS-1, the Public Services and Infrastructure Element of the 2045 General Plan has a goal, policies, and programs to further ensure a continued, reliable water supply, as detailed below:

- **Goal PSI-2:** Continued high-quality water services.
    - **Policy PSI-2.1: Water Service Capacity.** Ensure that adequate water service capacity and facilities exist prior to approving new development.
        - **Program A:** Coordinate with the Atascadero Mutual Water Company to ensure provision of facilities and water supplies commensurate with demand and projected need.
        - **Program B:** Require all proposed new projects and new development requiring domestic water service to obtain a will serve letter from the Atascadero Mutual Water Company.

Based on an evaluation of AMWC's current and future water supplies, including groundwater, Nacimiento water, and surface water sources, projected water demands, and the reliability of those water supplies under normal and drought conditions, the City of Atascadero would have sufficient water supply available to meet projected demand through the 2045 General Plan planning period. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact USS-2
The project would have sufficient water supplies available to serve reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

c) Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

IMPACT USS-3: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY INCREASE DEMAND FOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT SERVICES ACCOMMODATE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE CITY. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Wastewater generated from future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would ultimately be conveyed to the Atascadero WRF. The WRF receives wastewater collected from approximately 5,000 parcels over 1,900 acres, primarily serving the City's businesses and a mix of residential, retail, office, commercial, and light industrial uses. The remainder of properties within City limits use privately maintained on-site septic systems. As of 2025, the City's average daily flow is approximately 1.2 MGD over the past 6 years (Carollo 2025).

The City's wastewater collection system consists of over 63 miles of gravity mains and trunk lines (ranging from 4–21 inches in diameter), 12 active lift stations, and 6.8 miles of force mains. Wastewater from the northern and southern portions of the system is conveyed to Lift Stations 5 and 3, respectively, both of which pump directly to the WRF for treatment. Peak flows can increase substantially during significant rainfall events due to I/I, as demonstrated in January 2023, when daily flows reached 4.54 MGD (Carollo 2025).

As discussed under *Impact USS-1*, the City operates the WRF and proactively manages its wastewater collection system to accommodate growth and minimize inflow and infiltration. A draft updated Wastewater Collection System Master Plan was released in March 2025, which confirms that current wastewater treatment demand can be met without expanding the WRF, and near-term demand can likely be met with interim improvements. Future capacity will be accommodated through long-term planning provisions and significant large-scale WRF improvements incorporated into the City's CIP (Carollo 2025).

Guided by the Wastewater Collection System and Treatment Facility Master Plans, as well as the 2025 General Plan policies, the City's CIP prioritizes investments to address both immediate and future system needs, including LAMP identified area extensions and ongoing maintenance. The Draft Wastewater Collection System Master Plan (March 2025) recommends that proposed improvements to the existing system be sized to accommodate future (2045) conditions (Carollo 2025). In addition, the *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* of the 2045 General Plan Update includes a goal, policies, and actions to ensure the City's wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure has adequate capacity to serve future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update, as detailed below.

- **Goal PSI-3:** A comprehensive wastewater collection system and wastewater treatment plant capacity that support growth and economic development goals.
    - **Policy PSI-3.1: Water Reclamation Facility Master Plan.** Ensure the Water Reclamation Facility Master Plan responds to long-term growth objectives and local water quality goals.
    - **Policy PSI-3.2: Reclamation Facility.** Construct and maintain a water reclamation facility with capacity for forecasted growth that allows for beneficial reuse of treated wastewater.
    - **Policy PSI-3.3: Wastewater Collection System Master Plan.** Ensure the municipal sewage collection system serves the needs of all customers efficiently and cost effectively.
        - **Action A:** Establish sewer service fees and adjust to levels that can fund planned improvements to the water reclamation facility and sanitary sewer collection system.
        - **Action B:** Pursue State and Federal funding opportunities to update the current system and comply with regional regulations.
        - **Action C:** Include provisions in the Sewer Collection System Master Plan to address providing sewer service to identified areas in the Local Agency Management Program (LAMP).

In addition, Mitigation Measure USS/mm-3.1 has been identified to require the City to review all proposed development applications for adequate wastewater collection and treatment capacity prior to issuance of building permits. Based on the policies and programs outlined above and implementation of Mitigation Measure USS/mm-3.1, the City would continue to use the WRF Master Plan and the Wastewater Collection System Master Plan to plan for future wastewater system upgrades, the City would manage sewer service fees and other funding sources (such as development impact fees) to perform needed system upgrades, and future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding implementing Zoning Code Update would be subject to review during the City permitting

process to ensure that wastewater collection and treatment facilities have adequate capacity. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Impact USS-3	
The project could increase demand for wastewater treatment services to accommodate future development throughout the City of Atascadero.	
Mitigation Measures	
USS/mm-3.1	*The City shall incorporate the following Action into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption, under Policy PSI-3.3:* • *Action D: Require all proposed new projects and new development requiring wastewater collection and treatment service to be reviewed for adequate wastewater collection and treatment capacity prior to issuance of building permits.*
Residual Impacts	
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).	

d) Would the project generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

e) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

IMPACT USS-4: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY GENERATE SOLID WASTE IN EXCESS OF STATE OR LOCAL STANDARDS, GENERATE SOLID WASTE IN EXCESS OF THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE, AND IMPAIR THE ATTAINMENT OF SOLID WASTE REDUCTION GOALS. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The City of Atascadero provides solid waste management services through contracts with private service providers. Atascadero Waste Management handles the collection of solid waste, recycling, and organic materials within the City, while Waste Connections operates the Chicago Grade Landfill & Recycling facility, which currently serves as the primary disposal site for the City's solid waste, located approximately two miles east of the City. This facility is classified by the SWRCB as a Class III waste management unit, accepting only nonhazardous municipal solid waste. The landfill also contains a 4.5-acre recycling area for activities such as tire shredding, metal processing, and wood waste grinding, supporting the City's waste diversion and recycling efforts.

The Chicago Grade Landfill and Recycling has a maximum permitted capacity of 10,548,980 cubic yards and a maximum daily throughput of 500 tons, with operations authorized through December 31, 2039. As of May 1, 2025, the landfill had a remaining capacity of 4,078,523 cubic yards, approximately 39% of its maximum permitted capacity (CalRecycle 2025).

CalRecycle reports that the average solid waste generation rate in California is approximately 6.3 pounds per person per day (CalRecycle 2024). Based on the population projections associated with community

buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update, the City's population is projected to increase from 30,683 in 2024 to 37,279 in 2045. This would result in an approximate population net increase of 6,596 people over the course of the 20-year 2045 General Plan Update planning period. Based on the projected population increase associated with the 2045 General Plan Update, the City is expected to generate an additional 7,582.25 tons of solid waste per year by 2045. This equates to approximately 41,554.8 pounds (or about 20.78 tons) of solid waste per day. This daily increase represents approximately 4.2% of the landfill's maximum daily throughput of 500 tons. The additional waste would use approximately 10.8% of the remaining landfill capacity over the 20-year period. This estimate is considered conservative, as it assumes that solid waste generation rates would remain unchanged throughout the planning period. Solid waste service providers also regularly update management plans to accommodate regional growth projections and ensure adequate capacity. Waste Management will coordinate master planning efforts to address the horizon date to include a coordinated capacity plan between Chicago Grade landfill, Cold Canyon Landfill, and/or other regional facilities.

Generally, average solid waste generation rates would be expected to decrease over time, based on compliance with relevant State and local laws and regulations adopted with the purpose of reducing overall solid waste disposal and increasing solid waste diversion to recycling and green waste facilities as well as potential future laws and regulations enacted to continue the trend towards reducing solid waste generation rates. For example, the City of Atascadero is required to comply with the California Integrated Waste Management Act (AB 939) and the California Solid Waste Reuse and Recycling Act of 1991, which mandate waste reduction, recycling, and diversion. These requirements are designed to minimize landfill disposal, promote recycling and reuse, and extend the life of landfill facilities. In addition, SB 1383 requires jurisdictions to reduce the disposal of organic waste in landfills by establishing programs for the collection and diversion of green waste and food waste. A more recent example includes the adoption of SB 1053, which expanded the existing ban on single-use plastic bags from most grocery stores, liquor stores, convenience stores, etc. to include thicker, "reusable" plastic bags, which takes effect beginning on January 1, 2026.

In addition, the *Public Services and Infrastructure Element* of the 2045 General Plan includes the following programs and policies to further reduce solid waste volumes and maintain efficient and effective solid waste collection services:

- **Goal PSI-5:** Reduced waste volumes entering regional landfills and increased consumer commitment to minimizing waste production
    - **Policy PSI-5.1: Waste Hauler Contracts.** Contract with franchise waste haulers whose operations make it easy for residents and business owners to divert recyclable materials and organics from the waste stream.
        - **Action A:** Continue to encourage the reduction of solid waste through source reduction, curbside recycling, green waste collection, and recovery in cooperation with the Integrated Waste Management Board (SLO IWMA).
        - **Action B:** Support outreach and education efforts related to waste reduction, recycling, and organic waste, including statewide programs for the reuse and recycling of boxes and other packaging materials.
- **Goal PSI-5.2:** Efficient, effective, safe, and orderly waste collection services.
    - **Action A:** Work with the waste hauler to identify solutions for consolidated waste collection and pick-up service in higher density, commercial, and mixed-use areas.
    - **Action B:** Review and update, as needed, the municipal code to ensure that waste collection service does not impede on-street parking, emergency access, or visual character.

Based on current and projected waste generation rates, the remaining capacity at the Chicago Grade Landfill & Recycling, ongoing compliance with State and local waste diversion laws and regulations, and policies of the 2045 General Plan, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update is not expected to generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, nor in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, throughout the 2045 General Plan horizon. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact USS-4
Impact USS-4: The project would potentially generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, generate solid waste in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, and impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.15.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT USS-5: THE PROJECT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO CUMULATIVE CHANGES IN THE DEMAND FOR UTILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICE SYSTEMS, INCLUDING THE PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION OF UTILITY FACILITIES AND THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE CAPACITY TO SERVE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update would create increased demand for water, wastewater, and solid waste disposal utility services and infrastructure within the Planning Area currently serving existing development. Because each utility operates within a different service area, the cumulative analysis considers the full geographic area served by each respective utility provider rather than only the City of Atascadero. The cumulative scope for utilities and service systems would be all existing and reasonably foreseeable future development within each of the utilities' respective service areas. Cumulative impacts associated with stormwater drainage are evaluated in Section 4.8, Hydrology and Water Quality and cumulative impacts related to electricity and natural gas demand are addressed in Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy*.

Water services within the Planning Area are provided by AMWC, whose service area includes the City of Atascadero and surrounding parcels that extend beyond the City limits. Therefore, the cumulative impact area for water supply and distribution includes the entirety of the AMWC service area. The AMWC 2020 UWMP water demand projections for its service area were developed using representative water demand factors, expected future conservation measures, and SLOCOG's population growth assumptions and buildout scenarios. The AMWC maintains reliable water supply from its diverse portfolio, including NWP water, groundwater from the Atascadero Basin, and surface water from the Salinas River. As discussed under USS Impact 2, based on an evaluation of both current and projected water demand within the City's service area, as well as the available and planned water supplies, AMWC is expected to have sufficient water resources to meet the needs of development anticipated under the General Plan Update during normal, dry, and multiple dry years through 2045 (AMWC 2021).

Wastewater collection and treatment services are provided by the City of Atascadero within the areas connected to the municipal sewer system. Properties outside the sewer service area rely on private septic systems. Therefore, the cumulative impact area for wastewater infrastructure includes all areas connected to or anticipated to connect to the City's wastewater collection system and WRF. Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would contribute wastewater to the City's existing wastewater conveyance system and WRF. As described above under Impact USS Impact 3, based on an assessment of anticipated wastewater generation rates, the available treatment capacity at the WRF, and the review of future development through the City's permitting and environmental review processes and will-serve letter requirements, the City wastewater service infrastructure would have adequate capacity to serve future development pursuant to the 2045 General Plan horizon.

Telecommunications services within the Planning Area are provided by private telecommunications and broadband providers operating within regional service areas that extend beyond the Planning Area. Future development associated with buildout of the 2045 General Plan would incrementally increase demand for telecommunications services such as broadband and wireless communications. Because telecommunications infrastructure is typically expanded incrementally by private providers in response to market demand and technological advancements, cumulative increases in demand would be accommodated through ongoing upgrades and expansion of existing infrastructure networks.

Solid waste generated by development under the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be disposed of at the Chicago Grade Landfill, which currently serves the City of Atascadero and surrounding unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County. Therefore, the cumulative impact area for solid waste includes all of these areas, which all contribute solid waste to the Chicago Grade Landfill. Future discretionary uses in the unincorporated areas of the county that would contribute solid waste to the Chicago Grade Landfill would be evaluated for potential impacts to landfill capacity under CEQA, and mitigation would be identified for projects with potentially significant impacts. The population increase in the Planning Area as a result of the General Plan and Local Coastal Plan Update would result in an increase of waste disposal at the Chicago Grade Landfill by approximately 4.2%, which would not substantially increase daily or annual waste disposal, or result in exceedance of capacity at the Chicago Grade Landfill, resulting in a less than significant contribution of the 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update to cumulative impacts to waste disposal services in the area.

Based on the analysis provided above, the project would not have the potential to result in cumulatively considerable impacts associated with utilities and service systems. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Impact USS-5
The project would contribute to cumulative changes in the demand for utilities and public service systems, including the physical construction of utility facilities and the provision of adequate capacity to serve future development within the planning area.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

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4.16 WILDFIRE

This section describes the wildfire risks within and surrounding the Planning Area and analyzes the project's potential impacts related to wildfire. It should be noted that project impacts to fire protection services are evaluated in Section 4.13, *Public Services and Recreation*.

4.16.1 Existing Conditions

Fires play a critical role in maintaining ecological balance in California wildlands, as periodic burning or other fuel maintenance methods are necessary to sustain environmental health; however, the shift from natural wildfires to controlled methods such as prescribed burns, mowing, and grazing has become essential due to the risks posed to human habitation and development in fire-prone areas. Unfortunately, these fuel modification efforts can sometimes result in environmental damage. Fires, whether wildland or urban, pose significant threats to life, property, and the environment, with hazards influenced by factors such as building location and construction, access, flammable materials, water availability, and fire response times.

4.16.1.1 Wildfire Fundamentals

Wildfire is an uncontrolled blaze that occurs in areas with abundant combustible materials, such as vegetation and structures. Unlike other fires, wildfires take place outdoors in environments like grasslands, woodlands, brushlands, scrublands, peatlands, and other wooded areas that serve as fuel sources. When wildfires spread to nearby communities, buildings may be affected. Key environmental factors that increase an area's vulnerability to wildfires include slope and topography, vegetation type and condition, as well as weather and atmospheric conditions. Areas with dense, dry vegetation, particularly in canyons and on hillsides, present the highest wildfire risks. In urban settings, susceptibility is further influenced by development patterns, density, building types, and materials.

The indirect effects of wildland fires can be devastating. Besides stripping the land of vegetation and destroying forest resources, large and intense fires can damage soil, waterways, and the land itself. Soil exposed to extreme heat may lose its ability to absorb moisture and sustain life. Post-fire conditions also support less vegetation, which can increase stormwater runoff rates and increase risk of landslides.

Wildfires consist of three fundamental elements: the ignition source and location, the movement across the landscape from the origin, and the fire's characteristics upon reaching a location. Generally, a fire's nature is defined by eight characteristics:

- Direction of the fire front's advance
- Speed of the fire front's advance (rate of spread)
- Mechanism driving the advance
- Duration at any specific location
- Consumption of fuels related to structures
- Flame length
- Intensity
- Control measures

The rate at which a wildfire advances depends on the conditions of the burning material and the landscape ahead. Critical factors influencing speed include wind velocity, terrain slope, predominant fuel sizes, and the continuity of fuels in the fire's path.

Wildfires spread in two main ways: by heating nearby materials and by embers starting new fires further away. The length of time a fire stays in one location depends on the type and amount of fuel available. Fires move quickly through grasslands because the fine grasses burn fast, especially when dry. In forests with many trees, fires can last much longer because there is more material to burn.

Fires burn where there is fuel. In grasslands, they burn at ground level. In brushlands, fires can reach the tops of the plants. In forests, fires can climb from the ground up into the treetops if there are enough branches and leaves connecting the layers. Fires that reach the treetops can spread quickly across the forest. Flame height depends on how much fuel is burning and how tall the plants are. Grass fires usually have short flames (1–3 feet), brush fires can reach 4 to 10 feet, and some forests can have flames over 100 feet tall. The hotter and bigger the fire, the further it can spread. Grassland fires are usually easier to control because they burn quickly at one level. Fires in forests, with more and larger fuels, can be much harder to stop and may take a long time to extinguish.

4.16.1.2 Wildfire-Conducive Conditions

Atascadero is made up of rolling rural hills, creeks and rivers, and urban developed cityscape. The City of Atascadero covers approximately 16,720 acres, and is characterized by a Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Wildfire risks are heightened by extensive residential development in rural hillside areas dominated by flammable vegetation like cismontane chaparral, grasslands, and oak woodland, particularly where vegetation has not burned recently. These vegetation types, combined with the area's topography and prevailing wind patterns, create conditions conducive to wildfire ignition and spread. Chaparrals, for example burns at extremely high temperatures, making such fires challenging to control, especially when compounded by steep slopes and poor access for fire suppression. Additionally, the unique regional topography climatic conditions can cause fires to spread unpredictably.

VEGETATION

Wildfires thrive on vegetation, which serves as their primary fuel source. Vegetation undergoes continuous changes due to seasonal growth and decay. The interaction between vegetation and wildfire is intricate. Some plants naturally resist fire, whereas others ignite easily. For instance, dried grass ignites far more readily than living trees (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection [CAL FIRE] 2018). Grass acts as an open fuel, allowing oxygen to freely facilitate fire spread. Moreover, environmental factors like drought can dry out vegetation, reducing its moisture content and making it more susceptible to burning. Dominant vegetation types within the Planning Area include coastal oak woodlands and annual grasslands. Vegetation and land cover in the Planning Area is mapped and described in Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*.

SLOPE, ELEVATION, AND ASPECT

Slope angle significantly influences the speed at which a fire spreads. Fires tend to advance more rapidly uphill because the rising hot air preheats the vegetation above, and upward drafts increase the likelihood of creating spot fires (U.S. National Park Service [NPS] 2017). Steep and rugged terrains can also impede access and limit the use of heavy firefighting equipment, adding challenges to firefighting operations. After intense wildfires, sloped areas are more prone to landslides or flooding due to increased runoff during heavy rains. Landslides and surface slope failures are most common in regions with slopes exceeding 25%, such as hillside areas and steep bluffs.

Elevation plays a role in fire behavior by affecting precipitation patterns and exposure to prevailing winds. The aspect—or direction a slope faces—determines the amount of solar radiation it receives. Slopes oriented south to southwest receive the most sunlight, leading to warmer temperatures and drier vegetation compared to slopes facing north to northeast. This difference increases the potential for wildfire ignition and spreads (University of California Berkeley 2018).

Atascadero is a small suburban and rural town nestled between the Salinas River to the east and the rolling hills of the Santa Lucia Mountains to the west. Atascadero is about 26 square miles and is at an elevation of about 1,106 feet above mean sea level with U.S. Route 101 (U.S. 101) cutting through the center. Atascadero has many rivers and streams running through it including Paloma, Atascadero, Graves, and Boulder Creeks. The developed portion of Atascadero is primarily focused in the lower elevations around U.S. 101 where the slopes are less than 25%. Many scattered homes in the hills of the Santa Lucia Mountains within the western portion of Atascadero lie on steeper slopes and varying aspects.

4.16.1.2.3 CLIMATE AND WEATHER

Wind, temperature, and relative humidity are key weather factors that heavily impact fire behavior and vulnerability (NPS 2017). Fires tend to accelerate in hot, arid, and breezy conditions. Wind can carry embers far ahead of the main fire, facilitating its spread. Additionally, droughts result in prolonged dry spells that desiccate vegetation, thereby increasing both the available fuel and the likelihood of ignition.

Atascadero is vulnerable to wildfires due to its rugged hilly terrain and the hot, dry conditions typical of its summers. The prevailing winds align with the Santa Lucia Mountains are on shore from the northwest. These winds can be strong in the spring and into hot dry summer. Furthermore, many residents live scattered among the steeper hills in the western portion of the City and have large areas of open land around their homes that are more prone to burn then cityscape.

San Luis Obispo County experiences various seasonal wind patterns that significantly affect fire behavior. These winds are closely linked to the county's proximity to the Pacific Ocean, which influences atmospheric pressure systems and, consequently, wind direction and speed. In the summer, the area is predominantly affected by northwesterly winds driven by the Pacific high-pressure system situated off the coast. During the fall and late spring, the wind patterns shift, influenced by offshore subsidence winds resulting from high-pressure systems over Nevada and the Great Basin.

4.16.1.3 Power Lines

Overhead power lines can pose a wildfire hazard, particularly when they are near or pass through wilderness areas. High winds may cause trees and branches to encounter power lines, potentially igniting fires. Additionally, strong winds can break wooden poles, causing live wires to fall and ignite grass or other nearby fuels (Atkinson 2018). Historically, utility infrastructure has been responsible for less than 10% of reported wildfires; however, fires attributed to power lines consist of roughly half of the most destructive fires in California history (California Public Utilities Commission [CPUC] 2026).

Wildfire represents the single most significant risk for all of California’s investor-owned electric utilities. Because wildfire represents such a considerable risk, and wildfires started by utility equipment have had such harmful consequences, the State created a special process, and a separate State agency (Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety [OEIS]) specifically focused on reducing that one risk. The special process focuses on utility companies developing and implementing wildfire mitigation plans and submitting them to the OEIS. Wildfire mitigation plans document the initiatives utilities propose for reducing utility-caused catastrophic wildfire risk. The OEIS is the primary State agency responsible for reducing the likelihood of utility-involved wildfires through the review, approval, or denial and overseeing compliance with utility wildfire mitigation plans. In addition, the CPUC reviews the reasonableness of costs incurred by implementing wildfire mitigation plans for cost-recovery purposes and retains enforcement authority with respect regarding utilities’ compliance with these plans in cases of utility-caused wildfire events.

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is the primary electricity service provider in the City of Atascadero. As part of broader wildfire risk-reduction efforts, the City adopted updates to its Municipal Code in February 2026 requiring underground utility services for new, altered, or enlarged buildings. Section 8-5.102 of the Municipal Code requires that new electric, telephone, television, and other

communication service connections be provided through underground wiring, and that extensions of electric or communication distribution lines serving these projects also be undergrounded, unless deemed impractical or infeasible by the Chief Building Official or when connecting to existing overhead distribution systems.

PG&E uses multiple strategies to reduce wildfire ignition risks and prevent wildfires associated with its utility infrastructure. As of October 2025, PG&E had constructed and energized 1,000 miles of underground power lines in high fire risk areas of 27 counties in Northern and Central California. (PG&E 2025). In total, PG&E's system hardening efforts, which includes undergrounding, installing stronger overhead poles and wires, and line removals, has permanently removed 8.4% of wildfire ignition risk from the entire system since 2023. By the end of 2026, PG&E plans to construct and energize a total of 1,600 miles of underground power lines (PG&E 2025). In addition to undergrounding power lines, PG&E has developed a statewide network of nearly 1,600 weather stations and more than 650 high-definition cameras to identify and respond to wildfire risks, conducted inspections, trimming, and/or removal of over 960,000 trees and other types of vegetation across the service area, and installed more than 1,400 miles of strengthened power poles and covered power lines since 2018 (PG&E 2025).

4.16.1.4 Wildfire Hazard Designations

In California, wildfire prevention and suppression responsibilities are shared among state and local agencies, with federal agencies also playing a role. Federal agencies manage federal lands within Federal Responsibility Areas (FRAs). The State of California has designated certain nonfederal lands in unincorporated areas, particularly those with valuable watersheds, as State Responsibility Areas (SRAs), which are managed by CAL FIRE. All incorporated areas and unincorporated lands not classified as FRAs or SRAs fall under Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs).

Although almost every part of California faces some wildfire risk, specific characteristics make certain regions more hazardous. CAL FIRE is legally mandated to map significant fire hazard areas based on factors such as fuel, terrain, weather, and other relevant conditions (Public Resources Code [PRC] 4201-4204, California Government Code 51175-89). It is important to note that these hazard designations are applied to characterize the severity of fire hazard that is expected if located in that specific area, not the likelihood or probability of a wildfire occurring in the area. Key factors increasing fire hazard include slope, vegetation type and condition, and atmospheric conditions. CAL FIRE categorizes fire hazards into zones known as fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs), which include three levels: 1) moderate FHSZs; 2) high FHSZs; and 3) very high FHSZs. Currently, only very high FHSZs are mapped for LRAs in the official CAL FIRE FHSZ maps. The latest updates to the SRA FHSZ maps were made effective April 1, 2024, and CAL FIRE intends to provide additional future updates when new science, data, or policy direction warrant revisions. Updates to the LRA FHSZ maps were published in spring/summer 2025 and became effective on Thursday, June 26, 2025, with the passage of Ordinance No. 687.

These zones influence building regulations, and properties are protected to mitigate wildfire risks; however, none of the zones outright prohibit development or construction. To minimize fire risk, areas within very high FHSZs must adhere to specific building and vegetation management requirements aimed at reducing property damage and safeguarding lives. Local agencies also have the authority to implement their own building restrictions and/or regulations for development in high or very high FHSZs.

CAL FIRE has classified significant portions of the City of Atascadero as high and very high FHSZs and LRAs with no FHSZs (Figure 4.16-1). Generally, the area around the Santa Lucia Mountain hills on the western side of Atascadero is within the mapped very high FHSZ. The remainder of Atascadero that has more moderate to flat hills is within high or moderate FHSZs. Based on the 2025 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, approximately 8,034 properties are within FHSZs ranging from moderate to very high. Of these 1,119 are in the very high FHSZ, and 1,147 properties fall within the high FHSZ (County of San Luis Obispo 2025).

According to CAL FIRE, the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is defined as an area where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. These areas are characterized by an increased risk of wildfire impacts to life, property, and infrastructure due to the proximity of buildings to flammable vegetation. This designation is a descriptive land use condition and is distinct from FHSZ designations, and is used to inform wildfire preparedness planning, defensible space requirements, and ignition-resistant construction standards. Mapped WUI areas within the City of Atascadero are provided in Figure 4.16-2.

4.16.1.5 Fire History

San Luis Obispo County has experienced 594 wildfires between 1950 and 2025 according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Most of the major fires have taken place outside of the City of Atascadero limits. Historical fire records indicate that the area has experienced notable wildfire activity, including the 6,000-acre unnamed fire of 1921 and the Pink Goat Fire of 1956. Atascadero also faces a high incidence of human-caused ignitions, underscoring the need for proactive fire management and public awareness.

The largest fire to come close to burning within Atascadero was the Highway 41 Fire in 1994. Highway 41 Fire scorched 50,729 acres in the Santa Lucia Range. The fire started on State Route (SR) 41 near Cerro Alto and—driven by offshore diurnal winds on the first evening—threatened the city of Morro Bay; however, a shift in wind direction redirected the blaze toward Atascadero, Garden Farm, Santa Margarita, and into areas including Cal Poly, the Men's Colony, and the city of San Luis Obispo. The fire resulted in the destruction of 42 homes, 61 additional structures, and 91 vehicles. A strike team consisting of five fire engines and 20 firefighters narrowly escaped being overtaken along Tassajara Creek Road when the afternoon winds, known locally as the "Wind With No Name," propelled the fire toward them. At its peak, the Highway 41 Fire burned with unprecedented intensity in California, consuming 6,000 acres per hour.

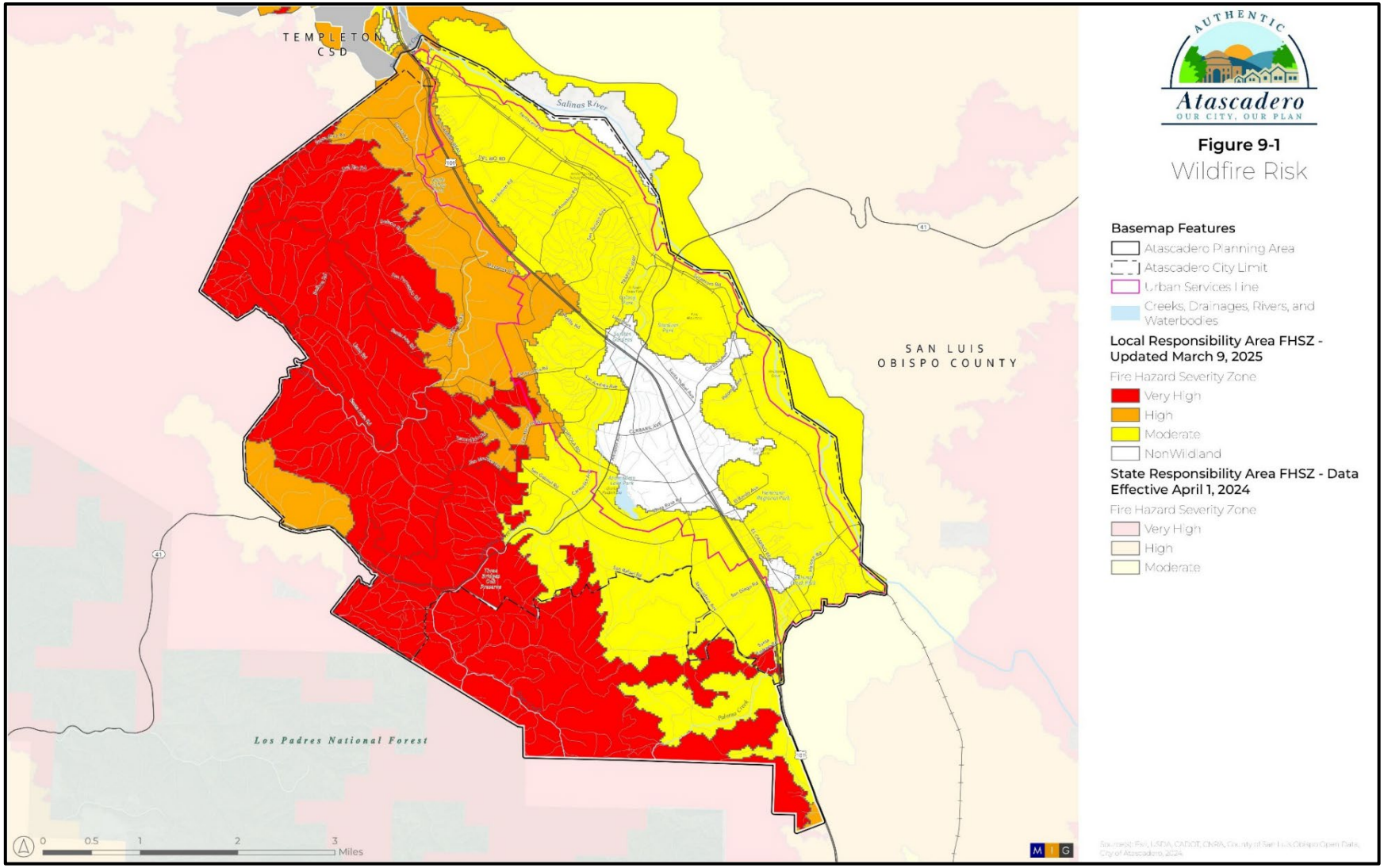
4.16.1.6 Post-Fire Slope Instability and Drainage Pattern Changes

The loss of vegetation due to wildfire can lead to landscape scarring, which often results in slope instability, causing intensified flooding and landslides. The altered drainage patterns and compromised post-fire slope soils can trigger soil creep on the downhill sides of foundations, diminishing lateral support. Atascadero features numerous hillsides and sloping areas that increase in steepness as you move west toward the Santa Lucia Mountains. Landslides in these regions can be triggered by heavy rainfall, erosion, vegetation removal, seismic activity, wildfires, or a combination of these factors. These slopes are susceptible to rockfalls, mudflows, and debris flows.

4.16.1.7 Fire Protection Services

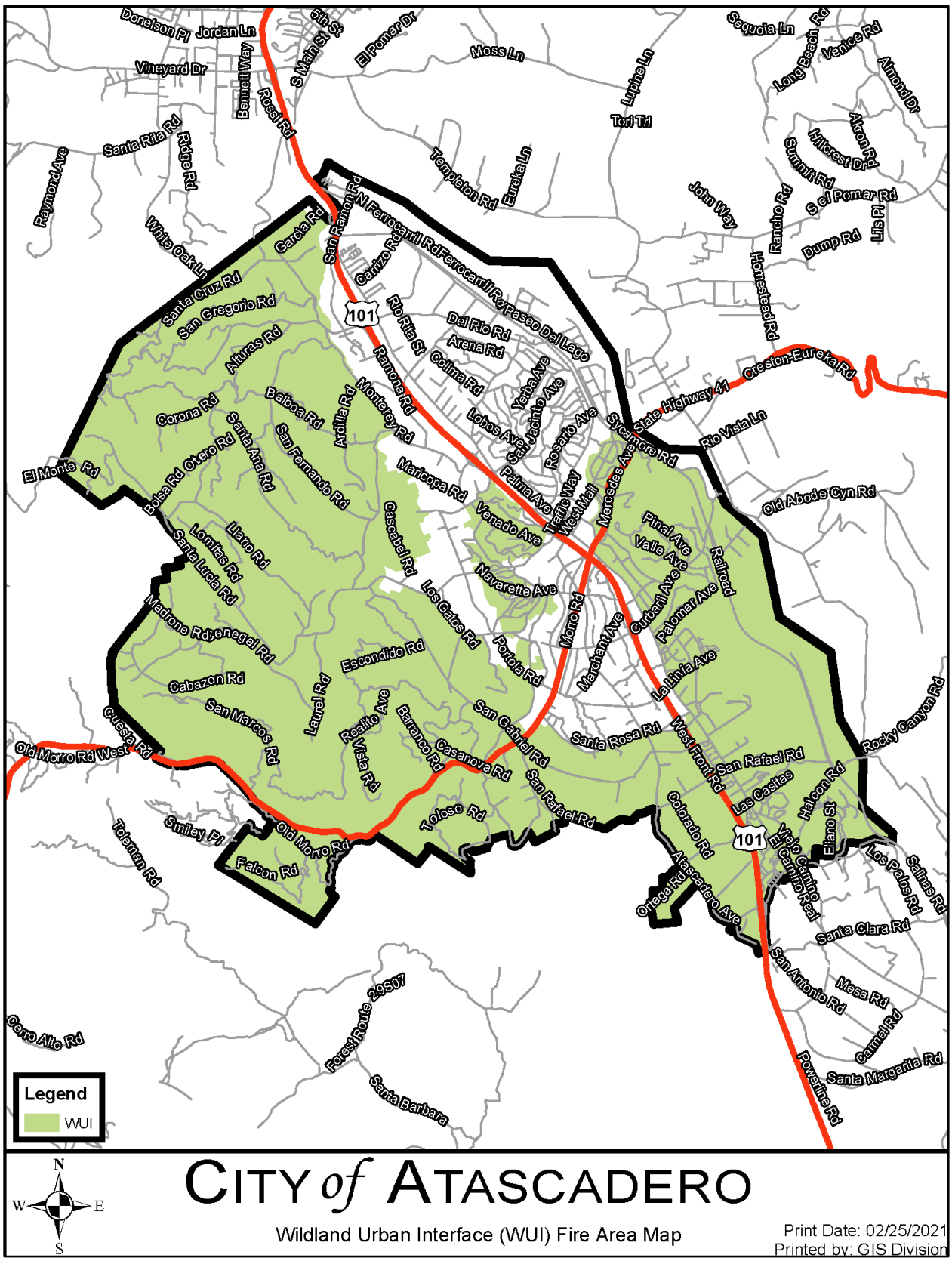
Atascadero is served by the Atascadero Fire and Emergency Services Department. This department provides fire protection, medical aid, rescue operations, and hazardous materials response. Comprising a dedicated team of both paid and volunteer staff, the department serves the City of Atascadero and its surrounding areas within San Luis Obispo County. The department operates from two fire stations strategically located throughout the City to ensure comprehensive coverage and rapid response.

San Luis Obispo County, where Atascadero is located, collaborates with CAL FIRE, who provides initial attack response to fires. CAL FIRE supports the County by funding fire protection services, including salaries, maintenance of firefighting facilities, pre-fire management roles, special repairs, and administrative functions (CAL FIRE 2022). Atascadero Fire and Emergency Services also engages in mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire service agencies within San Luis Obispo County, as well as state and federal entities such as the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), State Fire Marshal, U.S. Forest Service, NPS, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Department of Defense.



Source: City of Atascadero (2025).

Figure 4.16-1. City of Atascadero fire hazard severity zones.



Source: City of Atascadero (2021).

Figure 4.16-2. City of Atascadero Wildland-Urban Interface.

4.16.2 Regulatory Setting

4.16.2.1 Federal Regulations

DISASTER MITIGATION ACT OF 2000

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 established a new framework for mitigation planning, urging state and local governments to better coordinate their disaster mitigation efforts. Under this act, states are encouraged to develop either a "Standard" or an "Enhanced" Natural Mitigation Plan. Enhanced plans show a higher level of coordination in mitigation activities at the state level, and their approval can lead to increased funding through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The State of California's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP) aligns with the requirements of this act, ensuring comprehensive disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

Following a historic wildfire season, the National Fire Plan was initiated under Executive Order 11246 in August 2000. Its purpose is to develop strategies for actively responding to severe wildfires and mitigating their effects on communities, while ensuring adequate firefighting capabilities. The plan covers key areas such as firefighting, rehabilitation, hazardous fuel reduction, community assistance, and accountability. It fosters collaboration among local, state, tribal, and federal firefighting resources by facilitating training, equipment acquisition, and prevention efforts on a cost-sharing basis. To protect people and properties from catastrophic wildfires, the National Fire Plan allocates funding for projects aimed at reducing fire risks in communities (U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of the Interior 2000). In 2001, communities at high risk within the WUI—where residential areas meet wildlands—were identified and published in the *Federal Register*. This list, requested by Congress, included only those communities adjacent to federal lands. CAL FIRE incorporates elements from this plan into its state-level fire planning efforts (CAL FIRE 2018).

4.16.2.2 State Regulations

CALIFONIA FIRE CODE

The California Fire Code (CFC), outlined in Title 24 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Chapter 9, is an integrated code derived from the International Fire Code. It sets forth the minimum requirements, aligned with nationally recognized best practices, to protect public health, safety, and welfare from fire, explosions, and hazardous conditions in both new and existing buildings and premises. The CFC also aims to ensure the safety of firefighters and emergency responders during emergencies. It uses a hazard classification system to determine necessary protective measures for fire safety and life protection, which may include construction standards, property line separations, and specialized equipment. Compliance with these safety measures is enforced through a permit system based on hazard classification.

Specifically, CFC Chapter 8 deals with fire-related interior finishes, Chapter 9 covers fire protection systems, and Chapter 10 addresses fire-related means of egress. Additionally, Chapter 49 includes regulations for vegetation and fuel management to maintain clearances around structures. These standards set the minimum requirements for safeguarding buildings in FHSZs within SRAs, LRAs, and WUI fire zones.

CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC FIRE PLAN

The 2019 Strategic Plan, developed by CAL FIRE in conjunction with the California Natural Resources Agency, outlines key objectives for mitigating and preventing fire impacts across the state. These goals aim to foster a more resilient natural environment and enhance the resistance of human-made structures to wildfires through partnerships at the local, state, federal, and private levels.

Beyond the statewide 2019 Strategic Plan, each CAL FIRE unit creates its own fire plan, which serves as a strategic framework tailored to the unit's specific region. These plans are updated annually and focus on identifying wildfire protection zones, assessing initial attack success, evaluating assets and infrastructure at risk, and implementing pre-fire management strategies within the unit's geographical area. The unit fire plans pinpoint strategic locations for pre-fire planning and fuel management are determined by residents and workers. These plans are developed with input by local collaborators and stakeholders and are designed to align with other relevant plans in the area.

CALIFORNIA MULTI-HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

Cal OES is responsible for developing the SHMP, which outlines hazard risks, conducts vulnerability analysis, and proposes a hazard mitigation strategy (Cal OES 2018). The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 mandates that this plan be in place for the State to qualify for federal disaster assistance funding. The SHMP serves as California's primary guide for hazard mitigation, offering an updated assessment of historical and current hazards, along with goals, objectives, and strategies for mitigation. It underscores the state's commitment to a comprehensive approach aimed at minimizing disaster risks and impacts, thereby facilitating quicker recovery and enhancing overall resilience.

The SHMP must adhere to the criteria established in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) State Mitigation Plan Review Guide (revised March 2015, effective March 2016). Cal OES oversees the creation and upkeep of this plan, which was last recognized by FEMA as an Enhanced State Mitigation Plan in 2018. The SHMP is designed to mitigate the effects of disasters stemming from natural, technological, accidental, and human-caused hazards. It sets forth the state's mitigation priorities, strategies, and actions, and explains how risk assessment and mitigation strategy information are integrated from local plans into the SHMP. This plan also serves as a valuable resource for local planners, providing risk information pertinent to their areas. California is required to review and update its mitigation plan every five years and submit it for FEMA approval to maintain eligibility for certain federal grant programs.

STATE EMERGENCY PLAN

California's emergency planning and response efforts are built upon a comprehensive statewide mutual aid system. This system is crafted to guarantee that sufficient resources, facilities, and support are available to assist jurisdictions when their own capabilities fall short in managing emergency situations.

The California Disaster and Civil Defense Master Mutual Aid Agreement, outlined in California Government Code Sections 8555–8561, mandates that signatories develop operational plans for both local use and external deployment. These plans address fire and non-fire emergencies, including natural, technological, and wartime contingencies. In 1950, this agreement was signed by the State of California, all state agencies, political subdivisions, and fire districts.

According to Section 8568 of the California Government Code, known as the California Emergency Services Act, "the State Emergency Plan shall be in effect in each political subdivision of the state, and the governing body of each political subdivision shall take such action as may be necessary to carry out the provisions thereof." This act provides the foundational authority for conducting emergency operations following emergency declarations by the Governor or relevant local officials, such as a City Manager. Local

emergency ordinances further elaborate on these provisions. The act also details the roles and operations of government at all levels during extraordinary emergencies, including wartime situations.

Local emergency plans are extensions of the State of California Emergency Plan, which aligns with the requirements of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). SEMS, required by Government Code 8607(a), is the framework for managing emergencies involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies. It incorporates the Incident Command System, the Master Mutual Aid Agreement, existing mutual aid systems, the operational area concept, and multiagency coordination. To qualify for funding of response-related personnel costs under State disaster assistance programs, local governments must use SEMS. SEMS consists of five organizational levels activated as needed: field response, local government, operational area, regional, and state. Cal OES has divided the state into several mutual aid regions (Cal OES 2026).

CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE

Wildland-Urban Interface Building Standards

On September 20, 2007, the Building Standards Commission approved emergency regulations from the Office of the State Fire Marshal, amending the Title 24 CCR Part 2, known as the 2007 California Building Code (CBC). CBC provisions govern the construction, alteration, relocation, expansion, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, maintenance, removal, and demolition of every building or structure, including any connected or attached appurtenances, across California. These codes incorporate ignition-resistant construction standards specifically for the WUI areas, employing a hazard classification system to determine necessary protective measures for fire safety and life protection. Chapter 7A of the CBC (Part 2) specifically addresses materials and construction methods for exterior wildfire exposure.

The Atascadero's WUI designation for most of its area further emphasizes the challenges posed by the proximity of residential development to fire-prone wildlands. The definitions and recommendations for WUI areas are further elaborated in San Luis Obispo County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan 2025–2030 (San Luis Obispo County 2025).

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE

The PRC establishes fire safety regulations that limit the use of equipment capable of generating sparks, flames, or fires. These regulations mandate the installation of spark arrestors on construction machinery with internal combustion engines, outlines safe usage guidelines for gasoline-powered tools in fire hazard zones, and specify the fire suppression equipment required on-site for various types of work in fire-prone areas. Key regulations include:

- Earthmoving and portable equipment with internal combustion engines must be fitted with spark arrestors to minimize the risk of igniting wildfires (PRC Section 4442).
- During the peak fire danger season, from April 1 to December 1, appropriate fire suppression equipment must be maintained (PRC Section 4428).
- On days requiring a burning permit, flammable materials must be cleared within 10 feet of any equipment that could produce sparks, fire, or flames, and construction contractors must have suitable fire suppression equipment on hand (PRC Section 4427).
- Portable tools powered by gasoline-fueled internal combustion engines must not be used within 25 feet of flammable materials on days when a burning permit is required (PRC Section 4431).

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE SECTIONS 4290 AND 4291

PRC Code Section 4290 was enacted to set minimum wildfire protection standards for building, construction, and development activities in SRAs and, as of July 1, 2021, within LRA Very High FHSZs. According to PRC Section 4290, the planning and development of future structures, subdivisions, and developments in SRAs must include essential emergency access and specific perimeter wildfire protection measures. These standards encompass road specifications for emergency vehicles, signage and building numbering, water supply reserves, and the creation of fuel breaks and greenbelts. These requirements are detailed in 14 CCR Division 1.5, Chapter 7 Fire Protection, Subchapter 2, Articles 1–5 and are collectively referred to as the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations.

PRC Section 4291 establishes defensible space buffers in SRAs. Homeowners in SRAs must create and maintain defensible space buffers around homes and new homes must be constructed with fire-resistant materials. This affects some properties in surrounding unincorporated lands in the Planning Area.

EXECUTIVE ORDER N-05-19

On January 9, 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-05-19 to tackle the issue of wildfires in California. This order instructs CAL FIRE, in collaboration with other state agencies and departments, to propose immediate, medium, and long-term strategies to prevent destructive wildfires. In response, CAL FIRE developed the Community Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Report, which outlines strategies to minimize wildfire damage statewide. The report emphasizes reducing wildfire fuels through vegetation management, enhancing long-term community protection by creating defensible spaces, advancing wildfire prevention efforts, and promoting forest health (CAL FIRE 2019).

GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 51182

Per Government Code Section 51182, as revised by AB 3074 and AB 63, new regulations have been established for creating a 0- to 5-foot ember-resistant zone and defining requirements for defensible space. Individuals who own, lease, control, operate, or maintain an occupied dwelling or structure located in or near mountainous areas, forests, brushlands, grasslands, or any land covered with flammable materials, especially within Very High FHSZs, must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Ensure a defensible space of 100 feet around all sides of the structure.
2. Trim any tree branches that extend within 10 feet of a chimney or stovepipe outlet.
3. Keep trees, shrubs, and plants near or overhanging buildings free of dead or dying wood.
4. Regularly clear roofs of leaves, needles, and other vegetative debris.
5. Before constructing a new occupied dwelling or rebuilding one damaged by fire within these zones, obtain certification from the local building official confirming compliance with all relevant state and local building codes.

SB 1241 (2012)

Senate Bill 1241 mandates that municipalities and counties situated within SRAs and regions designated as Very High FHSZs incorporate considerations of fire risk into the safety components of their general plans. Additionally, this legislation led to modifications in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, introducing specific inquiries about the potential fire hazard impacts for developments located in or adjacent to areas classified as SRAs and Very High FHSZs.

AB 2911 (2018)

In response to the catastrophic fires of 2017, Assembly Bill 2911 was enacted to enhance fire safety in subdivision developments. This legislation mandates that the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, in collaboration with the State Fire Marshal, conduct a survey of local governments—including counties, cities, and fire districts—to pinpoint existing subdivisions within SRAs or very high FHSZs that lack a secondary egress route and are at considerable risk of fire. As part of the Subdivision Review Program, the Board, along with the State Fire Marshal and local authorities, is tasked with formulating recommendations to establish secondary access routes, upgrade existing access roads, and implement additional fire safety measures for these subdivisions.

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION GENERAL ORDERS

General Order 95

CPUC General Order 95 governs the construction and reconstruction of overhead electric lines throughout the state. When poles, towers, or other structures are replaced, it is classified as reconstruction and must comply with the strength and clearance stipulations outlined in this order. To enforce the fire safety mandates of General Order 95, the CPUC has introduced several rules, including:

- Rule 18A: This rule obligates utility companies to take appropriate corrective measures to address safety hazards.
- Nonconformance Clause: Requires each utility company to develop an auditable maintenance program to ensure compliance with General Order 95.
- Rule 31.2: Mandates frequent and thorough inspections of lines.
- Rule 35: Specifies that vegetation management activities must be conducted to achieve necessary and reasonable clearances. These stipulations apply to all overhead electrical supply and communication facilities governed by General Order 95, including those on lands owned and managed by California state and local agencies.
- Rule 38: Sets the minimum vertical, horizontal, and radial clearances between wires and other wires.
- Rule 43.2.A.2 requires that for lines located within Tier 2 or Tier 3 zones, the wind loads required in Rule 43.2.A.1 be multiplied by a wind load factor of 1.1. (CPUC 2018)

General Order 165

General Order 165 outlines the inspection protocols for electric distribution and transmission facilities located outside substations. Utilities are required to conduct "Patrol" inspections, which involve a straightforward visual examination of utility equipment and structures to detect obvious structural issues and hazards, at least once annually for each piece of equipment and structure. Additionally, "Detailed" inspections, involving a thorough examination of individual equipment and structures, must be carried out every five years for all overhead conductors and cables, transformers, switching/protective devices, and regulators/capacitors. By July 1 each year, utilities governed by this General Order must submit an annual report detailing the inspections conducted during the previous year, under penalty of perjury (CPUC 2017).

General Order 166

General Order 166, Standard 1.E, mandates that investor-owned utilities formulate a fire prevention plan detailing the strategies to be employed to mitigate the risk of power-line fires. This standard also requires these utilities to devise a specific plan for addressing power-line fires when wind conditions exceed the structural design standards of the lines during a Red Flag Warning in areas with high fire threats. The fire prevention plans must pinpoint specific regions within the utility's service territory where such conditions might occur concurrently. Furthermore, Standard 11 obligates utilities to submit an annual compliance report to the CPUC concerning adherence to General Order 166 (CPUC 2021).

SB 1028

Senate Bill 1028, enacted in 2016, mandates that every electrical corporation in California must design, maintain, and operate its electrical lines and equipment to minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfires associated with these components. Non-compliance with these provisions constitutes a criminal offense under state law. Additionally, the legislation requires each electrical corporation to annually develop a wildfire mitigation plan, which must be submitted to the CPUC for review. This plan should include a clear statement of objectives, a detailed description of preventive strategies and programs aimed at reducing risks linked to electrical facilities, and an explanation of the metrics used by the corporation to assess the performance of the overall wildfire mitigation plan, along with the assumptions that support the use of these metrics.

4.16.2.3 Local Regulations

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY MULTI-HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

The San Luis Obispo County 2025–2030 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) is a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing long-term risks to life and property from both natural and human-caused hazards. Developed collaboratively by the County, seven cities, several community service districts, and special districts, the plan covers a wide range of threats including wildfires, earthquakes, drought, floods, coastal erosion, and hazardous materials incidents. It emphasizes the importance of public involvement, interagency coordination, and integration with existing local and regional planning regulations. The 2025 update incorporates new data, includes two additional community service districts, and reflects significant advancements since previous versions adopted in 2005, 2011, 2013, and 2019. The plan also addresses climate change impacts and evaluates the vulnerability of critical infrastructure and population centers across the region.

The City of Atascadero adopts those hazard mitigation goals and objectives developed by the County Planning Team and described in Section 7 of the County MJHMP Mitigation Strategy. Those goals are as follows:

1. Strengthen risk reduction and resilience by minimizing risks to life, property, infrastructure, and the environment through comprehensive, community-wide strategies.
2. Boost outreach and capacity to improve disaster resilience for vulnerable communities.
3. Promote regional collaboration to reduce hazard vulnerability and strengthen community resilience.
4. Reduce injury, loss of life, and damage to critical facilities and infrastructure from natural hazards.
5. Enhance public education and engagement to boost awareness and preparedness for natural, human-health, and human-caused hazards.
6. Use the best science and data to guide resilience efforts and prioritize mitigation projects for natural hazards and climate change impacts.

Mitigation actions are prioritized based on risk assessments and tailored to the capabilities and needs of each participating jurisdiction. According to the 2025 County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, the City of Atascadero included 19 mitigation actions in the 2019 MJHMP. Of those 19 actions, one has been completed, and four have been deleted. The City added 12 new mitigation actions to the 14 mitigation actions that are continued or in progress, for a total of 26 mitigation actions in the 2025 MJHMP. Of those actions, the following are relevant to wildfire protection (County of San Luis Obispo 2025):

- **AT.3.** Wildfire Evacuation Routes. Seek options to improve City road systems to improve emergency access and egress and emergency evacuation times. Benefits: Improved road widths and clearance; enhanced residence evacuation times in high fire severity zones; elimination or reductions in loss of life.
- **AT.4.** Continue to educate the public on wildland fire safety.
- **AT.5.** Continue the enforcement on the Weed Abatement Ordinance. Continue to seek annual grant funding for the residential chipping program.
- **AT.6.** Maintain and revise the CWPP.
- **AT.7.** Continue to conduct current fuel management programs and investigate and apply new and emerging fuel management techniques.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

The San Luis Obispo County Fire Department (CAL FIRE SLO) operates as an all-hazard emergency response and fire protection agency covering over 3,223 square miles and serving more than 129,000 residents, plus hundreds of thousands of annual visitors (CAL FIRE SLO 2024). The department responds to approximately 14,900 incidents per year, including wildland and structure fires, emergency medical calls, vehicle accidents, hazardous materials incidents, and complex rescues involving water, rope, and confined spaces (CAL FIRE SLO 2024). Its six battalions are staffed by trained personnel supported with extensive equipment such as fire engines (Type II and III), rescue vehicles, hazmat units, boats, helicopters, air tankers, and seasonal firefighters. With over 1,139 training hours conducted annually, the department ensures high operational readiness and professionalism (CAL FIRE SLO 2024).

Led by a Unit Chief and supported by a Deputy Chief, Division Chiefs, and Battalion Chiefs, CAL FIRE SLO oversees Operations, Prevention, Air Operations, Hazardous Materials, Urban Search and Rescue, and Lifeguard Services (CAL FIRE SLO 2024). The agency collaborates with several local fire districts—such as Los Osos, Avila Beach, and Pismo Beach—under mutual aid agreements, while also contributing to CAL FIRE's larger mission of protecting over 31 million acres of California wildlands (CAL FIRE SLO 2024). Their services extend beyond emergency response to include proactive programs like prescribed burning, fire prevention education, defensible space inspections, and land use planning—all aimed at reducing risk and improving community resilience (CAL FIRE SLO 2024).

ATASCADERO FIRE DEPARTMENT

Atascadero Fire and Emergency Services is an all-risk, full-service fire department that provides emergency response and community safety programs to the nearly 30,000 residents of Atascadero, covering approximately 26.7 square miles. The department responds to around 3,500 calls annually, handling a wide range of incidents including structure and wildland fires, emergency medical services, vehicle accidents, hazardous materials incidents, and technical rescues. Operating out of two fire stations, they maintain a fleet that includes five fire engines, a ladder truck, a 4×4 ambulance, command vehicles, and a technical rescue unit. Their mission is to provide professional service and exceptional care, guided by the motto "Do One More Thing." They also offer numerous community programs such as wildfire preparedness

consultations, online burn permits, weed abatement enforcement, and a fire cadet program for youth aged 16 to 18.

The department is led by a Fire Chief and supported by a Battalion Chief of Operations, a Battalion Chief of Community Risk Reduction, and an Administrative Assistant. Frontline operations are carried out by 18 to 19 firefighters, with 12 to 13 certified paramedics among them, organized into three rotating 24-hour shifts (A, B, and C). Each shift includes two Captains, two Engineers, and two Firefighters, overseen by the on-duty Operations Battalion Chief. The department is also part of the North County Technical Rescue Team, which provides specialized capabilities such as high-angle rescues, trench rescues, and swift-water operations. With mutual aid agreements in place and a focus on both prevention and response, Atascadero Fire and Emergency Services is a key pillar in the City's emergency readiness and public safety infrastructure.

ATASCADERO MUNICIPAL CODE

Section 8-1.02 of the Atascadero Municipal Code incorporates the CBC by reference, with specific amendments. This adoption includes Chapters 7 and 7A, as previously mentioned. The fire safety provisions within Atascadero's building code are either equivalent to or more rigorous than those established in the CBC. Section 8-5.102 requires underground installation of electric and communication service connections for new, altered, or enlarged buildings, as well as underground extensions of distribution lines serving these projects. Exceptions are allowed where replacement connects to existing overhead service or where the Chief Building Official determines undergrounding to be impractical due to disproportionate cost or infeasible due to structural or site constraints.

4.16.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on wildfire if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below:

If located in or near SRAs or lands classified as very high FHSZs, would the project:

a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

Each of these thresholds is discussed under Section 4.16.5, *Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, below.

4.16.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

The evaluation of wildfire hazards and risks involved the use of CAL FIRE's FHSZ and WUI mapping for Atascadero, complemented by topographic mapping. Additionally, weather patterns, including prevailing wind directions and precipitation trends, were analyzed to understand their influence on the spread and intensity of wildfires. As a programmatic document, this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) offers a

comprehensive citywide assessment of the 2045 General Plan and implementing Zoning Code Update. Given that this EIR is designed as a long-term guiding document for future actions, this analysis consists of program-level and qualitative evaluations.

4.16.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

a) Would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

WF IMPACT 1: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY IMPAIR AN ADOPTED EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN OR EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Based on information from the County Office of Emergency Services, U.S. 101 is identified as a primary evacuation route for the region (County of San Luis Obispo 2025c). The City of Atascadero is directly served by U.S. 101, which provides convenient access for emergency evacuation purposes. Other major roadways in the City, including El Camino Real, SR 41, Curbaril Avenue, and Traffic Way, would also serve as important transportation corridors during an emergency evacuation depending on the location and nature of the emergency.

As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the 2045 General Plan is anticipated to guide sustainable population growth throughout the planning period and includes City population and employment growth projections based on land capacity, ability to expand infrastructure, and anticipated growth rates for both residential and commercial sectors. The City's forecasted population for the General Plan Update planning period (through 2045) is 37,279, reflecting a 22% increase over the 20-year planning period, or approximately 0.97% per year. Similarly, the number of dwelling units is projected to increase from 12,660 in 2024 to 15,550 by 2045. The population growth and increased number of residential dwellings associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would have the potential to result in increased traffic delays during emergency evacuation events.

The City Police and Fire Departments conduct ongoing safety precautions to keep the community safe and prepared in the event of a wildland fire. On an ongoing basis, the City Fire Department continuously inspects and maintains fire equipment and fire engines to the highest standards, coordinates with the Atascadero Mutual Water Company to ensure City water storage and fire hydrant system is sufficient and reliable, and tests emergency backup generators to make sure they are fully working and available in the event of a power outage (City of Atascadero 2025).

The County's Emergency Operations Plan and the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan identify the importance of public education and notification prior to and during an emergency. The City's Fire Department personnel currently prepare the community through implementation of the Community Wildfire Prevention Plan, Emergency Plan, and Vegetation Management Plan (City of Atascadero 2026a) and through implementation of Community Risk Reduction (CRR). CRR is a means of defending Atascadero from wildfire and includes programs such as public education, community involvement, inspections, code enforcement, and managing grant-funded programs like chipping and wildfire consultations (City of Atascadero 2026b).

In addition to the City's existing and ongoing efforts to ensure emergency preparedness, the 2045 General Plan *Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element* includes the following proposed goals, policies, and associated implementation actions to reduce impacts to emergency preparedness and response plans and evacuations in the event of a wildfire:

- **Policy SEP-1.1**: **New Development Risk Reduction.** Promote new development in areas of the community that have lower risk of wildfire hazards and ensure new development in higher risk areas are consistent with Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) standards.
    - **Action A:** Encourage the clustering of lots in higher fire hazard areas surrounded by defensible open space to minimize fire risk to new rural development.
    - **Action B:** Coordinate Fire Department and Atascadero Mutual Water Company review of subdivision design to ensure adequate fire flows.
    - **Action C:** Review new development to ensure adequate access for emergency vehicles and compliance with Fire and Building Codes.
    - **Action D:** Monitor and update the Municipal Code so that requirements for new development within the WUI to meet or exceed the requirements of the California Code of Regulations, including the California Building Code, the California Fire Code, California Wildland Urban Interface Code, and sections on SRA Fire Safe Regulations and Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations.
    - **Action E:** Work with land use applicants to locate development relative to landscape features that can act as buffers from oncoming wildfires (like agricultural lands and maintained parks and greenbelts).
    - **Action F:** Ensure at least two evacuation routes for all new residential developments, with roads wide enough for emergency vehicles.
    - **Action G:** Require the installation of all new utilities underground to prevent ignitions from power lines.
    - **Action H:** Implement development standards to assure adequacy of access for equipment, water supplies, construction standards, and vegetation clearance.
    - **Action I:** Prohibit increased land use densities in WUI areas, such as those allowed by State laws and density bonus laws, to minimize risk of exposure to persons in the event of wildfires.
    - **Action J:** Require that new essential public facilities be located outside of VHFHSZ to the maximum extent practicable.
- **Policy SEP-1.2: Fire Impact Reduction.** Implement programs and policies that minimize risks to life and property posed by fires.
    - **Action C:** Consider updating the Zoning Code to require conditions on land uses that serve mobility-limited persons, such as assisted care facilities or small group homes, to prepare and maintain detailed evacuation plans in the event of wildfires and other catastrophic events.
- **Policy SEP-1.3: Wildfire Risk Reduction.** Increase wildfire resiliency using required and voluntary risk reduction regulations and strategies.
    - **Action D:** Identify and implement evacuation procedures in coordination with the City's Emergency Plan.
    - **Action G:** Identify residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes identified and pursue grant funding opportunities to construct emergency access roads.

- **Policy SEP-6.6: Evacuation Coordination and Investments.** Prioritize investments that expand and enhance evacuation capacity and capabilities.
    - **Action A:** Seek funding to improve existing single-access residential neighborhoods so they include additional access routes or other provisions to increase evacuation safety.
    - **Action B:** Analyze the capacity, viability, and safety of evacuation routes for hazard areas in Atascadero, and incorporate the results into City emergency operations and disaster recovery plans.

- **Policy SEP-8.1**: **Facilities and Equipment.** Plan for adequate facilities, equipment, and personnel to meet firefighting demands.
    - **Action A:** Develop and maintain a Fire Department strategic plan.
    - **Action B:** Continue to plan for future facility, equipment, communication system, and personnel requirements.

- **Policy SEP-8.2: Fire Response.** Sustain the ability of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies.
    - **Action A:** Prepare, adopt, and maintain standards of coverage for the Fire Department.
    - **Action B:** Maintain a fire-related GIS database to assist decision-makers with analyzing development proposals and to assist with fire response and planning. Update the database as new fire hazard severity maps become available.

Although buildout under the 2045 General Plan may incrementally increase the number of residents in the City over the course of the planning period, the City's proximity to U.S. 101 and other regional roadways generally ensures that efficient evacuation routes are available, projected long-term growth rates in the City and region remain relatively modest and consistent with historical trends, and future development projects would be evaluated for consistency with applicable emergency plans and policies as well as the 2045 General Plan policies identified above. The 2045 General Plan also includes policies and actions to improve regional circulation and emergency access, including enhancements to local collector streets and intersections. Further discussion of roadway improvements and circulation is provided in Section 4.17, *Transportation*.

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and corresponding Zoning Code Update would be subject to review by the City Public Works Department for compliance with applicable State and local emergency access regulations. In addition, City Fire and Police Department staff would also have the opportunity to review discretionary development projects for alignment with emergency access standards and established emergency response or evacuation plans. Therefore, impacts associated with impairing an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan would be *less than significant.*

Impact WF-1
The project would potentially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, would the project exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

IMPACT WF-2: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY EXACERBATE WILDFIRE RISKS, AND THEREBY EXPOSE PROJECT OCCUPANTS TO POLLUTANT CONCENTRATIONS FROM A WILDFIRE OR THE UNCONTROLLED SPREAD OF A WILDFIRE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

In the City of Atascadero, approximately 8,034 properties are situated within FHSZs ranging from moderate to very high. Of these 1,119 are in the very high FHSZ, whereas 1,147 properties are within the high FHSZ (County of San Luis Obispo 2025). The 2045 General Plan would serve as a guiding policy document for future development in Atascadero and does not grant specific development entitlements but instead outlines goals and policies to guide development in the City through 2045. While the 2045 General Plan goals and policies would focus future growth within the City downtown core and corresponding LRA, the 2045 General Plan would allow for additional future development within High and Very High FHSZs within the City (as shown in Figure 4.16-1) as well as the WUI (as shown in Figure 4.16-2). Increased development in these areas would potentially exacerbate risks associated with wildland fire hazards.

Atascadero features hilly terrain and is influenced by strong, northwesterly winds that typically occur in in the summer and offshore winds in the spring and fall. Wildfire smoke, produced from the combustion of natural biomass, contains numerous compounds, including particulate matter, carbon dioxide, water vapor, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and other organic chemicals, nitrogen oxides, and trace minerals, which can be dispersed by winds. Prevailing winds in the area generally blow from northwest, but additional gusts from the west could drive potential wildfires and smoke through areas populated area, exposing residents to pollutants associated with wildfires.

Atascadero's landscape is primarily composed of chaparral and oak woodlands, featuring drought-tolerant plants like manzanita, chamise, and multiple species of oak such as coast live and valley oak. Along creeks and lower-lying areas, riparian woodlands and seasonal wetlands appear, populated with sycamores, willows, and cottonwoods. This diverse mix of habitats supports a wide range of wildlife and reflects the region's Mediterranean climate and fire-adapted ecology. Woody vegetation, such as tree and brush formations, is typically linked to rapid fire spread, high burn intensities, prolonged burning at specific locations, and the generation of airborne embers, particularly under extreme fire weather conditions. While existing urban development offers some barriers to wildfire spread, like paved roads and other non-flammable surfaces, undeveloped and open spaces remain vulnerable. Additionally, built structures and ornamental landscaping can become fuel sources in urban areas.

The land use patterns proposed under the 2045 General Plan would continue to allow residential and other development in areas adjacent to or interspersed with these natural vegetation communities. Development in or near these vegetated areas can increase exposure of structures and residents to wildfire hazards and smoke, particularly where structures, ornamental landscaping, and other combustible materials add to the available fuel load. Although existing and future urban development provides some barriers to wildfire spread (e.g., paved roads and other nonflammable surfaces), undeveloped open space and surrounding natural vegetation would continue to represent potential wildfire fuel sources. Occupied developments within or near these areas may be at risk for exposure to pollutants during wildfire.

To minimize and mitigate potential wildfire risks, the 2045 General Plan *Safety Element* includes the following specific goals, policies, and implementation actions:

- **Policy SEP-1.2: Fire Impact Reduction.** Implement programs and policies that minimize risks to life and property posed by fires.
    - **Action A:** Coordinate with the Atascadero Municipal Water Company to ensure that fire flows and anticipated water supply storage capacity is adequate for both short- and long-term fire prevention and protection.
    - **Action B:** Continue to enforce the Building Code for the installation of residential fire sprinklers on new construction citywide.
    - **Action C:** Consider updating the Zoning Code to require conditions on land uses that serve mobility-limited persons, such as assisted care facilities or small group homes, to prepare and maintain detailed evacuation plans in the event of wildfires and other catastrophic events.
- **Policy SEP-1.3: Wildfire Risk Reduction.** Increase wildfire resiliency using required and voluntary risk reduction regulations and strategies.
    - **Action A:** Adhere to State and local regulations and recommendations, including fire-safe design, of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan that address wildfire risk and vulnerabilities.
    - **Action B:** Pursue becoming a Fire Risk Reduction Community.
    - **Action C:** Encourage neighborhoods in becoming a NFPA recognized Firewise USA Community.
    - **Action D:** Identify and implement evacuation procedures in coordination with the City's Emergency Plan.
    - **Action E:** Support and coordinate with the Air Pollution Control District to allow burning within the City of Atascadero as a strategy for vegetation reduction.
    - **Action F:** Update and maintain regulations that balance the need for defensible areas around homes with the preservation of native trees, riparian corridors, and sensitive habitats.
    - **Action G:** Identify residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes identified and pursue grant funding opportunities to construct emergency access roads.
    - **Action H:** Update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan every five years to reflect the needs of the community and the changing risks in WUI areas. Ensure each update to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan identifies slope stability and wildfire hazard areas and mitigation strategies to reduce post-wildfire erosion.

- **Policy SEP-1.5: Vegetation Management Strategies.** Implement vegetation management strategies and enhanced roadway standards in fire-prone areas through the City's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
    - **Action A:** Implement the fuels mitigation projects in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and establish a monitoring program to track the effectiveness of Community Wildfire Protection Plan fuel-treatment activities.
    - **Action B:** Identify and encourage mitigation of existing non-compliant properties to current defensible space standards.
    - **Action C:** Enhance roadside safety and access for emergency services by implementing rigorous vegetation clearance.
    - **Action D:** Continue to promote the efforts of the Fire Safe Council and continue to identify locations within the City where fuel mitigation treatments can be implemented to help slow wildfire spread.

The Atascadero Fire Department is responsible for implementing and enforcing fire safety and building regulations for developments in very high FHSZs. As such, any individual projects proposed under the 2045 General Plan would be required to adhere to the Atascadero Fire Department's fire risk reduction requirements. These regulations cover a range of wildfire mitigation strategies, including vegetation management, brush clearance, fuel modification zones, and proactive fire planning. For developments within very high FHSZs, hazardous fire areas, or a WUI zone, applicants must submit preliminary fire protection plans, and detailed landscaping or fuel modification plans as part of the approval process.

In addition, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would be required to comply with applicable State and Federal regulations related to wildfire safety, including the following:

- Title 24 CCR, Building Regulations
- International Fire Code/CFC
- National Fire Codes of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- Title 19 CCR, Public Safety
- Title 8 CCR, Occupational Safety
- California Health and Safety Code

The CFC incorporates safety measures to minimize fire threats, such as ignition-resistant construction with noncombustible or ignition-resistant exterior materials from ground level to the roof, and sealing gaps around doors, windows, eaves, and vents to prevent flame or ember intrusion. Development must also meet CBC requirements, including 24 CCR Part 2, which specifies requirements concerning exterior wildfire exposure. Title 14 CCR outlines minimum standards for emergency access, fuel modification, setbacks, signage, and water supply, which are designed to prevent loss of structures or life by reducing wildfire hazard risks. Adherence to these regulations and building standards would mitigate the potential for future development pursuant to the 2045 General Plan to contribute to pollutant exposure for individuals in or near these developments.

Compliance with state and federal regulations, local fire department requirements and recommendations, and the policies set forth in the 2045 General Plan Safety Element would effectively minimize wildfire risks due to slope or prevailing winds, thereby minimizing future development occupants' exposure to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or uncontrolled wildfire spread. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact WF-2
The project would potentially exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

c) Would the project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

IMPACT WF-3: THE PROJECT WOULD REQUIRE THE INSTALLATION OR MAINTENANCE OF ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE THAT MAY EXACERBATE FIRE RISK OR THAT MAY RESULT IN TEMPORARY OR ONGOING IMPACTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Due to the 2045 General Plan focusing most future development within existing developed areas that already have infrastructure available, only a minimal amount of additional infrastructure—such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water supplies, power lines, or other utilities—would be needed to support future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan. The 2045 General Plan directs growth toward infill and areas already served by utilities through policies in the following policies:

- **Policy LU-1.2: Urban Services Line (USL).** Concentrate new and infill development within the Urban Services Line in areas where utilities and public services exist or are planned
- **Policy LU-1.3: Character and Scale.** Ensure new and infill development complements the character and scale of existing neighborhoods, cultural resources, historic structures, and natural landscapes.
- **Policy LU-1.4: Gentle Density Infill.** Allow opportunities for missing middle and gentle density style infill development surrounding mixed-use and commercial corridors.
- **Policy LU-2.3: Mid-block Infill.** Promote flexible land use patterns in areas between activity nodes along El Camino Real and support increased residential densities adjacent to and along commercial corridors to support commercial business activity and growth.

Most future developments would primarily require lateral connections to existing utilities, leading to negligible temporary environmental impacts. Among utilities, new overhead electrical lines pose the greatest potential wildfire risk; however, current lines are maintained in compliance with CPUC standards, and all electrical lines related to new development would be installed underground, as stipulated Ordinance No. 671 that amended Title 9 of the Atascadero building code. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update would not increase wildfire risk due to the installation of electrical lines.

To minimize and mitigate risks associated with the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk, the 2045 General Plan Community Facilities and Services Element includes specific goals and policies aimed at continued reliable public infrastructure:

- **Policy PSI-1.3: Private Utility Service.** Ensure that adequate private utility service capacity and facilities exist prior to approving new development.
    - **Action B:** Require that private utilities development projects conform to City site improvement standards and applicable ordinances.
- **Policy PSI-4.1: Stormwater Drainage Planning.** Plan comprehensively for stormwater drainage, considering the age of the City's system and emerging needs based on targeted growth areas and areas of concern.
    - **Action A:** Prepare, implement, and keep current a stormwater drainage master plan. Identify infrastructure in need of significant improvements or capacity upgrades.
    - **Action E:** Require implementation of post-construction structural control measures for new development to mitigate and treat additional stormwater runoff created by new impervious surfaces.

Because most future development pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would occur within existing developed areas with existing utility infrastructure and would require adherence to applicable State and local regulations that mandate undergrounding of new electrical power lines and implementation of the goals and policies of the 2045 General Plan, impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact WF-4
The project would require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

d) Would the project expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

IMPACT WF-4: THE PROJECT WOULD POTENTIALLY EXPOSE PEOPLE OR STRUCTURES TO SIGNIFICANT RISKS, INCLUDING DOWNSLOPE OR DOWNSTREAM FLOODING OR LANDSLIDES, AS A RESULT OF RUNOFF, POST-FIRE SLOPE INSTABILITY, OR DRAINAGE CHANGES. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

Vegetation covering hillsides plays a crucial role in stabilizing the soil, decelerating water runoff, and aiding in the absorption of water into the ground. When severe wildfires occur, they result in damage to trees, shrub layers, vegetation, and the soil itself. With the destruction of vegetation, more soil surface becomes vulnerable to environmental factors, and the absence of roots undermines the soil's structural stability.

Consequently, regions affected by wildfire burns often experience heightened runoff during heavy rainstorms, posing a threat of localized flooding and landslides to homes and structures situated below these burned areas.

Under the 2045 General Plan, future development is generally directed toward infill and areas within the Urban Services Line that are already developed or served by infrastructure; however, portions of the City include hillside terrain and areas adjacent to natural open space and vegetated slopes where wildfire and erosion hazards may occur. Development in these areas could increase the number of people, structures, and infrastructure located near slopes or drainage areas that may be susceptible to post-fire runoff, erosion, or slope instability. As a result, residents, buildings, and transportation or utility infrastructure in these areas could be exposed to secondary hazards following wildfire events, such as debris flows, flooding, or slope failure, particularly during intense storm events. The following goals, policies, and actions of the 2045 General Plan Safety Element would minimize the adverse effects of these phenomena:

- **Policy SEP-2.4: Structures in Floodplains.** Enforce Federal regulations regarding placement of structures in floodplains, and maintain appropriate standards for development in flood-prone and poorly drained areas.
    - **Action A:** Require an evaluation of flood hazards and appropriate on-site mitigation options by a qualified professional for any project in a FEMA-designated floodway during the development review process.
    - **Action B:** Discourage modifications to natural floodways, and enforce FEMA's Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) and Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) processes if development occurs within an existing floodway.
    - **Action C:** Require the lowest finished floor of new construction in low-lying or other areas with serious drainage or flooding potential to be a minimum of one foot above the 100- year water surface elevation.
    - **Action D:** Prohibit development that will create new upstream or downstream flooding or drainage problems.
- **Policy SEP-4.2**: **Structure Design.** Ensure that structures are designed and located to withstand strong ground shaking, liquefaction, and seismic settlement.
    - **Action A:** Enforce building code requirements for new development, including addressing liquefaction potential and preparing geotechnical reports.
    - **Action B:** Enforce Building Code provisions pertaining to grading and construction relative to seismic hazards.
    - **Action C:** Update Title 8 of the Municipal Code as necessary to promote seismic safety in structural designs.
    - **Action D:** Require retrofitting and abatement of structural hazards to levels of risk acceptable to the Building Official.
    - **Action E:** Prioritize retrofitting and abatement of City-owned structures, including buildings, bridges, and other infrastructure, in areas determined to experience strong ground shaking during an earthquake.
    - **Action F:** Work with and support state and local agencies, including public utilities, to retrofit and harden water storage facilities, wastewater conveyance, electricity transmission lines, roadways, regional stormwater facilities, levees, and other utilities that could be negatively affected by earthquakes.
- **Policy SEP-4.4: Erosion Control.** Promote erosion control strategies that reduce hazards to structures, properties, and drainages.

- **Action A:** Identify and require enhanced erosion control measures for properties that exhibit high erosion potential, are in areas of steep slopes, or have experienced past erosion problems.
- **Action B:** Require development proposals to mitigate landslide and slope stability conditions that have the potential to impact adjacent properties, structures, and infrastructure.
- **Action C:** Enforce Building Code provisions and other applicable ordinances regulating development on sloping ground.
- **Action D:** Continue to require slope stability assessments by appropriate registered professionals for developments in areas of known slope instability, landslides, or slopes steeper than 10 percent.
- **Action E:** Maintain mapping of high landslide risk areas and ensure that structures are engineered to account for any associated risk.

By integrating wildfire resiliency measures into both new and existing developments, the City would effectively reduce wildfire ignitions and limit the spread of fires, thereby decreasing the areas susceptible to post-fire debris flows. Additionally, the City would require implementation of best management practices to minimize stormwater runoff, which would help mitigate the adverse effects of flooding following a wildfire. Infill and mixed-use development under the 2045 General Plan and implementing Zoning Code Update would primarily take place in urbanized areas of Atascadero that are relatively flat and have low potential for landslides. Consequently, based on the policies and actions of the 2045 General Plan and compliance with applicable State and local regulations, the project would not result in the exposure of people or structures to significant risks, including flooding or landslides due to runoff, post-fire slope instability, or alterations in drainage and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact WF-4
The project would potentially expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.16.6 Cumulative Impacts

IMPACT WF-5: THE PROJECT WOULD NOT RESULT IN A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACT ASSOCIATED WITH WILDFIRE. *(LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT [CLASS III])*

The cumulative development scenario for wildfire would encompass current and reasonably foreseeable development within San Luis Obispo County. This area is suitable for analyzing cumulative wildfire impacts because it includes tracts of wildland fuels, such as oak woodlands and chaparrals, which are in or adjacent to the City of Atascadero. There are numerous fire breaks across the county, such as U.S. 101, and developed areas including the City of Atascadero and the City of San Luis Obispo, where potential wildfires in or near the City of Atascadero could spread into or from surrounding regions within San Luis Obispo County.

Foreseeable future developments outside the City may situate structures and people in High or Very High FHSZs, or at the base of slopes and hillsides susceptible to post-wildfire risks, such as landslides or mudflows; however, these developments would be required to comply with applicable State and Federal regulations related to wildfire safety, including the following:

- Title 24 CCR, Building Regulations
- International Fire Code/CFC
- National Fire Codes of the NFPA
- Title 19 CCR, Public Safety
- Title 8 CCR, Occupational Safety
- California Health and Safety Code

Future developments requiring discretionary approval would also be subject to review under CEQA, where all feasible mitigation measures must be implemented to reduce potential impacts related to wildfire, as applicable.

As concluded in Section 4.16.5, *Impact Analysis*, the 2045 General Plan would not result in any significant impacts related to wildfire. Compliance with state, regional, and local fire protection policies and requirements, along with the implementation of policies proposed by the 2045 General Plan, would minimize potential wildfire impacts and ensure consistency with current emergency response plans and policies. Additionally, the 2045 General Plan focuses future development in urbanized areas of Atascadero, away from wildland fuels and slopes. Therefore, the project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact associated with wildfire and impacts would be l*ess than significant*.

Impact WF-5
The project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact associated with wildfire.
Mitigation Measures
Mitigation is not necessary.
Residual Impacts
Residual impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

CHAPTER 5. ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Section 15126.6(a), requires an EIR to "describe a reasonable range of alternatives to a project, or to the location of a project, which could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives." This chapter discusses the feasibility of alternatives to the proposed 2045 General Plan Update and corresponding Zoning Code Update (Municipal Code) update (collectively referred to as the project), including a No Project Alternative. The State CEQA Guidelines provide direction for the discussion of alternatives to the proposed project, including the following guidance:

- Because an EIR must identify ways to mitigate or avoid the significant effects that a project may have on the environment (Public Resources Code Section 21002.1), the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly. (Section 15126.6(b))
- The EIR shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project. (Section 15126.6(d))
- The specific alternative of "no project" shall also be evaluated along with its impact. The purpose of describing and analyzing a no project alternative is to allow decisionmakers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. (Section 15126.6(e)(1))
- If the environmentally superior alternative is the 'no project' alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. (Section 15126.6(e)(2))
- When the project is the revision of an existing land use or regulatory plan, policy, or ongoing operation, the "no project" alternative will be the continuation of the existing plan, policy, or operation into the future. Typically this is a situation where other projects initiated under the existing plan will continue while the new plan is developed. Thus, the projected impacts of the proposed plan or alternative plans would be compared to the impacts that would occur under the existing plan. (Section 15126.6(e)(3))
- The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. Of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. (Section 15126.6(f))

Given the CEQA mandates listed above, this section: (1) describes the range of reasonable alternatives to the project; (2) examines and evaluates resource issue areas where significant adverse environmental effects have been identified and compares the impacts of the alternatives to those of the proposed project; and (3) identifies the Environmentally Superior Alternative.

5.2 ALTERNATIVES SELECTION

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, appropriate alternatives for EIR analysis are those that meet most of the basic project objectives and avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. Consequently, this section reviews the objectives that were identified for the proposed project and summarizes the significant unavoidable environmental effects identified in this EIR.

5.2.1 Project Objectives

As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the Guiding Principles serve as the project objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update and include the following:

Guiding Principles – Our Places

- Respect Atascadero's semi-rural character as the community evolves.
- Facilitate vibrant public spaces that encourage community connections. Support City parks, trails, and facilities that provide access to a variety of recreation experiences.
- Promote investments in downtown that support the needs of local businesses and residents and provide a quality experience for visitors.
- Encourage synergistic commercial and residential uses along the El Camino Real and Morro Road corridors to support long-term viability of commercial spaces.

Guiding Principles – Our People

- Support a culture that is welcoming, inclusive, and based on mutual respect.
- Create and maintain opportunities for people of all income levels and ages to live, work, raise families, and retire in Atascadero.
- Target growth to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life.

Guiding Principles – Our Economy

- Incentivize a mix of business and revenue streams that support a resilient economy.
- Diversify Atascadero's employment opportunities to address the needs of an evolving workforce and attract jobs for all skill levels and income ranges.

Guiding Principles – Our Infrastructure

- Facilitate safe, convenient, and comfortable connections for people of all abilities and in different stages of life.
- Support and maintain efficient and sustainable infrastructure systems.
- Organize public service systems so that all neighborhoods and business districts have access to public services and emergency response.
- Plan and prepare for community safety and resiliency from evolving climate threats, natural, and human-caused hazards.

Guiding Principles – Our Natural Environment

- Integrate Atascadero's natural, historical, and cultural landscapes and resources into planning decisions.

5.2.2 Significant Impacts Resulting from the Proposed Project

Alternatives to be considered under CEQA are those that would avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant environmental effects identified during evaluation of the proposed project. Many of the adverse environmental impacts described in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impacts Analysis*, were determined to be less than significant or less than significant with the incorporation of identified mitigation. The following impacts were found to be significant and unavoidable even with the implementation of mitigation measures. This alternatives analysis specifically focuses on alternatives that would avoid or substantially lessen the significant and unavoidable impacts summarized below.

5.2.2.1 Air Quality

- **Impact AQ 1: The project would conflict with an applicable air quality plan (Class 1).** The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update focuses growth in more VMT-efficient areas at higher densities and with more travel options, so it produces less VMT per capita and per employee than the existing General Plan; however, even with this focus on VMT-reducing development and implementation of 2045 General Plan policies, estimated increases in VMT would exceed the Land Use and Climate Innovation (LUCI) recommended thresholds (AMBIENT 2026a). As a result, increases in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) attributable to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be inconsistent with statewide planning and climate change policies and efforts, such as the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Climate Change Scoping Plan. Increases in VMT may result in long-term increases of mobile-source air pollutants not accounted for in the CAP. As a result, long-term increases of regional pollutants and consistency with the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (SLOAPCD) Clean Air Plan (CAP) would be considered a potentially significant impact. No feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would further reduce this impact, due to unmitigable contributing factors such as the existing development pattern and geography of the City. As a result, this impact would be considered *significant and unavoidable*. See Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, *and Energy* for the full discussion of this potential impact.
- **Impact AQ-2: The project would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants for which the project region is non-attainment (Class I).** The 2045 General Plan includes numerous goals, policies, and action items that would help to reduce criteria pollutant emissions commonly associated with construction and operational activities. In addition, the City of Atascadero development review process requires a review of consistency with local and state policies, including SLOAPCD regulations and CEQA. Consistent with existing practices, each new discretionary development project associated with community buildout pursuant with the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be reviewed for consistency with these policies to help reduce local and regional impacts. Potentially significant impacts would require implementation of additional project-specific mitigation measures to further reduce project-generated emissions and associated air quality impacts; however, given the region's current nonattainment status and uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of future mitigation for individual development projects, short-term and long-term air quality impacts would be *significant and unavoidable*. See Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy* for the full discussion of this potential impact.
- **Impact AQ-3: The project could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations (Class I).** The 2045 General Plan includes policies that would help to minimize construction-generated fugitive dust associated with future land use development projects and provide buffer areas between industrial and residential land uses that would help to minimize potential exposure to operational toxic air contaminants (TACs). Consistent with the City's current

practices, future discretionary development projects associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be evaluated for consistency with SLOAPCD's recommended guidance. In accordance with the SLOAPCD's guidance, future development projects would be evaluated for potential short-term and long-term exposure to localized pollutants, including emissions of criteria pollutants, TACs and other airborne pollutants, such as asbestos, CO, and Coccidioides (valley fever) fungus spores. However, even with consistency with SLOAPCD guidance, it is conceivable that some development projects may be large enough or close enough to a sensitive receptor that applicable project-level significance thresholds would be exceeded. In the event that a significant impact is identified for an individual project, the SLOAPCD-recommended mitigation measures would be required to reduce project-related impacts; however, even with mitigation, it may not be possible to reduce potential emissions of TACs or exposure to localized airborne pollutants and all health-related risks to nearby receptors to levels below the SLOAPCD recommended significance thresholds. As a result, this impact would be *significant and unavoidable*. See Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy* for the full discussion of this potential impact.

- **Impact AQ-5: The project would result in cumulatively considerable impacts associated with projected long-term increases in VMT and mobile-source emissions (Class I).** Implementation of the 2045 General Plan would incorporate numerous goals, policies, and actions that would be generally consistent with the SLOAPCD CAP, minimize criteria pollutant emissions, and minimize exposure of sensitive receptors to air pollutant concentrations. However, potential impacts would be cumulatively considerable and *significant and unavoidable*. See Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy* for the full discussion of this potential impact.

5.2.2.2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- **Impact GHG-1: The project could generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may result in a significant environmental impact and could conflict with applicable plans, policies, or regulations adopted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Class I).** Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would result in long-term increases in operational GHG emissions, primarily from mobile sources, with additional contributions from energy use, waste generation, water use, and area sources. Although the 2045 General Plan policies and mitigation measures identified would reduce GHG emissions relative to existing conditions under the 2025 General Plan, total residential and employment-based VMT would exceed LUCI-recommended thresholds. Because these thresholds are intended to support statewide GHG reduction goals, exceedance of the thresholds indicates that projected reductions in mobile-source GHG emissions would not be fully achieved. As a result, long-term increases in VMT and associated mobile-source emissions would remain the primary contributor to cumulative GHG emissions. Mitigation measures have been identified to incorporate policies into the 2045 General Plan to require an update of the City's Climate Action Plan, implement additional measures for land use development in support of the State's 2045 carbon-neutrality goal, and participate in the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) SCS/Regional Blueprint Planning effort. No additional feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would further reduce this impact, due to unmitigable contributing factors such as the existing development pattern and geography of the City. As a result, this impact would be *significant and unavoidable*. See Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy* for the full discussion of this potential impact.

- **Impact GHG-2: The project would result in cumulatively considerable greenhouse gas emissions associated with projected increases in VMT and mobile-source emissions and would conflict with applicable State greenhouse gas reduction plans (Class I).** As described under Impact GHG-1, total residential and employment-based VMT would exceed LUCI-recommended thresholds. Because these thresholds are intended to support statewide GHG reduction goals, exceedance of the thresholds indicates that projected reductions in mobile-source GHG emissions would not be fully achieved and long-term increases in VMT and associated mobile-source emissions would remain the primary contributor to cumulative GHG emissions. Therefore, even with implementation of 2045 General Plan policies and Mitigation Measures GHG/mm-1.1 through GHG/mm-1.3, cumulative GHG emissions associated with long-term increases in VMT and mobile-source emissions would remain cumulatively considerable. Accordingly, cumulative impacts related to GHG emissions would be *significant and unavoidable*. See Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy* for the full discussion of this potential impact.

5.2.2.3 Transportation

- **Impact TR-2: The project would exceed applicable thresholds of significance associated with VMT. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).** Buildout of the proposed 2045 General Plan would generate VMT in excess of applicable thresholds of significance, resulting in a significant impact. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3 identifies VMT as the appropriate measure of transportation impacts pursuant to SB 743 and allows lead agencies discretion in selecting methodologies and metrics for VMT evaluation. Consistent with this guidance, the SLOCOG Travel Demand Model (TDM) was used to estimate VMT under baseline conditions and under buildout of the 2025 and proposed 2045 General Plans. Based on recommendations from the Land Use and Climate Initiative (LUCI), general plans may result in a significant transportation impact if new residential or employment-generating land uses exceed a threshold of 15% below existing regional average VMT. Using baseline regional conditions, the applicable thresholds are 12.63 residential VMT per capita and 10.09 commute VMT per employee. The TDM results indicate that residential VMT per capita and commute VMT per employee under baseline conditions, the 2025 General Plan, and the proposed 2045 General Plan would exceed these thresholds (Central Coast Transportation Consulting 2025). Although the proposed 2045 General Plan is more VMT-efficient than the 2025 General Plan and includes extensive policies and actions to reduce VMT to the maximum extent feasible by focusing growth in more compact, multimodal, and higher-density areas, existing development patterns, the City's large geographic area, and limitations of feasible mitigation would prevent achievement of LUCI-recommended thresholds. Therefore, impacts associated with VMT under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) would be *significant and unavoidable*. See Section 4.14, *Transportation,* for the full discussion of this potential impact.
- **Impact TR-5: The project would result in cumulatively considerable impacts associated with VMT. Impacts would be significant and unavoidable (Class I).** Implementation of the proposed 2045 General Plan would result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to VMT, resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact. For purposes of cumulative analysis, the geographic area for VMT impacts is San Luis Obispo County, recognizing that VMT significance thresholds are established within a statewide regulatory framework intended to support achievement of statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. The cumulative VMT analysis utilized the SLOCOG TDM, which accounts for projected growth throughout the County. As demonstrated under Impact TR-2, buildout pursuant to the 2045 General Plan would improve residential and commute VMT on a per capita basis at the regional level compared to buildout of the 2025 General Plan; however, residential VMT per capita and commute VMT per employee would continue to exceed the significance thresholds recommended by the LUCI. Because these thresholds are tied to the State's

greenhouse gas reduction objectives, exceedance of the LUCI thresholds would contribute to cumulatively considerable VMT impacts at the regional and statewide levels. While the 2045 General Plan emphasizes growth in more VMT-efficient areas and includes policies and actions intended to reduce VMT to the maximum extent feasible, no feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would fully address factors contributing to the exceedance of LUCI thresholds, including the City's large geographic area and existing low-density development pattern. Therefore, cumulative impacts associated with VMT would be *significant and unavoidable*. See Section 4.14, *Transportation,* for the full discussion of this potential impact.

5.2.3 Alternatives Development and Analysis Process

In defining the feasibility of alternatives, the State CEQA Guidelines state: "Among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries (projects with a regionally significant impact should consider the regional context), and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site." If an alternative was found to be infeasible, as defined above, then it was dropped from further consideration in this analysis.

In addition, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 states that alternatives should attain most of the basic objectives of the project." As further explained by the California Supreme Court:

> [A]n EIR should not exclude an alternative from detailed consideration merely because it "would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives." But an EIR need not study in detail an alternative that is infeasible or that the lead agency has reasonably determined cannot achieve the project's underlying fundamental purpose.
>
> Although a lead agency may not give a project's purpose an artificially narrow definition, a lead agency may structure its EIR alternative analysis around a reasonable definition of underlying purpose and need not study alternatives that cannot achieve that basic goal. (In re *Bay-Delta Programmatic Environmental Impact Report Coordinated Proceedings*, 43 Cal.4th 1143, 1165–1166 [2008]).

The alternatives selected for further analysis have been evaluated against the proposed General Plan and Zoning Code Update project to provide a comparison of environmental effects and to identify the environmentally superior alternative. Note that the significance of impacts associated with the proposed project, and the determination of impacts presented in this section for comparative purposes, are based on the respective identified changes in conditions relative to the environmental baseline (as described in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*).

The City has the discretion to approve (or disapprove) whatever alternative or combination of alternatives it deems most appropriate, provided that the environmental impacts of the proposed project can be mitigated, or to the extent that they cannot, provided that the City adopts a Statement of Overriding Considerations, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093.

The alternatives analysis includes a preliminary alternatives screening process and alternative project evaluation process, as described below.

5.2.4 Preliminary Alternatives Screening Process

The alternatives analysis begins with a screening and evaluation of a list of preliminary alternatives to determine which alternatives will be selected for further analysis in the EIR. As summarized above in Section 5.2.2, the 2045 General Plan Update and Zoning Code Update would have significant and unavoidable impacts related to air quality, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and transportation. Each alternative identified in this Chapter was preliminarily assessed to determine which of the alternatives met the requirements of a viable alternative under CEQA by considering whether the alternative: 1) would be feasible; 2) would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project; and 3) could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. Those alternatives that met these three criteria were carried forward for more detailed review in the EIR.

5.2.5 Alternative Project Evaluation Process

The environmental impacts of the alternatives carried forward for review in the EIR, including the No Project Alternative, have been compared against the impacts of the proposed project for each environmental issue area discussed in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impacts Analysis*, of this EIR. A significance determination was made about each alternative for each issue area, and a basis for that determination has been provided. The determination of comparative impacts utilizes the following criteria:

- **No Impact:** The significance criteria do not apply, or no impact would result.
- **Similar:** Impacts would be identical or would be of the same general extent and severity as the impacts associated with the proposed project; therefore, the significance determination would be the same.
- **Increased:** New potentially significant impacts or a substantial increase in the severity of the impacts associated with the proposed project would occur; therefore, the significance determination would be greater.
- **Decreased:** Potentially significant impacts would be avoided or a substantial reduction in the severity of the impacts associated with the proposed project would occur; therefore, the significance determination would be reduced.

As a result of this evaluation and comparison of potentially significant environmental impacts, an Environmentally Superior Alternative has been identified in Section 5.5, *Environmentally Superior Alternative*.

5.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DISCARDED

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c) requires that an EIR disclose potential alternatives that were considered and eliminated along with a brief explanation of the reason for elimination. Factors used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration include: (1) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives, (2) infeasibility, and/or (3) inability to avoid significant environmental impacts.

During the initial project phase, the City conducted extensive community outreach and held multiple public hearings to determine potential areas for growth to meet projected population needs and areas that could accommodate the types of businesses and industries required to achieve stable economic health. Because Atascadero cannot extend beyond our current boundaries due to topographic and infrastructure constraints, areas were identified through community and Council input where residential and commercial development could occur aligned with City goals. The community identified key areas for natural resource preservation, and those areas were excluded from greater intensity development. The community also expressed needs

for higher density housing to meet the needs of current and future residents in areas where infrastructure exists to support project feasibility. The council and community supported increased density along key corridors with more opportunities for mixed-use development and gentle density policies for existing neighborhoods adjacent to goods, services, and transit to ensure that multiple housing types could be created to support the city and State housing goals as well as support economic health and prosperity by providing housing in proximity to commercial and jobs oriented centers. Key discussion topics of the community outreach process related to residential density and appropriate locations for increased density housing. Through these community discussions, the proposed 2045 General Plan was identified to meet the housing and economic goals of the City. This extensive outreach process also resulted in the identification of a reduced density alternative, as discussed below.

5.3.1 Alternate Location

An alternate location alternative is not possible based on the nature of the proposed project consisting of a General Plan and Zoning Code Update for the City. A city's General Plan is the primary policy document that lays out the overarching vision and policies for how a city will develop and function in the future, guiding the growth and development of areas that are located within the jurisdiction of the city. Applying the proposed goals, policies, or programs of the proposed 2045 General Plan Update to a different geographic area would therefore not be feasible or meet any of the basic objectives of the City's 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update.

5.3.2 Reduced Density Alternative

The reduced density alternative would allow for reduced development density within the urban core compared to the densities allowed for in the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, forcing development pressure to more rural areas within and outside the City. While some areas would still be identified for increased residential density and development, this alternative would limit the number of residential areas with increased density, limiting changes to existing land use patterns in favor of development in areas in and around City limits; however, the City of Atascadero does not have opportunities for significant annexations based on the topography of the surrounding area and constraints in extending services. Accordingly, a reduced density alternative would be unable to meet the basic project objective of accommodating population growth based on historic growth estimates and anticipated State Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) over the planning period. Because a reduced density alternative would not plan for these historic and future needs, this alternative was rejected for further consideration.

5.4 ALTERNATIVES IMPACTS ANALYSIS

Criteria used to develop preliminary project alternatives included: (1) whether the alternative would avoid or substantially lessen significant impacts to air quality, GHG emissions, and/or transportation; (2) whether the alternative would generally meet the project objectives and underlying fundamental purpose; and (3) whether implementation of the alternative would be feasible. Specific project alternatives are described in further detail below.

Due to the nature of the project as a jurisdiction-wide General Plan update, alternatives involving different locations are not applicable, and a reduced density alternative would not be able to accommodate anticipated growth and State housing directives, and thus does not meet the fundamental purpose of the 2045 General Plan. The proposed 2045 General Plan accommodates future growth and development based on historic population estimates and includes additional housing potential to meet future State RHNA allocations. The proposed 2045 General Plan already incorporates the maximum feasible VMT-reducing strategies, including increased residential densities within the City's urban core, expanded bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to provide opportunities for reduced vehicle dependence, promotion of transit use as an

alternative mode of transportation, and concentration of growth in more compact and multimodal accessible areas. The 2045 General Plan land use plan also maximizes VMT reductions by allowing for increased density within the downtown core and low-VMT producing areas of the City. The Project emphasizes supporting job-centric growth, improving the city's jobs-housing balance and increasing opportunities for reduced commuter travel. Further reductions in impacts associated with VMT, and air pollutant and GHG emissions associated with VMT and long-term mobile emissions, are constrained by factors that cannot be feasibly altered through policy, including the City's topography, existing low-density development patterns, State housing growth policies, and regional geographic context including existing job and industry centers and existing regional housing patterns. Accordingly, no additional alternatives were identified that would both substantially lessen air quality, GHG emissions, or transportation impacts and meet the basic objectives of the project, and the No Project Alternative was the only feasible alternative carried forward for detailed analysis.

5.4.1 No Project Alternative

The current City of Atascadero General Plan was adopted in 2002 and is referred to as the 2025 General Plan. The No Project Alternative would include implementation of the City's currently adopted 2025 General Plan and assumes that the proposed 2045 General Plan Update and its associated Goals, Policies, and Programs would not be adopted. Future development within the City would be consistent with the existing General Plan land use designations and zoning through the horizon year of 2045.

The No Project Alternative would assume that buildout of the City would occur in a manner that is consistent with SLOCOG's current population, housing, and employment projections for the City, including an increase in total population of approximately 2,550 residents (8.45%) between 2025 and 2060, the addition of roughly 1,975 housing units (15.77%), and growth of approximately 3,200 jobs (30.67%) (SLOCOG 2025).

Under the No Project Alternative, future development and transportation planning would continue to be guided by the 2025 General Plan, which does not incorporate the coordinated land use, mobility, infrastructure, and fiscal strategies proposed as part of the 2045 General Plan Update. Growth would be generally located in the same areas identified in the 2045 General Plan with less residential density potential and greater reliance on property redevelopment. The 2045 General Plan would place greater emphasis on directing higher-density residential and mixed-use development to Downtown and key corridors such as El Camino Real and Morro Road, supporting workforce housing near employment centers, and encouraging incremental infill development that maintains neighborhood character. The proposed plan would also strengthen policies aimed at attracting higher-wage industries through flexible land use regulations, targeted infrastructure investments, and reduced parking requirements, while prioritizing multimodal transportation improvements, complete streets, and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to support a healthier jobs-housing balance. In addition, the 2045 General Plan would expand policies addressing emergency access and evacuation in wildfire-prone areas and integrate infrastructure planning with long-term fiscal sustainability considerations.

Under the No Project Alternative, the land uses of the 2025 General Plan would remain the same. While both the 2025 General Plan and 2045 General Plan include similar policies related to areas of higher intensity development based on the location of services and goals to maintain community character, the 2025 General Plan includes less density and fewer opportunities for housing and quality commercial development to retain the economic health of the City. The 2025 General Plan includes policies to protect and preserve the rural atmosphere of the community by assuring "elbow room" for residents by means of maintenance of large lot sizes which increase in proportion to distance beyond the Urban Core, concentrating higher density development downtown and within the Urban Core, and focusing master planned commercial uses at distinct nodes along arterial corridors. The current land use designations throughout the City would remain unchanged. The 2025 General Plan also calls for infill development

inside the Urban Services Line (USL) where services can be provided in a cost-efficient manner. Beyond the USL, the plan intends for the Rural Service Area to retain rural residential to reinforce the City's identity and maintain open space characteristics. These policies and goals are echoed in the 2045 General Plan Update, but provide for minimal growth under the 2025 General Plan, which is insufficient to meet projected housing needs and support reliable fiscal health. Specifically, the 2045 General Plan expands areas available for mixed-use and multi-family development key to meeting historic growth rates and State RHNA, in addition to supporting commercial development that offers head of household and expanded workforce opportunities to improve the jobs/housing balance.

Under the No Project Alternative, the existing Zoning Code would continue to be implemented and would maintain established public hearing and amendment procedures consistent with Government Code Section 65358(b), including limited amendment cycles and City Council review.

5.4.1.1 No Project Alternative Impact Analysis

Based on a preliminary review of the project objectives, the No Project Alternative would generally be potentially consistent with the following project objectives:

- Respect Atascadero's semi-rural character as the community evolves.
- Facilitate vibrant public spaces that encourage community connections. Support City parks, trails, and facilities that provide access to a variety of recreation experiences.
- Encourage synergistic commercial and residential uses along the El Camino Real and Morro Road corridors to support long-term viability of commercial spaces.
- Support a culture that is welcoming, inclusive, and based on mutual respect.
- Facilitate safe, convenient, and comfortable connections for people of all abilities and in different stages of life.
- Support and maintain efficient and sustainable infrastructure systems.
- Organize public service systems so that all neighborhoods and business districts have access to public services and emergency response.
- Plan and prepare for community safety and resiliency from evolving climate threats, natural, and human-caused hazards.
- Integrate Atascadero's natural, historical, and cultural landscapes and resources into planning decisions.

As discussed under Section 5.4.1 above, while both the 2025 General Plan and 2045 General Plan include similar policies related to areas of higher intensity development based on the location of services and goals to maintain community character, the 2025 General Plan includes less density and fewer opportunities for housing and quality commercial development to retain the economic health of the City. Beyond the USL, the 2025 General Plan intends for the Rural Service Area to retain rural residential to reinforce the City's identity and maintain open space characteristics. Because the 2025 General Plan does not allow for the expansion of housing opportunities and investment in commercial uses to meet projected future needs, it is insufficient to meet projected housing needs and support reliable fiscal health. Accordingly, this alternative would be potentially inconsistent with the following project objectives:

- Promote investments in downtown that support the needs of local businesses and residents and provide a quality experience for visitors.
- Create and maintain opportunities for people of all income levels and ages to live, work, raise families, and retire in Atascadero.

- Target growth to serve community needs and enhance the quality of life.
- Incentivize a mix of business and revenue streams that support a resilient economy.
- Diversify Atascadero's employment opportunities to address the needs of an evolving workforce and attract jobs for all skill levels and income ranges.

Continued implementation of the 2025 General Plan would not establish an updated community vision through 2045, nor would it provide a modernized legal and policy foundation for land use decision-making that reflects current growth conditions, State policy direction, and CEQA requirements. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not serve as a comprehensive guide for coordinated land use, circulation, environmental management, housing, infrastructure, and public health and safety planning through the 2045 horizon year, thereby limiting the City's ability to strategically address multimodal transportation, emergency preparedness, GHG reduction, and long-term fiscal sustainability. Inability to plan for potential population growth and associated fiscal challenges would limit the City's ability to adequately manage impacts and infrastructure needs.

Under the No Project Alternative, most environmental impacts would be similar to those associated with the proposed 2045 General Plan Update, with impacts associated with air quality, GHG emissions, and transportation among the issue areas that would experience increased impacts over the proposed project, as discussed further below.

5.4.1.1.1 AIR QUALITY

The 2025 General Plan includes the following goal and policies related to air quality:

Goal CIR 3: Provide and promote alternative modes of travel to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by providing viable transit alternatives.

- **Policy 3.1:** Promote alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel, particularly for commute trips.
- **Policy 3.2:** Encourage expansion of public transit as needed to meet the changing needs of the area for local and regional access, including fixed route and demand response where appropriate.
- **Policy 3.3:** Comply with the Transportation Demand Management program requirements of the San Luis Obispo County Clean Air Plan to reduce peak period trip generation.

Under the 2025 General Plan, the City's jobs-to-housing ratio was projected to worsen from a year 2015 ratio of 0.77 to a ratio of 0.71 by the year 2030 (AMBIENT 2026a). In addition, as described in detail under Section 5.4.1.1.2, *Transportation*, below, the 2025 General Plan would produce more VMT per capita and per employee than the proposed project (AMBIENT 2026a), which would be inconsistent with statewide planning and climate change policies and efforts, such as CARB's Climate Change Scoping Plan and would result in long-term increases of mobile-source air pollutants not accounted for in the SLOAPCD CAP. Therefore, under the No Project Alternative, potential impacts associated with a conflict with the SLOAPCD CAP would be anticipated to be *increased* in comparison to the proposed project.

Similar to the proposed project, the No Project Alternative would result in a cumulatively considerable increase of short-term air quality impacts and long term mobile emissions that would contribute to the region's nonattainment status for ozone. Impacts of the No Project Alternative would be anticipated to be *increased* in comparison to the proposed project, due to the No Project Alternative resulting in higher VMT per capita and per employee.

Similar to the proposed project, the No Project Alternative would facilitate development of land uses considered to be sensitive receptors, as well as new development near existing sensitive receptors. Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan could potentially

include short-term, construction sources of TACs and long-term, operational sources of TACs, including stationary and mobile sources. Consistent with the City's current practices, future discretionary development projects associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan and existing Zoning Code would be evaluated for consistency with SLOAPCD's recommended guidance. In accordance with the SLOAPCD's guidance, future development projects would be evaluated for potential short-term; as well as long-term exposure to localized pollutants, including emissions of TACs and other airborne pollutants, such as asbestos, CO, and *Coccidioides* fungus spores, however, even with consistency with SLOAPCD guidance, it is conceivable that some development projects may be large enough or close enough to a sensitive receptor that applicable project-level significance thresholds would be exceeded. In the event that a significant impact is identified for an individual project, the SLOAPCD-recommended mitigation measures would be required to reduce project-related impacts; however, even with mitigation, it may not be possible to reduce potential emissions of TACs or exposure to localized airborne pollutants and all health-related risks to nearby receptors to levels below the SLOAPCD recommended significance thresholds. As a result, the No Project Alternative impacts associated with exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations would be *similar* to those of the proposed project.

Similar to the proposed project, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan under existing Zoning Code regulations could introduce new sources of odors (both temporary and long-term) throughout the City in proximity to sensitive receptors. SLOAPCD Rule 402, Nuisance, prohibits the discharge of air contaminants or other materials, including odors, that would cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to a considerable number of individuals. As a result, with compliance with SLOAPCD Rule 402, the 2025 General Plan and existing Zoning Code would not result in the exposure of a substantial number of people to objectionable odors. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would result in *similar* impacts to the proposed project associated with other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.

5.4.1.1.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Similar to the proposed project, future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan would result in long-term increases in GHG emissions primarily associated with increases in motor vehicle use. To a lesser extent, energy consumption, waste generation, water use, and area sources would also be anticipated to contribute to overall increases in projected future community-wide GHG emissions under the No Project Alternative.

Under the 2025 General Plan, the City's jobs-to-housing ratio was projected to worsen from a year 2015 ratio of 0.77 to a ratio of 0.71 by the year 2030 (AMBIENT 2026a). In addition, as described in detail under Section 5.4.1.1.3, *Transportation*, below, the 2025 General Plan would produce more VMT per capita and per employee than the proposed project (AMBIENT 2026a), which would be inconsistent with LUCI recommended significance thresholds and statewide planning and climate change policies and efforts, such as CARB's Climate Change Scoping Plan. Because these thresholds are intended to support statewide GHG reduction goals, exceedance of the thresholds indicates that projected reductions in mobile-source GHG emissions would not be fully achieved. As a result, long-term increases in VMT and associated mobile-source emissions would remain the primary contributor to cumulative GHG emissions. Because VMT per capita emissions and per employee emissions would be higher than the proposed project under the No Project Alternative, environmental impacts associated with GHG emissions, conflicts with applicable GHG reduction plans, and cumulative GHG impacts would all be *increased* in comparison to the proposed project.

5.4.1.1.3 TRANSPORTATION

Without land uses that support greater residential density and focused commercial development in infill areas, the No Project Alternative will not accommodate anticipated growth and economic goals related to greater financial stability. Under the existing 2025 General Plan, future development pressure could be placed outside the USL and encroach into more rural areas of the City and surrounding county, which could result in potential conflicts with current local and regional plans and policies such as SLOCOG's regional transportation plan (RTP)/sustainable communities strategy (SCS). These local and regional plans include policies encouraging higher-density infill development, mixed land uses, and development that reduces VMT. Development under the 2025 General Plan and existing zoning framework would maintain lower residential densities and unfocused commercial redevelopment potential, resulting in a worsening jobs/housing ratio and shifting residential development pressure outside the urban core. Accordingly, environmental impacts associated with potential conflicts with applicable plans and policies related to the circulation system would be *increased* under the No Project Alternative in comparison with the proposed project.

As described in Chapter 4, Section 4.14, *Transportation*, the SLOCOG TDM was used to estimate VMT and forecast traffic levels under existing and project conditions. Table 5-1 below summarizes the 2045 General Plan's effects on regional VMT compared to existing baseline conditions and build-out conditions under the 2025 General Plan.

Table 5-1. Regional VMT Effects

Metric	Scenario (Horizon Year)		
	Baseline (2015)	**2025 General Plan Buildout (2045)**	**Proposed General Plan Buildout (2045)**
Total Regional VMT[1]	8,796,917	11,203,335	11,348,867
Population	271,859	302,069	307,885
Total Employment	115,190	135,808	138,978
Service Population (Population + Employees)	387,049	437,977	446,863
Regional VMT/Service Population	*22.73*	*25.58*	*25.40*
Residential VMT	4,040,055	4,398,052	4,474,989
Residential VMT/Population	*14.86*	*14.56*	*14.53*
Commute VMT	1,367,961	1,474,183	1,515,782
Commute VMT/Employee	*11.88*	*10.85*	*10.91*

Source: CCTC (2025).

Note:

[1] Total regional VMT reflects daily automobile VMT within the San Luis Obispo County region. Residential VMT reflects all home-based productions. Commute VMT reflects home-based work attractions.

As shown in Table 5-1, total regional VMT increases under both the 2025 General Plan and the 2045 General Plan; however, this effect generally reflects an increase in overall regional population and employment, therefore, total regional VMT does not provide a meaningful 'apples to apples' comparison between current and proposed plans. A more appropriate metric is an efficiency metric of regional VMT per service population. Service population refers to the sum of population and employment. On a regional basis, the 2045 General Plan would result in fewer regional VMT per service population than the 2025 General Plan, which indicates that the 2045 General Plan is more VMT efficient than the 2025 General Plan (CCTC 2025).

Under the No Project Alternative, continued reliance on the existing General Plan's land use framework would result in development patterns that are less supportive of transit use and alternative travel modes, such as lower multifamily and mixed-use density and a diminished focus on job centric development, thereby increasing automobile dependency and associated VMT. Although neither the No Project Alternative nor the proposed project would meet the LUCI-recommended thresholds for residential or commute VMT, the proposed 2045 General Plan Update would perform better on a regional efficiency basis by concentrating growth in areas with a greater mix of uses and travel options. Accordingly, impacts related to transportation and VMT under the No Project Alternative would be *increased* in comparison to the proposed project.

Similar to the proposed project, future development associated with community buildout under the 2025 General Plan would likely include construction of new streets and roadways within residential subdivisions and master planned commercial developments. Adherence with these existing and proposed regulations, which would be enforced through the review and entitlement process that all proposed future development would be subject to, would ensure that construction and operation of future development under the proposed General Plan would not increase hazards due to geometric design features or result in inadequate emergency access. Therefore, impacts associated with hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses and inadequate emergency access would be *similar* to the proposed project.

5.4.1.1.4 OTHER ISSUE AREAS

Future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the current 2025 General Plan would accommodate less overall development and associated growth than what would occur under the 2045 General Polan and Zoning Code Update. The 2045 General Plan anticipates residential and commercial growth consistent with historic growth rates and is responsive to the States RHNA goals, providing opportunities for growth and development within the urban core where services and multi-modal options exist and can be augmented as needs demand. Future development pursuant to the 2025 General Plan, on the other hand, would continue to follow the current development pattern throughout the City and would not provide the potential for development at higher densities within the downtown core and expanded mixed use zones within the City. Based on these characteristics, the No Project Alternative's potential impacts associated with impacts not found to be significant and unavoidable for the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update are summarized below:

- **Aesthetics.** Potential impacts associated with scenic vistas, the City's visual character, and light and glare would be anticipated to be similar to those of the proposed project, *less than significant*.
- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources.** Potential impacts associated with agriculture and forestry resources would be anticipated to be similar to those of the proposed project, due to no proposed changes to existing agriculturally-zoned areas and absence of forestry resources within the City. Impacts are anticipated to be *less than significant*.
- **Biological Resources.** Potential impacts to special status species, sensitive communities, state or federally protected wetlands, migration corridors, and habitat conservation plans would be anticipated to be similar in comparison to the proposed project due to the similar level of development within the same geographic area of the proposed project. Impacts are anticipated to be *less than significant*.
- **Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources.** Potential impacts to historic resources, archaeological resources, and human remains would be anticipated to be similar to those of the proposed project, *less than significant*.

- **Energy.** Potential energy resource consumption associated with the No Project Alternative would be anticipated to be greater than the proposed project due to increases in motor vehicle use and associated fuel consumption; however, impacts would be anticipated to still be less than significant, similar to the proposed project.
- **Geology and Soils.** Potential impacts associated with geologic hazards, and unstable earth/soil conditions are anticipated to be less than significant, similar to the proposed project, due to future development generally occurring within the same geographic area. Potential impacts associated with paleontological resources are anticipated to be potentially significant, similar to the proposed project, as the 2025 General Plan does not include a policy or action that would reduce impacts to paleontological resources within the City and mitigation would be required to reduce potential impacts to *less-than-significant* levels.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Potential impacts associated with use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials, hazards associated with accident conditions, and hazardous material cleanup sites would be anticipated to be similar to those of the proposed project, due to the similar nature of buildout of future land uses within the City, applicability of Federal, State, and local policies and regulations governing handling of hazardous materials, and buildout of uses within the same geographic area. Impacts associated with potential conflicts with emergency preparedness plans or evacuation plans would be anticipated to be similar to the project due to the increased number of residential dwellings and other uses associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan. Impacts are anticipated to be *less than significant*.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality.** Potential impacts associated with surface and groundwater quality, drainage patterns, flood risks, and stormwater are anticipated to be similar to the proposed project, due to future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan generally occurring within the same geographic area. Impacts are anticipated to be *less than significant*.
- **Land Use and Planning.** Potential impacts associated with land use and planning are anticipated to be potentially significant and increased in comparison to the proposed project, due to the projected worsening of the jobs/housing imbalance under the 2025 General Plan, the increase in VMT per capita and per employee, and lack of planning for anticipated growth and future RHNA, resulting in potential conflicts with the SLOCOG RTP/SCS.
- **Noise.** Potential impacts associated with Noise are anticipated to be similar to the proposed project due to future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan being subject to similar noise standards and discretionary review. Impacts are anticipated to be *less than significant*.
- **Population and Housing.** Potential impacts associated with population and housing are anticipated to be similar to the proposed project, as future development under the 2025 General Plan would not displace a significant number of people or existing housing, and would not result in substantial unplanned population growth. Impacts are anticipated to be *less than significant*.
- **Public Services and Recreation.** Potential impacts associated with public services and recreation are anticipated to be similar to those of the proposed project due to future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan occurring within the same geographic area and having similar impacts to public service systems and recreation facilities. Impacts are anticipated to be *less than significant*.
- **Utilities and Service Systems.** Potential impacts associated with utilities and service systems are anticipated to be similar to those of the proposed project due to future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan occurring within the same geographic area

and having similar impacts to public service systems and recreation facilities. Impacts are anticipated to be *potentially significant*.

- **Wildfire.** Potential impacts associated with wildfire are anticipated to be similar to those of the proposed project, due to the level of future development associated with community buildout pursuant to the 2025 General Plan occurring within the same geographic area and similar applicability of State and local regulations, such as the California Fire Code and City building code regulations. Impacts are anticipated to be *less than significant*.

5.5 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

The State CEQA Guidelines require an analysis of alternatives to identify an environmentally superior alternative among the alternatives evaluated in the EIR. The environmentally superior alternative is the alternative that would minimize adverse impacts to the environment. Table 5-1 presents a comparison of the potential environmental impacts associated with each alternative evaluated in this EIR.

Table 5-2. Comparison of Impacts Among Alternatives

Issue Area	No Project Alternative
Aesthetics	Similar
Agriculture	Similar
Air Quality	Increased
Biological Resources	Increased
Cultural Resources	Similar
Energy	Increased
Geology and Soils	Similar
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Increased
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Similar
Hydrology and Water Quality	Similar
Land Use and Planning	Increased
Mineral Resources	Similar
Noise	Similar
Population and Housing	Similar
Public Services	Similar
Recreation	Similar
Transportation and Traffic	Increased
Tribal Cultural Resources	Similar
Utilities and Service Systems	Similar
Wildfire	Similar
Meets Project Objectives?	No

Based on the analysis provided above, no feasible alternatives were identified that would reduce any of the significant, unavoidable impacts that would result from the proposed project, and the No Project Alternative would not meet the project's basic objectives. Therefore, the proposed project is the environmentally superior alternative.

CHAPTER 6. OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter of the environmental impact report (EIR) discusses other potential environmental effects for which the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires analysis, in addition to the specific issue areas discussed in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. These additional effects include the potential for the 2045 General Plan Update and subsequent Atascadero Code of Ordinances (Municipal Code) update (collectively referred to as the project) to result in growth-inducing impacts and the irreversible commitment of resources.

6.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires EIRs to include a discussion of the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed project. Such impacts may occur when a project fosters economic or population growth or results in the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding area. Growth-inducing effects may also result from project features that accommodate growth by removing obstacles to population increases, such as the expansion of a wastewater treatment plant. In addition, growth-inducing impacts can arise from project characteristics that encourage or facilitate other activities that could have significant environmental effects, either individually or cumulatively, including population increases that require the provision of new community service facilities. In general terms, a project may induce spatial, economic, or population growth in a geographic area if it meets any of these four criteria:

- Removal of an impediment to growth (e.g., establishment of an essential public service or the provisions of new access to an area);
- Economic expansion or growth (e.g., changes in revenue base, employment expansion);
- Establishment of a precedent-setting action (e.g., an innovation, a change in zoning, or general plan amendment approval); or
- Development or encroachment in an isolated area or adjacent to open space (being different from an "infill" type of project).

Should the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update meet any of these criteria, it could be considered growth-inducing. The evaluation of growth-inducing impacts for the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update considers the City's long-term vision for preservation, growth, and change, as well as the potential for new development, infrastructure improvements, and policy changes that may facilitate economic and population growth throughout the City and Planning Area.

The analysis of growth-inducing impacts is based on the buildout scenario envisioned in the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update, which encompasses a range of land use changes, infrastructure investments, and policy initiatives designed to accommodate future housing, employment, and community needs. These changes include updates to zoning and development standards, expansion or enhancement of public services and amenities, and the implementation of programs to support sustainable growth and economic vitality.

The impacts of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update are evaluated below with respect to these four growth-inducing criteria, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines.

6.1.1 Population Growth

As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the 2045 General Plan provides a comprehensive regulatory framework for the City's growth and development through the year 2045. Planned growth includes the expansion of employment-generating uses, enhancement of existing neighborhoods, and creation of new

residential opportunities, all based on the City's land capacity, infrastructure potential, and anticipated growth rates for both residential and commercial sectors. The 2045 General Plan does not propose any single project that would directly induce substantial unplanned population growth, such as a major new residential development outside of currently designated residential areas. Instead, the plan guides future development in accordance with established land use policies and the City's authority to review and approve or revise growth assumptions and the Zoning Code Update implements these policies and goals.

The 2045 General Plan includes City population and employment growth projections based on land capacity, ability to expand infrastructure, and anticipated growth rates for both residential and commercial sectors based on multiple factors. These projections were used to make assumptions about anticipated infrastructure and service needs over the planning period. Growth projections were also informed by historic trends, anticipated future conditions, and input from City staff and City Council members. As described in Chapter 2, the City's total population as of 2024 was 30,683, consisting of a base population of 29,365 and 1,318 group-quarter residents at the Atascadero State Hospital. The City's forecasted total population for the General Plan Update planning period (through 2045) is 37,279, reflecting an overall increase of 6,596 over the 20-year planning period. Similarly, the number of dwelling units is projected to increase from 12,660 in 2024 to 15,550 by 2045. Employment is expected to increase from 9,729 employees in 2024 to 12,914 employees in 2045, improving the city's jobs/housing ratio from 0.77 to 0.83 (Table 6-1) (City of Atascadero 2025).

Table 6-1. General Plan Forecasted Growth

Type	Baseline	General Plan Horizon Year (2045)	Net Change (2024–2045)
Dwelling Units (Total)	12,660	15,550	2,890
Single-family Units	*9,786*	*9,991*	*205*
Multifamily Units	*2,874*	*5,559*	*2,685*
Population[1]	30,683	37,279	6,596
Employees	9,729	12,914	3,185
Jobs/Housing Ratio[2]	0.77	0.83	0.06

Notes:

* Population includes group quarters (1,318) at Atascadero State Hospital.

† Jobs/housing ratio is an equation used to determine how many jobs are available in a community relative to the number of dwelling units (homes). The policy approach assumes that a "balanced community" has a 1:1 ratio, which strives to match the number of local jobs to the number of available housing units. This approach does not require residents to work in town; rather, it looks to provide the opportunity for residents to have jobs within the community.

This projected growth would improve longstanding jobs-housing imbalances and housing affordability challenges within the City, whereas the rate of growth would provide new employment opportunities that could be filled by both current residents and workers commuting from nearby communities.

The 2045 General Plan presents a comprehensive framework of goals, policies, and actions designed to guide economic development in alignment with anticipated population growth. The following goals and policies illustrate the City's strategy for managing and supporting this growth:

- **Goal ED-1:** A sound economic base to sustain the City's unique character through a range of employment and business opportunities and generation of sufficient revenue to support adequate levels of public services, as well as environmental and social quality
    - **Policy ED-1.1: Business Attraction.** Facilitate establishment of a full range of goods and services desired by Atascadero residents, workers, and visitors.

  - **Action B:** Consider the use of a form based code to guide development in the Innovation/Flex district to respond to changing business trends over time.
  - **Action C:** Ensure that development in commercial and innovation/flex zones is geared to tax-generating uses and/or provides flexible use spaces for evolving trends that allow local businesses to capitalize on emerging economic growth sectors.
  - **Action E:** Maintain key commercial sites and nodes that prioritize commercial activities and provide spaces for larger-scale commercial uses, technical education facilities, and light-industrial uses.

- **Goal ED-2:** Retention and expansion of existing businesses and attraction of new businesses and industries to increase economic growth, improve the availability of goods and services, and increase opportunities for higher-wage jobs in Atascadero
  - **Policy ED-2.1: Existing Business Support.** Encourage established businesses to continue providing products and services the community desires.
    - **Action A:** Continue to support Chamber of Commerce efforts to market goods and services available in Atascadero, particularly those produced locally.
    - **Action B:** Identify locations with adequate land to accommodate established businesses looking to expand.
  - **Policy ED-2.2: Local Job Growth.** Attract new development and enterprises that provide jobs and services for current residents and that build the local jobs base of higher-wage positions.
    - **Action A:** Update the Municipal Code to provide flexibility for home occupation uses.
    - **Action B:** Update the Zoning Ordinance to ensure land use regulations accommodate a broad range of desired industries and that entitlement processes are more efficient.

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update aligns with regional growth projections developed by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG). According to SLOCOG's 2050 Regional Growth Forecast, Atascadero's population is expected to reach 34,278 by 2045 under a medium-growth scenario, and 38,549 under a high-growth scenario (SLOCOG 2017). The City's plans to accommodate these anticipated increases in population and housing are consistent with regional growth management policies and remain within established thresholds.

The 2045 General Plan is designed to accommodate planned, orderly growth that supports economic vitality, housing diversity, and quality of life for residents. Any indirect population growth resulting from increased housing and employment opportunities under the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is anticipated to be consistent with City and regional projections, and impacts related to unplanned population growth would be *less than significant*.

6.1.2 Economic Growth

In 2024, Atascadero had a jobs-to-housing ratio of 0.75, indicating substantially more households than jobs in the City. Over 10,700 Atascadero residents were employed outside of the City in 2019, whereas 6,000 employees traveled to Atascadero for work (City of Atascadero 2025). Citywide buildout under the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is projected to generate new full-time equivalent jobs, in addition to short-term employment. This increase in employment opportunities is designed to help address the existing jobs-to-housing imbalance.

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update envisions a balanced approach to citywide growth, accommodating a mix of employment, commercial, and visitor-serving uses. This strategy supports the development of clean, attractive businesses and industries, expands opportunities for visitor-serving activities, and ensures adequate space for economic growth within the City. Importantly, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is designed not only to enhance Atascadero's economic vitality but also to prevent additional or unplanned impacts by focusing new development within the Urban Services Line (USL), coordinating growth planning efforts with neighboring cities and community services districts, and maintaining key areas for commercial and employment uses that are not compatible with integrated residential development. These measures help manage growth responsibly, minimize regional impacts, and preserve the character and functionality of the community.

The following goals and policies from the Land Use and Economic Elements illustrate the City's commitment to sustainable economic development and responsible growth management:

- **Goal LU-1:** Growth integrated and compatible with established land use patterns and the community aesthetic
    - **Policy LU-1.2: Urban Services Line (USL).** Concentrate new and infill development within the USL in areas where utilities and public services exist or are planned.
        - **Action A:** Revisit density and intensity requirements for land use(s) if sewer extends into new areas.
        - **Action B:** Maintain Rural Residential as the predominant use and limit the subdivision of land beyond the USL.
        - **Action C**: Consider future planned density and intensity when repairing infrastructure and ensure that infrastructure is sized to accommodate future growth.
- **Goal ED-2:** Retention and expansion of existing businesses and attraction of new businesses and industries to increase economic growth, improve the availability of goods and services, and increase opportunities for higher-wage jobs in Atascadero
    - **Policy ED-2.1: Existing Business Support.** Encourage established businesses to continue providing products and services the community desires.
        - **Action A:** Continue to support Chamber of Commerce efforts to market goods and services available in Atascadero, particularly those produced locally.
        - **Action B:** Identify locations with adequate land to accommodate established businesses looking to expand.
    - **Policy ED-2.2: Local Job Growth.** Attract new development and enterprises that provide jobs and services for current residents and that build the local jobs base of higher-wage positions.
        - **Action A:** Update the Municipal Code to provide flexibility for home occupation uses.
        - **Action B:** Update the Zoning Ordinance to ensure land use regulations accommodate a broad range of desired industries and that entitlement processes are more efficient.

These uses are intended to foster clean, attractive businesses and industries, expand opportunities for visitor-serving uses, and provide space for economic growth within the City.

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update emphasizes economic growth as a priority and has identified policies to ensure that this planned growth can be accommodated by the City's infrastructure; the location of the growth occurs in a way that minimizes environmental impacts and is compatible with surrounding uses and the existing character of the community,; and the growth would contribute to

improving the City's longstanding jobs-housing imbalance. The focus of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update on providing additional job opportunities within the City will help improve the jobs-to-housing balance, reduce commute distances for local residents, and support a more sustainable, economically vibrant community. Therefore, impacts related to unplanned population growth as a result of increased employment opportunities would be *less than significant*.

6.1.3 Precedent Setting Action

As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update involves comprehensive changes to land use and zoning designations throughout the City and its sphere of influence (SOI). The project is intended to allow for a range of residential, commercial, industrial, and visitor-serving uses in appropriate areas, in alignment with the City's long-term vision and community needs. All future development under the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would be required to comply and/or be consistent with the City's General Plan, Municipal Code, and applicable zoning and land use regulations.

Because any future proposed development must be consistent with these established planning parameters and regulatory frameworks, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update does not set a precedent for growth-inducing development outside of designated areas. The types of uses anticipated under the proposed Placetypes are not precedent setting, as similar development is already permitted and present in various parts of Atascadero. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update supports the City's ongoing efforts to provide for balanced growth, economic vitality, and housing diversity while ensuring that new development remains orderly and consistent with Atascadero's character and existing regulatory requirements. Therefore, impacts related to unplanned population growth as a result of a precedent-setting action would be *less than significant*.

6.1.4 Development in an Isolated Area

Development is generally considered growth-inducing when it occurs outside established urban boundaries or in isolated locations rather than as infill within existing developed areas. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update applies to all properties within the City's incorporated limits and its SOI. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update directs future growth within Atascadero's USL by permitting higher housing densities and expanding opportunities for job-generating businesses, with targeted change focused near Downtown and along major corridors such as El Camino Real and Morro Road. This strategy supports the City's objectives of achieving a balanced jobs-to-housing ratio of 1:1, which enhances local employment opportunities, reduces commute distances, and limits environmental impacts. At the same time, the project aims to diversify the housing stock through a mix of multifamily and infill development that would accommodate households of all income levels. Policies within the 2045 General Plan would enable approximately 4,794 new jobs and 2,890 new dwelling units relative to the 2024 baseline as depicted in Table 6-1, and the City is committed to ensuring any necessary infrastructure improvements are implemented in a manner compatible with surrounding uses and the existing character of the community. The use of new and refined Placetypes ensures that future development would be compatible with existing land use patterns and supported by necessary infrastructure improvements that are planned in conjunction with growth.

Whereas the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update anticipates moderate increases in population, housing, and employment, these changes would be carefully managed to avoid creating growth pressure on surrounding agricultural or open space lands outside the City boundary. The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update encourages infill development and revitalization within the existing USL, focusing new growth in areas where public utilities and services already exist or are planned. Despite these anticipated land use changes, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would generally preserve the existing pattern of land uses in the city. By directing growth to already urbanized areas, the 2045 General Plan and

Zoning Code Update would reduce development pressure on undeveloped lands at the City's periphery. Adjacent lands within the unincorporated San Luis Obispo County (County) remain subject to the County General Plan and Land Use Ordinance, further ensuring resource protection. The 2045 General Plan Land Use and Community Form Element requires that land beyond the City limits considered for annexation serve the community as described in the following policy and action items:

- **Policy LU-1.8: Annexations.** Ensure that growth beyond the City limit serves community needs, enhances fiscal stability, and improves quality of life for community members.
    - **Action A:** Require annexation proposals align with the Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals, and Policies included in this General Plan.
    - **Action B:** Oppose all development within the sphere of influence the site prior to annexation.
    - **Action C:** Require the approval of a Specific Plan prior to the annexation of the Eagle Ranch property.

Through these measures, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update's land use framework accommodates future growth in an orderly and sustainable manner, consistent with both City and County objectives for resource protection and community character. Therefore, impacts related to unplanned population growth as a result of development in an isolated area would be *less than significant*.

6.1.5 Removal of an Impediment to Growth

The City is within an established urban area that is served by existing infrastructure. The 2045 General Plan/Zoning Code Update encourages infill development and revitalization within the existing USL, focusing new growth in areas where public utilities and services already exist or are planned. Downtown Atascadero and key activity nodes are identified as primary locations for higher-density residential and mixed-use development, supporting the efficient use of infrastructure and public services.

Despite these anticipated land use changes, the 2045 General Plan/Zoning Code Update would generally preserve the existing pattern of land uses in the city. By directing growth to already urbanized areas, the 2045 General Plan/Zoning Code Update would reduce development pressure on undeveloped lands at the City's periphery. This approach would minimize potential impacts to biological resources, regional traffic, and air quality compared to development extending beyond the City's urban boundary.

The Planning Area is defined by existing City limits and the SOI. Any future annexations of land into City boundaries would be subject to review and approval by the City, County, and other relevant agencies and would be required to comply with applicable regional and state policies, including those established by the Local Agency Formation Commission. Most of the City's Planning Area is within the Atascadero watershed, and the City's municipal water supply is managed by Atascadero Mutual Water Company, which is projected to provide sufficient water to meet future demand under normal and drought conditions, as described in the 2020 Urban Water Management Plan (see Section 4-15, *Utilities and Service Systems*, for detailed analysis). Wastewater and stormwater infrastructure are similarly planned and maintained to accommodate projected growth, with ongoing improvements guided by the City's adopted master plans. In practice, municipal water conveyance, wastewater conveyance, and stormwater infrastructure improvements are typically funded by and implemented in conjunction with specific development proposals at the time permit applications are submitted, rather in advance in a manner that would induce or facilitate future growth.

The 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update does not include policies or regulations that would induce substantial unplanned population increases. Projected population growth would be managed through policies that require infrastructure and public services to be in place before development proceeds and ensure that future expansion is consistent with adopted plans and policies. Therefore, implementation of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would not remove any existing obstacle to growth, and impacts would be *less than significant*.

6.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

6.2.1 Irreversible Commitment of Resources

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that EIRs evaluate whether a proposed project would result in irreversible changes in the environment, particularly through the use of nonrenewable resources during construction and operation. This chapter assesses whether implementation of the project would result in impacts related to the irreversible commitment of resources.

Buildout under the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would allow for a range of new residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses throughout the City. Construction and operation of these new developments would irreversibly commit construction materials and nonrenewable energy resources, such as fossil fuels, wood, and other building materials. The use of these resources is typical for development projects throughout the region and is not unique to Atascadero. All new construction would be subject to the California Building Code, which regulates the use, properties, and performance of building materials, as well as state and local requirements.

In the long term, the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update would contribute incrementally to the ongoing consumption of energy resources associated with residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Electricity for new development would be supplied by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and Central Coast Community Energy (3CE), both of which provide a significant portion of power from renewable sources. The 2024 PG&E electric power mix consisted of 35% renewable sources (PG&E 2025). The 2024 3CE power mix consisted of 56% renewable sources and is currently on a pathway to achieving 100% clean and renewable energy by 2030 (3CE 2025). Natural gas would be provided by Southern California Gas Company, which has committed to increasing its use of renewable natural gas in the coming years. All new development would be required to comply with applicable state and local standards for energy and water efficiency, including Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, which mandates water conservation measures, energy-efficient appliances, and sustainable building systems and is updated every 3 years. Energy consumption associated with buildout of the 2045 General Plan and Zoning Code Update is discussed further in Section 4.3, *Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy*.

Implementation of these standards and requirements would help reduce the demand for new energy and water resources, while also minimizing the consumption of nonrenewable materials. These measures would ensure that resource use remains consistent with, or better than, similar development throughout the region. Therefore, impacts would be *less than significant*.

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CHAPTER 7. MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

7.1 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

When a Lead Agency makes findings on significant environmental effects identified in an EIR, the agency must also adopt a "reporting or monitoring program for the changes to the project which it has adopted or made a condition of approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment" (Public Resources Code Section 21081.6(a) and State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15091(d) and 15097). The Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) is implemented to ensure that the Mitigation Measures (MMs) and project revisions identified in the EIR are implemented. Therefore, the MMRP must include all changes in the proposed project either adopted by the project proponent or made conditions of approval by the Lead or Responsible Agency.

7.2 ADMINISTRATION OF THE MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

The City of Atascadero (City) is the Lead Agency responsible for the adoption of the MMRP. The City is also responsible for implementation of the MMRP, in coordination with other identified entities. According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15097(a), a public agency may delegate reporting or monitoring responsibilities to another public agency or to a private entity that accepts the delegation. However, until mitigation measures have been completed, the Lead Agency remains responsible for ensuring that the implementation of the measure occurs in accordance with the program.

7.2.1 Mitigation Measures

Table 7-1 is structured to enable quick reference to MMs and the associated monitoring program based on the environmental resource. The numbering of MMs correlates with numbering of measures found in the Chapter 4, *Environmental Impacts Analysis* of this EIR.

Table 7-1. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Mitigation Measure	Requirements of Measure	Compliance Method	Verification Timing	Responsible Party
Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy				
GHG-1.1	The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption: Update the City of Atascadero Climate Action Plan to identify ways to reduce GHG emissions and limit climate change impacts on the residents to the extent possible. The Climate Action Plan shall integrate the State's future GHG-reduction goals, such as the State's goal of attaining carbon neutrality by 2045.	Incorporate the referenced policy into the 2045 General Plan	Prior to adoption of 2045 General Plan	City of Atascadero Community Development Department (CDD)
GHG/mm-1.2	The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption: Until the City adopts a qualified Climate Action Plan consistent with Mitigation Measure GHG-1, the City shall incorporate development standards into the Municipal Code for new development projects located along existing or planned public transit routes that require features that promote the use of public transit. Examples include the installation of sidewalks or pathways that facilitate ease of access from onsite locations to nearby transit stops, installation of transit improvements (e.g., benches, bus turnouts) for future planned transit stops located adjacent to the development site.	Incorporate the referenced policy into the 2045 General Plan and update the City Zoning Code accordingly	Prior to adoption of 2045 General Plan	City of Atascadero CDD
GHG-1.3	The City shall incorporate the following policy into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption: The City shall participate in SLOCOG's Sustainable Communities Strategy/Regional Blueprint Planning effort to help increase consistency between local development plans and associated population and employment growth and the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy.	Incorporate the referenced policy into the 2045 General Plan	Prior to adoption of 2045 General Plan	City of Atascadero CDD

Mitigation Measure	Requirements of Measure	Compliance Method	Verification Timing	Responsible Party
Geology and Soils				
GEO-9.1	The City shall incorporate the following Policy and Actions into the Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Resources Element of the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption: • Policy REC-6.3: Paleontological Resource Protection. Protect unique paleontological resources from disturbance associated with development. – Action A: Maintain a current GIS-based map of generalized areas of paleontologically sensitive areas and areas that have yielded significant fossils. – Action B: Require preparation of a Paleontological Resource Study for projects that would include proposed development within a geologic unit with high paleontological sensitivity and earthwork would occur in areas that have not previously been developed with urban uses, or when excavation depths would exceed those previously disturbed. The Paleontological Resource Study shall evaluate potential impacts to unique paleontological resources and identify appropriate avoidance/mitigation measures in accordance with processional standards set forth by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology.	Incorporate the referenced policy into the 2045 General Plan	Prior to adoption of 2045 General Plan	City of Atascadero CDD
Utilities and Services Systems				
USS-3.1	The City shall incorporate the following Action into the 2045 General Plan prior to adoption, under Policy PSI-3.3: • Action D: Require all proposed new projects and new development requiring wastewater collection and treatment service to be reviewed for adequate wastewater collection and treatment capacity prior to issuance of building permits.	Incorporate the referenced policy into the 2045 General Plan	Prior to adoption of 2045 General Plan	City of Atascadero CDD

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CHAPTER 8. REFERENCES AND REPORT PREPARATION

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8.3 REPORT PREPARATION

This EIR has been prepared by the City of Atascadero (CEQA Lead Agency), in association with SWCA Environmental Consultants, AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting, and Central Coast Transportation Consulting.

8.3.1 CEQA Lead Agency

8.3.1.1 City of Atascadero

City of Atascadero
6500 Palma Avenue
Atascadero, California 93422

Phil Dunsmore, Community Development Director
Kelly Gleason, Planning Manager

8.3.2 Environmental Consultant Team

8.3.2.1 SWCA Environmental Consultants

SWCA Environmental Consultants
4111 Broad Street, Suite 210
San Luis Obispo, California 93401

Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager

8.3.2.2 AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting

AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting
75 Higuera Street #105
San Luis Obispo, California 93401

Kurt Legleiter, Principal

8.3.2.3 Central Coast Transportation Consulting

Central Coast Transportation Consulting
895 Napa Avenue, #6
Morro Bay, California 93442

Joe Fernandez, P.E., AICP, Principal

8.4 EIR PREPARERS

The following is a list of individuals responsible for preparation of the EIR.

Responsibilities	EIR Preparer
Executive Summary Introduction Project Description Environmental Setting Environmental Impact Analysis Alternatives Analysis Other CEQA Considerations Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan References and Report Preparation	Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager / Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA Mariah Gasch, Associate Project Environmental Planner, SWCA Jaimie Jones, Project Technical Editor, SWCA
Aesthetics	Lee Moore, Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA Mariah Gasch, Associate Project Environmental Planner, SWCA Robert Carr, Visual Resource Specialist, SWCA
Agriculture and Forestry Resources Hazards and Hazardous Materials Population and Housing	Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager / Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA Mariah Gasch, Associate Project Environmental Planner, SWCA
Air Quality Energy Greenhouse Gas Emissions Noise	Kurt Legleiter, Principal, AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager / Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA Mariah Gasch, Associate Project Environmental Planner, SWCA
Biological Resources	Rebecca Doubledee, Senior Biologist, SWCA Skyler McKinnon, Staff Biologist, SWCA
Cultural Resources Tribal Cultural Resources Land Use and Planning	Laura Ricardelli, Assistant Project Environmental Planner, SWCA Mariah Gasch, Associate Project Environmental Planner, SWCA
Geology and Soils Hydrology and Water Quality Mineral Resources Utilities and Service Systems	Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager / Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA Mariah Gasch, Associate Project Environmental Planner, SWCA
Public Services and Recreation	Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager / Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA Annika Kiemm, Project Environmental Planner, SWCA
Wildfire	Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager / Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA Laura Ricardelli, Assistant Project Environmental Planner, SWCA
Transportation	Cassidy Bewley, Project Manager / Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA Lee Moore, Senior Environmental Planner, SWCA
Graphics and Mapping	Sarah Halpern, Associate Project Geospatial Scientist, SWCA
Technical Editing and Document Production	Jaimie Jones, Project Technical Editor, SWCA Cristy Philips, Associate Project Technical Writer, SWCA