

Watsonville General Plan 2050

Draft Environmental Impact Report

State Clearinghouse No. 2024080799

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Watsonville
CALIFORNIA

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ES EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The City of Watsonville (City) proposes a comprehensive update to the existing City of Watsonville 2005 General Plan. The changes include amendments to the text of the 2005 General Plan and adding place type designations to replace land use designation and adding new growth areas. To ensure consistency with General Plan 2050, the City would amend the Zoning Ordinance, Map of Zoning Districts, Major Streets Master Plan, application for a change within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI), and other relevant plans.

From 2003-2006 the City conducted a planning process to update the Watsonville 2005 General Plan, resulting in the VISTA 2030 Plan ("VISion To Action" Plan) for Watsonville. The VISTA 2030 Plan was first adopted in 2006. However, a court decision from the subsequent lawsuit was issued in 2008. A second attempt to adopt the 2030 Plan and associated EIR occurred in 2013, but the court again found in favor of the appellants in 2014, determining that the City violated both State Aeronautics Act and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and that the VISTA 2030 Plan was inconsistent with Measure U. These challenges were made by the Watsonville Pilots Association, the Friends of Buena Vista, and the Sierra Club. The ensuing settlement agreements obligated the City to rescind the VISTA 2030 Plan, leaving the 2005 General Plan in place as the City's guiding document until the adoption of this General Plan 2050.

The City as lead agency, determined that the Watsonville General Plan 2050 ("General Plan 2050" or "plan" or "project") is a "project" subject to CEQA, and requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). This EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR (PEIR) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. This Draft Program EIR has been prepared to evaluate the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the plan. This EIR is designed to fully inform decisionmakers in the City, other responsible and trustee agencies, and the general public of the potential environmental consequences of approval and implementation of General Plan 2050. A detailed description of the proposed project, including its components and characteristics, objectives, and how the EIR will be used, is provided in **Chapter 2.0, Project Description**. This chapter presents a summary of General Plan 2050 Program EIR in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15123 and identifies areas of controversy and issues to be resolved, in addition to conclusions of each of the analysis contained in **Chapters 4.0, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation**, of the EIR. It also includes a summary of the alternatives to the proposed project that would reduce or avoid significant effects. For a detailed discussion of alternatives to the proposed project, please see **Chapter 8.0, Alternatives**, of this EIR.

This Draft EIR addresses the significant environmental effects associated with implementation of General Plan 2050. CEQA requires that local government agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary approval authority prior to taking action. An EIR is a public document designed to provide the public, and local and state governmental agency decision-makers with an analysis of potential environmental consequences to support informed decision-making.

This Draft EIR has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of CEQA (and the State CEQA Guidelines) to determine if approval of the identified discretionary actions and related subsequent development could have a significant effect on the environment (i.e., significant impact). The City, as the Lead Agency has reviewed and revised as necessary all submitted drafts, technical studies, and reports to reflect its

own independent judgment, including reliance on applicable city technical personnel and review of all technical subconsultant reports. Information for this Draft EIR was obtained from field observations; discussions with affected agencies; analysis of adopted plans and policies; review of available studies, reports, data, and similar literature in the public domain; and specialized environmental assessments (e.g., air quality, cultural, hydrology and water quality, noise, and transportation).

Project Summary

The following provides a summary of the project location, project description, project objectives, potential significant and unavoidable impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed project, and a list of the agencies responsible for continued implementation of General Plan 2050 and approvals required for subsequent projects.

Project Location

The City of Watsonville is located in the southern portion of Santa Cruz County, approximately 14 miles southeast of the City of Santa Cruz and 16 miles northwest of the City of Salinas. The City is bordered to the west, north, and east by unincorporated Santa Cruz County and to the south by the Town of Pajaro in unincorporated Monterey County.

The City encompasses approximately 4,200 contiguous acres (6.5 square miles). Five areas of non-contiguous land include the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Plant (0.03 acres), Buena Vista Landfill (0.08 acres), Pinto Lake (0.12 acres), Corralitos Water Filter Plant (0.02 acres), and Browns Valley Intake (0.05 acres). The City's SOI represents the Watsonville Planning Area Boundary and encompasses parcels served by existing City public services (e.g., water services) both within and outside City limits.

The General Plan 2050 Area (plan area) includes the City limits and potential annexation areas within the existing and proposed Urban Limit Line (ULL). In 2002, Watsonville residents voted to establish an ULL through Measure U, consisting of the areas located within the existing urban limit line boundary. The ULL acts as a designated limit to where new growth may occur under certain conditions. The ULL was originally planned to last through 2027, but a 2022 resident vote extended this to 2040 via Measure Q. Area A (Buena Vista) and Area B (Atkinson Lane) have been identified as possible annexation areas for General Plan 2050 to accommodate new growth within the ULL. Annexation areas within the ULL that are already developed or largely developed include the Freedom Area (Phases I and II), Area E (Villages), Area F (Manabe/Burgstrom), and the South Manfre Road Area. Anticipated growth involves amending the ULL to include Area C and the Highway 1 Gateway and expanding Buena Vista to Freedom Boulevard. However, future annexation and modification of the ULL would be subject to voter approval. In 2002, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) adjusted the SOI to align with the ULL established by Measure U. In 2022, LAFCO inadvertently adjusted the SOI to align with the water service area, resulting in the western portion of the Buena Vista new growth being removed from the SOI. Restoring the previously included portion of the SOI would ensure that the City's SOI once again aligns with the ULL and reflects the area's intended annexation and growth potential.

Project Description

General Plan 2050 is a comprehensive update of the Watsonville 2005 General Plan in response to changes in conditions in the City and new state laws enacted since the preparation of the existing General Plan, including AB 1358 (Complete Streets), SB 99 (Evacuation Analysis), SB 379 (Climate Adaptation), SB 932 (Safe Systems), SB 1241 (Wildfire Hazards) and SB 1000 (Environmental Justice).

General Plan 2050 articulates a community vision and planning framework that would serve as a guide for the City, developers, community members, and stakeholders over the next 20 to 30 years. General Plan 2050 provides a comprehensive land use and mobility plan, along with development and design regulations, to guide future public and private development in the City and its SOI. General Plan 2050 introduces a variety of new housing options, new employment and commercial uses, expanded accommodations for passenger rail service, and complete street improvements. General Plan 2050 emphasizes the City's existing character and focuses on the preservation of the City's natural open spaces. Other public agency decision makers, including the County, LAFCO, and the California Department of Transportation, may also use General Plan 2050 to inform decisions concerning annexations, roadway improvements, capital improvement projects, and other actions affecting the plan area.

General Plan 2050 includes goals, policies, implementation measures, and implementation actions – developed with extensive community input – to advance the City's vision and community priorities, including: revitalizing Downtown Watsonville; introducing a range of new housing choices, both single-family and multifamily; attracting new employment and revenue-generating uses; maintaining the existing character of the City's residential neighborhoods, preserving the City's natural open spaces, especially the sloughs; improving the City's existing parks and community facilities, and introducing new ones; accommodating planned passenger rail service, including a possible station in Downtown Watsonville; implementing complete streets improvements; and rerouting truck routes around town.

Project Objectives

General Plan 2050 is intended to function as a policy document to guide land use decisions in the plan area through 2050. According to State law, General Plans are required to cover seven topics: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. SB 1000 went into effect in 2018, requiring local governments to identify "disadvantaged communities" in their jurisdictions and address environmental justice in their general plans (Gov. Code Sec. 65302(h)(2)). Due to the presence of identified disadvantaged communities in the City, Watsonville is required to address environmental justice in General Plan 2050. Jurisdictions may address these topics across different chapters, or elements, of their general plan, and include any other topic that is relevant to planning its future. General Plan 2050 will include the State required topics in addition to community character, public facilities and services, parks, recreation and libraries, and an airport element.

Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Based on the analysis and conclusions of this EIR, implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in the following significant unavoidable impacts:

- Agricultural Resources – the conversion of agricultural lands
- Air Quality – conflict with an applicable air quality plan, or net increase in criteria pollutant concentrations
- Cultural Resources – impacts to built historical and cultural resources, or unanticipated discovery of archaeological resources
- Greenhouse Gas – net increase in greenhouse gas emissions
- Noise – generation of a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in excess of established standards

Mitigation Monitoring

CEQA requires public agencies to set up monitoring and reporting programs for the purpose of ensuring compliance with those mitigation measures adopted or made as a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant environmental effects identified in environmental impact reports. A mitigation monitoring and reporting program, incorporating the mitigation measures set forth in this document, would be adopted concurrently with adoption of the CEQA findings and prior to approval of General Plan 2050.

Summary of Project Alternatives

Below is a summary of the alternatives that were considered and evaluated in **Chapter 8.0, Alternatives**.

Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

Under the No Project Alternative, the development within the plan area would continue to be implemented as proposed under the 2005 General Plan, and changes to Elements, except for the approved Housing Element, would not be implemented. Despite the lack of an update under the No Project scenario, the distribution and location of projected growth would occur in a manner that is consistent with the 2005 General Plan and zoning documents.

Alternative 2: No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)

Under the No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista) Alternative, the City boundary would not expand into the existing ULL and the proposed expansion of the ULL in the Buena Vista Area would not be included as part of the General Plan 2050. Future growth would instead be accommodated within the existing ULL and other growth areas, including through infill and redevelopment opportunities in underutilized areas (see **Table 2-3** for proposed ULL and areas of new growth). Because areas outside the City boundaries and ULL would not be designated for new growth, this alternative would reduce the overall development capacity of the plan compared to the proposed General Plan 2050.

Alternative 3: No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)

Under the No Expansion of the Area B Alternative, the City boundary would not expand into the existing ULL as part of the General Plan 2050. Future growth would instead be accommodated within the existing ULL and other growth areas, including through infill and redevelopment opportunities in underutilized areas (see **Table 2-3** for proposed ULL and areas of new growth). Because areas outside the City boundaries would not be designated for new growth, this alternative would reduce the overall development capacity of the plan compared to the proposed General Plan 2050.

Alternative 4: No Expansion of Area C

Under the No Expansion of the Area C Alternative, the City boundary and the proposed expansion of the ULL in Area C would not be included as part of the General Plan 2050. Future growth would instead be accommodated within the existing ULL and other growth areas, including through infill and redevelopment opportunities in underutilized areas (see **Table 2-3** for proposed ULL and areas of new growth). Because areas outside the City boundaries and ULL would not be designated for new growth,

this alternative would reduce the overall development capacity of the plan compared to the proposed General Plan 2050.

Alternative 5: No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway

Under the No Expansion of the Highway 1 Gateway Alternative, the City boundary would not expand and the proposed expansion of the ULL would not be included as part of the General Plan 2050. Future growth would instead be accommodated within the existing ULL and other growth areas, including through infill and redevelopment opportunities in underutilized areas (see **Table 2-3** for proposed ULL and areas of new growth). Because areas outside the City boundaries and ULL would not be designated for new growth, this alternative would reduce the overall development capacity of the plan compared to the proposed General Plan 2050.

Areas of Controversy and Issues to be Resolved

Pursuant to Section 15123(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines, an EIR summary section is required to include a discussion of areas of controversy known to the lead agency, including issues raised by agencies and the public. Following are the known areas of controversy:

- Land Use, Growth, and Annexation- The potential annexation areas, consistency with Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) policies, the Urban Limit Line, agricultural land conversion, and the relationship between future growth and voter-adopted land use policies
- Agricultural Resources – The potential conversion of agricultural lands to urban uses
- Water Supply- Future water demand, groundwater basin sustainability, stormwater runoff, groundwater recharge, and cumulative impacts on water resources.
- Biological Resources and Wetlands-Concerns regarding special-status species, sensitive habitats, wetlands, riparian corridors, wildlife movement, and cumulative impacts on biological resources. Recommendations included habitat surveys, avoidance and minimization measures, buffer zones, and best management practices to protect sensitive resources
- Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources – Compliance with Assembly Bill (AB) 52 and Senate Bill (SB) 18 consultation requirements, protection of tribal cultural resources, evaluation of culturally sensitive sites, and development of appropriate mitigation measures for future ground-disturbing activities
- Transportation – Increased vehicle miles traveled associated with population growth, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit-oriented development, complete streets, transportation demand management strategies, and coordination with regional transportation improvement
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions- Emissions associated with projected growth, consideration of impacts on disadvantaged communities and sensitive receptors, expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure, and implementation of strategies to reduce vehicle trips and associated emissions
- Geology, Hazards, and Wildfire- Concerns regarding seismic hazards, liquefaction, landslide potential, airport-related safety considerations, wildfire hazards, and other public safety issues associated with future development.
- Airport Compatibility- Airport land use compatibility, aircraft noise, safety zones, airspace

protection, runway configuration alternatives, and potential effects on future development in areas surrounding the airport.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15123(b) also requires a summary of any issues to be resolved, including the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate significant impacts.

Executive Summary Matrix

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15123(b)(1), **Table ES- 1** below summarizes the impacts, mitigation measures, and resulting level of significance after mitigation for the relevant environmental issue areas evaluated for the implementation of General Plan 2050. **Table ES-1** is intended to provide an overview; narrative discussion and analysis for specific environmental topics are included in the corresponding sections of this EIR.

Table ES-1 Executive Summary Matrix

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Agricultural Resources			
Conversion of agricultural lands	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure AG-1:** Agricultural Conservation Program The City of Watsonville shall establish an agricultural conservation program to reduce significant impacts related to the conversion of agricultural land. When agricultural land is converted for new development, the project applicant must either dedicate an agricultural conservation easement at a 1:1 ratio or the payment of an in-lieu mitigation fee. The agricultural conservation plan would offset some of the adverse effects related to the conversion of agricultural land, minimizing impacts to Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland.	Significant and Unavoidable Impact
Air Quality			
Conflict or obstruct an applicable air quality plan and Dust and exhaust from construction period impacts	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure AQ-1:** Require Project-Level Construction Assessment for Projects in the Plan Area. Prior to discretionary approval by the City of Watsonville for development projects subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (i.e., non-exempt projects), project applicants shall submit construction criteria pollutant and TAC quantification for individual projects developed under the General Plan 2050 to the City once those details are available through modeling to identify impacts prior to project approval and, if necessary, include measures to reduce emissions below the applicable MBRAD construction thresholds. Reductions in emissions can be accomplished through, though is not limited to, the following measures: • Construction equipment selection for low emissions (e.g., U.S. EPA Tier 4 standards); • Use of alternative fuels, engine retrofits, and added exhaust devices;	Significant and Unavoidable Impact

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		• Low- Volatile Organic Compounds paints; • Modify construction schedule; and ○ Implementation of measures to control fugitive dust due to construction, including but not limited to: ○ Water all active construction areas at least twice daily. Frequency should be based on the type of operation, soil, and wind exposure. ○ Prohibit all grading activities during periods of high wind (over 15 mph). ○ Cover all trucks hauling dirt, sand, or loose materials. ○ Cover inactive storage piles. ○ Maintain at least 2'0" of freeboard in haul trucks. ○ Apply chemical soil stabilizers on inactive construction areas (disturbed lands within construction projects that are unused for at least four consecutive days).	
Conflict or obstruct an applicable air quality plan and Operational criteria pollutant emissions	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure AQ-2:** Require Project-Level Operational Assessment for Projects in the General Plan 2050. Prior to discretionary approval by the City of Watsonville for development projects subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (i.e., non-exempt projects), project applicants shall submit operational criteria pollutant analysis to the City in accordance with the latest guidance provided by the MBARD for projects with a potential to exceed project emission thresholds. The MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines provide project screening level Table 4.3 4) to determine if projects warrant modeling to evaluate their emissions. Projects that are found to not meet these screening criteria or have emissions above significant thresholds would be required to implement additional mitigation including but not limited to: • Proposed residential and commercial developments within the General Plan	Significant and Unavoidable

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		2050 should implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs to reduce VMT as recommended by a traffic consultant. The TDM programs would be reviewed and approved by the City prior to issuance of building permits. An annual TDM monitoring report shall be submitted to the City to document each development is meeting the required TDM program reductions. • Proposed developments within the General Plan 2050 shall have electricity delivered from 3CE and participate in the 3Cchoice program at a minimum. • Proposed developments within the General Plan 2050 that have stationary or off-road equipment with diesel engines larger than 50-HP would be subject to CARB's Stationary Diesel Airborne Toxics Control Measure (ATCM) and require permits from the MBARD that will have to meet. Best Available Control Technology (BACT) for air toxics. • Proposed development within the General Plan 2050 shall incorporate additional green building measures such as rooftop solar photovoltaic systems, rough-ins for electric vehicle charging, use of efficient lighting and irrigation, and recycled water, as feasible, to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director. • Developed parcels shall require within their Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions and/or ground leases requirements for all future interior spaces to be repainted only with architectural coatings that meet the "Low- Volatile Organic Compounds" or "Super-Compliant" requirements.	
TAC emissions	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure AQ-3:** Require Project-Level Health Risk Assessments for Projects near Sensitive Receptors. Prior to discretionary approval by the City of Watsonville for development projects subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (i.e., non-exempt projects), project applicants proposing development of two acres or greater and lasting more than one year within 1,000 feet of existing sensitive receptors or worker receptors as defined by the MBARD (e.g., residential, schools) shall prepare a site-specific	Significant and Unavoidable

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		construction and operational health risk assessment (HRA) and submit to the City. If the HRA demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the City, that the health risk exposures for adjacent receptors will be less than MBARD project-level thresholds, then additional mitigation would be unnecessary. However, if the HRA demonstrates that health risks would exceed MBARD project-level thresholds, additional feasible on- and off-site mitigation shall be analyzed to further reduce risks to the greatest extent practicable. Measures to reduce significant health risk impacts include: • Implementation of Mitigation Measure AQ-1. • Site design modifications, such as locating TAC emitting equipment at portion of a site that have the least impact. • Operational modifications, such as limiting the number of operational hours of TAC emitting equipment or activities.	
Expose sensitive receptors	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure AQ-4:** Projects developed within the plan area that are affected by TAC sources shall implement appropriate measures to minimize long-term TAC exposure for new project occupants. a) This mitigation measure applies to any project developed within the affected plan area that are near high volume roadways or stationary sources, as indicated above. For such a project, the Project Applicant would either need to include measures to reduce long-term exposure to TAC, as described below, or conduct site-specific analysis to identify the level of exposure to TACs in terms of cancer risk concentrations. The analysis shall use procedures prescribed by MBARD (e.g., the MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines) to predict these exposures. Where cancer risk exceeds 10 chances per million from any single source (i.e., within 1,000 feet) and where HI exceeds 1.0 from any single source, the following measures to reduce risk impacts may include but are not limited to: Design project developments to limit exposure from sources of TACs emissions, using setbacks to buffer sensitive portions of the development. b) Install air filtration at units that have predicted cancer risk levels above 10	Less than Significant with Mitigation

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		chances per million and HI above 1.0. Air filtration devices shall be rated MERV13 or higher. Alternately, at the approval of the City, equivalent control technology may be used if it is shown by a qualified air quality consultant or heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) engineer that it would reduce risk below significance thresholds. c) As part of implementing this measure, an ongoing maintenance plan for the building's HVAC air filtration system shall be required. d) Ensure that any lease agreements and other property documents (1) require cleaning, maintenance, and monitoring of the affected units for air flow leaks; (2) include assurance that new owners and tenants are provided information on the ventilation system; and (3) include provisions that fees associated with owning or leasing a unit(s) in the building include funds for cleaning, maintenance, monitoring, and replacements of the filters, as needed. e) Require that, prior to building occupancy, an authorized air pollutant consultant or HVAC engineer verify the installation of all necessary measures to reduce cancer risk below 10 chances per million and HI below 1.0 from any source.	
Biological Resources			
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-1:** Conduct Floristic Surveys for Proposed Development and Infrastructure Projects. Prior to the City deeming any development or infrastructure project application complete, the project applicant or applicable City department shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct protocol level floristic surveys for special status plant species within all suitable habitat, including riparian woodland, freshwater marsh, and California annual grassland. Floristic surveys shall be conducted during the appropriate blooming periods for all potentially occurring special-status plant species and must follow the most current	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		CDFW and CNPS survey protocols. A Floristic Survey Report, including maps that depict all survey areas, identified populations, and recommended avoidance or protection zones, shall be submitted by the applicant for review, oversight, and approval by City staff prior to issuance of any project-specific CEQA clearance or discretionary approval. All approved maps and avoidance areas shall be incorporated into final project design and included on all project plan sets prior to the issuance of grading or building permits.	
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-2:** Establish Sensitive Habitat Setback Requirements to Avoid Impacts to Special-Status Plants The project applicant or applicable City departments shall design development footprints during the project-specific CEQA process to be sited to avoid potential impacts to special-status plants plus an avoidance buffer determined by a qualified plant ecologist for the population and project. For Santa Cruz tarplant, this avoidance should also include critical habitat. If avoidance of listed plant species is not feasible, then formal consultation with USFWS and CDFW and the issuance of an incidental take permit would be required. Impacts to non-listed species would likely involve informal discussions with CDFW. Special-status plant occurrences located within temporary construction areas should be fenced or flagged for avoidance prior to construction, and a biological monitor should be present to ensure compliance with off-limits areas. Seasonal avoidance measures (i.e., limited operating periods based on timing of annual plant dormancy), combined with topsoil salvage and site restoration, may be acceptable in some cases. Compensation for permanent loss of special-status plant occurrences, in the form of land purchase or restoration, must be provided to the level acceptable to the resource agencies.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-3:** Compensate for Loss of Special-Status Plants Compensatory measures will be determined by the project applicant or applicable City departments during the project-specific CEQA process on a case-by-case basis for project losses that exceed the significance criteria for CNPS-ranked species (i.e., impacts to more than 10% of the population), or for any impacts to the federally listed Santa Cruz tarplant. Compensation for loss of special-status plants typically involves the purchase and permanent stewardship of known occupied habitat at a 1:1 (mitigation:impact) ratio or the restoration and reintroduction of populations in degraded, unoccupied habitat at a minimum 1.5:1 ratio. Restoration/reintroduction may be located on- or off-site. In the latter case, a Site Restoration Plan would be required which includes the following information: • Location of areas to restore lost plant populations; • A description of propagation and planting techniques to be employed in the restoration effort. Plants to be impacted should have their seeds collected so that the seeds can be planted within the restoration areas; • A time table for implementation of the restoration plan, including pilot-phase studies; • A five-year monitoring plan and performance criteria; • A description of remedial measures to be performed in the event initial restoration measures are unsuccessful in meeting the performance criteria; and • A description of the site maintenance activities to follow restoration activities. These may include weed control, irrigation and control of herbivory by livestock and wildlife.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-4:** Conduct Surveys for Special-Status Amphibians and Turtles To determine if any special-status amphibian and turtle species would be affected by any given project element, the project applicant or applicable City department shall	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		conduct surveys at the specific project site prior to construction, following standard USFWS or CDFW protocol for each species, if potential habitat could be affected by project implementation. Potential habitat for the California red-legged frog is defined as streams, freshwater pools, and ponds in riparian woodlands, seasonal wetlands, freshwater marsh, and California annual grassland with emergent or overhanging vegetation, which may occur in or directly adjacent to the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C; and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas. Potential habitat for the California tiger salamander and Santa Cruz long-toed salamander is defined as freshwater pools and ponds in riparian woodlands, seasonal wetlands, freshwater marsh, and California annual grassland, and these two species could occur in the Buena Vista new growth area. Potential habitat for the northwestern pond turtle includes permanent or nearly permanent water and adjacent uplands in riparian woodlands, seasonal wetlands, freshwater marsh, and California annual grassland in the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C; and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas. If it is determined that any of these federally and/or state-listed species are present, consultation with the USFWS and/or CDFW will be necessary if impacts are possible.	
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-5:** Avoid Impacts to Special-Status Amphibians and Turtles If feasible, construction of project elements shall be designed by the applicant or applicable City departments during the project-specific CEQA process to avoid aquatic and associated upland habitat for these special-status species. If construction will occur adjacent to riparian woodlands, seasonal wetlands, freshwater marsh, or California annual grassland, impacts to individuals can be avoided or minimized through the following measures to be implemented by the project applicant or applicable City departments: 1. Prior to any construction activities, the boundaries of construction areas will be clearly delineated with orange plastic construction fencing to prevent workers or equipment from inadvertently straying from the construction area. All construction personnel, equipment, and vehicle movement shall be confined to designated construction areas and connecting roadways. Movement of construction and personal vehicles shall be prohibited outside designated	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		construction areas or off established roadways. 2. Prior to the onset of any ground disturbing activities, exclusion fencing will be established around areas of potentially occupied habitat, as determined by a qualified biologist. Exclusion fencing will consist of silt-fencing or similar material at least 36 inches in height that is buried six inches in the ground to prevent incursion under the fence. Exclusion fencing may be installed at the base of the construction fencing described in A above. This fence will be surveyed each morning before construction, to verify that no individuals of these species have entered the construction site. 3. Before any construction activities begin, a qualified biologist will conduct a training session with construction personnel to describe the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, and northwestern pond turtle, as well as these species' habitat, the specific measures being implemented to minimize effects to these species, and the boundaries of the construction area. 4. All food-related trash items will be enclosed in sealed containers and removed daily from Project site to discourage the concentration of potential predators in habitat potentially occupied by these species.	
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-6:** Protect Water Quality Water quality will be protected under the City's BMPs, per the City's Stormwater Control and Prevention Ordinance (6-3.525) and General Plan Policies C-2.1 and 3.1 and Actions C-2.1.3, 3.1.4, and 6.1.2. Applicants or applicable City departments will implement the following BMPs, as applicable, during construction: • No debris, soil, silt, sand, bark, slash, sawdust, cement, concrete, washings, petroleum products or other organic or earthen material should be allowed to enter into, or be placed where, it may be washed by rainfall or runoff into aquatic habitats. • Silt fencing should be constructed where work will occur near aquatic habitats	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		to protect water quality. • A hazardous materials spill prevention plan will be developed and implemented. Hazardous material will be stored in secured structures with secondary spill containment features. Refueling of construction equipment and vehicles will not occur within 256 feet of any water body or anywhere that spilled fuel could drain to a water body. The contractors will check and maintain equipment and vehicles daily to prevent leaks of fuels, lubricants, or other fluids.	
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-7:** Compensate for Lost Aquatic and Upland Habitat If aquatic habitats such as freshwater marsh or seasonal wetland that supports special-status amphibians (and the northwestern pond turtle if it is listed under FESA at the time of project implementation) will be impacted, compensatory mitigation will be required to be identified by project applicants or applicable City departments during the project-specific CEQA process and implemented by the applicants prior to or concurrent with the impact. Mitigation for impacts to wetlands is addressed under Impact Analysis c). For impacts to habitat for federally-listed amphibians, mitigation areas providing similar or better habitat shall be preserved and protected in perpetuity. Essential aquatic habitat (including verified aquatic breeding habitat) and associated upland habitat within 256 feet of essential aquatic habitat for the California red-legged frog (and northwestern pond turtle, if the species is listed), and aquatic breeding habitat for the two listed salamanders, should be replaced at a 3:1 ratio. All three federally listed amphibians can potentially estivate (remain dormant) in upland habitat in coast live oak woodland, riparian woodland, or California annual grassland, such as ground squirrel burrows near wetland breeding areas. In addition, some upland areas may provide important dispersal habitat between breeding sites and northwestern pond turtles may lay nests in these areas. The location of potential aestivation, refugial, dispersal, and nesting habitat will be identified by surveys (Mitigation Measure BIO-4). The extent of lost upland aestivation habitat should be determined on a case by case basis based on proximity to aquatic habitat, availability of aestivation sites such as small mammal burrows, land disturbance, and barriers to	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		dispersal (such as fences, extensive developed areas, or wide, busy roads). If avoidance of upland habitat for federally listed amphibians and the northwestern pond turtle (if listed at the time of project implementation) is infeasible, then mitigation lands providing similar or better habitat adjacent to occupied or suitable aquatic habitat shall be preserved and protected in perpetuity. Upland aestivation and nesting habitat should be replaced at a 1:1 replacement ratio on an acreage basis. Alternately, this ratio may be reduced at the discretion of the City (subject to approval by the USFWS) if additional aquatic breeding habitat is provided. The amount of reduction shall be proportional to the amount of additional essential habitat provided, up to a maximum reduction of fifty percent. In selecting off-site mitigation lands, preference shall be given to preserving large blocks of habitat rather than many small parcels, linking preserved areas to existing open space and other high-quality habitat, and excluding or limiting public use within preserved areas.	
Disturbance to sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-8:** Implement Lighting Impact Reduction Measures The following measures shall be implemented by project applicants or applicable City departments during construction to reduce spillover of lighting into freshwater marsh, seasonal wetland, riparian woodland, coast live oak woodland, and California annual grassland habitat, or glare/increased luminance perceived by special-status animals as well as adverse effects of lighting on migratory birds. • Through a combination of appropriate fixture selection that suits its purpose, low mounting height, glare shielding, and orientation/aiming of light fixtures, new construction in the plan area shall actively control light spill towards sensitive habitat areas and towards the sky. Exterior lighting adjacent to freshwater marsh, seasonal wetland, riparian woodland, coast live oak woodland, and California annual grassland habitat shall be fully shielded to block illumination from shining outward towards these habitats and to prevent the lit portions of these fixtures (i.e., the lamps) from being visible to amphibians, fish, or birds in the water. Limited uplighting may apply to select building façade areas and landscape features that are at least 50 feet from the edge of these habitats. These uplight fixtures shall incorporate glare shields and	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		strategic aiming to prevent light from being visible beyond the feature being lit (i.e., the feature being lit shall block luminance from view of birds flying overhead); shall incorporate timeclock control to turn off uplighting from 10 pm until the next evening; and shall use 40-Watt maximum lamps to minimize light output. Low-intensity (100-200 lumens) and warm-colored (2700K-3000K) lighting will be used in these areas to minimize brightness and emission of blue lights that can disrupt wildlife circadian rhythms. • Except as indicated in the previous bullet (and the exceptions for public streets below), fixtures shall comply with lighting zone LZ-2, Moderate Ambient, as recommended by the International Dark-Sky Association (2011) for multifamily residential uses, institutional residential uses, schools, churches, hotels, commercial and/or business areas in predominately residential areas, and/or mixed-used development with a predominance of residential uses. The allowed total initial luminaire lumens for development in the plan area adjacent to freshwater marsh, riparian woodland, and seasonal wetland habitat is 1.25 lumens per square foot of hardscape, and the BUG rating for individual fixtures shall not exceed B3 or G1, as follows: o B3: 2,500 lumens high (60–80 degrees), 5,000 lumens mid (30–60 degrees), 2,500 lumens low (0–30 degrees) o G2: 225 lumens (forward/back light 80–90 degrees), 5,000 lumens (forward 60–80 degrees), 1,000 lumens (back light 60–80 degrees asymmetrical fixtures), 5,000 lumens (back light 60–80 degrees quadrilateral symmetrical fixtures) • Lighting for public roadways and traffic signage lighting, including lighting for driveway entrances occurring in the public right-of-way, shall be excluded from these BUG rating limitations to support public safety and proper illumination of public streets. • Exterior lighting shall be minimized in accordance with recommendations from the International Dark-Sky Association (2011) from midnight until dawn, at a minimum, except as needed for safety and City code compliance.	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		• Spillage of lighting from building interiors shall be minimized using occupancy sensors, dimmers, or other mechanisms from 10 pm until dawn, at a minimum, during bird migration seasons (February–May and August–November). If desired, this measure may be voluntarily implemented year-round.	
Disturbance of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-9:** Reduce Direct Impacts to Special-Status Fish The following measures shall be implemented by project applicants or applicable City departments during construction to reduce impacts to special-status fish: 1. Construction within the channel will be restricted to the dry season (June 1 - September 30), the period in which there is minimal water in the channel and in which movement of steelhead and lamprey within the project area is expected to be minimal. 2. When work in a flowing stream is unavoidable, any stream flow shall be diverted around the work area by a barrier, temporary culvert or a new channel capable of permitting upstream and downstream fish movement. The temporary construction of a diversion structure within a water of the U.S. (jurisdictional water) will require permits from the USACE and CDFW. Construction of the barrier or the new channel shall normally begin in the downstream area and continue in an upstream direction and the flow shall be diverted only when construction of the diversion is completed.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-10:** Mitigate for Lost Shaded Riverine Aquatic Habitat Impacts to riparian habitat will be addressed under Impact Analysis b). This mitigation shall include replacement of shaded riverine aquatic (SRA) habitat at a 2:1 ratio on a linear footage basis, and shall be identified by project applicants or applicable City departments during the project-specific CEQA process and implemented by the applicants or applicable City departments prior to or concurrent with the impacts.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated
Loss or disturbance	Potentially	**Mitigation Measure BIO-11:** Avoid Impacts to Burrowing Owls	Less than Significant with Mitigation

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
of sensitive habitat	Significant Impact	This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants or applicable City departments prior to construction if ground disturbance will occur in or within 250 feet of potentially suitable burrowing owl habitat. Preconstruction Surveys. Preconstruction surveys for burrowing owls should be completed in all potentially suitable habitat within 250 feet of ground disturbance in conformance with CDFW protocols, no more than 14 days prior to the start of construction. To maximize the likelihood of detecting owls, the preconstruction survey shall last a minimum of three hours. The survey shall begin one hour before sunrise and continue until two hours after sunrise (three hours total) or begin two hours before sunset and continue until one hour after sunset. A minimum of two surveys shall be conducted (if owls are detected on the first survey, a second survey is not needed). Owls observed shall be counted and their location shall be mapped. Surveys shall conclude no more than two calendar days prior to construction; thus, surveys must begin no less than four days prior to the start of construction, operations, or reclamation activities (two days of surveying plus up to two days between surveys and construction). To avoid last-minute changes in schedule that may occur if burrowing owls are found, a preliminary survey may be conducted up to 14 days before construction. This preliminary survey may count as the first of the two required surveys, as long as the second survey concludes no more than two calendar days in advance of construction. If the preconstruction survey does not identify the presence of burrowing owls on or within 250 feet of the site, no further measures are necessary. However, should the preconstruction survey determine the presence of burrowing owls on or within 250 feet the site, then the applicant shall implement the following avoidance measures. 1. Avoidance during the Breeding Season. If evidence of burrowing owls is found during the breeding season (February 1 to August 31), all nesting or roosting sites that could be disturbed by construction shall be avoided during the remainder of the breeding season (if owls remain throughout the breeding season) or while the nest (i.e., a burrow occupied during the period February 1 to August 31) is occupied by adults or young (occupation includes individuals or family groups foraging on or near the site following fledging). Although burrowing owls are unlikely to nest in the plan area, there is a remote possibility that nesting may occur. Wintering owls in	Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		Santa Cruz County often remain past February 1, at which time they cannot be distinguished from breeding birds. As a result, any owl present between February 1 and August 31 will be considered a potential breeder unless and until it leaves the site. Avoidance shall include establishment of a 250-foot non-disturbance buffer zone around nests. Demolition and construction may occur outside of the 250-foot non-disturbance buffer zone. Demolition and construction may occur inside of the 250-foot non-disturbance buffer during the breeding season only if the nest is not disturbed, and a qualified biologist develops an avoidance, minimization, and monitoring plan prior to Project construction that includes all of the following criteria: • A qualified biologist monitors the owls for at least 3 days prior to construction to determine baseline nesting and foraging behavior (i.e., behavior without construction). • The same qualified biologist monitors the owls during construction and finds no change in owl nesting and foraging behavior in response to construction activities. • If there is any change in owl nesting and foraging behavior as a result of construction activities, all disturbance activities shall cease within the 250-foot buffer. Construction shall not resume within the 250-foot buffer until the adults and juveniles from the occupied burrows have moved out of the Project area and 250-foot buffer. • If monitoring indicates that the nest is abandoned prior to the end of the nesting season (as would occur if a wintering owl lingered past February 1 and then eventually migrated to its breeding areas outside the region), and the burrow is no longer in use by owls, the non-disturbance buffer zone may be removed. The qualified biologist will excavate the burrow to ensure that no owls are present and to prevent reoccupation after receiving approval from CDFW.	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		2. Avoidance during the Non-Breeding Season. During the non-breeding season (September 1 through January 31), a 250-foot non-disturbance buffer shall be established around occupied burrows as determined by a qualified biologist. Construction activities outside of this 250-foot buffer are allowed. Construction activities within the 250-foot buffer are allowed if all the following criteria are met to prevent owls from abandoning important overwintering sites: • A qualified biologist monitors the owls for at least three days prior to construction to determine baseline foraging behavior (i.e., behavior without construction). • The same qualified biologist monitors the owls during construction and finds no change in owl foraging behavior in response to construction activities. • If there is any change in owl nesting and foraging behavior as a result of construction activities, all disturbance activities shall cease within the 250-foot buffer. • If the owls are gone for at least one week, the Project applicant may request approval from CDFW that a qualified biologist excavate or block usable burrows to prevent owls from re-occupying the site. After all usable burrows are excavated, the buffer zone will be removed and construction may continue. Monitoring must continue as described above for the non-breeding season as long as the burrow remains active. Construction Monitoring. Based on the avoidance, minimization, and monitoring plan developed during construction, all non-disturbance buffer zones shall be established and maintained. A qualified biologist shall monitor the site consistent with the requirements described above to ensure that buffers are enforced and owls are not disturbed. The biological monitor shall also conduct training of construction personnel on the avoidance procedures, buffer zones, and protocols in the event that a burrowing owl flies into an active construction zone or within 250 feet of such zone. Owls present on site after February 1 will be assumed to be nesting on or adjacent to the site unless evidence indicates otherwise. This protected area will remain in effect	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		until August 31, or at CDFW's discretion and based upon monitoring evidence, until the young owls are foraging independently. Relocation. If construction will directly impact occupied burrows, eviction outside the nesting season may be permitted pending evaluation of eviction plans by, and receipt of formal written approval of the relocation from, CDFW. No burrowing owls will be evicted from burrows during the nesting season (February 1 through August 31) unless evidence indicates that nesting is not actively occurring (e.g., because the owls have not yet begun nesting early in the season, or because young have already fledged late in the season).	
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-12:** Compensate for Impacts to Occupied Burrowing Owl Habitat This mitigation shall be identified during the project-specific CEQA process and implemented by project applicants and applicable city departments prior to or concurrent with impacts if destruction of habitat known to be occupied by breeding burrowing owls within the past three years is unavoidable. A qualified biologist will determine the extent of habitat impacted by the project. Compensatory mitigation for individual project impacts on the burrowing owl habitat will be provided via the purchase of credits from a conservation bank or mitigation bank that has restored suitable habitat for the burrowing owl; project-specific mitigation via the preservation and management of suitable habitat for this species; or some combination of the two approaches. If no CDFW-approved conservation banks specifically for the burrowing owl are available, credits in a bank that provides suitable habitat for, and is expected to be occupied by, this species would be adequate. Compensatory mitigation shall be provided at a minimum ratio of 3:1 (mitigation: impact) on an acreage basis if project-specific mitigation is performed or 1:1 if credits are purchased from a mitigation or conservation bank. Compensatory mitigation shall be provided for any potentially suitable habitat for these species that is permanently lost to development or that is present within 50 ft of any new or higher-intensity lighting installed by General Plan activities. If project-specific mitigation is provided as compensatory mitigation, the applicant will	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		prepare an HMMP describing the measures that will be taken to create, restore, or enhance habitat for the burrowing owl and monitor the effects of the mitigation on this species. The HMMP will include, at a minimum, the following: • A summary of project impacts on the burrowing owl and the proposed mitigation of these impacts; • A description of the location and boundaries of the mitigation site and a description of existing mitigation site conditions; • A description of measures to be undertaken, if necessary, to enhance (e.g., through focused management) the mitigation site for the burrowing owl; • Proposed management activities, such as management of invasive plants, to maintain high-quality habitat conditions for the burrowing owl; • A description of community and species monitoring measures on the mitigation site, including specific, objective goals and objectives, performance indicators, success criteria, monitoring methods, data analysis, reporting requirements, and monitoring schedule. At a minimum, success criteria will include demonstration that habitat conditions are suitable for occupancy by the burrowing owl. Monitoring will occur until these criteria are achieved but for no less than 5 years; • A description of the HMMP's adaptive component, including potential contingency measures for mitigation elements that do not meet performance criteria; and • A description of the funding mechanism to ensure the long-term maintenance and monitoring of the mitigation lands. The HMMP will be submitted to the CDFW for review and approval prior to implementation.	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Loss or disturbance to sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure Bio-13:** Avoid Nesting Birds This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments prior to construction activities. Seasonal Avoidance. The nesting season for most birds in Santa Cruz extends between February 1 and August 31. If construction in or near suitable habitat for these species can be scheduled outside of this nesting season, nesting birds will not be impacted, and no further mitigation is necessary. Preconstruction Surveys and Buffer Zones. If construction in or near suitable habitat for these species must occur during the breeding season ((typically February 15 to August 31 for small bird species such as passerines; January 15 to September 15 for owls; and February 15 to September 15 for other raptors), a qualified ornithologist shall conduct two preconstruction surveys wherever suitable habitat is present no more than 14 days prior to the initiation of disturbance, with a final survey conducted within 48 hours prior to construction. Appropriate minimum survey radii surrounding the work area are typically the following: i) 250 feet for passerines; ii) 500 feet for small raptors such as accipiters; and iii) 1,000 feet for larger raptors such as buteos. Surveys shall be conducted at the appropriate times of day and during appropriate nesting times. If active nests are found to be present within or adjacent to work sites during the breeding season, a qualified biologist should determine the species-appropriate width of this buffer. The buffer shall be clearly marked and maintained until the young have fledged and are foraging independently. Prior to construction, the qualified biologist shall conduct baseline monitoring of the nest to characterize “normal” bird behavior and establish a buffer distance which allows the birds to exhibit normal behavior. The qualified biologist shall monitor the nesting birds daily during construction activities and increase the buffer if the birds show signs of unusual or distressed behavior (e.g., defensive flights and vocalizations, standing up from a brooding position, and/or flying away from the nest). If buffer establishment is not possible, the qualified biologist shall have the authority to cease all construction work in the area until the young have fledged, and the nest is no longer active.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-14:** Conduct Preconstruction Surveys for Roosting Bats and Implement Avoidance Measures This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments prior to construction activities. A preconstruction survey for roosting bats should be conducted prior to any construction adjacent to suitable habitat or demolition of buildings, particularly those with closed areas such as an attic space, or trees >12 inches in diameter at 4.5 feet above grade. Pallid bats occasionally roost in the walls of occupied and abandoned buildings without showing any signs of occupying the attic and will roost in tree branch cavities only 6 inches in diameter. The survey should be conducted by a qualified bat biologist. No activities that would result in disturbance to active roosts would proceed prior to the completed surveys. If no active roosts are found, then no further action would be warranted. If a maternity roost is present, a qualified bat biologist would determine the extent of construction-free zones around active nurseries since these species are known to abandon young when disturbed. If either a maternity roost or hibernacula is present, Mitigation Measure BIO-15 would be implemented. CDFW should also be notified of any active nurseries within the construction zone. If active maternity roosts or hibernacula are found, the project could be redesigned to avoid the loss of the building or tree occupied by the roost.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-15:** Exclude Bats Prior to Demolition of Roosts This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments prior to construction activities. If an active nursery roost is located and the project cannot be redesigned to avoid removal of the occupied tree or structure, demolition of that tree or structure should commence before maternity colonies form (i.e., prior to April 1) or after young are volant (flying) (i.e., after July 31). The disturbance-free buffer zones described above should be observed during the maternity roost season (April 1 - July 31). If the preconstruction survey reveals any structure is suitable roosting habitat for bats,	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		then the appropriate exclusionary measures will be implemented prior to construction. Potential avoidance may include exclusionary blocking or filling potential cavities with foam, visual monitoring and staging Project work to avoid bats. If bats are known to use the structure, exclusion netting shall not be used. If the habitat assessment reveals suitable bat habitat in trees and tree removal is scheduled tree removal shall be removed using a two-day phased method. The two-phase system shall be conducted over two (2) consecutive days. On day one (1), (in the afternoon) under the supervision of a qualified biologist, all tree limbs containing bat habitat shall be removed using chainsaws or other hand tools. Limbs with cavities, crevices, or deep bark fissures are avoided and only branches or limbs without those features are removed. On day two (2), the next day, the rest of the tree shall be removed.	
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-16:** Compensate for Loss of Maternity Roosts This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments prior to construction activities. If a tree or any other structure containing a bat maternity roost must be removed as part of the Project, a qualified biologist shall design and determine an appropriate location for an alternative roost structure, based on the location of the original roost and habitat conditions in the vicinity. The roost structure shall be built to specifications as determined by a qualified biologist and CDFW, or it may be purchased from an appropriate vendor, though the design must be approved by a qualified biologist and CDFW. The structure shall be placed as close to the impacted roost site as feasible, though it will be located far enough from future Project activities so as to avoid disturbance of bats using the roost. The Applicant shall monitor the roost for three years or until occupancy is determined (whichever occurs first) to determine use by bats and submit annual reports verifying monitoring results to the County Department of Planning and Development.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Loss or disturbance of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-17:** Establish Riparian Habitat Setback Requirements For each proposed project site adjacent to riparian habitat, the City will require the applicant or applicable City departments to conduct an analysis of an appropriate riparian setback by a qualified biologist during the project-specific CEQA process to be reviewed by the City. The riparian buffer shall be a minimum of 50 feet from the edge of the riparian corridor (defined above), or of sufficient size to protect sensitive species and their habitat from the impacts of human and urban activity (noise, lights, and human traffic). A riparian setback of at least 100 feet is typically appropriate for high-quality riparian habitat. No development will occur within the buffer area. In highly degraded areas, the setback requirement may be reduced following habitat analysis by a qualified biologist. In considering the reduction of the setback requirement, the following conditions shall be considered: • Biological condition of the riparian habitat • Existence of structure or other improvements currently within the riparian setback • Average setback on adjacent properties • Occurrence of project site within an urban location where most properties are already developed and parcels are generally small • Potential of the project construction or operations to disrupt the continuity of riparian habitat or preclude restoration of vegetation along a creek channel where upstream and downstream habitat are of good quality • Occurrence or potential for occurrence of special-status species within the riparian corridor • Potential for project to significantly reduce the moisture streamside vegetation receives from natural drainage from upland areas.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated
Loss of sensitive	Potentially	**Mitigation Measure BIO-18:** Obtain Appropriate Permits and Compensate for Riparian	Less than Significant with Mitigation

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
habitat	Significant Impact	Habitat Loss This mitigation shall be identified during the project-specific CEQA process and implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments prior to or concurrent with the impacts. Riparian habitat that will be permanently impacted, or indirectly affected by setback encroachment, by future projects would be replaced at a level that will ensure no net loss of habitat functions and values. In-kind and on-site replacement of lost habitat will be done where possible. The determination of impacts and the subsequent location and design of potential mitigation sites would be determined by qualified biologists. All mitigation sites will be protected in perpetuity. Acceptable riparian mitigation ratios are based on habitat quality characteristics (e.g., vegetation structure and complexity), which correspond to fish and wildlife habitat value. Impact ratios of 3:1, 2:1, and 1:1 should be applied for impacts to high, medium and low-quality habitats, respectively: • High quality – Native overstory with continuous understory or occurring in dense thickets; dense native overstory with sparse, non-native or no understory; and native willow thicket. • Medium quality – Sparse native overstory with sparse, non-native or no understory, non-native overstory with native understory, and dense non-native overstory with sparse, non-native or no understory. • Lower quality – Sparse non-native overstory with sparse, non-native or no understory. In addition, any areas not included in medium or high quality categories that will be covered with riprap, gabions, etc. (e.g., ruderal habitat and bare ground). A Mitigation and Monitoring Plan will be prepared by a qualified restoration ecologist and will provide the following: 1. Summary of habitat impacts and proposed mitigation ratios	Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		2. Goal of the restoration to achieve no net loss of habitat functions and values 3. Location of mitigation site(s) and description of existing site conditions 4. Mitigation design: a. existing and proposed site hydrology b. grading plan if appropriate, including bank stabilization or other site stabilization features c. soil amendments and other site preparation elements as appropriate d. planting plan e. irrigation and maintenance plan f. remedial measures/adaptive management, etc. 5. Monitoring plan (including final and performance criteria, monitoring methods, data analysis, reporting requirements, monitoring schedule, etc.) 6. Success shall be evaluated relative to a nearby reference site, which shall be established to document pre-project environmental conditions. Performance criteria include the following: by the end of Year 1, restored areas shall achieve a minimum of 40 percent of the average vegetation cover observed at the reference site. Restored areas shall also demonstrate consistent increases in vegetative cover. By the end of Year 3, restored areas shall attain at least 75 percent of the vegetation cover documented at the reference site. In addition, invasive species ranked as "High" by the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) shall not exceed 5 percent absolute cover within the restoration area. 7. Contingency plan for mitigation elements that do not meet performance or final success criteria	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Loss of sensitive habitat	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure BIO-19:** Obtain Appropriate Permits and Compensate for Wetland Habitat Loss During the project-specific CEQA process, the project applicant or applicable City departments shall conduct a wetland delineation per the USACE Wetland Delineation Manual (Environmental Laboratory 1987), and using the one-parameter approach in areas within the Coastal Zone, should be conducted prior to construction. A delineation report should be prepared and submitted to the USACE and California Coastal Conservancy (CCC) for verification. Through this process, final calculations of wetland area present in the plan area will be obtained for project permitting. In addition, plans for proposed alteration to any watercourse should be submitted to CDFW for their review. These agencies' determinations, permits, and approved mitigation plans should be submitted as part of the final environmental package. The wetland habitat that will be lost under any given project element would be functionally replaced as part of the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan required for permit issuance. In-kind and on-site replacement of lost wetland habitats must be done where possible. If multiple impacts to wetlands occur from the construction of facilities, larger wetland mitigation areas will be created that provide greater functions and values than numerous small mitigation sites. The determination of wetland impacts and the subsequent location and design of potential mitigation sites would be determined by qualified biologists in coordination with resource agency personnel. Minimum replacement ratios should be established as follows: 2:1 for wetlands (by restoration, enhancement, or creation) and 3:1 for riparian habitat and streams (by restoration or enhancement). These ratios ensure no net loss of habitat area or ecological function. Mitigation and habitat restoration plans should provide the following: • Replacement of lost acreage and functions of wetland habitat • Location of restoration opportunities, complete with an analysis of the technical approach to create high-quality wetlands.	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		• Prior to construction of any project element that may impact wetland habitats, the project proponent will apply for permits from the USACE and RWQCB. The project proponent will comply with the conditions of the permit. Detailed plans will be prepared for wetland mitigation construction that include excavation elevations, location of hydrologic connections, planting plans and soil amendments, if necessary. Maintenance and monitoring plans are to be prepared in consultation with a qualified habitat restoration specialist. Any mitigation wetlands will be monitored for a period of 5 years, during which the site will achieve the performance criteria (as determined by wetland delineation) by Year 5. Specific performance criteria will be the same as those outlined in Mitigation Measure BIO-19 above. Monitoring reports will be provided annually to the appropriate resource agencies.	
Cultural Resources			
Loss or disturbance of cultural or archaeological resources	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure CUL-1(a):** Archaeological Resources Investigation At the time of application for discretionary land use permits that involve grading, trenching, excavation or other ground disturbance in native soil with the potential for encountering unknown archaeological resources, the project applicant shall retain a qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior standards in archaeology to complete a Phase 1 cultural resources assessment of the development site. A Phase 1 cultural resources assessment shall include an archaeological pedestrian survey of the development site, if possible, and sufficient background archival research and field sampling to determine whether subsurface prehistoric or historic remains may be present. The City shall ensure that a cultural resources records search is performed at the Northwest Information Center (NWIC) of the California Historical Resources Information System and a Sacred Lands File (SLF) search conducted with the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for the plan area for multi-family development projects arising that require ground disturbance (i.e., excavation, trenching, grading, etc.), and that record searches are current (no more than one-year old). To receive project	Significant and Unavoidable

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		approval, an archaeologist meeting the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SOIS) for Archeology must review the results and identify if the project would potentially impact cultural resources. If the archaeologist determines that known cultural resources or potential archaeologically sensitive areas may be impacted by the project, a pedestrian survey must be conducted under the supervision of a SOIS-qualified archaeologist of all accessible portions of the project area, if one has not been completed within the previous five years. Additional research, including subsurface testing, monitoring during construction, and/or a cultural resources awareness training may be required to identify, evaluate, and mitigate impacts to cultural resources, as recommended by the SOIS-qualified archaeologist. If avoidance is not feasible, the City shall consult with California Native American tribes identified by the NAHC to be affiliated with the plan area for the purposes of tribal consultation under Chapter 905, California Statutes of 2004 (if the resource is pre-contact or indigenous) to determine treatment measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any potential impacts to the resource pursuant to PRC Section 21083.2 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4. This shall include documentation of the resource and may include data recovery (according to PRC Section 21083.2), if deemed appropriate, or other actions such as treating the resource with culturally appropriate dignity and protecting the cultural character and integrity of the resource (according to PRC Section 21084.3). A cultural report detailing the results of the research shall be prepared and submitted for review by the City and a final draft shall be submitted to the NWIC. Once the report has been approved by the City, the City may issue appropriate permits. Identified prehistoric or historic archaeological remains shall be avoided and preserved in place, where feasible. Where preservation is not feasible, the significance of each resource shall be evaluated for significance and eligibility for listing in the CRHR through a Phase 2 evaluation. A Phase 2 evaluation shall include any necessary archival research to identify significant historical associations as well as mapping of surface artifacts, collection of functionally or temporally diagnostic tools and debris, and excavation of a sample of the cultural deposit to characterize the nature of the sites, define the artifact and feature contents, determine horizontal boundaries and depth below surface, and	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		retrieve representative samples of artifacts and other remains. Cultural materials collected from the sites shall be processed and analyzed in the laboratory according to standard archaeological procedures. The age of the materials shall be determined using radiocarbon dating and/or other appropriate procedures; lithic artifacts, faunal remains, and other cultural materials shall be identified and analyzed according to current professional standards. The significance of the sites shall be evaluated according to the criteria of the CRHR. The results of the investigations shall be presented in a technical report following the standards of the California Office of Historic Preservation publication "Archaeological Resource Management Reports: Recommended Content and Format (1990 or latest edition)" (http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1054/files/armr.pdf). Upon completion of the work, all artifacts, other cultural remains, records, photographs, and other documentation shall be curated an appropriate curation facility. All fieldwork, analysis, report production, and curation shall be fully funded by the applicant. If the resources meet CRHR significance standards, the City shall ensure that all feasible recommendations for mitigation of archaeological impacts are incorporated into the final design and permits issued for development. If necessary, Phase 3 data recovery excavation, conducted to exhaust the data potential of significant archaeological sites, shall be carried out by a qualified archaeologist meeting the SOI standards for archaeology according to a research design reviewed and approved by the City prepared in advance of fieldwork and using appropriate archaeological field and laboratory methods consistent with the California Office of Historic Preservation Planning Bulletin 5 (1991), Guidelines for Archaeological Research Design, or the latest edition thereof. As applicable, the final Phase 1 Inventory, Phase 2 Testing and Evaluation, and/or Phase 3 Data Recovery reports shall be submitted to the City prior to issuance of construction permit. Recommendations contained therein shall be implemented throughout all ground disturbance activities.	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Loss or disturbance of archaeological resources	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure CUL-1(b):** Archaeological Resources Construction Monitoring. During construction of the development, construction activities involving ground disturbance such as grading or excavation shall be monitored by a qualified archaeologist. Archaeological monitoring shall be performed under the direction of an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for archaeology (National Park Service, 1983). Should the construction site be determined to have little if any potential to yield subsurface cultural resources deposits, the qualified archaeologist may recommend that monitoring be reduced or eliminated after consulting with the City and Native American representatives.	Significant and Unavoidable
Loss or disturbance of archaeological resource	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure CUL-2:** Unanticipated Discovery of Archaeological Resource In the event that archaeological resources are unexpectedly encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work within 50 feet of the find shall halt and an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for archaeology (National Park Service 1983) shall be contacted immediately to evaluate the find. If the resource is determined by the qualified archaeologist to be prehistoric, then a Native American representative shall also be contacted to participate in the evaluation of the resource. If the qualified archaeologist and/or Native American representative determines it to be appropriate, archaeological testing for CRHR eligibility shall be completed. If the resource proves to be eligible for the CRHR and impacts to the resource cannot be avoided via project redesign, a qualified archaeologist shall prepare a data recovery plan tailored to the physical nature and characteristics of the resource, per the requirements of CCR Guidelines Section 15126.4(b)(3)(C).	Significant and Unavoidable
Loss or disturbance of historical resource	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure CUL-3(a):** Historical Resources Evaluation For a discretionary project that would demolish, relocate, or substantially alter the exterior of a building or structure 45 years of age or older, at the time of complete project application submittal but prior to project approval, the Community Development Director shall determine whether the affected property is a designated historical resource, has previously been evaluated for historical significance, or has a reasonable	Significant and Unavoidable Impact

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		potential to qualify as a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. At this stage, City staff shall conduct an initial screening using information reasonably available to the City. Such information may include the City's historic resource inventories and surveys; the Downtown Watsonville Historic Resources Survey; designations made pursuant to Chapter 8-21 of the Watsonville Municipal Code; California Historical Resources Inventory information; previous environmental documents or historical evaluations; assessor records; historic maps and photographs; building permit records; photographs of the existing property; and other readily available information. In conducting the screening, City staff shall consider whether the property: (1) has previously been identified as historically significant or potentially significant; (2) appears to retain sufficient integrity to convey its historical character; (3) exhibits distinctive architectural characteristics; (4) has a known association with significant persons, events, institutions, cultural groups, industries, or patterns of development in Watsonville; or (5) may contribute to an existing or potential historic district. No Further Evaluation. If the property has previously been evaluated and found ineligible for historical designation and no substantial new information indicates that the property's historical significance has changed, or if City staff determines based on the initial screening that there is no reasonable potential for the property to qualify as a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5, no additional historical resource evaluation shall be required under this measure. Further Evaluation. If the initial screening indicates that the property has a reasonable potential to qualify as a historical resource, or if available information is insufficient for City staff to make that determination, a historical resources evaluation shall be prepared by an architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61) to evaluate the building or structure for eligibility for listing on the National Register, California Register, and for local eligibility. The qualified architectural historian or historian shall conduct an intensive-level survey and perform the historical evaluation in accordance with the guidelines and best practices	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		promulgated by the California OHP. Properties shall be evaluated within their historic context and documented in a report meeting the California OHP guidelines. All evaluated properties shall be documented on California Department of Parks and Recreation Series 523 Forms. The report with attached Department of Parks and Recreation forms shall be submitted to the City for review and concurrence. If the evaluation shall determine that the property qualifies as a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5, the project shall comply with Mitigation Measures CUL-3(b) and CUL-3(c).	
Loss or disturbance of historical resource	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure CUL-3(b):** Compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties If it is determined by the City that a proposed project located in the plan area contains a historical resource, prior to any demolition or significant alteration of the historic resource, efforts shall be made to avoid adverse impacts as feasible, including actions that could compromise the character defining features of said resource. For projects located in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area, project design shall be consistent with the historic preservation components listed in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatments of Historic Properties (the Standards), WMC Chapter 21 (Preservation of Historical, Architectural, and Aesthetic Structures) of Title 8 (Building Regulations) and DWSP Vision Themes and Guiding Principles, including but not limited to: • Revitalize and showcase the beautiful historic architecture and urban fabric in downtown. • Revitalize vacant historic structure into vibrant mixed use-buildings that incorporate housing. • Reclaim and adaptively reuse vacant historic buildings for new, contemporary uses that contribute to the desired character. Any relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of a resource shall be implemented consistent with the Standards. Application of the Standards shall be overseen by a	Significant and Unavoidable Impact

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		qualified architectural historian or historical architect meeting the Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualification Standards in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61). In conjunction with any development application that may impact a historical resource, a report identifying and specifying proposed construction activities and the treatment of character-defining features shall be provided to the City for review and concurrence as part of the planning process, in addition to a historical resources evaluation.	
Loss or disturbance of historical resource	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure CUL-3(c):** Historical Resource Documentation If historical resources are identified on a proposed project site located in the plan area and compliance with Mitigation Measure CUL-3(b) and/or avoidance is not feasible, the project applicant or developer shall provide a report explaining why compliance with the Standards and/or avoidance is not feasible for the City's review and approval. Site-specific mitigation measures shall be established and undertaken, including, but not limited to, documentation of the historical resource in a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) or HABS-like report. If a HABS or HABS-like report is proposed, it shall be commissioned by the project applicant or their consultant to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Architectural and Engineering Documentation (Federal Register Vol. 48, No. 190, pp. 44730-34) and shall generally follow the Historic American Buildings Survey Level III requirements, including digital photographic recordation, detailed historic narrative report, and compilation of historical research. The documentation shall be completed by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualification Standards in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61) and submitted to the City prior to issuance of permits for the demolition or alteration of the historical resource.	Significant and Unavoidable Impact
Disturbance of human remains	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measures CUL-4:** Encountering Human Remains In the event that human remains are unearthed during excavation and grading activities of any future development project, the project applicant shall ensure that all activity shall cease immediately. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 7050.5, no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made the necessary	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		findings as to origin and disposition pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98(a). If the remains are determined to be of Native American descent, the coroner shall within 24 hours notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). The NAHC shall then contact the most likely descendent of the deceased Native American, who shall then serve as the consultant on how to proceed with the remains. Pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98(b), upon the discovery of Native American remains, the landowner shall ensure that the immediate vicinity, according to generally accepted cultural or archaeological standards or practices, where the Native American human remains are located is not damaged or disturbed by further development activity until the landowner has discussed and conferred with the most likely descendants regarding their recommendations, if applicable, taking into account the possibility of multiple human remains. The landowner shall discuss and confer with the descendants all reasonable options regarding the descendants' preferences for treatment.	
Geology and Soils			
Loss and disturbance of paleontological resources	Less than Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure GEO-1:** Discovery of Paleontological Resources In the event that fossils or fossil bearing deposits are discovered during ground disturbing activities, excavations within a 50-foot radius of the find shall be temporarily halted or diverted. Ground disturbance work shall cease until a City-approved qualified paleontologist determines whether the resource requires further study. The paleontologist shall document the discovery as needed in accordance with Society of Vertebrate Paleontology standards (Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, 2025), evaluate the potential resource, and assess the significance of the find under the criteria set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. The paleontologist shall notify the appropriate agencies to determine procedures that would be followed before construction activities are allowed to resume at the location of the find. If avoidance is not feasible, the paleontologist shall prepare an excavation plan for mitigating the effect of construction activities on the discovery. The excavation plan shall be submitted to the City for review and approval prior to implementation, and all construction activity shall adhere to the recommendations in the excavation plan.	Less than Significant Impact

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Greenhouse Gas Emissions			
Greenhouse gas emission from development	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure GHG-1:** Project-Level Greenhouse Gas Analysis and Reduction Prior to approval of a discretionary development project facilitated by General Plan 2050 buildout, the applicant shall complete the City's CAAP Consistency Checklist. If the project cannot demonstrate consistency with the CAAP or may generate GHG emissions not adequately addressed in this EIR, the applicant shall prepare a project-specific GHG emissions analysis for City review. If the analysis identifies a significant impact, the project shall incorporate all feasible GHG reduction measures through project design, conditions of approval, or another enforceable mechanism.	Significant and Unavoidable
Hazards and Hazardous Materials			
Exposure to hazardous materials	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure HAZ-1:** Property Assessment – Phase I and II ESAs Prior to the start of construction (demolition or grading) on a known hazardous site within the plan area, project applicants shall retain a qualified environmental professional (EP), as defined by ASTM E-1527, to complete one of the following. If the project is not listed in DTSC (GeoTracker) or SWRCB (EnviroStor) resources or other database comprising Government Code Section 65962.5, and requires more than five feet of excavation, then the proponent shall retain a qualified environmental consultant, California Professional Geologist (PG) or California Professional Engineer (PE), to prepare a Phase I ESA. If the Phase I ESA identifies recognized environmental conditions or potential concern areas, a Phase II ESA shall be prepared. If the project site is currently listed, previously listed, or un-listed with a regulatory closure or no further action letter in DTSC (GeoTracker) or SWRCB (EnviroStor) resources or other database comprising Government Code Section 65962.5, then the project proponent shall retain a qualified environmental consultant, California Professional Geologist (PG) or California Professional Engineer (PE), to prepare a Phase II ESA to project proponent shall test to confirm that there are no existing hazardous materials	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		posing a risk to human health. The Phase II ESA shall determine whether the soil, groundwater, and/or soil vapor has been impacted at concentrations exceeding regulatory screening levels for commercial/industrial land uses. All recommended actions included in the Phase II ESA shall be followed. This may include the preparation of a Soil Management Plan (SMP) for Impacted Soils (see below) prior to project construction and/or completion of remediation at the proposed project prior to onsite construction. The completed ESAs shall be submitted to the lead agency for review and approval prior to issuance of building or grading permits. Soil Management Plan Requirements: The SMP, or equivalent document, shall be prepared to address onsite handling and management of impacted soils or other impacted wastes, and reduce hazards to construction workers and offsite receptors during construction. The plan shall be submitted to the lead agency and must establish remedial measures and/or soil management practices to ensure construction worker safety, the health of future workers and visitors, and the off-site migration of contaminants from the site. These measures and practices may include, but are not limited to: • Stockpile management including stormwater pollution prevention and the installation of BMPs • Proper disposal procedures of contaminated materials • Monitoring and reporting • A health and safety plan for contractors working at the site that addresses the safety and health hazards of each phase of site construction activities with the requirements and procedures for employee protection • The health and safety plan shall also outline proper soil handling procedures and health and safety requirements to minimize worker and public exposure to hazardous materials during construction. • The lead agency shall review and approve the development site Soil Management	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		Plan for Impacted Soils prior to demolition and grading (construction). Soil Remediation Requirements: If soil present within the construction envelope at the development site contains chemicals at concentrations exceeding hazardous waste screening thresholds for contaminants in soil (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 22, Section 66261.24), the project proponent shall retain a qualified environmental consultant (PG or PE), to conduct additional analytical testing and recommend soil disposal recommendations, or consider other remedial engineering controls, as necessary. The qualified environmental consultant shall utilize the development site analytical results for waste characterization purposes prior to offsite transportation or disposal of potentially impacted soils or other impacted wastes. The qualified environmental consultant shall provide disposal recommendations and arrange for proper disposal of the waste soils or other impacted wastes (as necessary), and/or provide recommendations for remedial engineering controls, if appropriate. Remediation of impacted soils and/or implementation of remedial engineering controls may require additional delineation of impacts; additional analytical testing per landfill or recycling facility requirements; soil excavation; and offsite disposal or recycling. The City shall review and approve the development site disposal recommendations prior to transportation of waste soils offsite and review and approve remedial engineering controls, prior to construction.	
Exposure to hazardous materials	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure HAZ-2:** Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessment If groundwater is encountered during construction on properties included on a list compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 or through a Phase I or Phase II ESA pursuant to Mitigation Measure HAZ-1, an Environmental Professional shall be called to the site to determine safe handling procedures. The groundwater shall be pumped into appropriate containers and samples shall be obtained for chemical analysis of the Contaminants of Potential Concern in accordance with the requirements of the waste disposal facility to which the material would be sent. If water sample analytical	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		results indicate the water is free of all detectable concentrations of Contaminants of Potential Concern, such water can be re-used at the site if deemed appropriate by the RWQCB. If water sample analytical results indicate the water contains concentrations of Contaminants of Potential Concern above appropriate RWQCB screening levels, such water shall not be re-used at the site. The contractor and the Environmental Professional shall elect to: (a) treat the groundwater onsite to render it free of detectable concentrations of Contaminants of Potential Concern (e.g., by activated carbon filtration); or (b) transport the groundwater to a local treatment or disposal facility for appropriate handling.	
Noise			
Operational hourly average noise levels during construction days would exceed the noise levels	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure NOI-1:** Standard Construction Noise Controls Project applicants shall minimize the exposure of nearby properties to excessive noise levels from construction-related activity through CEQA review, conditions of approval, and/or enforcement of the City's Noise Ordinance. Prior to issuance of demolition, grading, and/or building permits for development projects, a note shall be provided on development plans indicating that during on-going grading, demolition, and construction, the property owner/developer shall be responsible for requiring contractors to implement the following standard construction noise controls shall be implemented at a project site within the City of Watsonville: • Construction activities shall be limited to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays. No construction is permitted on Sundays or holidays, unless permission is granted with a development permit or other planning approval. • Utilize the best available noise suppression devices and techniques during construction activities. • Equip all internal combustion engine-driven equipment with intake and exhaust mufflers that are in good condition and appropriate for the equipment.	Less than Significant Impacts with Mitigation

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		• Unnecessary idling of internal combustion engines shall be strictly prohibited. • Locate stationary noise-generating equipment, such as air compressors or portable power generators, as far as possible from sensitive receptors. Construct temporary noise barriers to screen stationary noise-generating equipment when located near adjoining sensitive land uses. • Utilize "quiet" air compressors and other stationary noise sources where technology exists. • Construction staging areas shall be established at locations that would create the greatest distance between the construction-related noise source and noise-sensitive receptors near the project site during all project construction. • Locate material stockpiles, as well as maintenance/equipment staging and parking areas, as far as feasible from residential receptors. • Control noise from construction workers' radios to a point where they are not audible at existing residences bordering the project site. • Notify all adjacent businesses, residences, and other noise-sensitive land uses of the construction schedule, in writing, and provide a written schedule of "noisy" construction activities to the adjacent land uses and nearby residences. • Designate a "disturbance coordinator" who shall be responsible for responding to any complaints about construction noise. The disturbance coordinator shall determine the cause of the noise complaint (e.g., bad muffler, etc.) and require that reasonable measures be implemented to correct the problem. Conspicuously post a telephone number for the disturbance coordinator at the construction site and include it in the notice sent to neighbors regarding the construction schedule. • If receptors adjoin the project site, construct a solid plywood fence along the shared property line, where feasible. A temporary noise barrier, tall enough to block direct line-of-sight with ground-level receptors, would provide about 5	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		dBA attenuation for adjacent noise-sensitive receptors when construction activities occur at the ground level. • If impact pile driving is proposed, foundation pile holes shall be pre-drilled to minimize the number of impacts required to seat the pile. Pre-drilling foundation pile holes is a standard construction noise control technique. Pre-drilling reduces the number of blows required to seat the pile. • If impact pile driving is proposed, multiple pile drivers shall be considered to expedite construction. Although noise levels generated by multiple pile drivers would be higher than the noise generated from a single pile driver, the total duration of pile driving activities would be reduced. • If impact pile driving is proposed, temporary noise control blanket barriers shall shroud pile drivers or be erected in a manner to shield the adjacent land uses. Such noise control blanket barriers can be rented and quickly erected. If the hammer is shrouded, about 3 to 5 dBA of noise reduction could be expected, and more reduction could be achieved with the inclusion of a property line barrier. If a noise control blanket is erected on the receiving buildings, 5 to 10 dB of noise reduction could be achieved, depending upon how much shielding can be reasonably achieved. • If pile driving is proposed and geological conditions permit, Cast-In-Drilled-Hole (CIDH) foundation systems shall be used instead of impact or vibratory pile driving. CIDH methods could reduce noise levels by 20 dB, as compared to impact pile driving.	
New developments would potentially produce noise levels	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure NOI-2:** Operation of a New Project Would Result in a Permanent Noise Increase Exceeding the Limits Project applicants shall minimize the exposure of nearby properties to excessive noise levels from project operations through CEQA review, conditions of approval, and/or enforcement of the City's Noise Ordinance. Prior to issuance of demolition, grading, and/or building permits for development projects, a note shall be provided on	Significant and Unavoidable

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		development plans indicating that one or more of the following shall be implemented within the City of Watsonville if operation of a new project would result in a permanent noise increase exceeding the limits in Action N-1.1.4 or exceeds existing ambient daytime or nighttime Leq noise levels by a significant amount: • Mechanical equipment shall be selected and designed to reduce noise levels to meet City requirements at the nearby noise-sensitive land uses. A detailed acoustical study shall be prepared during final building design to evaluate the potential noise generated by building mechanical equipment and demonstrate the necessary noise control to meet the City's Action N-1.1.4 threshold and would not exceed ambient noise levels by a significant amount. Noise control features, such as sound attenuators, baffles, and barriers, shall be identified and evaluated to demonstrate that mechanical equipment noise would not exceed the City's Action N-1.1.4 threshold or existing ambient noise levels by a significant amount at noise-sensitive locations around the project site. The noise control features identified by the study shall be incorporated into the project prior to issuance of a building permit. • For truck loading/unloading operations exceeding the City's noise limits at the property lines of noise-sensitive receptors, a qualified acoustical consultant shall be retained to review that one or more of the following measures have been incorporated into the project and to verify that the project does not result in a permanent noise level increase or that daytime ambient Leq is not exceeded by a significant amount: o Implement a no idling policy that requires engines to be turned off after five minutes; o Ensure the truck docks are recessed into the ground; o Equip loading bay doors with rubberized gasket type seals to allow little loading noise to escape; o Locate loading docks in less sensitive locations, away from noise-	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		sensitive receptors or shielded from noise-sensitive receptors; and o Construct a noise barrier between the loading docks and noise-sensitive receptors. The proposed barrier shall be continuous from grade to top, with no cracks or gaps, and have a minimum surface density of three lbs/ft2 (e.g., one-inch-thick marine-grade plywood, ½-inch laminated glass, concrete masonry units (CMU)). The minimum height of the barrier shall be determined by the acoustical consultant and shall be tall enough to break the line-of-sight between the noise source and the sensitive receptor. • To reduce noise levels exceeding the City limits during events, sporting activities, concerts, etc., involving amplified speech and/or music, a qualified acoustical consultant shall be retained to review that one or more of the following measures has been incorporated into the project and to verify that the project does not result in a permanent noise level increase or that daytime ambient Leq is not exceeded by a significant amount: o Allowable hours of the events and the use of amplified speech and/or music shall be limited to daytime (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) hours only; and o PA systems, music equipment, and speakers shall be set up such that they are oriented away from noise-sensitive receptors. The volume shall be controlled such that noise levels do not exceed existing ambient Leq is not exceeded by a significant amount at the property lines of noise-sensitive receptors or does not result in a significant permanent noise level increase	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
Construction equipment used at project sites within the City could operate within the screening distances	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure NOI-3:** Exceeded Vibration Limits Project applicants shall minimize the exposure of nearby properties to excessive groundborne vibrations from construction-related activity through CEQA review, conditions of approval, and/or enforcement of the City's General Plan 2050 Action N-1.1.3. Prior to issuance of demolition, grading, and/or building permits for development projects, a note shall be provided on development plans indicating that during on-going grading, demolition, and construction, the property owner/developer shall be responsible for requiring contractors to implement best available controls where vibration limits are exceeded at off-site buildings surrounding construction sites within the City of Watsonville: • A list of all heavy construction equipment to be used for this project known to produce high vibration levels (tracked vehicles, vibratory compaction, jackhammers, hoe rams, etc.) shall be submitted to the City by the contractor. This list shall be used to identify equipment and activities that would potentially generate substantial vibration and to define the level of effort for reducing vibration levels below the thresholds. • Place operating equipment on the construction site as far as possible from vibration-sensitive receptors. • Smaller, non-pile-driving equipment (less than 18,000 pounds) shall be used near the property lines or adjacent sensitive buildings to minimize vibration levels. For example, a smaller vibratory roller similar to a Caterpillar model CP433E vibratory compactor could be used when compacting materials within 12 feet of modern buildings, within 19 feet of older buildings, and within 27 feet of historic buildings. The smaller equipment intended to implement this requirement shall be individually identified among the list of equipment required under the above condition as a subset of equipment allowed for use at the property lines. • Avoid dropping heavy equipment and using vibratory rollers within 12 feet of modern buildings, within 19 feet of older buildings, and within 27 feet of	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		historic buildings. Use alternative methods for breaking up existing pavement, such as a pavement grinder, instead of dropping heavy objects, within 12 feet of modern buildings, within 19 feet of older buildings, and within 27 feet of historic buildings. Select demolition methods that do not involve large impact tools, such as hoe-rams, within 12 feet of modern buildings, within 19 feet of older buildings, and within 27 feet of historic buildings. Portable jackhammers, saws, or grinders shall be used to minimize impacts to the ground. • Notify neighbors within 500 feet of the construction site of the construction schedule and that there could be noticeable vibration levels resulting from impact or vibratory pile driving, if applicable. • For all projects requiring impact pile driving, foundation pile holes shall be pre-drilled to minimize the number of impacts required to seat the pile. • For all projects requiring impact pile driving, jet or partially jet piles into place to minimize the number of impacts required to seat the pile. • If the above measures are not feasible to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level at adjoining historic buildings or at any building adjoining pile driving activities, a Construction Vibration Monitoring Plan (Plan) shall be implemented to document conditions prior to, during, and after construction or pile driving activities. The Plan shall be developed by a qualified acoustical consultant, and all plan tasks shall be undertaken under the direction of a licensed Professional Structural Engineer in the State of California and be in accordance with industry-accepted standard methods. The Plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following tasks: o Identify the sensitivity of nearby structures to groundborne vibration activities. A vibration survey (generally described below) would need to be performed. o Perform a photo survey, elevation survey, and crack monitoring survey at all identified sensitive structures. Surveys shall be performed prior to any demolition or pile driving activity, at regular intervals during	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		construction or pile driving, and after completion, and shall include internal and external crack monitoring in structures, settlement, and distress, and shall document the condition of foundations, walls, and other structural elements in the interior and exterior of said structures. o Develop a vibration monitoring and construction contingency plan to identify structures where monitoring would be conducted, set up a vibration monitoring schedule, define structure-specific vibration limits, and address the need to conduct photo, elevation, and crack surveys to document before and after demolition/construction or pile driving. Alternative construction methods would be identified for when vibration levels approach 0.5 in/sec PPV at modern buildings, 0.3 in/sec PPV at older buildings, and 0.2 in/sec PPV at historic buildings. o If vibration levels approach limits, suspend construction and implement alternative construction methods to either lower vibration levels or secure the affected structures. o Conduct post-surveys on structures where either monitoring has indicated high levels or complaints of damage have been made. Make appropriate repairs or compensation where damage has occurred as a result of construction activities. o The results of all vibration monitoring shall be summarized and submitted in a report shortly after substantial completion of each phase identified in the project schedule. The report will include a description of measurement methods, equipment used, calibration certificates, and graphics as required to clearly identify vibration-monitoring locations. An explanation of all events that exceeded the vibration limits will be included, together with proper documentation supporting any such claims. o Designate a person responsible for registering and investigating claims of excessive vibration. The contact information of such a person shall	

Potential Environmental Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measures	Level of Significance After Mitigation
		be clearly posted on the construction site.	
Tribal Cultural Resources			
Loss or disturbance to tribal cultural resources and tribal access and participation	Potentially Significant Impact	**Mitigation Measure TCR-1:** Suspension of Work in the Area of Potential Tribal Cultural Resources In the event that potential tribal cultural resources, such as archaeological resources of Native American origin or tribal traditional tangible spaces or artifacts (historic-era and pre-contact era), are identified during implementation of a future development project within the plan area, the project applicant/ landowner shall ensure that on-site project activities within 50 feet of the find shall be temporarily suspended or redirected until either a qualified archaeologist meeting the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SOIS) for Archeology has evaluated the nature and significance of the find (if archaeological) as a pre-contact or Native American- associated resource and an appropriate local Native American representative is consulted, or an appropriate local Native American representative is consulted regarding the significance of the resource (if not archaeological). If the City of Watsonville, in consultation with local Native American Tribes, determines that the resource is a tribal cultural resource and thus significant under CEQA, a mitigation plan shall be prepared and implemented for the specific development project in accordance with state guidelines and in consultation with local Native American group(s). The plan shall include avoidance of the resource or, if avoidance of the resource is infeasible, the plan shall outline the appropriate treatment of the resource in coordination with the appropriate local Native American tribal representative and, if applicable, a qualified archaeologist. Examples of appropriate mitigation for tribal cultural resources include, but are not limited to, protecting the cultural character and integrity of the resource, protecting traditional use of the resource, protecting the confidentiality of the resource or providing Tribal cultural sensitivity training about the resource to applicable City staff if it will be managed, appropriate public outreach regarding the resource, or heritage recovery (recovering items of tribal cultural heritage according to established tribal customs).	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) examines the potential environmental effects of the City of Watsonville's General Plan Update, referred to herein as the project or General Plan 2050. The environmental review process for the project and the legal basis for preparing an EIR under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), are described below.

1.1 Overview of General Plan 2050

From 2003-2006 the City of Watsonville (City) conducted a planning process to update the Watsonville 2005 General Plan, resulting in the VISTA 2030 Plan ("Vision To Action" Plan) for Watsonville. That plan was intended to build upon the 2005 General Plan and Watsonville's many strengths and opportunities and to evolve the City to a more vibrant urban place set in rich agricultural and natural environments.

The VISTA 2030 Plan was first adopted in 2006. However, a court decision from the subsequent lawsuit was issued in 2008. A second attempt to adopt the 2030 Plan and associated EIR occurred in 2013, but the court again found in favor of the appellants in 2014. The ensuing settlement agreements obligated the City to rescind the VISTA 2030 Plan, leaving the 2005 General Plan in place as the City's guiding document until the adoption of this General Plan 2050. Careful analysis of the VISTA 2030 Plan in relation to current community priorities and planning best practices also reveals that much of the good work in that document remains relevant today.

The City proposes to update the 2005 General Plan in order to reflect changes in applicable goals and policies, which address a range of topics, including: land use and community design; economic development; transportation; parks, recreation, and open space; natural resources conservation; safety; air quality; noise; and infrastructure. The plan area, as described in **Chapter 2, Project Description**, entail updates which include annexation and extension of the urban limit line (ULL) as part of the proposed project. Additionally, the City is proposing land use changes to unincorporated areas and will introduce new land use designations within City limits, such as the new Corridor Mixed-Use, Corridor Mixed-Use Center, Gateway Commercial and Industrial Light.

Originally adopted in 1994, the Watsonville 2005 General Plan currently serves as the blueprint for the development of the City. The Watsonville 2005 General Plan anticipated a total population of 51,600 in the city limits and its Sphere of Influence (SOI) by 2005. To accommodate this growth, the Watsonville 2005 General Plan established an urban limit line consistent with the adoption of Measure U in November of 2002. Measure U established the outer edge where urban development can occur. It defines a greenbelt along part of the ULL that serves as a buffer between adjacent farmland and natural resources, and urbanization. This ULL extends beyond the city limits and includes the incorporation of the Freedom area, a portion of the Buena Vista Area, and the Atkinson Lane Area. The Manabe-Ow industrial area was annexed to the City of Watsonville in 2006 and the required specific plan for the area was subsequently adopted in 2010.

The City plans to update the Watsonville 2005 General Plan with General Plan 2050 to guide future development in a way that will support the needs of the residents of the City of Watsonville.

The City of Watsonville adopted the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) in October 2023 to guide future planning and development in the City's downtown area, which is within the planning area for General Plan 2050. The DWSP aims to provide mixed-use infill development in the downtown core and support population and job growth while preserving the area's historical character. DWSP is

consistent with the Watsonville 2005 General Plan, and it would continue to be a valid planning document in the DWSP planning area following the adoption of General Plan 2050, because implementation of General Plan 2050 does not include land use changes or amendments to DWSP. The DWSP EIR is incorporated herein by reference. Accordingly, applicable best management practices, project design features, and mitigation measures identified in the DWSP EIR have been derived from and incorporated into this GP 2050 EIR, where appropriate, and would be applied throughout General Plan 2050 planning areas as appropriate and feasible.

1.2 Purpose of the EIR

CEQA requires that all State and local government agencies consider the environmental consequences of programs and projects over which they have discretionary authority before taking action on them. This EIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with continued implementation of the approved General Plan for the City of Watsonville.

This EIR has been prepared in compliance with CEQA, California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq; the California CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq); and the rules, regulations, and procedures for implementing CEQA as adopted by the City of Watsonville. This EIR is intended to serve as an informational document for the public agency decision-makers and the public regarding the potential environmental impacts associated with General Plan 2050. In addition to identifying potential environmental impacts, this EIR also identifies the goals, objectives, policies, and standards that are part of General Plan 2050 that will avoid or reduce potentially significant environmental impacts and identifies mitigation measures and alternatives to reduce potentially significant environmental impacts.

This EIR is the primary reference document for the formulation and implementation of a mitigation monitoring program for General Plan 2050. Environmental impacts cannot always be mitigated to a level that is considered less than significant. In accordance with Section 15093(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines, if a lead agency such as the City of Watsonville approves a project (i.e., text changes to the approved General Plan and continued implementation of the approved General Plan) that has significant impacts that are not substantially mitigated (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts), the lead agency shall state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the final CEQA documents and any other information in the public record for the project. This requirement is identified in Section 15093 of the state of CEQA Guidelines, “a statement of overriding considerations.” For General Plan 2050, the following impacts were found to be significant and unavoidable: agricultural resources, air quality, cultural resources, and greenhouse gas. These impacts are discussed in more detail throughout **Chapter 4** of this EIR.

1.3 Type of EIR

The State CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. This EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. Section 15168 states:

“A program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:

1. Geographically;
2. As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions;
3. In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the

conduct of a continuing program; or

4. As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways."

The program-level analysis considers the broad environmental effects of the proposed project. This EIR will be used to evaluate subsequent projects and activities under General Plan 2050. This EIR is intended to provide the information and environmental analysis necessary to assist public agency decision-makers in considering approval of the proposed project, but not to the level of detail to consider approval of subsequent development projects that may occur after adoption of General Plan 2050. Additional environmental review under CEQA may be required for subsequent projects and would be generally based on the subsequent project's consistency with the General Plan and the analysis in this EIR, as required under CEQA. It may be determined that some future projects or infrastructure improvements may be exempt from environmental review. When individual subsequent projects or activities under the General Plan are proposed, the City will examine the projects or activities to determine whether their effects were adequately analyzed in this Program EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168). If the projects or activities would have no effects beyond those disclosed in this EIR, no further CEQA compliance would be required.

1.4 Environmental Review Process

CEQA Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21000, et seq., requires that a public agency prepare an EIR when the public agency finds substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment (PRC Section 21080 [d]). The basic purposes of CEQA are to:

1. Inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities;
2. Identify the ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced;
3. Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when the governmental agency finds the changes to be feasible; and
4. Disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project in the manner the agency chose if significant environmental effects are involved.

In compliance with the State CEQA Guidelines, the City has taken steps to maximize opportunities for the public and other public agencies to participate in the environmental review process. The City conducted the scoping process, determined that an EIR was required to evaluate the potentially significant environmental effects of General Plan 2050 and related actions, and issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the preparation of an EIR for the proposed project that solicited input on the scope and content of the EIR. In addition, a public scoping meeting was held, as discussed further below.

1.4.1 Notice of Preparation

The scope of this EIR reflects the issues identified during the Notice of Preparation (NOP) process for the proposed project. The NOP was prepared in accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines and was intended to provide responsible and trustee agencies, the State Office of Planning and Research, Native American tribes, organizations, and interested members of the public with sufficient information regarding the project and its potential environmental effects to facilitate meaningful input on the scope and content of the EIR.

The original NOP was circulated for the required 30-day review period beginning on September 12, 2024, to notify agencies and the public that an EIR was being prepared for General Plan 2050 and to solicit comments regarding the scope and content of the environmental analysis. Subsequently, the project description was revised to include approximately 55 acres within the Highway 1 Gateway area for potential annexation and future non-residential development. As a result, an updated NOP was circulated on January 24, 2025, for an additional 30-day review period. Copies of all NOP comment letters are provided in Appendix A.

Comments received during the NOP review periods generally focused on environmental issues and planning considerations that should be evaluated in the EIR. The comments identified several recurring themes, summarized below:

- **Land Use, Growth, and Annexation.** Agencies and members of the public requested analysis of potential annexation areas, consistency with Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) policies, the Urban Limit Line, agricultural land conversion, and the relationship between future growth and voter-adopted land use policies.
- **Agricultural Resources.** Commenters expressed concern regarding the potential conversion of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, particularly within the Highway 1 Gateway area and other potential growth areas. Requests included evaluation of alternatives that minimize farmland conversion and consideration of the economic, environmental, and cultural importance of agricultural lands.
- **Water Supply, Groundwater, and Water Quality.** Agencies raised concerns regarding future water demand, groundwater basin sustainability, stormwater runoff, groundwater recharge, and cumulative impacts on water resources. Recommendations included implementation of water conservation measures, low-impact development practices, and drought-tolerant landscaping.
- **Biological Resources and Wetlands.** Resource agencies requested evaluation of special-status species, sensitive habitats, wetlands, riparian corridors, wildlife movement, and cumulative impacts on biological resources. Recommendations included habitat surveys, avoidance and minimization measures, buffer zones, and best management practices to protect sensitive resources. CEQA-related comments concerning biological resources and wetlands are addressed in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**, of this EIR.
- **Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources.** Tribal representatives and the Native American Heritage Commission emphasized compliance with Assembly Bill (AB) 52 and Senate Bill (SB) 18 consultation requirements, protection of tribal cultural resources, evaluation of culturally sensitive sites, and development of appropriate mitigation measures for future ground-disturbing activities.
- **Transportation and Mobility.** Transportation agencies requested analysis of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit-oriented development, complete streets, transportation demand management strategies, and coordination with regional transportation improvements.
- **Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** Commenters requested evaluation of emissions associated with projected growth, consideration of impacts on disadvantaged communities and sensitive receptors, expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure, and implementation of strategies to reduce vehicle trips and associated emissions.
- **Geology, Hazards, and Wildfire.** Comments addressed seismic hazards, liquefaction, landslide

potential, airport-related safety considerations, wildfire hazards, and other public safety issues associated with future development.

- **Airport Compatibility.** The Watsonville Airport Advisory Committee and Airport Management requested evaluation of airport land use compatibility, aircraft noise, safety zones, airspace protection, runway configuration alternatives, and potential effects on future development in areas surrounding the airport.

Overall, comments received during the NOP process helped refine the scope of environmental review contained in this EIR. Consistent with CEQA and Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, these comments were considered in determining the scope and content of the environmental analysis. Environmental issues raised by agencies, tribes, organizations, and members of the public are addressed throughout the relevant sections of this EIR, including **Chapter 4, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures**; **Chapter 5, Cumulative Impacts**; and **Chapter 8, Alternatives**, as appropriate.

A summary of the NOP comments and their disposition in this EIR is provided in **Table 1** of Appendix B. **Table 1** provides a cross-reference of comments received during the NOP process and identifies where each issue raised is addressed within the EIR.

1.4.2 Scoping Meeting

Since the proposed project includes amending the text of the General Plan, the project is considered to be of regional or area-wide significance in accordance with Section 15206 of the CEQA Guidelines. For projects of regional or area-wide significance, at least one scoping meeting is required as identified in Section 15082(c) (1) of the CEQA guidelines. During the agency and public review period for the NOP, the City of Watsonville held a virtual EIR public scoping meeting on October 9, 2024. An additional scoping meeting was held on February 18, 2025 after the reissuance of the NOP, described above. Key environmental issues and concerns raised at the scoping meeting included: population increase, traffic, water quality, groundwater recharge, recreational facilities, endangered species, tree removal, emergency access, and stormwater. Additional non-CEQA related concerns including the boundaries of the ULL, closure of the Watsonville Municipal Airport's crosswind runway, and business and job preservation are not addressed in the EIR but are included in General Plan 2050. A complete compilation of comments received during the NOP scoping meetings is included in Appendix A. Appendix B summarizes the comments and provides cross-references to locations in the EIR where CEQA-related comments are addressed.

1.4.3 Effects Determined to be Potentially Significant

Based on the previous analysis as well as the comments that were received during the scoping process, the following environmental issues are addressed in the Program EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing

- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

1.5 Organization of this Draft Program EIR

This Draft Program EIR is organized into the following chapters, which contain the contents of an EIR as required by Sections 15120 through 15132 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Chapter 1: Executive Summary. This chapter provides a summary of the project and the project alternatives that are addressed in this Draft Program EIR, including a summary table of project impacts, recommended mitigation measures, and the level of significance after mitigation for each environmental issue. This chapter includes the project and cumulative issues addressed in **Chapter 4**, Environmental Impacts Analysis.

Chapter 2: Introduction. This chapter includes an introduction and overview describing the purpose of this Draft Program EIR, along with its scope and components.

Chapter 3: Project Description. This chapter provides a detailed description of the project, including the location and project characteristics. A discussion of the intended uses of this Draft Program EIR, project background, project objectives, and project approvals needed for the project are also included.

Chapter 4: Evaluation of Environmental Impacts. This chapter provides an overview of the project and cumulative environmental setting. The project setting focuses on the environmental conditions within the Planning Area. The cumulative setting identifies the environmental conditions within the cumulative study area.

This chapter is also divided into 20 sections that are organized into major topical areas that provide analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. Each topical section includes a description of the environmental setting, regulatory setting, significance criteria, project impacts, mitigation measures, and level of significance after mitigation.

Chapter 5: Cumulative Impacts. This chapter evaluates the cumulative impacts associated with implementation of the project in combination with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects within the region.

Chapter 6: Growth Inducing Impacts. This chapter evaluates the potential for the project to induce population growth, economic growth, or additional development, either directly or indirectly, and discusses the potential environmental effects associated with such growth.

Chapter 7: Significant and Unavoidable Impact. This chapter provides a summary of significant and unavoidable impacts and irreversible changes associated with General Plan 2050.

Chapter 8 Alternatives. This chapter includes a discussion of potential alternatives that could meet the basic objectives of the project and reduce potential significant environmental impacts of the project.

Chapter 9: Lead Agency and Consultants. This chapter provides a list of personnel who prepared this EIR, the organizations and persons consulted during the preparation of this EIR, a listing of the references used to prepare this EIR.

Chapter 10: Acronyms and Abbreviations. This chapter provides a list acronyms and abbreviations used in this EIR.

Chapter 11: Lead Agency and Consultants. This chapter provides a list references used in this EIR.

Appendices. The appendices contain the NOP, comments on the NOP, a cross-reference to the locations in the EIR where CEQA-related NOP comments are addressed, and the technical studies and information that were prepared and used to support the analyses and conclusions in this EIR.

The Final Program EIR will be prepared after the public review period for this Draft Program EIR has been completed. The Final Program EIR will include any comments and recommendations received on the Draft Program EIR during the public review period; a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft Program EIR; written responses to significant environmental issues

1.6 Project Applicant and Lead, Responsible, and Trustee Agencies

The project applicant and CEQA lead agency for the proposed project is the City of Watsonville. The City of Watsonville is the public agency that has the principal responsibility for certifying the Program EIR and approving and carrying out the project.

The responsible agencies are State and local public agencies other than the lead agency that have authority to carry out or approve a project or that are required to approve a portion of a project for which the lead agency is preparing or has prepared an EIR. There are no agencies other than the City of Watsonville that have approval or permitting authority for the adoption of the General Plan. Implementation of the project would involve many responsible agencies depending upon the specifics of the subsequent projects. Following are some of the agencies that could be required to act as responsible agencies for subsequent projects:

- Caltrans, including the Division of Aeronautics
- California Air Resources Board
- California Department of Conservation
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- California Department of Housing and Community Development
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- California Department of Toxic Substances Control
- California Public Utilities Commission
- California State Office of Historic Preservation
- California State Lands Commission
- California State Water Resources Control Board
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
- County of Santa Cruz
- County of Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission
- Fire Districts (Various)
- School Districts
- Freedom Sanitation District
- Salsipuedes Sanitation District
- Pajaro Sanitation District
- Any Other Responsible or Trustee Agency that may need to provide discretionary approval

The trustee agencies under CEQA are public agencies with legal jurisdiction over natural resources that are held in trust for the people of California and that would be affected by a project, whether or not the agencies have authority to approve or implement a project. It is anticipated that development under General Plan 2050 could affect lands under the jurisdiction of a Trustee Agency such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California State Lands Commission, and the California State Department of Parks and Recreation.

1.7 Incorporation by Reference

Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines permits documents of lengthy technical detail to be incorporated by reference in an EIR. Section 15150 states that an EIR may "incorporate by reference all or portions of another document which is a matter of public record or is generally available to the public…" Incorporated documents are to be briefly summarized in the EIR and made available to the public for inspection or reference. As noted above, DWSP is generally consistent with General Plan 2050 and would continue to function as a key tool for the implementation of General Plan 2050 in the City's downtown area and beyond, where feasible and applicable. Consistent with Section 15150 of CEQA Guidelines, the DWSP EIR (SCH# 2022100602) certified by the City Council in October 2023 is hereby, incorporated in this EIR by reference.

1.8 Review of this Draft Program EIR

Upon preparation of this Draft Program EIR, the City of Watsonville prepared and filed a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the California Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation/State Clearinghouse to begin the public review period (Public Resources Code, Section 21161). Concurrent with the NOC, the City of Watsonville distributed a Notice of Availability (NOA) in accordance with Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines. The NOA was mailed to the organizations and individuals who previously requested such a notice to comply with Public Resources Code Section 21092(b)(3). This Draft Program EIR was distributed to the California Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation/State Clearinghouse and the Watsonville Council of Governments in accordance with Section 15206 of the CEQA Guidelines. The NOA was also published in the Pajaronian newspaper to comply with Section 15087(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines and was distributed to affected agencies, surrounding cities and municipalities, and all interested parties. During the public review period, this Draft Program EIR, including the appendices, is available for review at the following locations:

- City of Watsonville Community Development Department, 250 Main Street, Watsonville, California, 95076;
- City of Watsonville City Manager's Office, 275 Main Street, Suite 400, Watsonville, California, 95076;
- Watsonville Public Library, 275 Main Street, Suite 100, Watsonville, California, 95076;
- Freedom Branch Library, 2021 Freedom Boulevard, Freedom, California, 95019;
- and online at https://www.watsonville.gov/2440/General-Plan-Update.

2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section describes the Watsonville General Plan 2050 (General Plan 2050), including the lead agency, project objectives, project characteristics, and discretionary actions needed for approval.

2.1 Project Title and Brief Description

General Plan 2050 is a comprehensive update of the Watsonville 2005 General Plan in response to changes in conditions in the City and new state laws enacted since the preparation of the existing General Plan, including Assembly Bill (AB) 1358 (Complete Streets), Senate Bill (SB) 99 (Evacuation Analysis), SB 379 (Climate Adaptation), SB 932 (Safe Systems), SB 1241 (Wildfire Hazards), and SB 1000 (Environmental Justice). General Plan 2050 articulates a community vision and planning framework that would serve as a guide for the City of Watsonville (City) decision-makers, developers, community members, and stakeholders over the next 20 to 30 years. General Plan 2050 also guides public agencies, such as the Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), Caltrans, and Santa Cruz County, regarding annexation decisions, roadway improvements, capital improvement projects, etc. General Plan 2050 provides a comprehensive land use and mobility plan to guide future public and private development within the City and its urban limit line. General Plan 2050 would introduce a variety of new housing options, new employment and commercial uses, expanded accommodations for passenger rail service, and complete street improvements. General Plan 2050 emphasizes the City's existing character and focuses on the preservation of the City's natural open spaces.

General Plan 2050 will include goals, policies, and implementation actions – developed with extensive community input – to advance the City's vision and community priorities, including: revitalizing Downtown Watsonville; introducing a range of new housing choices, both single-family and multifamily; attracting new employment and revenue-generating uses; maintaining the existing character of the City's residential neighborhoods; preserving the City's natural open spaces, especially the sloughs; improving the City's existing parks and community facilities, and introducing new ones; accommodating planned passenger rail service, including a possible station in Downtown Watsonville; implementing complete streets improvements; and rerouting truck routes around town.

2.2 Lead Agency Name, Address, and Contact Person

Comments or questions related to the General Plan or General Plan EIR can be directed to:

City of Watsonville
Community Development Department, Planning Division
250 Main Street
Watsonville, California 95076

Contact: Justin Meek, AICP, Assistant Community Development Director
831-768-3050

2.3 Project Location

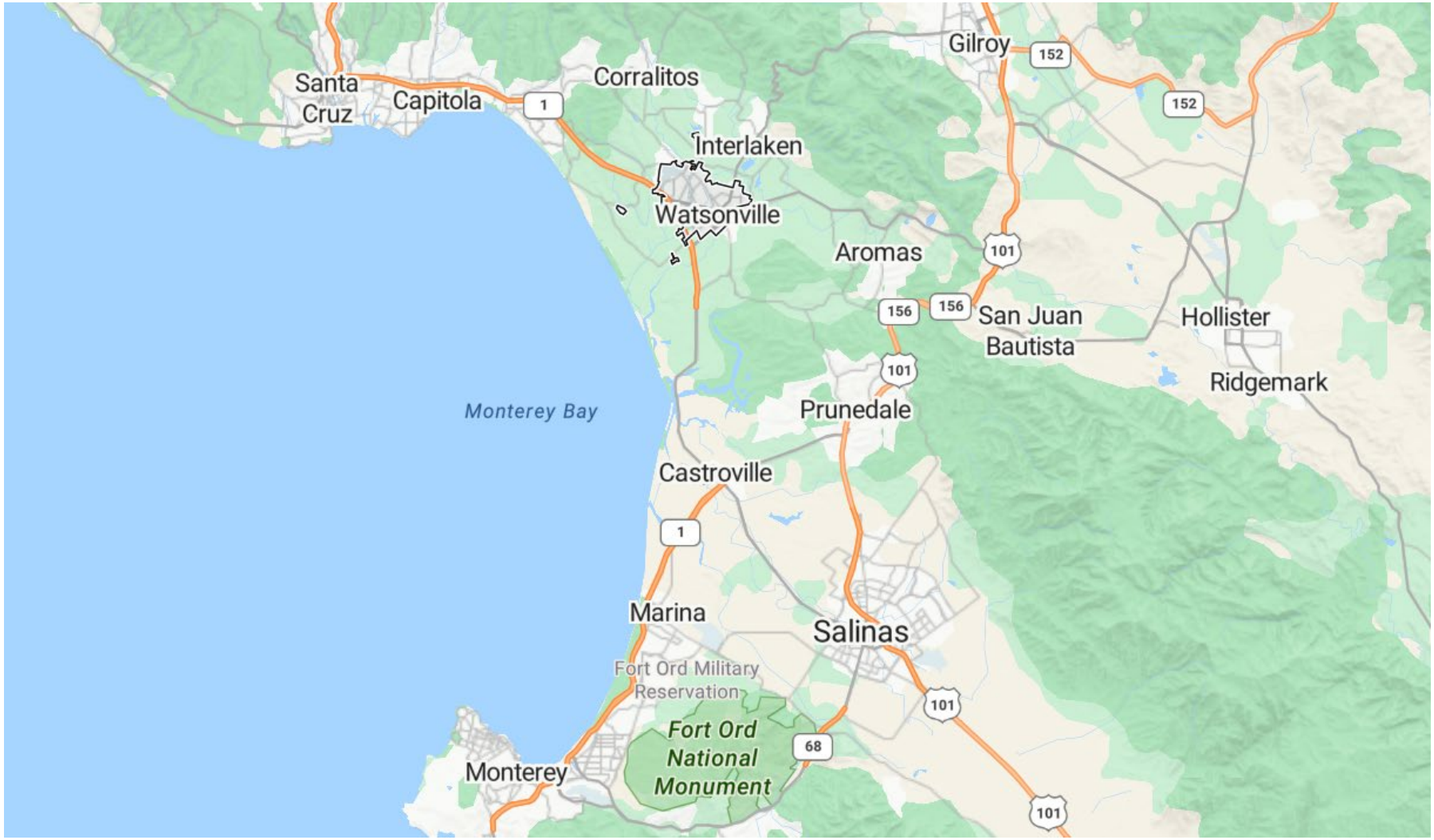
The City of Watsonville is located in the southern portion of Santa Cruz County, approximately 14 miles southeast of the City of Santa Cruz and 16 miles northwest of the City of Salinas (**Figure 2-1**). The City is bordered to the west, north, and east by unincorporated Santa Cruz County and to the south by the Town of Pajaro in unincorporated Monterey County. Major transportation routes that provide access to the City include Highway 1 (SR 1), which runs north-south along the western edge of the City; SR 152 which begins at SR 1 and passes through the City along Main Street and East Lake Avenue; and SR 129, which also begins at SR 1 and heads eastward through the southern portion of the City along Riverside Drive to U.S. Highway 101. The existing urban limit line and Sphere of Influence (SOI) are shown in **Figure 2-2**.

The City encompasses approximately 4,200 contiguous acres (6.5 square miles). Five areas of non-contiguous land include the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Plant (0.03 acres), Buena Vista Landfill (0.08 acres), Pinto Lake (0.12 acres), Corralitos Water Filter Plant (0.02 acres), and Browns Valley Intake (0.05 acres). The City's SOI represents the Watsonville Planning Area Boundary and encompasses parcels served by existing City public services (e.g., water services) both within and outside city limits. The land use jurisdiction for areas outside city limits belongs to Santa Cruz County and is outlined in **Figure 2-3**.

General Plan 2050 Area (plan area) includes the city limits and potential annexation areas within the existing and proposed Urban Limit Line (ULL), as shown in **Figure 2-3**. In 2002, Watsonville residents voted to establish an ULL through Measure U, consisting of the areas located within the existing urban limit line boundary. The ULL acts as a designated limit to where new growth may occur under certain conditions. The ULL was originally planned to last through 2027, but a 2022 resident vote extended this to 2040 via Measure Q. Area A (Buena Vista) and Area B (Atkinson Lane) have been identified as possible annexation areas for General Plan 2050 to accommodate new growth within the ULL. Annexation areas within the ULL that are already developed or largely developed include the Freedom Area (Phases I and II), Area E (Villages), Area F (Manabe/Burgstrom), and the South Manfre Road Area. Anticipated growth involves amending the ULL to include Area C and the Highway 1 Gateway and expanding Buena Vista to Freedom Boulevard. However, future annexation and modification of the ULL would be subject to voter and LAFCO approval. In 2002, LAFCO adjusted the SOI to align with the Urban Limit Line established by Measure U. In 2022, LAFCO adjusted the SOI to align with the City's water service area, which inadvertently resulted in the western portion of the Buena Vista New Growth Area being removed from the SOI. Restoring the previously included portion of the SOI for this area would ensure that the City's SOI once again aligns with the ULL and reflects the area's intended annexation and growth potential (**Figure 2-3**).

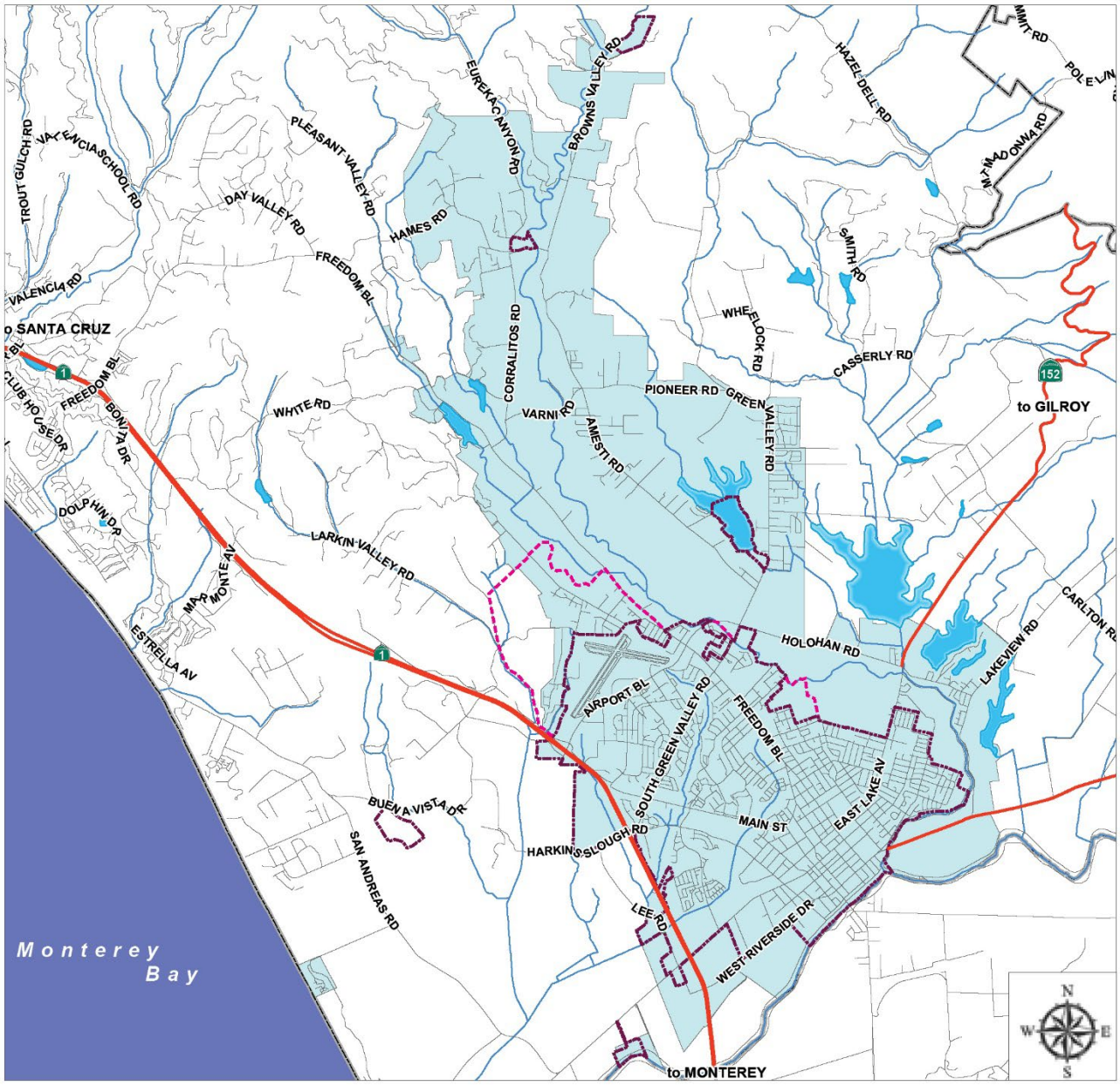
General Plan 2050 would serve as a guiding framework, establishing the groundwork for how potential annexed areas could be integrated into the City's overall planning and development strategy. While General Plan 2050 does not directly authorize annexation, it identifies key considerations and planning principles that would be applied if annexation moves forward in the future.

Figure 2-1 Project Vicinity Map



Source: City of Watsonville, 2026

Figure 2-2 Existing Sphere of Influence

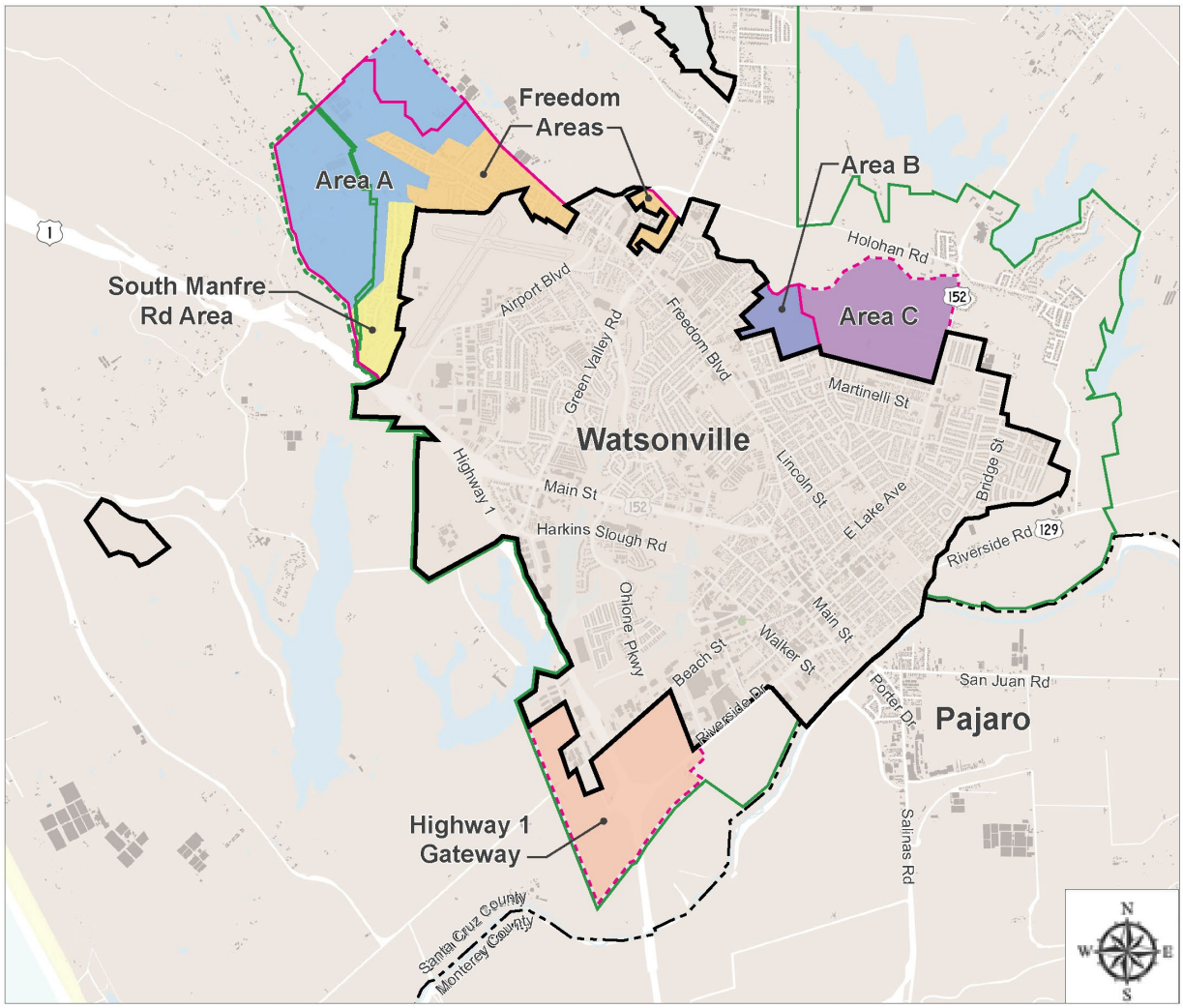


Legend

- Street
- Highway
- Stream
- Lakes
- Sphere of Influence
- City Limit
- County Boundary
- Existing Urban Limit Line

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026

Figure 2-3 Proposed Boundaries and Areas of New Growth



Legend

- City Limit
- County Boundary
- Existing Sphere of Influence
- Proposed Sphere of Influence
- Existing Urban Limit Line
- Proposed Urban Limit Line
- Area A (Buena Vista)
- Area B (Atkinson Lane)
- Area C (West of East Lake)
- Highway 1 Gateway
- Freedom Areas
- South Manfre Rd. Area

2.4 Existing Setting and Land Uses

The plan area features a mix of uses, including retail, commercial, civic, religious, industrial, and residential developments. Key civic and institutional landmarks include City Hall, the Police Station, Civic Plaza with Council Chambers, the Library, the County Courthouse, the U.S. Post Office, and the Cabrillo College Watsonville Center. The Watsonville City Plaza is a vital public open space that supports a variety of civic and community activities.

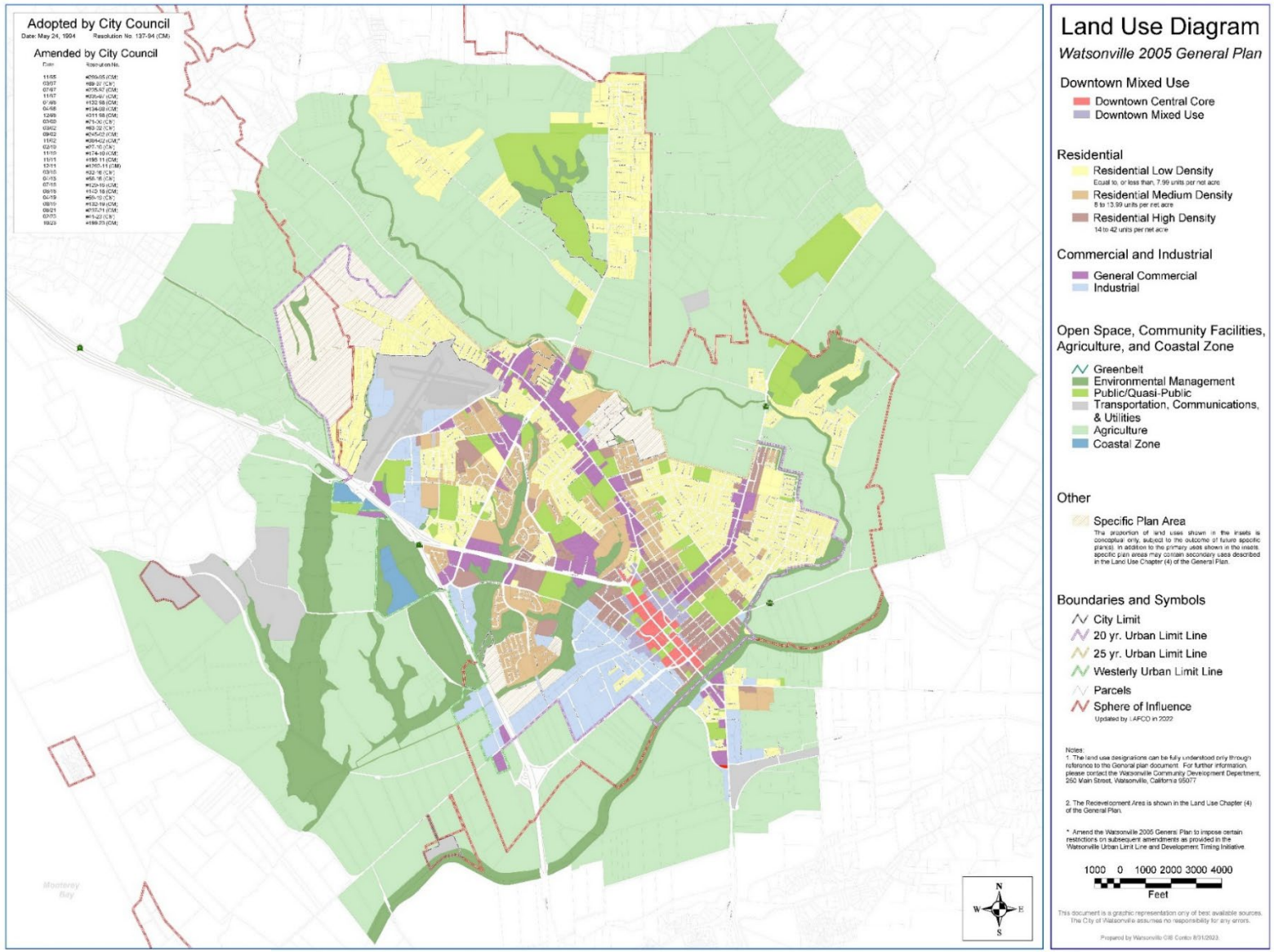
Main Street, located at the heart of Downtown Watsonville, is home to historic and large mixed-use buildings with ground-floor local-serving retail and services, and upper-level offices and residential units. Several recreational and cultural sites, such as the Henry J. Mello Center for the Performing Arts, Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery, and the Pajaro Valley Historical Museum, are located throughout the City.

Agriculture and manufacturing are two of Watsonville's primary industries, with many agricultural companies headquartered within the City. Farmland surrounds the City, while agricultural processing plants and industrial buildings are located primarily in the southern portion of the City and south of the Watsonville Municipal Airport.

The 2005 General Plan land use designations in the plan area include Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Downtown Mixed Use, Public/Quasi-Public, Environmental Management, and Agriculture categories. The previous 2005 General Plan land use designations within the plan area are shown in **Figure 2-4**.

The Watsonville Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 14-16 of the Watsonville Municipal Code) implements the General Plan by establishing zoning districts and development standards that are consistent with the General Plan's land use designations and policies.

Figure 2-4 Existing Land Use Designations



Source: City of Watsonville, 2005

2.5 Project Characteristics

2.5.1 Project Objectives

General Plan 2050 is intended to function as a policy document to guide land use decisions in the plan area through the plan horizon year 2050. According to State law, General Plans are required to cover seven topics: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Under SB 1000, jurisdictions are required to consider Environmental Justice in the General Plan if disadvantaged communities are present within their planning area. Jurisdictions may address these topics across different chapters, or elements, of their General Plan, and include any other topic that is relevant to planning its future. General Plan 2050 will include the State required elements, plus community character as part of the land use element, a public facilities and services element, and an airport element.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15124, the EIR must identify the objectives sought by the project. The objectives of the project are as follows:

1. Implement the General Plan's guiding principles that provide the foundation for Watsonville's vision for the future and direct the General Plan's goals, policies, actions:

    - **Small Town Character.** Protect Watsonville's agricultural and architectural heritage, ensuring that all new development and public improvements contribute to a "sense of place" rooted in Watsonville's unique climate, topography, history, and cultural traditions. Leverage public investments and guide private actions to preserve and enhance Watsonville's pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, activate its corridors, revitalize a vibrant downtown, and ensure a safe, comfortable, human-scale public realm of beautiful streets, parks, plazas, and open spaces.

    - **Housing for All.** Encourage a range of housing opportunities for existing residents, with a broad range of residence types, sizes, neighborhood contexts, prices, and rents that are consistent with existing needs and demographic forecasts for Watsonville and the surrounding region, and the evolving needs of a diverse community.

    - **Local Amenities and Services.** Plan for and encourage a growing array of businesses and facilities that meet residents' needs and wants for goods, services, entertainment, and recreation within Watsonville and located conveniently near neighborhoods.

    - **Mobility for All.** Create and maintain safe streets that accommodate a full range of transportation modes including pedestrians, cars, bicycles, micro-mobility devices, and buses. Provide wide sidewalks, frequent, safe and strategically located crosswalks, and a robust bike network to enable safe and comfortable all-mode access to parks, schools, bus stops, and planned passenger rail. Integrate land uses and transportation by introducing higher-density and mixed-use development along bus transit routes and in areas surrounding the planned Watsonville passenger rail station.

    - **Human Scale Streetscape and Public Realm.** Plan for, leverage public investments, and guide private investment to implement a complete, seamless network of human-scale streets and comfortable green open spaces as the framework of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, active corridors, and a vibrant downtown. Safe, comfortable, and useful public places for people are the goal throughout all of Watsonville's existing urbanized and new growth areas.

- **Vibrant Downtown.** Building on the recently adopted Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan, prioritize available public resources and guide market forces to revitalize Downtown Watsonville, strengthening the array of cultural and retail destinations, broadening available housing options, and ensuring pedestrian-friendly streets and urban environments.
- **Open Space and Conservation.** Encourage development patterns that protect and are compatible with the agricultural lands and natural habitats surrounding the City. Encourage protection of ecologically valuable, and scenic open lands, while providing appropriate recreational access for the enjoyment of these amenities by Watsonville's residents and visitors.
- **Focused Infill.** Encourage new multi-family and mixed-use development in Downtown and along Watsonville's corridors—particularly North Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue—that leverages the value of public investments in bus transit and planned passenger rail service and provides easy access to retail and services for residents within the corridor and in surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Employment Opportunity.** Foster a prosperous and robust economy through policies and actions that recognize the skills and needs of Watsonville's workforce, while devising strategies that coordinate economic trends and the professional aspirations of Watsonville's youth with business development, business recruitment, education, and skill development programs. Policies and public investments should help support agriculture-related business and protect environmental assets, while supporting and encouraging the growth of visitor-, research-, light industrial-, and service-related enterprises
- **Community Health.** Promote a healthy community by supporting healthy, active lifestyles ensuring safe, inviting, and comfortable walking and biking environments throughout town; incorporating active recreational and exercise opportunities into Watsonville's parks and open space network; maintaining and expanding Watsonville's trail network; and carefully managing the creeks, sloughs, river and other open spaces surrounding Watsonville from natural hazards, including flooding and wildfires.
- **Diversity and Equity.** Facilitate social and economic diversity within Watsonville by: providing a variety of housing types accommodating a broad range of household incomes; making streets safer for all members of the community, whether pedestrian, cyclist, or motorist, and irrespective of age, income or physical capabilities; improving all-mode access to transit, parks, and recreational facilitates; guiding the distribution of land uses in a manner that brings the necessities of daily life within easy reach of all residents and reduces exposure to noise, pollution, and hazardous materials; and enables all members of the community to have a voice in municipal planning and administration processes.
- **Resilient and Green.** Be a responsible steward of Watsonville's natural resources. With an eye on the needs of future generations, pursue energy and water efficiency, greater use of sustainable materials, and enhanced resilience to natural hazards (flooding, wildfires, drought, and rising sea level) exacerbated by climate change.

2. Update the City's environmental baseline conditions to the year 2050.
3. Update the general plan development projections for the year 2050, including projections for dwelling units and employment.

4. Conform with CEQA (Public Resource Code Section 21000 et seq.), which requires that environmental impacts be addressed and mitigated.
5. Prepare and certify a proposed general plan EIR (Program EIR) that will serve as a first-tier environmental document, consistent with the requirement of Section 15152 of the State CEQA Guidelines.
6. Address changed conditions since the adoption of Watsonville 2005 General Plan in 1994.
7. Provide a basis for informative decisions when considering the development associated with implementation of the proposed general plan.
8. Provide a legally defensible environmental foundation upon which decisions may be evaluated and justified.

2.5.2 General Plan Organization

General Plan 2050 includes all the elements required by State Planning and Zoning Law and is organized into thirteen chapters, as follows: (1) Introduction; (2) Context; (3) Vision and Growth Strategy; (4) Land Use and Community Character, including a Place Type Diagram; (5) Parks, Recreation, and Libraries; (6) Public Facilities and Services; (7) Mobility and Access; (8) Airport; (9) Housing; (10) Conservation; (11) Safety; and (12) Noise. General Plan 2050 does not have standalone Air Quality and Environmental Justice Elements but instead integrates air quality and environmental justice considerations throughout elements listed above, in accordance with California Government Code Section 65302. General Plan 2050 is organized into three foundational chapters that provide background and direction, followed by nine policy elements addressing the community's core planning topics, and concluding with an implementation chapter outlining the actions needed to carry out the Plan's goals and policies:

- **Introduction (Chapter 1):** This Chapter describes the purpose of a General Plan, the reasons for updating it, the relationship to State general plan requirements, how Watsonville's General Plan is organized, and how it will be implemented.
- **Context (Chapter 2):** This Chapter describes Watsonville's existing setting—the regional context, planning area boundaries, potential growth areas, and the existing local context, including urban form, open space, circulation, transportation, socioeconomic conditions, and historical resources—with the objective of establishing the foundation for the General Plan's policy direction and future land use decisions.
- **Vision and Growth Strategy (Chapter 3):** This Chapter presents the community's vision and priorities for Watsonville's future, and explains how these apply to each of Watsonville's geographic areas, especially where growth is expected to occur. This Chapter also identifies focus areas where change is anticipated or prioritized.
- **Land Use & Community Character Element (Chapter 4):** This chapter guides the type and character of anticipated new development—whether infill within the City limits or new growth in the annexation areas outside the City limits—to ensure that it aligns with the community's vision, values, and needs. It describes the desired land uses and their development intensity and density; identifies land use and placemaking strategies that can ensure that new development reflects Watsonville's small-town community character while increasing revenue for the City's general fund; provides policies to guide the preservation of important historic resources, and designates land for parks and community facilities.

- **Parks, Recreation, and Libraries Element (Chapter 5):** This chapter guides the management, maintenance, and enhancement of Watsonville's parks, trails, and recreational facilities, with the overarching objective of enhancing the community's quality of life and health by expanding the amount of park space and recreational opportunities—especially in conjunction with new development. This chapter also covers library services to support lifelong learning and community engagement.

- **Public Facilities & Services Element (Chapter 6):** This chapter outlines goals, policies, and programs for providing essential public facilities and services to support the current and future population of Watsonville. Key topics covered include essential infrastructure facilities, including the roadway and trail network, water supply and distribution systems, sewer and wastewater management, stormwater drainage systems, solid waste and recycling services, electricity and natural gas distribution, and broadband internet and telecommunications infrastructure. This chapter also covers educational services to ensure there is proper coordination with the school district about providing public school facilities to accommodate population growth.

- **Mobility & Access Element (Chapter 7):** This chapter establishes the framework for a robust multimodal circulation network (including roadways, trails, bike facilities, sidewalks and transit routes) prioritizing safety, comfort and access, and connecting residents and visitors to destinations and community gathering places. Watsonville's trails and streets, in addition to their function of moving bicycle, transit, and vehicular traffic, serve as important public spaces for community activity. Accordingly, this chapter provides goals, strategies and policies for balancing traffic flow and congestion management with improved safety outcomes for all modes—pedestrians in particular—and supporting the placemaking and community character goals of the Land Use & Community Character Element.

- **Airport Element (Chapter 8):** This chapter establishes policies to guide the orderly expansion of the Watsonville Municipal Airport and compatible land use within the Airport Influence Area to protect public health, safety, and welfare. It reflects the adopted Airport Master Plan, which defines long-term operational needs and capital improvements. This chapter incorporates, by reference, the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, which establishes criteria addressing aircraft noise, safety, airspace protection, and overflight to minimize conflicts (see General Plan Appendix B). It also promotes coordination among local agencies and stakeholders to support long-term airport viability and a vibrant community.

- **Housing Element (Chapter 9):** This chapter analyzes the housing needs of all members of the community and provides goals, policies, and strategies to meet those needs. The Housing Element is the only element that must be approved ("certified") by the State of California and it must be updated every eight years according to a separate process from the 2050 General Plan. The current 2023-2031 Housing Element was adopted by City Council in October 2024 and certified by the State of California on October 28, 2024.

- **Conservation Element (Chapter 10):** This chapter guides the long-term conservation of natural resources (water, air, energy, soil, minerals), natural open spaces, wildlife habitats, scenic views, and cultural resources for the enjoyment and use of current and future generations and to ensure that new development and City operations do not undermine the health of residents or harm the natural environment.

- **Safety Element (Chapter 11):** This chapter focuses on the protection of public health and safety by addressing various hazards and risks that could impact the Watsonville community, whether natural (earthquakes, floods, and wildfires) or manmade (hazardous materials and air pollution). It also provides guidance to ensure that residents are prepared for the effects of these hazards:

emergency response preparedness, including evacuation and shelter; and management of hazardous materials. Aviation-related safety hazards affecting people and property on the ground is covered under Chapter 8 (Airport Element).

- **Noise Element (Chapter 12):** This chapter promotes a healthier, more livable environment by ensuring that noise is managed effectively in the planning and development process. It identifies existing and projected noise sources (such as traffic, industrial activities, outdoor events, and construction) and establishes strategies to limit the exposure of Watsonville's residents and businesses to excessive noise levels (such as zoning regulations, vehicular speed moderation, sound barriers, and building codes).
- **Implementation (Chapter 13).** This Chapter provides a Work Plan for responsible departments to carry out the General Plan's implementation actions.

Each Element discusses its overall purpose, or vision as it relates to the Plan as a whole. The goals and policies in each Element then outline how the City plans to achieve this vision. Finally, implementation actions designed to help achieve the goals and policies are contained at the end of each topical chapter and in the Implementation chapter.

2.5.3 General Plan Vision

General Plan 2050 outlines goals, policies, and actions—developed with significant community input—that guide the City's future growth while maintaining its small-town character. General Plan 2050 focuses on several key areas, including revitalizing Downtown and Watsonville's major corridors; introducing diverse housing options (both single-family and multi-family); supporting new employment and revenue-generating businesses; and preserving the natural open spaces, especially the sloughs.

Key initiatives include enhancing Watsonville's existing neighborhoods by promoting infill development and facilitating Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) while providing safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists; implementing the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan to transform Downtown into a vibrant and active city center with diverse uses and housing options; and evolving key corridors, such as North Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue, into pedestrian- and transit-friendly environments; and rerouting truck traffic around the City.

Watsonville's employment districts will continue to support local businesses, with a focus on enhancing industrial areas and attracting new industries, such as research and development and agritourism. Watsonville Municipal Airport will remain a central part of the City's identity and economy. Future potential annexations of the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, and Area C new growth areas will accommodate new neighborhoods with a mix of housing options, parks, and community amenities. Lastly, the Highway 1 Gateway will introduce new employment uses and function as a key entry point to Watsonville, providing regional retail, hospitality, and recreation opportunities that will generate sales tax revenue to support the City's infrastructure and services.

In addition, General Plan 2050 prioritizes preserving Watsonville's small-town character; providing a wide variety of housing choices; enabling safe, walkable streets; and bringing more sales and hotel tax revenue into the City to maintain the road network, parks, trails, recreational offerings, and community services.

Infill growth within the City Limits – primarily multi-family and mixed-use development – will be focused along the East Lake Avenue and Freedom Boulevard corridors and within Downtown Watsonville, which is governed by the recently adopted Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan per Ordinance no. 1457-23 (**Figure 2-3**). New growth beyond the existing City limits would be accommodated in the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C, and the Highway 1 Gateway area. Growth within Buena Vista and Area C would

consist of single-family and multi-family housing and small mixed-use neighborhood centers and may offer a significant number of new home ownership opportunities. Growth within the Highway 1 Gateway would consist of employment, regional retail, community recreation, and visitor-serving uses. New development within Buena Vista and Atkinson Lane, which are already within the ULL, would require annexation into the City of Watsonville. New development within the planning area beyond the ULL – the parcels adjacent to Buena Vista, within Area C, and within the majority of the Highway 1 Gateway – would require approval via a Citywide referendum and subsequent annexation. If a Citywide referendum does not result in approval, these parcels will not be eligible for possible annexation and development until 2040.

To address runway visibility issues created by existing hangars as identified by the FAA, the Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan (2023) proposed shortening the length of Runway 9-27 from 3,998 feet to 2,408 feet. To further enable aviation activities at the Airport, including jet aircraft, the main runway (2-20) is anticipated to be lengthened from 4,501 to 5,181 feet. However, General Plan 2050 itself does not mandate or initiate modifications to the main runway. These are solely decisions being considered by the City Council and state and federal authorities, and General Plan 2050 is designed to account for possible future scenarios without directly causing or influencing such an outcome.

2.5.4 General Plan Land Use Map

The purpose of the General Plan 2050 land use map, shown in **Figure 2-5,** is to guide the general distribution, location, and extent of the various land uses in the City. The General Plan 2050 land use map shows the land use designations proposed under the Plan. Specific land use regulations for parcel development will continue to be defined in the City's Zoning Ordinance, which will be updated following adoption of General Plan 2050.

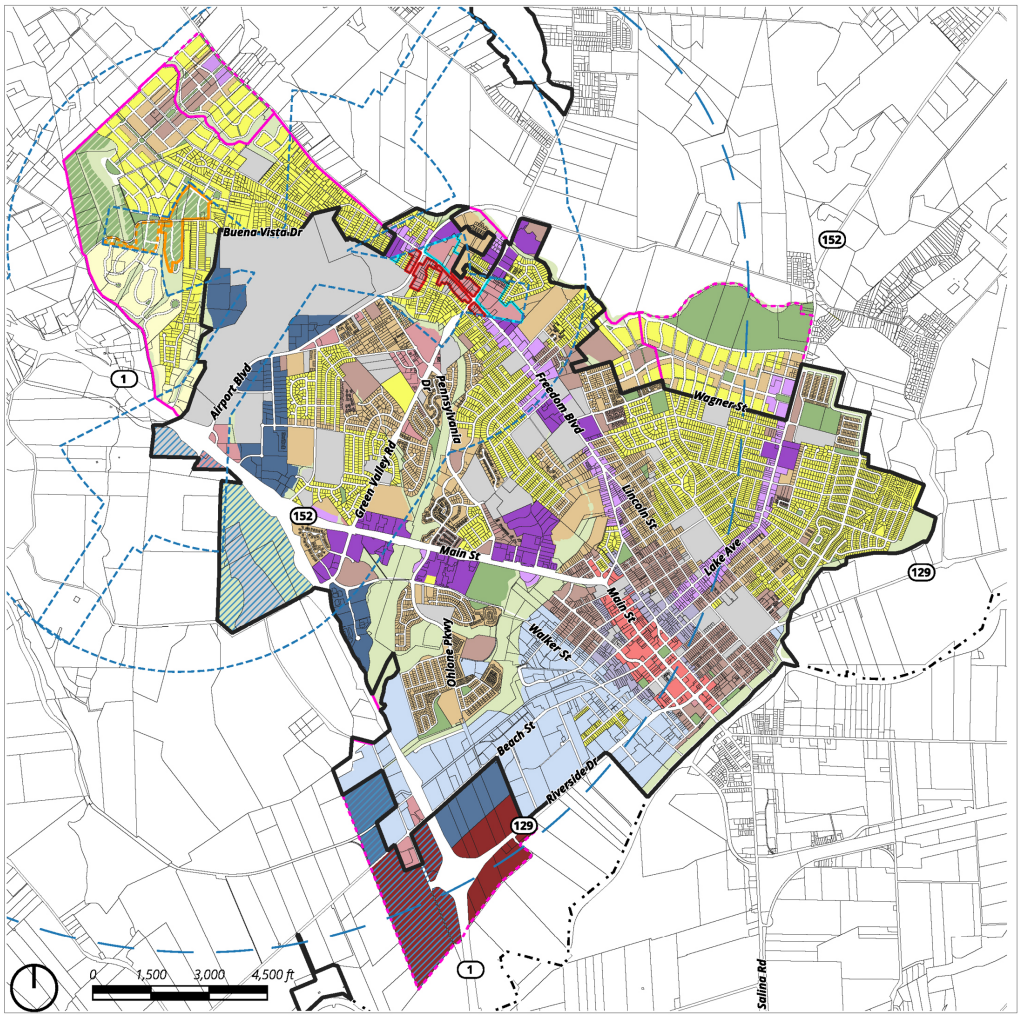
The proposed land use map (**Figure 2-5**) specifies land use designations for all areas of the City. **Table 2-1** shows the proposed breakdown of land use designations under the proposed Plan compared to the current 2005 General Plan.

The existing 2005 General Plan has 13 land use designations, while General Plan 2050 has 16 land use designations and five overlays, each with its own mix of potential uses, development density and/or intensity, and development character standards. Most of the land use designations have been retained in General Plan 2050, including the Low, Medium and High Density Residential land use designations. A few land use designations that exist under the 2005 General Plan have been removed from General Plan 2050, and some new land use designations have been added to General Plan 2050 as follows:

- In addition to the current mixed-use Downtown Central Core and Downtown Mixed Use designations, General Plan 2050 adds the Corridor Mixed-Use and Corridor Mixed-Use Center land use designations to correspond with major corridors such as East Lake Avenue and Freedom Boulevard.
- General Plan 2050 introduces a new Very Low Density Residential land use designation to guide residential development on the steeper portions of the Buena Vista new growth area.
- General Plan 2050 introduces a new Gateway Commercial land use designation to guide development within the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area.
- The single Industrial land use designation from the 2005 General Plan is divided into two categories in General Plan 2050: Industrial and Industrial Light.
- General Plan 2050 replaces the 2005 General Plan's Environmental Management designation with the Natural Open Space designation.

- General Plan 2050 replaces certain parcels designated in the 2005 General Plan as Public/Quasi Public and that contain parks with the Parks designation.
- General Plan 2050 replaces the 2005 General Plan's Transportation, Communications & Utilities designation with a new Community Facilities designation.
- General Plan 2050 retains the Agriculture designation, applying it to portions of the Buena Vista new growth area that are not designated for residential or other forms of development.
- General Plan 2050 replaces the areas identified in the 2005 General Plan as Specific Plan with the Corridor Mixed-Use, Residential High Density, Residential Medium Density, Residential Low Density, Residential Very Low Density, Natural Open Space, Parks, and Agriculture designations.
- General Plan 2050 introduces the Corridor Mixed-Use Center Overlay, the Corridor Mixed-Use Overlay, the Residential Low Density Overlay, and the Residential Very Low Density Overlay to areas subject to Watsonville Municipal Airport's Airport Safety Zones to allow development per the designation associated with the overlay in the event that the Safety Zone boundaries are adjusted or removed at a future date.
- General Plan 2050 clarifies that the Coastal Zone Overlay is an overlay and that parcels subject to the overlay must conform to applicable provisions of the Local Coastal Program.

Figure 2-5 Proposed Land Use Designations



Legend

- County Boundary
- Watsonville City Boundary
- Existing Urban Limit Line
- Proposed Urban Limit Line
- Airport Safety Zone
- Airport Influence Area

Overlays

- Corridor Mixed-Use Center
- Corridor Mixed-Use
- Residential Low Density
- Residential Very Low Density
- Coastal Zone Overlay

Mixed Use

- Downtown Central Core
- Dowtown Mixed-Use
- Corridor Mixed-Use Center
- Corridor Mixed-Use

Commercial

- Gateway Commercial
- General Commercial

Industrial

- Industrial
- Industrial Light

Residential

- Residential High Density
- Residential Medium Density
- Residential Low Density
- Residential Very Low Density

Open Space, Agriculture, & Community Facilities

- Parks
- Community Facilities
- Natural Open Space
- Agriculture

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026

Table 2-1 Comparison of Existing Land Use Designations & Proposed Land Use Designations

Land Use	2005 General Plan		General Plan 2050	
	Acres	Percentage (%)	Acres	Percentage (%)
Downtown Central Core	61.2	1.5	61.2	1.4
Downtown Mixed Use	47.3	1.1	47.3	1.1
Corridor Mixed-Use Center[1]			161.6	3.6
Corridor Mixed-Use[1]			107.4	2.4
Residential Very Low Density[2]			58.6	1.3
Residential Low Density	872.5	20.9	963.5	22
Residential Medium Density	515.5	12.4	548.4	12.5
Residential High Density	277.9	6.7	283.7	6.3
General Commercial	343.4	8.2	105.6	2.4
Industrial	494.7	11.9	409.7	9.1
Industrial Light[3]			227.3	5.1
Gateway Commercial [4]			175.6	3.9
Environmental Management	386.7	9.3		
Natural Open Space[5]			457.7	10.2
Public/Quasi-Public	307.6	7.4		
Transportation, Communications & Utilities	285.5	6.9		
Agriculture			78.0	1.7
Specific Plan Area[6]	560.7	13.5		
Parks[7]			169.7	3.8
Community Facilities[8]			630.5	14.1
Total [9]	**4,153.0**	**100.0**	**4,485.8**	**100.0**

[1] New designation that applies to certain parcels previously designated "General Commercial" in the Watsonville 2005 General Plan. The new General Plan 2050 designation replaces the 2005 General Plan designation along key commercial corridors, such as Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue.

[2] New designation that applies to certain parcels located in the Buena Vista New Growth Area, outside the Watsonville current city limits and presently designated "Agriculture" in the 2024 Santa Cruz County General Plan. The new General Plan 2050 designation generally applies to parcels along Larkin Valley Road that have relatively steep topography and thus are more amenable to larger lot single-family development and would become effective upon annexation of the subject parcels into the City of Watsonville.

[3] New designation that applies to certain parcels located within the Watsonville city limits that are designated "Industrial" in the Watsonville 2005 General Plan, such as along Hangar Way and Aviation Way, and parcels located outside the Watsonville city limits in portions of the Highway 1 Gateway Area that are designated "Agriculture" in the 2024 Santa Cruz County General Plan. For subject parcels located within the city limits, the new General Plan 2050 designation replaces the 2005 General Plan designation. For parcels located outside the city limits, the new General Plan 2050 designation would become effective upon annexation of the subject parcels into the City of Watsonville.

[4] New designation that applies to certain parcels located outside the Watsonville city limits in portions of the Highway 1 Gateway Area that are designated "Agriculture" in the 2024 Santa Cruz County General Plan. The new General Plan 2050 designation would become effective upon annexation of the subject parcels into the City of Watsonville. In addition, parcels located west of Highway 1, encompassing approximately 63 acres, are subject to the Coastal Zone.

[5] New designation that applies to parcels or portions of parcels located both within and outside the Watsonville city limits that are designated "Environmental Management" in the 2005 General Plan and areas located outside the City that are designated "Agriculture" in the 2024 Santa Cruz County General Plan. For parcels located within the city limits, the new General Plan 2050 designation replaces the 2005 General Plan designation. For parcels located outside the city limits, the new General Plan 2050 designation would become effective upon annexation of the subject parcels into the City of Watsonville.

[6] Removed and replaced with the Residential High Density, Residential Medium Density, Residential Low Density, Residential Very Low Density, Natural Open Space, Parks, and Agriculture designations.

[7] New designation that applies to certain parcels located within the Watsonville city limits that are designated "Public/Quasi-Public" in the 2005 General Plan, such as Ramsay Park and other existing parkland, and parcels located outside the Watsonville city limits in the Buena Vista and Area C New Growth Areas that are designated "Agriculture" in the 2024 Santa Cruz County General Plan. The new General Plan 2050 designation replaces the 2005 General Plan designation. For parcels located outside the city limits, the new General Plan 2050 designation would become effective upon annexation of the subject parcels into the City of Watsonville.

[8] New designation that applies to parcels that are designated "Transportation, Communications & Utilities," including the Watsonville Municipal Airport, and "Public/Quasi-Public," including existing schools, libraries, churches and cemeteries, in the 2005 General Plan. The new General Plan 2050 designation replaces the 2005 General Plan designations.

[9] Totals arrived at by adding up the individual rows above may differ slightly from the number shown here, due to rounding.

2.5.5 Projected Growth

The projected growth in General Plan 2050 envisions the addition of up to 5,980 new residential units and 2.672 million square feet of non-residential development, as follows:

- 4,560 new residential units are projected to be developed within the existing city limits, primarily in Downtown Watsonville;[1]
- 1,420 new residential units within the Buena Vista and/or Area C growth areas;[2]
- 513,000 square feet of new non-residential development is anticipated to be developed within the existing city limits (Downtown Watsonville, entitled industrial projects, and along East Lake Avenue and Freedom Boulevard);[3]
- 2,129,000 square feet of non-residential development within the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area including regional retail, community recreation, and visitor-serving uses;[4] and
- 30,000 square feet of neighborhood-serving retail in the Buena Vista and Area C new growth areas.[5]

2.5.6 Residential and Employment Growth

The City is a member of the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), which manages transportation planning on behalf of the region that includes Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz

[1] Consists of 3,883 units within the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area; 581 units along Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue; and 96 new units within Watsonville's existing neighborhoods. The original NOP projections totaled 4,320 units, comprised of 3,890 units within the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area; 390 units along Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue; and 40 units within Watsonville's existing neighborhoods.
[2] Consists of 716 units in the Buena Vista new growth area and 704 units in the Area C new growth area.
[3] Consists of 115,000 sf within the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area; 127,000 sf along Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue; and 271,000 sf of entitled "pipeline" projects within the Manabe-Ow Business Park Specific Plan area.
[4] Includes increased growth potential of 769,000 sf from the addition of four agricultural parcels located between Riverside Drive and W. Beach Street (APNs 052-273-17, -18, -23, and -25).
[5] Consists of 20,000 sf in the Buena Vista new growth area and 10,000 sf in the Area C new growth area.

Counties. AMBAG periodically prepares regional growth forecasts to estimate future population, housing, and employment trends across the Monterey Bay region as part of its long-range planning responsibilities under the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) process. The forecast incorporates historical demographic patterns with current conditions, and projected job growth, including data on births, deaths, migration, household formation, and economic trends. **Table 2-2** shows City employment, housing, and population estimates and forecasts from the AMBAG 2026 Regional Growth Forecast. AMBAG projects that the City's population will increase by 1,431 people (2.8 percent) between 2023 and 2050, to an estimated 2050 population of 52,251 residents. AMBAG projects that the number of households in the City will increase by 1,720 between 2023 and 2050 to an estimated 16,070 households in 2050. According to AMBAG estimates, there were 1.96 jobs per household in the City, in 2023, and this figure will decrease slightly to 1.85 jobs per household by 2050. Although Watsonville's jobs per household ratio is projected to decrease, it is expected to remain at nearly a 2 to 1 ratio, so it is possible that many residents within the City would be employed locally and, therefore, not have to commute to other cities for work, provided that the industries and jobs in their line of work are present in Watsonville.

Table 2-3 shows that development facilitated by General Plan 2050 would result in approximately 5,980 new homes within the plan area. Planning for this number of new housing units is also expected to help the City meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) housing requirements. Based on Watsonville's estimated average household size of 3.47 people (DOF, 2024), this figure would lead to an increase of approximately 17,872 residents in the City. Adding 17,872 new residents to the City's estimated 2023 population of 52,314, future residential growth carried out under the Plan is predicted to increase the City's total population to 70,186 which is above AMBAG's 2050 estimated population forecasts of 52,251 (AMBAG, 2026). The addition of approximately 17,872 residents would lead to a 34.2 percent population increase between 2023 and 2050.

Table 2-2 AMBAG Population, Housing and Jobs Forecasts

Year	Population	Household Units	Jobs	Jobs/Household Ratio
2023	50,820	14,699	28,125	1.91
2050	52,251	16,642	29,804	1.79
Change, 2023-2050	1,431	1,943	1,679	- 0.12

Source: AMBAG, 2026

Table 2-3 Plan Population, Housing and Jobs Forecasts

Year	Population	Housing Units	Jobs	Jobs/Household Ratio
2023	52,314	14,779	27,194	1.84
2050	70,186	20,759	33,400	1.60
Change, 2023-2050	17,872	5,980	6,206	-0.24

Source: AMBAG, 2026

Based on forecasts for square footage growth estimates for nonresidential development carried out under General Plan 2050, Watsonville is forecast to gain 6,206 jobs between 2023 and 2050, as shown in **Table 2-3**. Most development under the Plan would be in the industrial, office space, and retail land use designations, particularly in the Highway 1 Gateway Area and Downtown, and as a result those sectors would experience the most job growth. Compared with AMBAG's forecast of 1,679 new jobs by 2050, the Plan would substantially exceed this projection, as shown in **Table 2-3**.

2.6 Relationship to Other Plans

General Plan 2050 considers existing and adopted plans, policies, and regulations at the city, regional, state, and federal levels. General Plan 2050's relationship to existing planning documents is outlined below.

2.6.1 Watsonville 2005 General Plan

The City of Watsonville's 2005 General Plan, adopted originally in 1994, establishes land uses and policies for development in the City, including within the plan area. General Plan 2050 would be a comprehensive update of the 2005 Plan in response to changes in conditions in the City and new state laws enacted since the preparation of the 2005 Plan.

2.6.2 Watsonville General Plan Housing Element

The City's 6th cycle Housing Element, which would cover the planning period of 2023 to 2031, is a required element of the City's General Plan 2050 and includes citywide strategies to address housing. The current 2023-2031 Housing Element would plan for the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 2,053 housing units. The current 2023-2031 Housing Element was adopted by City Council in October 2024 and certified by the State of California on October 28, 2024. In accordance with State law, the City's Housing Element has been adopted separately and is not a part of this General Plan update.

2.6.3 Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan

The Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP), adopted in 2023, establishes a vision for the future of downtown Watsonville with consideration of the historic origins of the City and vicinity. The DWSP includes the development of multi-story mixed used buildings and encourages compact development near transit to decrease automobile dependency. Per California State law, specific plans must be

internally consistent with the jurisdiction's general plan. General Plan 2050 maintains land use designations that are consistent with the new mixed-use zoning districts established by the DWSP.

2.6.4 Watsonville Zoning Ordinance

Since General Plan 2050 serves as the City's comprehensive policy framework for land use and development, the City's Zoning Ordinance (Title 14 of the Watsonville Municipal Code) must be consistent with the General Plan. Accordingly, following adoption of General Plan 2050, the City would update the Zoning Ordinance, as necessary, to ensure consistency with the General Plan's land use designations, policies, and development standards.

2.6.5 Watsonville Downtown Complete Streets Plan

The Complete Streets Plan, adopted in 2019, provides a vision of a multi-modal Downtown area that is accessible by users of all modes of transportation, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and motorists. Certain recommendations in the Complete Streets Plan for downtown have been superseded by provisions of the DWSP and are referenced in General Plan 2050.

2.6.6 Watsonville Urban Greening Plan

The Watsonville Urban Greening Plan, adopted in 2012, was developed to identify and facilitate the design of projects that address greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or help residents adapt to challenges posed by climate change. The Urban Greening Plan's elements, including the Citywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails, Habitat Restoration and Enhancement for Trail Corridors, Citywide Street Tree Program, Landscape Guidelines and Policy, and Green Roof Design Report & Criteria, are referenced in General Plan 2050.

2.6.7 Watsonville Climate Change and Adaptation Plan

The Watsonville 2030 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan was adopted in 2021 to reduce the community's GHG emissions below certain targets. As the transportation sector contributes the greatest amount of GHG emissions, the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan calls for implementing a range of strategies to reduce the number and length of vehicle trips, including facilitating smart growth, increasing multimodal transportation facilities, managing better available parking, and supporting passenger rail service. General Plan 2050 would support these strategies by fostering high-density, infill development near transit, identifying pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, and revising parking and other development standards to reduce the transportation sector's GHG contribution by reducing single-occupant vehicle driving and encouraging alternative modes of transportation.

2.7 Project Related Approvals, Permits, and Discretionary Actions

Because General Plan 2050 is a conceptual vision for the City of Watsonville and not a formal site plan or construction application, no permits are needed for its adoption. However, the City of Watsonville City Council must formally certify the EIR and adopt General Plan 2050, and then implement the vision and changes identified in General Plan 2050.

Individual projects pursuant to General Plan 2050 would require permits and approvals such as, but not limited to, city demolition and building permits and design review. Future approvals from the City may require additional environmental review with the City as the lead agency, such as projects that require a General Plan Amendment or zone changes that may increase density, height and development intensity

of an area. However, pursuant to Section 15183 of the State CEQA Guidelines, future individual projects or actions that are determined to be consistent with General Plan 2050 shall not require additional environmental review, except as might be necessary to examine whether there are project-specific significant effects which are peculiar to the project or its site. Actions that may be found to be consistent with General Plan 2050 may include but not be limited to approval of funding and transactional activities (e.g., agreements, negotiations, land assembly, etc.) that implement the objectives, policies and actions included in General Plan 2050. This streamlines the review of such projects and reduces the need to prepare repetitive environmental studies.

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3 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section provides a general overview of the environmental setting for the proposed project. More detailed descriptions of the environmental setting for each environmental issue area can be found in **Chapter 4, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation,** of the EIR.

3.1 Regional Setting

Watsonville (City) is in the Pajaro Valley of Santa Cruz County, approximately 14 miles southeast of the City of Santa Cruz, 16 miles north of the City of Salinas, and 22 miles northeast of the City of Monterey. The City is approximately 6.8 square miles in area, and 0.1 square miles is comprised of water. The City encompasses wetlands and freshwater sloughs, which house several species of fish and birds. The City is bordered by the unincorporated communities of Freedom to the north, Interlaken to the east, and Pajaro to the south. The Monterey Bay/Pacific Ocean is approximately three miles west of the City. The areas surrounding the City are largely coastal and agricultural lands/plots. Pinto Lake is located 1.5 miles north of the City. Mount Madonna is 6 miles northeast of the City, and Palm Beach State Parks lies 3 miles southwest of the City. Watsonville has a population of approximately 52,590 in approximately 15,000 households (United States Census Bureau, 2024). As of 2019, the primary employers in the City were the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Watsonville Community Hospital, Granite Construction, and several major agricultural companies (City of Watsonville, 2024). The largest employment sector in Watsonville is the educational services, health care, and social assistance industry, employing approximately 21.5 percent of the City's employees (U.S. Census, 2024). Approximately 15 percent of jobs are in the agricultural sector (AMBAG, 2024). Several major agricultural companies are headquartered in Watsonville, and crops like strawberries, broccoli, and lettuce are vital to the region's agricultural industry.

3.2 Plan Area Setting

General Plan 2050 area (plan area) encompasses approximately 4,851 acres, including 4,200 contiguous acres that comprise the City of Watsonville and 651 acres of potential annexation areas within the sphere of influence to accommodate new growth within the voter-established Urban Limit Line (ULL). Five non-contiguous land areas, including the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Plan, Buena Vista Landfill, Pinto Lake, Corralitos Water Filter Plan, and Browns Valley Intake account for approximately 0.3 acres of the plan area. The plan area, including designated growth areas, is shown in **Chapter 2, Project Description**.

The plan area is primarily comprised of residential land uses, community facilities, natural open space, and employment uses, including retail, commercial, and industrial development. Watsonville's City Hall, Civic Plaza with Council Chambers, Santa Cruz County Courthouse, and City Plaza make up the majority of civic uses in the plan area. Main Street, located in downtown Watsonville, houses historic and mixed-use buildings, providing a combination of retail, service, office, and residential uses. Farmland surrounds and intersects the plan area, and agricultural processing plants and industrial buildings are located in the southwestern portion of the City between downtown and Highway 1, representing two of Watsonville's largest industries.

Most of the plan area is developed for residential, employment, or commercial uses. Industrial uses dominate the southwestern portion of the plan area, while open space follows the sloughs that run

through Watsonville and agricultural uses extend along plan area's northwestern, northeastern, and southern perimeter.

Throughout the plan area, landscaping with native and non-native vegetation can be found near residential and commercial uses. In downtown Watsonville, landscaping includes non-native vegetation and bare ground, especially along sidewalks. Non-landscaped areas are often open space areas or in proximity to industrial, agricultural, or roadway uses.

The roadway network in the plan area is centered around State Route 1 (SR 1), State Route 129 (SR 129), and State Route 152 (SR 152). Referred to locally as Highway 1, SR 1 is a two-to-three-lane highway that travels north-south along the City's western border. SR 1 acts as a gateway to the City, and travelers entering Watsonville from SR 1 have panoramic views of open space, low hills, and trees. SR 129 extends from its interchange with SR 1 (southwest of the City) to its interchange with U.S. Highway 101 (north of San Juan Bautista). SR 129 runs southwest-northeast along the plan area's southern boundary. Within Watsonville, SR 152 connects to SR 1 near the City's western boundary and travels southeast, where it is called Main Street. SR 152 continues to the northeast, now called East Lake Avenue, from downtown Watsonville, toward Interlaken and then over the Santa Cruz Mountains to the City of Gilroy. In addition to these highways, major cross-town arterial streets connect travelers to freeways, and local access roads and cross streets connect neighborhoods, employment hubs, and community facilities with and outside of the plan area.

3.3 Cumulative Development

In addition to the specific impacts of individual projects, CEQA requires EIRs to consider potential cumulative impacts of the proposed project. CEQA defines "cumulative impacts" as two or more individual impacts that, when considered together, are substantial or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the combined changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project and other nearby or related projects. For example, noise impacts of two nearby projects may be less than significant when analyzed separately but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. Cumulative impact analysis allows the EIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects. Cumulative impacts related to the adoption and implementation of General Plan 2050 are addressed in **Chapter 5, Cumulative Impacts**.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION

This section of the EIR presents the discussion of potential impacts from implementation of General Plan 2050 related to the following environmental subjects in their respective subsections under Chapter 4 of this EIR as identified below:

- 4.1 Aesthetics
- 4.2 Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- 4.3 Air Quality
- 4.4 Biological Resources
- 4.5 Cultural Resources
- 4.6 Energy
- 4.7 Geology and Soils
- 4.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- 4.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- 4.10 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 4.11 Land Use and Planning
- 4.12 Mineral Resources
- 4.13 Noise
- 4.14 Population and Housing
- 4.15 Public Services
- 4.16 Recreation
- 4.17 Transportation
- 4.18 Tribal Cultural Resources
- 4.19 Utilities and Service Systems
- 4.20 Wildfire

The discussion for each environmental area of analysis includes the following:

Environmental Setting – This subsection provides a brief overview of relevant plans, policies, and regulations that compose the regulatory framework for the project and describes the existing physical environmental conditions within the plan area and in the surrounding area at the time of the NOP, as relevant.

Impacts and Mitigation – This subsection includes the analysis of the proposed project's potential to result in environmental impacts as well as the corresponding mitigation measures that would be implemented to mitigate significant impacts under CEQA. The Impacts and Mitigation subsections include the following subheadings:

- **Thresholds of Significance –** This subheading includes the adopted CEQA thresholds used by the City to assess potential environmental impacts.
- **Methodology –** This subheading includes a description of the methodology used to perform the corresponding impact analysis, including the models and data used, relevant assumptions, and the specific scope of the analysis that was conducted.
- **Project Impacts –** This subheading provides analysis of General Plan 2050's potential environmental impact relevant to the corresponding threshold of significance. For significant impacts that are not fully mitigated by implementation of General Plan goals, policies, and implementation measures, feasible mitigation measures are identified.
- **General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Mitigate Potential Impacts-** This subsection includes the relevant General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that would minimize potential environmental impacts through the implementation of General Plan 2050.
- **Mitigation Measures -** This subsection, as applicable, includes the list of mitigation measures that would be implemented to minimize, avoid, or eliminate significant environmental impacts.

"Mitigation measures" are defined as measures that will minimize, avoid, or eliminate a significant impact (CEQA Guidelines Section 15370).

- **Significance After Mitigation –** This subsection, as applicable, analyzes the level of significance of a potential environmental impact after the implementation of any proposed mitigation measures or applicable General Plan 2050 policies, and whether the proposed mitigation would reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

Additionally, as described in **Section 1.4.1, Notice of Preparation** of **Chapter 1, Introduction**, several comments were received during the Notice of Preparation (NOP) process and Scoping Meeting. The NOPs and comments received are presented in Appendix A of this EIR. Appendix B, **Table 1** provides a detailed cross-reference of comments received during the NOP process and identifies where each issue raised is addressed within this EIR.

4.1 Aesthetics

This section describes the aesthetic and visual resources conditions within the plan area and vicinity and assesses the potential aesthetic impacts that may result with implementation of General Plan 2050.

During the public scoping process, one comment was received from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, highlighting concerns that anticipated growth could reduce open space and scenic landscapes, replacing them with increased residential or developed areas. California Department of Fish and Wildlife noted the importance of addressing aesthetic impacts from changes to hydrology and stream flows, potential disturbances to habitats and special-status species, and the obstruction of natural movement corridors that contribute to visual and ecological value. Impacts associated with the transformation of these aesthetic spaces and encroachment onto scenic lands are discussed in **Section 4.1.2, Impacts and Mitigation**.

4.1.1 Environmental Setting

4.1.1.1 Regulatory Framework

State

State Designated Scenic Routes

The California Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963 with the purpose to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change, which would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) manages the California Scenic Highway Program, provides guidance, and assists local government agencies, community organizations, and citizens with the process to officially designate scenic highways. 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. The California Scenic Highway Program includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have designated as such. The highways are identified in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code.

State highways nominated for scenic designation must first be on the statutory list of highways eligible for scenic designation in the Sate Scenic Highway System. A process for adding eligible highways to the statutory list is described in *Section III: Obtaining Eligibility* of the Caltrans' *Scenic Highway Guidelines*. Scenic highway nominations are evaluated using the following criteria:

- The State or county highway consists of a scenic corridor that is comprised of a memorable landscape that showcases the natural scenic beauty or agriculture of California.
- Existing visual intrusions do not significantly impact the scenic corridor.
- Demonstration of strong local support for the proposed scenic highway designation.
- The length of the proposed scenic highways is not less than a mile and is not segmented.

The status of a State scenic highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated as a Scenic Highway. According to the Caltrans California Scenic Highway Program, State Route (SR) 1 and SR 152, which traverse the City, are eligible for the official State Scenic Highway designation. However, there are no officially designated State scenic highways in Watsonville (Caltrans, 2018).

Title 24 Outdoor Lighting Zones

In 2001, the California Legislature passed a bill requiring the California Energy Commission (CEC) to adopt energy efficient standards for outdoor lighting for both the public and private sector. In November 2003, the CEC adopted changes to the Building Energy Efficient Standards within Title 24. These standards became effective on October 1, 2005, and specify outdoor lighting requirements for residential and nonresidential development. The intent of the new standards is to improve the quality of outdoor lighting and help reduce the impacts of light pollution, light trespass, and glare. The standard regulates lighting characteristics, such as maximum power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls to turn lighting on and off. Different lighting standards are set by classifying areas by lighting zone. The classification is based on population figures in the 2020 Census and the areas can be designated as LZ1 (dark), LZ2 (low), LZ3 (medium), or LZ4 (high). Lighting requirements for dark and rural areas are stricter in order to protect the areas from new sources of light pollution and light trespass. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Watsonville is classified as an urban area and is therefore designated as LZ3 per the CEC classification standards.

Local

Santa Cruz County General Plan / Local Coastal Program

The Santa Cruz County General Plan/Local Coastal Program (LCP) was adopted by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors on November 15, 2022, certified by the California Coastal Commission on December 15, 2023, and became effective on March 15, 2024. The Santa Cruz County General Plan/LCP includes aesthetics-related goals, objectives, policies, and implementation strategies that are relevant to the plan area, particularly where the plan area is adjacent to County lands, agricultural areas, rural scenic corridors, and the coastal zone. Overall, these policies emphasize protection of scenic and visual resources, including public views, coastal viewsheds, agricultural vistas, scenic roads, wooded hillsides, open meadows, ridgetops, and prominent natural landforms. The policies also guide new development to be visually compatible with the surrounding natural and built environment through appropriate siting, scale, height, setbacks, grading, materials, colors, landscaping, signage controls, and screening. Collectively, the Santa Cruz County General Plan/LCP policies seek to preserve the County's coastal, rural, agricultural, and scenic character while allowing development that is designed to avoid or minimize adverse visual effects.

City of Watsonville Municipal Code

The Watsonville Municipal Code (WMC) includes several regulations associated with protection of the City's visual character and control of light and glare. For example, Chapter 11 of Title 7, *Street Trees,* prevents trees from being planted along streets without a permit, and Chapter 13 of Title 7, *Preservation of Historical Trees*, states the City Council, by ordinance, may designate an individual tree or other feature, or an integrated group of trees and features on a single lot or site, having a special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value as a designated tree and shall further describe a site sufficient for each designated tree to maintain its growth and preservation.

City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines

In 2001, the Watsonville City Council adopted the Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines (Guidelines) with the objective of developing more housing in a way that conserves the desirable characteristics of established neighborhoods, while improving new and evolving neighborhoods. Based on seven neighborhood and architectural design principles, the Guidelines provide a framework of neighborhood and design criteria for shaping residential development in the City. The Guidelines indicate that new housing should 1) connect to the community, 2) use block patterns that are similar to Watsonville's traditional neighborhoods, 3) avoid flood and wetland areas, and 4) fully integrate parks and community facilities where appropriate.

City of Watsonville Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan

The Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) includes development standards and design guidelines that address lighting and glare within the Downtown area. The DWSP requires that site lighting be shielded by permanent attachments to light fixtures so that light sources are not visible from a public way and to prevent off-site glare. In addition, the DWSP calls for the use of pedestrian-scaled lighting fixtures and specifies that lighting should be selected, retrofitted, and located to shield or confine light spread to targeted areas, thereby limiting glare, sky glow, and light intrusion. These standards and guidelines currently apply to development within Downtown Watsonville and help minimize potential aesthetic impacts associated with exterior lighting.

In addition, the DWSP calls for a coordinated program of public realm improvements, including the planting of street trees, to enhance the visual character of Downtown Watsonville and help establish a pleasant, pedestrian-oriented, and publicly accessible environment. These improvements are intended to contribute to a cohesive streetscape and reinforce the aesthetic quality of the downtown area.

4.1.1.2 Existing Conditions

Regional Setting

Watsonville is situated in the heart of the Pajaro Valley, located within the southern boundaries of Santa Cruz County. The Pajaro Valley is characterized by its surrounding expanses of fertile agricultural land and rangeland, which stretch across the valley floor and contribute to the region's rich farming heritage. To the north and east, the dramatic rise of the Santa Cruz Mountains creates a natural backdrop, with their densely wooded slopes offering a visual contrast to the open agricultural fields and urban development below. These mountains not only provide a scenic edge to Watsonville but also contribute to the rural charm that defines much of the City's landscape.

The Pajaro River flows along the southern edge of the City, separating Watsonville from Monterey County and further accentuating the City's position within a largely rural, agrarian setting. The City's western boundary is marked by SR 1, beyond which agricultural fields continue to stretch toward the Monterey Bay, approximately three miles away. This proximity to the coast enhances the diversity of Watsonville's surroundings, blending coastal, rural, and mountainous elements.

Within the City itself, the landscape features a blend of urban development and agricultural areas. Major roadways, such as Main Street, Riverside Drive and Freedom Boulevard, provide vital connections across Watsonville and contribute to the urban character of the City. The City's proximity to both the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Monterey Bay further enhances its scenic appeal, offering expansive views that connect urban life with the natural beauty of the region.

The agricultural land surrounding Watsonville adds a distinctive rural quality to the City's viewsheds, creating a juxtaposition between the orderly rows of crops and the bustling urban core. From certain vantage points outside the City, such as the Forest of Nisene Marks approximately 12 miles to the north, visitors can appreciate the broader regional setting. While the details of individual buildings or roadways in Watsonville may not be visible from such distances, the overall layout of the City within its agricultural and natural context is evident, underscoring Watsonville's unique blend of rural and urban landscapes.

Urban Visual Character and Quality

Surrounding Land Uses

The area surrounding the City primarily consists of a mix of agricultural land, residential neighborhoods, and commercial developments. To the north, large swaths of farmland dominate the landscape, reinforcing the City's agricultural roots, with scattered one- and two-story residential structures supporting the local community. The City is also home to several industrial and commercial areas, particularly along Main Street, where a variety of businesses and retail establishments are located.

To the east, the Watsonville Municipal Airport is located approximately two miles from the City center, adjacent to light industrial and agricultural areas. Further east, rolling hills and the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains provide a scenic backdrop to the City, adding both natural beauty and visual contrast to the flat agricultural lands below.

South of the City, more farmland extends toward Monterey County, emphasizing the region's strong connection to agriculture. Pinto Lake Park, located about 1.5 miles to the north of the city, adds a natural recreational feature with its open spaces, lake, and picnic areas, and offers a contrast to the surrounding urban development.

SR 1 forms a significant boundary to the west of Watsonville, separating the City from additional agricultural lands that stretch toward Monterey Bay. The highway corridor also provides views of both urban development and open fields, contributing to the City's blend of rural and suburban aesthetics. The City's landscape is further defined by the nearby Pajaro River, which flows along its southern edge, contributing to Watsonville's unique mix of natural, rural, and urban elements.

Natural features like the Pajaro River and agricultural land encircle the City, maintaining Watsonville's distinctly rural character while the urban core develops with residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

Scenic Views

A scenic view refers to a landscape or vista that is visually pleasing or noteworthy due to its natural beauty, unique features, or combination of elements such as mountains, water bodies, forests, or open spaces. Scenic views are often considered valuable aesthetic resources, contributing to the visual character and enjoyment of an area.

In Watsonville, scenic views are largely defined by its location within the Pajaro Valley, surrounded by the Santa Cruz Mountains to the north and east, which provide a scenic and visually prominent natural backdrop. The topography of the plan area and the City itself is generally flat, limiting unobstructed views of the surrounding mountains from most locations within the urban core. However, occasional breaks in the built environment, such as open agricultural fields and roadways, offer clear and striking views of the mountains, enhancing the rural and scenic character of the region.

The Pajaro River Watershed and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary also contribute to Watsonville's natural scenic beauty, offering views of the river, tributaries such as Salsipuedes Creek and

Corralitos Creek, and nearby riparian areas including Watsonville Slough, Struve Slough, and the West Branch of Struve Slough. In particular, elevated areas along SR 1 and SR 152 provide occasional expansive views of both the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Monterey Bay, showcasing the juxtaposition of Watsonville's agricultural landscape with its surrounding natural features.

Although the City is primarily characterized by gently sloping terrain, the flat landscape allows for distant views of the surrounding agricultural lands, open spaces, and the natural ridgelines of the Santa Cruz Mountains. These views, framed by the City's agricultural heritage and rural setting, are key scenic resources for Watsonville. Additionally, Pinto Lake and the Pajaro Valley hills to the northwest contribute to the scenic variety, adding natural elements that punctuate the otherwise flat terrain of the City.

Scenic Roads

According to the Santa Cruz County General Plan/LCP, Policy ARC-5.2.1 (LCP) Designation of Scenic Roads, the following roads and highways are valued for their vista within or directly adjacent to the plan area (County of Santa Cruz, 2024):

- State Highways
    - Highway 1 - from San Mateo County to Monterey County
    - Highway 129 – from Highway 1 to San Benito County
    - Highway 152 – from Highway 1 to Santa Clara County
- County Roads
    - Amesti Road – from Varni Road to Browns Valley Road
    - Beach Road – from Highway 1 to Palm Beach

These roads are not classified as California State Scenic Highway. SR 1 and 152 have a status of eligible (Caltrans, 2018).

Light and Glare

Light and glare refer to artificial illumination and the potential for that light to cause visual discomfort or impairment. Light includes both indoor and outdoor sources that enhance visibility, while glare is the excessive brightness that can come from direct light or reflections, particularly during the day. In Watsonville, nighttime lighting varies by area, with more intense lighting found in urban and commercial zones, and lower-intensity lighting in residential and rural areas.

At night, outdoor lighting includes illuminated signs, streetlights, parking lots, and building lighting in commercial areas like Main Street and Downtown Watsonville. Indoor lighting, visible through windows, adds to the overall brightness in these parts of the City. In residential neighborhoods and agricultural areas, however, lighting is more subdued, with minimal outdoor sources such as porch lights and streetlights, preserving the area's rural character.

During the day, glare typically comes from reflective surfaces like glass windows, metal facades, vehicle windshields, and pavement. Commercial areas with larger buildings and reflective materials are more prone to glare, while agricultural and residential zones experience less daytime glare.

4.1.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.1.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G of the State *CEQA Guidelines*, the proposed project would result in potentially significant environmental effects on the aesthetic and visual character of the area if it would:

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) Conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality;

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

4.1.2.2 Methodology

Impacts related to aesthetics were evaluated qualitatively based on the location and type of development that would be accommodated under General Plan 2050, the existing visual character of the plan area and its surroundings, the presence of scenic vistas and scenic resources, public views from publicly accessible vantage points, and applicable local and State regulations governing scenic quality, design, light, and glare. The analysis also considered whether future development would be subject to General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions; WMC requirements; City design review procedures; and, where applicable, DWSP standards.

4.1.2.3 Project Impacts

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

A project would have a substantial effect on a scenic vista if it results in a scenic vista being fully or significantly blocked from public views in a public area. While General Plan 2050 does not designate any scenic vistas, the City's unique natural resources, including its creeks, sloughs, and wetlands contribute to its unique scenic characteristics. Together, natural open spaces and working lands preserve scenic views. Trees play a vital role in a community's scenic beauty, the character of the local landscape, and the overall quality of the environment. Trees provide a variety of aesthetic and environmental values, and accentuation of the architectural design of buildings.

According to the Santa Cruz County General Plan/LCP, public roads provide the broadest range and greatest level of public access to the various scenic and aesthetic resources within the County, offering important viewing areas and scenic corridors. Within the plan area, scenic roads and highways, including portions of Highway 1, Highway 152, and local County roads, may provide intermittent public views of wetlands, agricultural fields, dense redwood forests, open meadows, and mountain hillsides (County of Santa Cruz, 2024), depending on location and direction of motorists and pedestrians.

Compared to the existing conditions, the project would include the development of multi-story buildings which could alter, block, or diminish public scenic views. However, because General Plan 2050 would focus multi-story development within already urbanized and infill areas, much of this development would occur in locations where the existing visual setting is already part of the built environment and so would not be expected to substantially alter the intermittent scenic viewsheds.

Scenic views in the plan area include coastal vistas along Monterey Bay, the Watsonville Wetlands, Pinto Lake and surrounding hillsides, forested ridgelines of the Santa Cruz Mountains, and open views along the Pajaro Valley. Development in the plan area could potentially lead to substantial effects on these scenic vistas if they are fully or significantly blocked from public views in the area. However, these multi-story buildings in the project area may also provide potential viewpoints of the scenic vistas with less obstruction.

Ultimately, all future development within the plan area would be evaluated through the City's design review process. This process is managed by the City's Community Development Department to ensure that new buildings are consistent with General Plan 2050 policies. The design review process evaluates building placement, height, massing, scale, setback, and other architectural and design features to ensure that new development respects and preserves important scenic views.

Additionally, General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions contain development standards to guide the design and would serve as program-level mitigation for impacts to scenic views.

Scenic vistas would be preserved and developed within the plan area in accordance with the following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

> **Goal C-5 Trees.** Encourage protection and planting of trees for aesthetic and environmental value.
>
> **Policy C-5.1 Tree Protection.** The City shall protect certain trees from being removed since trees provide a variety of aesthetic and environmental values.
>
> **Action C-5.1.1 Tree Protection Ordinance.** The City shall adopt a tree preservation ordinance and tree planting guidelines. The ordinance and guidelines shall set forth the types of trees to be protected and the conditions under which trees may be removed.
>
> **Action C-5.1.2 Tree Planting Guidelines.** The City shall adopt street tree planting requirements and guidelines that identify a citywide tree planting program, including a list of appropriate street trees suitable for various areas of the community. New projects will be required to follow the established tree planting guidelines.
>
> **Action C-5.1.3 Preserve the Tree Canopy.** Conduct necessary actions to preserve and expand the tree canopy. Carry out actions related to promoting tree planting and expanding the City's tree canopy, as noted in the Urban Greening Plan and Urban Forest Management Plan.
>
> **Goal LC-1. A Well-Planned City of Places.** A well-planned City that: supports a wide range of complementary land uses developed and operated at intensities that accommodate anticipated growth; achieves the vision of a beautiful, diverse, and well-connected community; features unique places that respect Watsonville's agricultural and architectural heritage; and remains rooted in its unique climate, topography, history, and cultural traditions.
>
> **Policy LC-1.3 Infill and Preservation of Community Character.** Promote, encourage, and cultivate infill, reuse, and revitalization along Watsonville's commercial corridors, neighborhood centers, and in and adjacent to downtown.
>
> **Policy LC-1.6 Connectivity and Mobility.** Preserve and enhance Watsonville's existing street and trail network to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists of all abilities and improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between: existing neighborhoods; retail and services along corridors; parks,

schools, recreation and natural open spaces; bus transit and the planned passenger rail station; and Downtown Watsonville and Pajaro.

Policy LC-1.7 Natural Resources. Conserve and enhance designated natural resources—including wetlands, sloughs, creeks, and the Pajaro River—to maintain ecological health and balance and enhance Watsonville's visual, recreational, and educational offerings.

Action LC-1.1.3 Street and Trail Network Improvements. Plan and implement targeted improvements to the quality and number of pedestrian and bicycle routes within the street and trail network, prioritizing connections to schools, parks, neighborhood activity centers, and downtown.

Action LC-10.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise zoning provisions, and other policies to:

- Maintain the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods by ensuring that any new multi-family residential development adjacent to single-family neighborhoods is house-form in scale and character.
- Ensure the creation of new neighborhoods within the new growth areas that are consistent with the human-scaled provisions of this General Plan 2050. In particular, include objective design standards consistent with the General Plan that include the following design features:
    - An interconnected street and block network with a high level of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connectivity;
    - Tree-lined streets with sidewalks and on-street parking;
    - Integration of one or more community facilities, such as parks, schools, trails, or civic buildings;
    - A variety of housing types and styles appropriate to the existing neighborhood context; and
    - Street-facing building entries and windows with driveways and garages generally deemphasized in the streetscape composition.

Policy LC-13.1 Natural Features. Conserve Watsonville's natural features, including its sloughs, creeks, and the Pajaro River.

Policy LC-13.2 Enjoyment of Natural Features. Maintain, enhance, and expand recreational opportunities along Watsonville's sloughs, creeks, and the Pajaro River.

Policy LC-13.3 New Development and Natural Features. Ensure new development along Watsonville's natural features complements the natural features.

Action LC-13.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise zoning provisions, and/or adopt development standards to ensure new development faces natural features, trails, and parks.

The WMC includes several provisions that would help reduce conflicts between urban development and agricultural operations and, in doing so, support the continued presence of agricultural lands that contribute to the visual character of the plan area. Chapter 14-33, Right to Farm, is intended to preserve and protect agricultural operations and agricultural land in the vicinity of Watsonville by limiting land use

conflicts associated with urban development located near agricultural operations and by providing notice to owners, purchasers, and tenants of non-agricultural uses adjacent to agricultural lands. In addition, the City's agricultural zoning districts, including the Exclusive Agricultural District and Interim Agricultural District, are intended to protect agricultural uses, prohibit conflicting uses, and prevent premature urban development of lands retained in agricultural use (Chapter 14-16). Where applicable, the City's Coastal Zone Implementation Plan also requires agricultural buffers between agricultural land and non-agricultural uses, including vegetative or other physical barriers to minimize land use conflicts (Chapter 9-5). These provisions are not scenic vista regulations; however, they support agricultural land preservation and urban-agricultural edge compatibility, which maintain visual character associated with working agricultural lands surrounding Watsonville.

With implementation of General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions included in the project, buildout and future development, the project would not result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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

No state scenic highways are located within the plan area. The nearest officially state-designated scenic highway is SR 156, located approximately 8 miles south of the plan area, and is separated by intervening development and physical geographic features. Therefore, buildout of future development under the project would have no impact on scenic resources within a state scenic highway. (No Impact)

c) Would the project, in non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

The City does not formally designate scenic resources; however, it contains a range of scenic elements, including views from roadway corridors such as SR 152, East Beach Street, Main Street, and Riverside Drive. Additionally, the City is home to several significant natural features, including the Santa Cruz Mountains, Pajaro Valley, Pajaro River Watershed, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Pajaro River, Salsipuedes Creek, Corralitos Creek, Pinto Lake, Watsonville Slough, Struve Slough, and the West Branch of Struve Slough. These features of the local environment provide unique aesthetic and recreational opportunities for city residents.

General Plan 2050 would have a significant impact if future growth and development resulting from implementation of General Plan 2050 would substantially change the existing visual character around development sites such that the visual quality of those areas would be damaged. The plan area contains urban, suburban, and rural lands, along with commercial, industrial, open space, and institutional areas. The proposed project would support infill development within the City limits while also accommodating new growth in annexation areas outside the City limits but within the SOI. Infill growth within the City limits would primarily consist of multi-family and mixed-use development and would be focused along the East Lake Avenue and Freedom Boulevard corridors and within Downtown Watsonville. New growth beyond existing City limits would be accommodated in the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C, and the Highway 1 Gateway area. Growth within Buena Vista and Area C would consist of single-family and multi-family housing and small mixed-use neighborhood centers and may offer a significant number of new home ownership opportunities. Growth in these areas would result in diminished views of nearby scenic resources. **Figure 2-8** illustrates the proposed land use designations, showing where future development has the potential to occur.

To reduce potential changes to the existing visual character or quality of public views due to infill growth within the plan area, the project would adhere to General Plan 2050, which includes goals, actions, and policies to reduce impacts to visual resources by ensuring that new development reflects the City's small-town community character.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

Action C-1.1.8 Public Access to Trail Systems. The City shall require private development adjacent to slough systems to incorporate public trail systems along the slough when feasible.

Policy LC-2.1 Placemaking Design Elements. Require new development to be compatible with the existing context and envisioned character and scale appropriate to Watsonville. Key place-making strategies include:

- Buildings located at the front of the lot and facing the street with ample windows.
- Pedestrian access into buildings directly from the sidewalk or common open spaces that connect directly to the sidewalk.
- Parking, loading zones, and utilities located at the center or rear of the lot with vehicular and service access from alleys or side streets.
- Active ground-floor uses such as sidewalk dining, where applicable.
- Sufficiently wide sidewalks and street trees.
- Complementary uses within walking or biking distance.
- Convenient, comfortable, and safe access to schools, parks, open space, and transit.

Policy LC-6.1 Mixed-use, Transit-Oriented Neighborhood Centers. Infill large parcels with multi-family and mixed-use development that:

- Provides higher-density residential uses within proximity of commercial uses and transit to encourage pedestrian activity, to provide a consumer base for commercial uses, and to increase transit ridership;
- Provides convenient shopping opportunities for residents of the neighborhood center residents and of surrounding neighborhoods; and
- Provides appropriate transition between higher intensity buildings and adjacent neighborhoods.

Goal LC-9 Context-Sensitive Neighborhood Infill. New neighborhood-adjacent multi-family infill buildings will be designed to the scale of existing single-family houses.

Policy LC-9.1 House Form Infill. Introduce new house-form multi-family buildings consistent in scale, massing and visual character with single-family houses.

Action LC-9.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Review and revise as necessary existing adopted residential design standards and guidelines, including the City of Watsonville Residential Development Standards for Multi-Family Condominium & Townhouse Projects, and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines to guide the design of new neighborhood-adjacent house-form, multi-family buildings to be consistent with the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods.

Policy LC-10.6 Conventional Suburban Neighborhood Design. Prohibit the construction of new residential neighborhoods that provide sound walls along any streets, discontinuous cul-de sac street patterns, long block lengths, single building and housing types, and lack of walking or biking access to parks, schools, goods, and services. Where this is not possible due to safety factors, existing development patterns or envisioned streetscape character, neighborhood edges shall be designed according to the following policies:

- Strongly discourage the construction of new gated communities.
- Allow sound walls to buffer new neighborhoods from existing sources of noise pollution, such as railroads and limited access roadways.
- Consider sound walls as sites for public art and/or vertical landscaping.
- Prohibit the use of sound walls to buffer residential areas from arterial or collector streets Instead address noise issues with building design and setbacks, landscaping and other techniques.
- In the case where sound walls must be provided, require pedestrian access points to improve access from the neighborhoods to nearby commercial, educational, and recreational amenities, activity centers and transit stops.
- Discourage the use of signs to distinguish one residential project from another. Strive for neighborhoods to blend seamlessly into one another. If provided, gateways should be landmarks and urban design focal points, not advertisements for home builders.

Policy LC-13.3 New Development and Natural Features. Ensure new development along Watsonville's natural features complements the natural features by:

- Ensuring new development located adjacent to Watsonville's sloughs, creeks, and the Pajaro River faces public trails and/or publicly accessible streets located along the edge of these natural features; and
- Prohibiting parking lots and back of house areas of new development from facing these natural features.

Goal LC-14 Conserved Natural Features and Accessible Recreation Amenities. The City's parks will be accessible to all modes of transportation, accommodate a wide range of recreational amenities, reflect the City's small-town character, feature rich landscaping and tree canopy, and provide appropriate transitions between abutting neighborhoods and other land uses.

Policy LC-14.1 Parks and Recreational Amenities. Introduce new parks and recreational amenities in conjunction with development in new growth areas, as follows:

- In conjunction with new development in the Area C new growth area, introduce community recreational and athletic fields in the 100-year flood basin;
- Introduce a revenue-generating regional sports and entertainment complex in the Highway 1 Gateway that hosts regional and state wide athletic tournaments, concerts, festivals, and other events; and

- Require developers of the Area C and Buena Vista new growth areas to introduce neighborhood parks that provide dog runs, playgrounds and passive and active recreational amenities.

Additionally, as discussed in Project Impact (a), the WMC includes several land use provisions that support the preservation of agricultural areas and reduce potential conflicts at the urban-agricultural edge. These include the City's Right to Farm ordinance, agricultural zoning districts, and, where applicable, Coastal Zone agricultural buffer requirements, which help protect agricultural operations, limit incompatible urban encroachment, and provide separation between agricultural and non-agricultural uses. Although these provisions are not scenic quality regulations, they support the continued presence of working agricultural lands and help maintain the visual character of areas where public views are defined by agricultural uses, rural edges, and open cultivated landscapes. Therefore, these provisions would help reduce the potential for future development to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views in and around agricultural areas within the plan area.

For development within the DWSP area, the DWSP also provides policy direction related to visual character, urban design, building form, pedestrian experience, historic identity, and sensitive infill. The following DWSP policies are applicable to the analysis:

Policy 2.1: Character Areas. Recognize that different parts of the Specific Plan area have distinct character and should be designed to enhance those unique characteristics. Promote, encourage, and increase higher levels of infill, reuse, reinvestment, and revitalization within each of the Character Areas.

Policy 2.3: Varied Intensity. Allow the highest densities and heights in the Historic Core and Civic Core with moderate-intensity developments in areas adjacent to single family neighborhoods.

Policy 3.1: Active and Attractive Street Wall. Create an active continuous street wall with buildings at the back of walk along Main Street and other major corridors to create a seamless pedestrian experience. The downtown should offer an attractive urban environment, with pedestrian-friendly streets and a high level of special enclosures created by taller buildings built close to the street.

Policy 3.2: Built Form. Orient the function, shape (height and mass) and configuration of buildings to the street to create an urban experience.

Policy 3.4: Walkable Environment. Improve the pedestrian experience, public space, aesthetics, and design quality to attract visitors, serve residents and workers, and promote walking.

Policy 4.1: Sense of Place. Leverage and strengthen Watsonville's cultural and historic identities to create a sense of place.

Policy 4.3: Unique Elements. Allow and encourage public and private buildings and development projects that promote Watsonville's history, arts, and culture through the addition of signs, distinctive landscaping, monuments, and/or other features that identify the downtown as a distinct place.

Policy 8.5: Sensitive Infill. Use development and design regulations to develop sensitively designed infill projects.

New development allowed by General Plan 2050 would be designed to be consistent with these goals, policies, and actions, as well as the design review requirements of the City's Planning Division, applicable provisions of the WMC, and, where applicable, the DWSP. The WMC and DWSP (incorporated in this EIR by reference) include provisions related to design review, building form, sensitive infill, agricultural land

use compatibility, and buffering between agricultural and non-agricultural uses, which would further help reduce potential visual character impacts. Adherence to these policies and standards would ensure that new development is designed to be compatible with existing development and uses high-quality building materials and design techniques. Therefore, new development would not degrade the existing visual character and impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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

General Plan 2050 would have a significant impact if future development allowed by the plan would create new sources of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views. The proposed General Plan 2050 is a policy document that provides direction for future growth and development but does not include the construction of any specific physical improvements or development projects that would introduce substantial sources of new lighting or glare. New lighting from new development allowed by General Plan 2050 would occur mainly from commercial areas, safety lighting, building-mounted lights, illuminated signage, parking lot and streetlights, and traffic on major arterials. New sources of glare would occur primarily from building materials, structural surfaces and parked cars.

Nighttime uses associated with development allowed by General Plan 2050 may increase light intensity levels in development areas and may have the potential to affect existing and future nearby sensitive receptors. If lighting in new development is not designed to reduce upwardly directed light, nighttime lighting could obscure views of the night sky or intrude into neighboring properties. Future development allowed by the proposed General Plan would also incrementally increase glare due to the new building surfaces and parked cars.

General Plan 2050 would allow redevelopment throughout the plan area. Sources of light and glare associated with these uses would be similar in intensity and nature to the existing source of light and glare associated with existing downtown, suburban, and rural residential uses.

Future development pursuant to General Plan 2050 would be subject to applicable WMC requirements, including Chapter 14-16, District Regulations, which identifies permitted uses and applicable development standards for the City's zoning districts, including lighting-related requirements. Future development would also be subject to the City's development regulations and design review requirements addressing glare and exterior lighting. In addition, where future development occurs within the DWSP area, it would be required to comply with applicable DWSP lighting guidelines. For example, Chapter 6 of the DWSP requires site lighting to be shielded by permanent attachments to light fixtures so that light sources are not visible from a public way and to prevent off-site glare. Chapter 6 also includes standards that regulate the brightness and intensity of light fixtures depending on whether the fixture is associated with residential, commercial, or industrial development. In addition, Chapter 6 includes building design standards, such as standards for arcades, which are colonnaded extensions of upper floors of a building that can shade lower floors where larger glass window panels are typically located. These design features would also help reduce glare from reflective surfaces. Compliance with these applicable WMC requirements, DWSP standards where applicable, and City development regulations would help prevent significant light and glare impacts associated with future development in the plan area.

Although General Plan 2050 does not have any goals, policies, or actions on light or glare, new development would be required to be consistent with the California Building Code standards for outdoor lighting, which are intended to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls. Future development would also be subject to applicable WMC requirements and City development regulations addressing exterior lighting and glare, and development within the DWSP area would be required to comply with DWSP lighting standards, including

requirements for shielded lighting, limits on light intensity, and design features intended to reduce off-site glare. Adherence to these standards and guidelines would ensure that lighting is shielded to avoid glare and light spillage and incorporates technologies such as timers to avoid excessive lighting. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

4.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

This section analyzes the potential for General Plan 2050 to impact agricultural and forestry resources.

During the public scoping process, several commenters expressed concerns that anticipated growth would encroach on farmland and result in the development and conversion of farmland. One commentor expressed concerns about the expansion of the Watsonville Urban Limit Line (ULL) to accommodate new growth, thus impacting existing agricultural lands. One commentor raised concerns whether the plan would potentially reduce open space and agricultural land uses. Impacts related to the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses, as well as development encroachment onto agricultural land, are discussed in **Section 4.2.2.2, Project Impacts**.

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

4.2.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

Farmland Protection Policy Act

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) aims to minimize the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses by assuring compliance with state, local, and private programs related to farmland protection. Farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. Forest land, pastureland, and cropland may also be subject to FPPA, but water and urban built-up land are not subject to FPPA.

Federal Forest Legacy Program

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is a conservation program that encourages the protection of privately-owned forest lands through land purchases or conservation easements. FLP aims to protect private forests, as they provide a variety of public benefits, including hunting and fishing opportunities, clean drinking water, habitats for fish and wildlife, and timber and other forest products.

State

California Land Conservation Act

The California Land Conservation Act, also called the Williamson Act, allows local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners such that specific parcels of land are restricted to agricultural or open space uses. In exchange, landowners receive lower property tax assessments on Williamson Act-contracted parcels. Contracts last for a minimum of ten years, and they automatically renew each decade unless the landowner initiates a non-renewal process. Williamson Act contracts may be cancelled before their expiration to be used for non-agricultural purposes. However, early cancellation of the contract requires coordination with the local or regional government and incurs a cancellation fee.

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment

The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model provides metrics to rate the relative importance of agricultural land resources. The LESA Model provides agencies with a means of assessing significant

effects of agricultural land conversion. Soil resource quality, project size, water resource availability, the presence of surrounding agricultural lands, and surrounding protected resource areas are all evaluated under LESA and assigned a point-value. The final score of these metrics determines a project's potential significance.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) aims to track the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural purposes through mapping. FMMP prepares and maintains maps that identify Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, Farmland, and Farmland of Local Potential. Maps are updated every two years through computer mapping, aerial imagery, and field reconnaissance and can be used to determine a project's potential impacts on agricultural land in an area.

Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973

The Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act regulates logging and forest management activities to ensure forest resources are harvested sustainably. This Act applies to private forestland and is enforced by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (DFFP). DFFP must approve all timber harvest plans prior to their implementation.

Right to Farm Act of 1981

The Right to Farm Act protects qualifying farmers from nuisance lawsuits, including those involving noise and pollution, filed by those who move into an area with existing farming operations. This Act safeguards farmers from attempts to stop agricultural activities and replace farmland with new development.

Regional

Santa Cruz County General Plan

The Santa Cruz County General Plan includes an Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Conservation Element, which establishes objectives and goals to sustain existing and future agriculture, aquaculture, viniculture, and other specialized agricultural types. The County General Plan recognizes specialized and commercial agriculture as significant to the County economy as well as its community character. This element outlines pertinent land use designations and permitting and development processes within and near lands used for agriculture.

The following policy addresses the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses within the City of Watsonville's Sphere of Influence (SOI):

- **ARC-1.3.3 (LCP) Conversion to Non-Agricultural Uses Near Urban Areas.** Prohibit the conversion of commercial agricultural lands (changing the land use designation from Agriculture to non-agricultural uses) around the periphery of urban areas except where it can be demonstrated that the viability of existing commercial agricultural uses are already severely limited by conflicts with the urban uses, where the conversion of the lands would complete a logical and viable neighborhood and contribute to the establishment of a stable limit to urban development, and where the conversion of such lands would not impair the viability of other commercial agricultural lands in the area. Within the Sphere of Influence of the City of Watsonville, no conversion of commercial agricultural land is allowed which would adversely affect the City's General Plan affordable housing goals, unless determined to be of an overriding public benefit.

Local

Urban Limit Line and Greenbelt

The Watsonville ULL and Greenbelt were established to contain urban development and limit urban sprawl to open spaces and agricultural lands. Watsonville residents first voted to establish the ULL in 2002 through Measure U and was planned to last through 2027. In 2022, a resident vote via Measure Q extended the ULL to last until 2040. The ULL encompasses the City of Watsonville as well as several planned urban expansion areas, including Area A (Buena Vista Area), Area B (Atkinson Lane), Area E (Villages), Freedom Area (Buena Vista Drive/Calabasas Road & Pajaro Lane/Stewart Ave), and the South Manfre Road Area. The ULL provides a boundary that outlines the outermost limit for urban development, helping to define the City and preventing urban development from encroaching on agricultural lands.

Watsonville Municipal Code Chapter 14-33 (Right to Farm)

Watsonville's specific Right to Farm ordinance protects qualifying farmers from nuisance lawsuits filed by those who move into an area with pre-existing agricultural activities. It also dictates that property owners within 500 feet of agricultural land or activities must notify renters or new buyers of the City's right to farm practices.

Watsonville Municipal Code Chapter 14-04 (Establishment and Designation of Districts)

Watsonville Municipal Code Chapter 14-04 identifies zoning districts used by the City to prevent encroachment on agricultural lands. This chapter also aims to prevent the premature conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. There are two zoning districts for agricultural land uses; EM-A-1 refers to "Exclusive Agricultural Districts," and EM-A-2 refers to "Interim Agricultural Districts." While the City's municipal code identifies these zoning districts, these districts are not present within the plan area.

Agricultural Buffer Policy

The City of Watsonville's Agricultural Buffer Policy, adopted in 2004, establishes standards to reduce land-use conflicts between new urban development and adjacent Santa Cruz County Commercial Agriculture zoned lands (Resolution No. 274-04 [CM]). The policy applies to residential, institutional, hotel/motel, and active private or public parks and requires a minimum 200-foot agricultural buffer located entirely within the urban area, unless reduced by the City Council to no less than 150 feet based on specific site conditions. Development subject to the policy must submit an Agriculture Buffer Report that recommends fencing, vegetative screening, signage, and other design measures to mitigate potential conflicts such as noise, trespass, or pesticide drift. The first 150 feet of the buffer must remain as landscaped, non-accessible open space, with limited public infrastructure allowed in the remaining 50 feet. A conservation easement and long-term maintenance mechanism must be established for the buffer, and the City provides notice of project applications to the Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner and Farm Bureau for review. The policy includes limited exceptions for certain existing or previously established uses.

4.2.1.2 Existing Conditions

Important Farmland

To characterize the environmental baseline for agricultural resources, Important Farmland Maps produced by the California Department of Conservation's (DOC) FMMP were reviewed. Unless otherwise

expressed, the future use of "Farmland" specifically includes the following definitions provided by the DOC (DOC, 2019):

- Prime Farmland is farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features that can sustain long-term agricultural production. The land's soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply must produce sustained high yields to be categorized as Prime Farmland. Additionally, the land must have been irrigated for agricultural production at sometime within the four years prior to mapping date to be eligible as Prime Farmland.
- Unique Farmland refers to farmlands with lower quality soils used for the production of the state's primary agricultural products. Land is often irrigated, but it may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- Farmland of Statewide importance is similar to Prime Farmland, but it may have greater slopes or a lower ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been irrigated within the four years prior to the mapping date.
- Farmland of Local importance is designated by County and local advisory committees and board of supervisors. Usually, this land is significant for the local agricultural economy.

There are swaths of Prime Farmland within and in the vicinity of the plan area, including in the Highway 1 Gateway, Buena Vista and Area C New Growth Areas (DOC, 2025). As shown in **Figure 4.2-1**, Farmland of Local Importance exist to the southwest of the Watsonville Municipal Airport but not within a planned new growth area. Some parcels of Unique Farmland are within the City's existing ULL planned for housing in the Buena Vista New Growth Area. Outside of the existing and proposed ULL, there is Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland on all sides of the plan area.

California Public Resources Code, Section 12220(g)

Forestry resources include forestland, timberland, and timberland production zones. Definitions used for forest land and timberland are those found in the California Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 12220(g) and 4789.2(g) and Government Code Section 51104(g). These codes define forestland, timberland, and timberland production zones as follows:

- Forest land is land that can support 10 percent native tree cover of any species under natural conditions. Forest land must also allow for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, or other public benefits.
- Timberland is defined as land, which is not owned by the federal government or designated as experimental forest land, available for and capable of growing commercial tree species used to produce lumber products (PRC § 4526).
- Timberland production zones are areas devoted to growing and harvesting timber. Timberland preserves may be designated by County (Gov. Code § 51104[g]).

There are no designated forests or timberlands in the plan area (GISWeb, 2022).

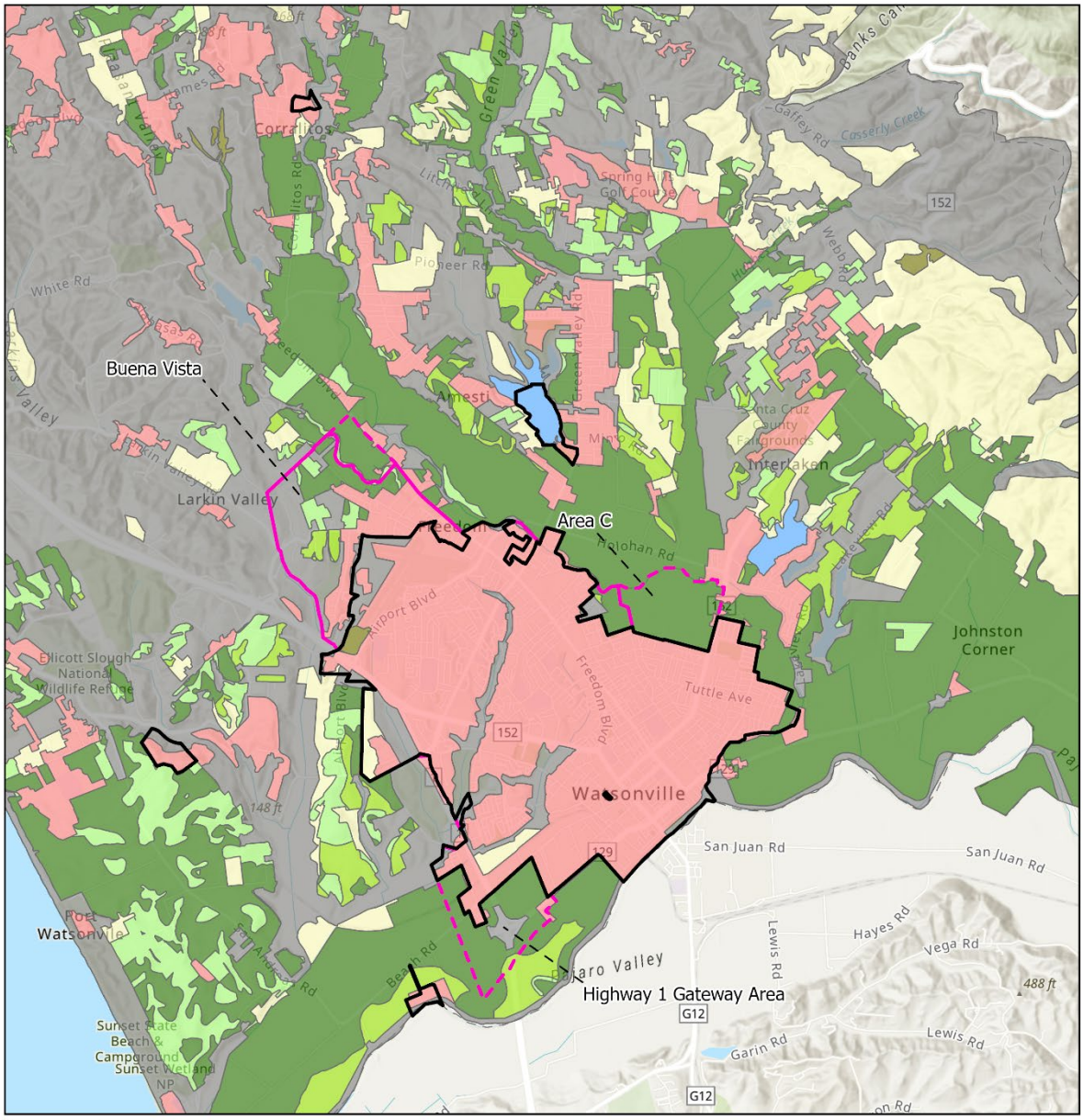
Environmental Setting

Most of the land in the plan area – especially within city limits – is classified as urban and built-up land (DOC, 2025). In the northern portion of the plan area, there are swaths of Prime Farmland (approximately 132acres), Farmland of Statewide Importance (approximately 33 acres), and Unique

Farmland (approximately 27 acres). Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance are also within Area C and the Highway 1 Gateway. There is also Irrigated Farmland to the northwest of the Watsonville Municipal Airport. Prime Farmland is also present on all sides of the plan area, but outside of the plan area and ULL. Within city limits, approximately 21 acres are mapped as Farmland of Local Importance and approximately 91 acres as Grazing Land, which are primarily located along the sloughs or the Watsonville Municipal Airport (**Figure 4.2-1**).

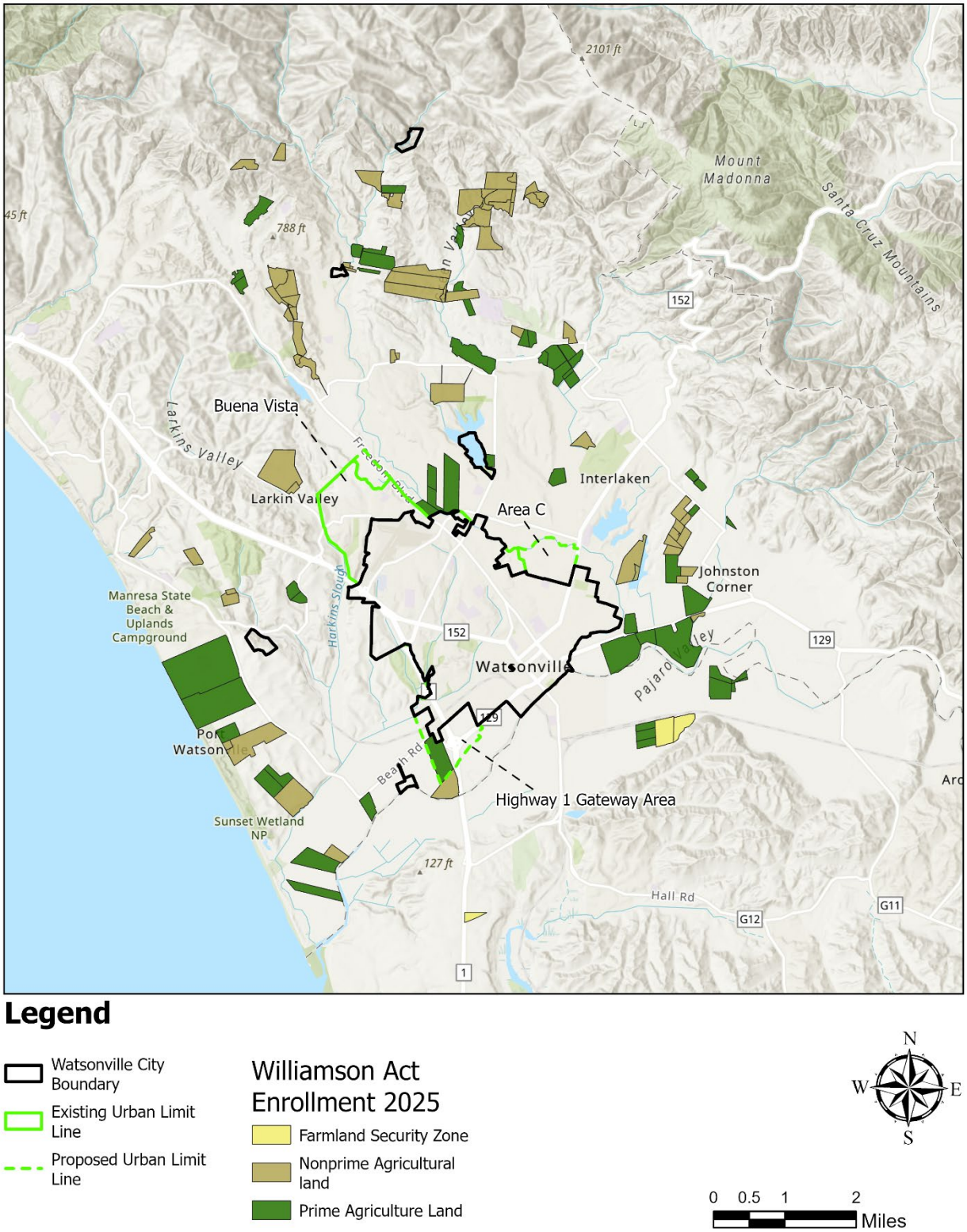
As of 2024, there are active Williamson Act contracts for Prime Farmland in the County, northeast of the Watsonville Municipal Airport (**Figure 4.2-2**) (DOC, 2024). These contracts do not apply to land located within the plan area, but do apply to land located north of the city limits adjacent to Freedom Boulevard and Corralitos Creek. There is a Williamson Act contract in the Highway 1 Gateway area, designated as Prime Farmland (**Figure 4.2-2**). Another Williamson Act contract, identified as nonprime agricultural land, exists adjacent to the Highway 1 Gateway area but outside of the plan area (**Figure 4.2-2**). Forest lands, as defined under PRC Section 12220(g), do not exist within the plan area. There are no timber resources or timberland production zones in the plan area (GISWeb).

Figure 4.2-1 Farmland Designations within and in the vicinity of the General Plan 2050 Area



Source: California Department of Conservation, 2022

Figure 4.2-2 Williamson Act Contracts within and in the vicinity of the General Plan 2050 Area



Source: California Department of Conservation, 2026

4.2.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.2.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to agricultural or forestry resources would be considered significant if the project would:

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 PRC § 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Gov. Code § 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?

4.2.2.2 Methodology

The analysis of agricultural resources and open space lands was conducted through a review of existing maps, FMMP data, and City and County General Plan land use and zoning designations. Impacts to agricultural resources were evaluated based on General Plan 2050's anticipated capacity to convert agricultural land, forest lands, or timberland to non-agricultural uses such that there is a net loss of such lands and whether General Plan 2050 would conflict with existing Williamson Act contracts or land use designations. A Farmland Conversion Memo was prepared for General Plan 2050 in March 2025 and was used to inform farmland conversion types and amounts (Appendix I).

4.2.2.3 Project Impacts

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?

The FMMP classifies the majority of the plan area as Urban and Built-up Land, which refers to areas occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit for every 1.5 acres (DOC, 2025). Outside of the Watsonville city limits, but within the ULL, there are swaths of Prime Farmland along the northern, eastern and southern sides of the plan area, as shown in **Figure 4.2-1**. Additionally, there are portions of Prime Farmland as well as small sections of Unique Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance along the plan area's northwestern and southwestern edge. The established ULL was created to protect agricultural areas from urban sprawl and expanded development into the wider Pajaro Valley.

Per the Farmland Conversion Memo (Appendix I), General Plan 2050 projects the conversion of approximately 80acres of farmland to non-agricultural uses. The farmland planned to be converted would include 675 acres of Prime Farmland, 41 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 64 acres of Unique Farmland. Of the converted farmland, 22 acres are located within the existing ULL, particularly in portions of the Buena Vista new growth area, and 568 acres are located within the proposed ULL that includes the Highway 1 Gateway area, extension of Buena Vista (Area A), and Area C.

The plan would guide most future development within city limits and the ULL areas, ensuring that encroachment into agricultural or open space lands would be minimal. The City established an agricultural buffer policy, in 2004, which sets forth standards to balance new urban development and County-designated Commercial Agriculture lands. New development located adjacent to Commercial Agriculture areas must occur at least 200 feet away from the agricultural lands and must submit an Agriculture Buffer Report that would describe how potential land use conflicts would be mitigated. With this policy, adverse impacts related to new urban development near agricultural lands would be minimized.

As part of project implementation, agricultural land would be protected and preserved within the plan area and the surrounding region in accordance with the following Goals, Policies, and Actions.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

> **Goal LC-1 A Well Planned City of Places.** A well-planned City that: supports a wide range of complementary land uses developed and operated at intensities that accommodate anticipated growth; achieves the vision of a beautiful, diverse, and well-connected community; features unique places that respect Watsonville's agricultural and architectural heritage; and remains rooted in its unique climate, topography, history, and cultural traditions.
>
> **Goal S-8 Agriculture and Ecosystem Hazards.** Protect the long-term viability of agricultural activities in Watsonville and the surrounding region.
>
> **Policy S-8.1 Climate-Resilient Agriculture Support Initiative.** The City shall support efforts by farmers, agricultural operations, and regional partners to promote practices and crop varieties that are better adapted to warmer temperatures, greater precipitation variability, and changes in pest regimes.

However, even with implementation of the City's agricultural buffer policy and the above General Plan goals and policies, General Plan 2050 buildout would result in net loss of Important Farmlands. The City has considered whether agricultural land mitigation and related programs could feasibly reduce General Plan 2050's potential impacts from the conversion of Important Farmland. Consequently, **Mitigation Measure AG-1** has been identified to reduce impacts related to the conversion of agricultural lands.

Mitigation Measure AG-1: Agricultural Conservation Easement and In-Lieu Fees

For new development projects in growth areas that would result in conversion of agricultural lands, the City of Watsonville shall require the project applicant, prior to the issuance of the grading or building permit, whichever occurs first, to demonstrate evidence of dedication of agricultural conservation easement at a 1:1 ratio or the payment of an in-lieu mitigation fee to Santa Cruz Land Trust or similar entity. The documentation provided to the City shall include a description of the project(s)being funded by the mitigation fee if such information is available at time of the fee(s) payment. To qualify under this mitigation measure, the specific agricultural easement acquisition projects must preserve acreage of farmland of an equal or greater Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program designation value (e.g., Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland) within the Pajaro Valley outside the City's urban limit line to offset the permanent conversion of Important Farmland by the Projects.

Significance After Mitigation

While implementation of **Mitigation Measures AG-1** could reduce these impacts, the loss of Important Farmland remains significant and unavoidable for the following reasons. First, implementation of Mitigation Measure relies on third parties (Santa Cruz Land Trust or similar entity and private property

owners). In addition, the implementation of agricultural easements under the mitigation measure restricts future land uses; consequently, landowners may be unwilling to put agricultural easements on their property. Also, the City has no evidence that a sufficient inventory of willing sellers or eligible farmland exists at a scale commensurate with the Farmland that would be converted under General Plan 2050 buildout. Moreover, the cost of implementing the mitigation measure is not known and cannot be known with certainty at this time. Due to the need to negotiate acquisition of each individual agricultural easement with a willing property owner, there is some uncertainty as to the timing by which **Mitigation Measure AG-1** could be implemented. Lastly, while acquiring agricultural easements would ensure that the parcels over which they are acquired are preserved for agricultural uses, the Projects would not reduce the number of acres lost to agricultural production. A conservation easement would not 'replace or provide a substitute resource' (CEQA Guidelines Section 15370(e)) for the permanent loss of farmland acreage. The mitigation efficiency from implementation of a conservation easement program is, therefore, not guaranteed. As a result, impacts related to the conversion of agricultural lands would be significant and unavoidable. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

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

Santa Cruz County General Plan Policy ARC-1.3.3 prohibits the conversion of Commercial Agriculture land to non-agricultural uses, which conflicts with the City's plans to accommodate additional housing. Portions of the planned new growth areas located within the existing and proposed ULL are zoned as Commercial Agriculture lands. Under ARC-1.3.3, converting these lands to urban land uses would not be allowed unless it could be demonstrated that prohibiting the conversion would adversely affect the City's affordable housing goals and an overriding public benefit determination could be made. While the planned housing in these new growth areas would support the City's housing development objectives, including the provision of additional affordable housing units required pursuant to the City's Affordable Housing Ordinance, not all new housing would be 100-percent affordable, and an overriding public benefit finding may not be achievable for all projects. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would conflict with the County's existing Policy ARC-1.3.3 and zoning for agricultural use, as it would involve converting agricultural land located outside the City into new developable areas under the plan.

There is one Williamson Act contract designated as Prime Agricultural Land in the Highway 1 Gateway area (**Figure 4.2-2**). Land uses in the Williamson Act contract must remain consistent with agricultural uses until the contract expires or is formally cancelled. There are no other Williamson Act contracts in the plan area. However, there are Williamson Act contracts for Prime Agricultural Land located northeast of the Watsonville Municipal Airport, adjacent to but outside of the plan area (**Figure 4.2-2**) (DOC, 2024). A Williamson Act parcel for Nonprime Agricultural Land is adjacent to the parcel in the Highway 1 Gateway Area, but is located outside of the plan area (**Figure 4.2-2**) (DOC, 2024).

As described in **Section 4.2.2.2 a)** above, there is some land zoned for agricultural usage within the plan area. However, the plan would not directly result in expanded development or population increases. Instead, it would provide guidance for responsible growth within the plan area with a focus on infill development. New residential and non-residential development, as well as associated job growth and population increases, are anticipated to occur in the Buena Vista, Area C, and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas. Following the annexation of these growth areas, the land use designations would differ from the Commercial Agriculture designation established by the County. However, General Plan 2050 would designate land uses that would be in conformance and compatible with existing and planned development.

General Plan 2050 would not conflict with existing zoning, nor would it have the potential to change existing zoning designations. The plan would not conflict with any existing Williamson Act contracts beyond the Williamson Act contract located within the Highway 1 Gateway area. Instead, the plan would guide growth in designated areas that would minimize encroachment into Williamson Act lands or areas

zoned for agricultural use. Development or changes to land within the existing Williamson Act contract in the Highway 1 Gateway area must continue to support Prime Agricultural Land until the contract is non-renewed or cancelled by the owner.

General Plan 2050 has the potential to conflict with one existing Williamson Act contract in the Highway 1 Gateway area. Before the Williamson Act-contracted land could be used for non-agricultural uses, however, the contract must be non-renewed or officially cancelled. Additionally, the conversion of agricultural land designated by the County as Commercial Agriculture would conflict with the County General Plan. Mitigation related to conflicts with the County General Plan, and related impacts cannot be minimized through mitigation efforts. Therefore, impacts to lands zoned for agricultural use, including land designated by the County as Commercial Agriculture, and Williamson Act lands would be considered significant and unavoidable. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

c) Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in PRC § 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by PRC § 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Gov. Code § 51104[g])?

The plan area does not include any forest land as defined in PRC Section 12220(g), timberland as defined by PRC Section 4526, or property zoned for Timberland Production as defined by Gov. Code Section 51104(g). (No Impact)

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

The plan area does not include any forest land as defined in PRC Section 12220(g), and the plan would not result in the loss of forest land or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use. (No Impact)

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?

There is no forest land or timberland within the plan area. However, as described above, the plan would involve other changes that could convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. Therefore, the impact would be significant and unavoidable. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

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4.3 Air Quality

This section is based on an air quality assessment prepared for the project by Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc. (I&R), dated June 15, 2026 (Appendix C).

During the public scoping process, the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) recommended that the EIR quantitatively evaluate potential air quality impacts associated with planned growth, particularly in disadvantaged communities and near sensitive receptors, and incorporate emission-reduction strategies such as electric vehicle infrastructure, public charging stations, walkable and bicycle-friendly design, vehicle miles traveled (VMT)-reduction measures, and electric transit investments. The Watsonville Airport Management also provided a comment expressing concerns regarding emissions associated with growth in the Buena Vista Area. Both the MBARD and the Watsonville Airport Management's comments are addressed in **Section 4.3.2.2, Project Impacts**. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife provided a comment noting that the analysis should include review of permanent and temporary habitat disturbance and associated air pollution effects, which are discussed in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**.

4.3.1 Environmental Setting

4.3.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

Pursuant to the Federal Clean Air Act (FCAA) of 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The NAAQS were established for major pollutants, termed "criteria" pollutants. Criteria pollutants are defined as those pollutants for which the federal and state governments have established ambient air quality standards, or criteria, for outdoor concentrations in order to protect public health.

Both the EPA and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) have established ambient air quality standards for common pollutants: carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O_3), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), lead (Pb), and particulate matter (PM). In addition, the state has set standards for sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, vinyl chloride, and visibility reducing particles. These standards are designed to protect the health and welfare of the public with a reasonable margin of safety. These ambient air quality standards are levels of contaminants which represent safe levels that avoid specific adverse health effects associated with each criteria pollutant.

Federal Air Quality Regulations

At the federal level, the EPA has been charged with implementing national air quality programs. EPA's air quality mandates are drawn primarily from the FCAA, which was enacted in 1963. The FCAA was amended in 1970, 1977, and 1990.

The FCAA required EPA to establish primary and secondary NAAQS and required each state to prepare an air quality control plan referred to as a State Implement Plan (SIP). Federal standards include both primary and secondary standards. Primary standards set limits to protect public health, including the health of sensitive populations such as asthmatics, children, and the elderly. Secondary standards set limits to protect public welfare, including protection against decreased visibility, damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings. The Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (FCAAA) added requirements for states with nonattainment areas to revise their SIPs to incorporate additional control

measures to reduce air pollution. The SIP is periodically modified to reflect the latest emissions inventories, planning documents, and rules and regulations of the air basins as reported by their jurisdictional agencies. EPA has responsibility to review all state SIPs to determine conformity with the mandates of the FCAAA and determine if implementation will achieve air quality goals. If the EPA determines a SIP to be inadequate, a Federal Implementation Plan (FIP) may be prepared for the nonattainment area which imposes additional control measures. Failure to submit an approvable SIP or to implement the Plan within the mandated timeframe may result in the application of sanctions on transportation funding and stationary air pollution sources in the air basin.

The 1970 FCAA authorized the establishment of national health-based air quality standards and also set deadlines for their attainment. The FCAA Amendments of 1990 changed deadlines for attaining NAAQS as well as the remedial actions required of areas of the nation that exceed the standards. Under the FCAA, state and local agencies in areas that exceed the NAAQS are required to develop SIPs to show how they will achieve the NAAQS by specific dates. The FCAA requires that projects receiving federal funds demonstrate conformity to the approved SIP and local air quality attainment Plan for the region. Conformity with the SIP requirements would satisfy the FCAA requirements.

State

California Clean Air Act

In 1988, the California Clean Air Act (CCAA) established its own, more stringent ambient air quality standards, known as California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS). The CCAA requires that all air basins in the state endeavor to achieve and maintain CAAQS for CO, O_3, SO_2, and NO_2 by the earliest practical date. The CCAA establishes local air districts and provides them with authority to regulate indirect sources and mandates that air quality districts focus particular attention on reducing emissions from transportation and area-wide emission sources. Each nonattainment area in the State is required to adopt a plan to achieve a 5 percent annual reduction, averaged over consecutive 3-year periods, for each nonattainment pollutant or its precursors. A Clean Air Plan is a SIP that shows how a district would reduce emissions to achieve air quality standards.

California Air Resources Board

The CARB is the agency responsible for coordination with the EPA and developing SIPs to achieve and maintain both the NAAQS and CAAQS. As a result, it has oversight of the state's air pollution control programs. Other CARB duties include monitoring air quality (in conjunction with air monitoring networks maintained by air pollution control and air quality management districts), determining and updating area designations and maps, and setting emissions standards for new mobile sources, consumer products, small utility engines, and off-road vehicles.

The CARB is responsible for the coordination and oversight of state and local air pollution control programs in California and for implementing the CCAA. The CCAA requires that all air districts in the state achieve and maintain the CAAQS by the earliest practical date. The CCAA specifies that districts should focus on reducing emissions from transportation and air-wide emission sources and provides districts with the authority to regulate indirect sources.

CARB is also responsible for developing and implementing air pollution control plans to achieve and maintain the NAAQS. CARB is primarily responsible for statewide pollution sources and produces a major part of the SIP. Local air districts provide additional strategies for sources under their jurisdiction. CARB combines this data and submits the completed SIP to the EPA.

Other CARB duties include monitoring air quality (in conjunction with air monitoring networks maintained by air pollution control and air quality management districts), establishing CAAQS (which in many cases are more stringent than the NAAQS), determining and updating area designations and maps, and setting emissions standards for new mobile sources, consumer products, small utility engines, and off-road vehicles.

On-Road Vehicles

CARB has set statewide CAAQS that establish health-based concentration limits for ambient air quality and developed vehicle emissions and fuel standards for on-road and off-road mobile sources that are more stringent than those adopted by the EPA. Several of CARB's regulatory programs affect medium and heavy-duty diesel trucks that represent the bulk of diesel particulate matter (DPM) emissions from California highways. These regulations include the solid waste collection vehicle rule, in-use public and utility fleets, and the heavy-duty diesel truck and bus regulations. In 2008, CARB approved a regulation to reduce emissions of DPM and nitrogen oxides (NO_X) from on-road heavy-duty diesel fueled vehicles. The regulation requires affected vehicles to meet specific performance requirements between 2014 and 2023, with all affected diesel vehicles required to have 2010 model-year engines or equivalent by 2023.

The Advanced Clean Cars Program, originally adopted by CARB in 2012, was designed to bring together CARB's traditional passenger vehicle requirements to meet federal air quality standards and also support California's AB 32 goals to develop and implement programs to reduce GHG emissions back down to 1990 levels by 2020, a goal achieved in 2016 as a result of numerous emissions reduction programs. Advanced Clean Cars Phase II (ACC II) is phase two of the original rule and establishes a year-by-year process, starting in 2026, so all new cars and light trucks sold in California will be zero-emission vehicles by 2035, including plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. The regulation codifies the light-duty vehicle goals set out in Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-79-20. In 2025, 23 percent of new light-duty vehicles sold in California are zero emissions or plug-in hybrids. By 2030, 68 percent of new vehicles sold in California would be zero emissions and 100 percent by 2035. The U.S. EPA granted CARB its Clean Air Act waiver request on December 18, 2024. However, Public Law 119-16, enacted on June 12, 2025, disapproves of this regulation under the Congressional Review Act, retroactively revoking the ACC II waiver. Therefore, adjustments to CalEEMod were not made to account for this rule.

CalEEMod uses the CARB's EMFAC2021 model to predict traffic emissions, assuming a mix of different vehicles. This model assumes implementation of California's heavy-duty vehicle regulations. The United States Congress rescinded the waiver for such regulations in June 2025 through Public Law 119-15 and Public Law 119-17, and the recent repeal of the U.S. EPA's Endangerment Finding. The CalEEMod model used may underpredict emissions from trucks in the future due to this federal action. At this time, CARB is evaluating modeling methodologies to update the EMFAC model to more accurately reflect future emissions. These adjustments are not expected to be substantial, compared to predictions made using EMFAC2021.

CARB is actively enforcing heavy-duty diesel vehicle regulations that require fleets to replace or retrofit heavy-duty diesel vehicles, with full implementation of the program scheduled for January 1, 2023. Compliance with the program is generally considered vehicles equipped with a 2010 or newer engine model year. As of January 1, 2020, the department of motor vehicles (DMV) cannot register any vehicle that does not meet the requirements of the Truck and Bus Regulation.

Other CARB diesel programs affecting heavy-duty diesel vehicles include:

- Idling limits of no more than 5 minutes with special exceptions.
- Emission Control Labels must be affixed to engines of all commercial heavy-duty diesel vehicles, and must be legible as proof the engine, at minimum, meets U.S. federal emissions standards for the engine model year.
- The Periodic Smoke Inspection Program requires owners of California-based fleets of two or more diesel vehicles to perform annual smoke opacity tests and to keep records for at least two years for each vehicle.
- The Heavy-Duty Vehicle Inspection Program uses random roadside inspections to verify that diesel engines do not smoke excessively and are tamper-free.

Off-Road Vehicle and Equipment Regulations

CARB has also adopted and implemented regulations to reduce DPM and NO_X emissions from in-use (existing) and new off-road heavy-duty diesel vehicles (e.g., loaders, tractors, bulldozers, backhoes, off-highway trucks, etc.). The regulations apply to diesel-powered off-road vehicles with engines 25 horsepower (hp) or greater. The regulations are intended to reduce particulate matter and NO_X exhaust emissions by imposing limits on idling, requiring vehicles to be reported to CARB's online reporting system, restringing the adding of older vehicles into fleets and banning older Tiered engines, and requiring owners to turn over their fleet (replace older equipment with newer equipment) or retrofit existing equipment in order to achieve specified fleet-averaged emission rates. Implementation of this regulation, in conjunction with stringent Federal off-road equipment engine emission limits for new vehicles, is expected to substantially reduce emissions of DPM and NO_X in order to help reduce the health risk throughout California.

Fleet owners must report the vehicle and engine information for all vehicles within their fleets operating in California. Fleet owners must also report owner information. Fleet owners should report using Diesel Off-Road Online Reporting System, which is CARB's online reporting tool. CARB issues a unique Equipment Identification Number (EIN) that is assigned to each vehicle. The fleet owner must label their vehicles with the EIN.

Other CARB diesel programs affecting off-road vehicles and equipment include:

- Idling limits of no more than 5 minutes with special exceptions.
- Portable engines 50 hp or greater may require a permit or registration to legally operate. The local air district is responsible for taking enforcement action against individuals who own or operate portable equipment without a registration or permit.

California Air Resources Board Handbook

In 1998, CARB identified particulate matter from diesel-fueled engines (i.e., DPM) as a toxic air contaminant. CARB has completed a risk management process that identified potential cancer risks for a range of activities using diesel fueled engines. CARB subsequently developed an Air Quality and Land Use Handbook (Handbook) in 2005 that is intended to serve as a general reference guide for evaluating and reducing air pollution impacts associated with new projects that go through the land use decision-making process. The 2005 CARB Handbook recommends that planning agencies consider proximity to air

pollution sources when considering new locations for “sensitive” land uses, such as residences, medical facilities, daycare centers, schools, and playgrounds.

Air pollution sources of concern include freeways, rail yards, ports, refineries, distribution centers, chrome plating facilities, dry cleaners, and large gasoline service stations. Key recommendations in the Handbook relative to the plan area include taking steps to consider or 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.
- Within 300 feet of gasoline fueling stations (note that new fueling stations utilize enhanced vapor recovery systems that substantially reduce emissions).
- Within 300 feet of dry-cleaning operations (note that dry cleaning with Toxic Air Contaminants (TACs) is being phased out and was completely prohibited beginning in 2023).

Since the handbook was published, California has substantially reduced or eliminated some of the TAC emission sources, such that these buffer distances are likely not applicable. For example, particulate and DPM emissions from trucks have been greatly reduced through U.S. EPA engine standards that phased in after 2010. TACs are no longer used in dry cleaning. Gasoline stations and passenger vehicles have greatly improved vapor recovery systems that reduce TAC emissions associated with gasoline dispensing facilities.

California Department of Justice Guidelines

The California Department of Justice recommends best management practices for warehouse projects that include heavy-duty truck and off-road diesel fleets. These best management practices are intended to reduce the air quality and greenhouse gas impacts from warehouse projects. The guidelines contain siting and design considerations and air quality and GHG analyses and mitigation recommendations. Possible mitigation measure recommendations are described for construction emissions and operational emissions so that local, statewide, and global impacts from warehouse projects are reduced to the lowest levels possible. Best practices and mitigation measures that address other issues such as noise and traffic are also provided.

Truck and Bus Regulation

CARB is actively enforcing heavy-duty diesel vehicle regulations that require fleets to replace or retrofit heavy-duty diesel vehicles, with full implementation of the program scheduled for January 1, 2023. Compliance with the program is generally considered vehicles equipped with a 2010 or newer engine model year. As of January 1, 2020, the DMV cannot register any vehicle that does not meet the requirements of the Truck and Bus Regulation.

Other CARB diesel programs affecting heavy-duty diesel vehicles include:

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- Emission Control Labels must be affixed to engines of all commercial heavy-duty diesel vehicles, and must be legible as proof the engine, at minimum, meets U.S. federal emissions standards for the engine model year.

- The Periodic Smoke Inspection Program requires owners of California-based fleets of two or more diesel vehicles to perform annual smoke opacity tests and to keep records for at least two years for each vehicle.
- The Heavy-Duty Vehicle Inspection Program uses random roadside inspections to verify that diesel engines do not smoke excessively and are tamper-free.

Advanced Clean Fleets

California's Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF) regulation, effective January 1, 2024, requires medium- and heavy-duty on-road vehicles (over 8,500 lb. Gross Vehicle Weight Rating), off-road yard tractors, and light-duty package delivery trucks operating in California to transition to zero-emission models on a phased schedule. It applies first to drayage fleets at seaports and railyards—mandating only Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) registrations beginning January 1, 2024, and full ZEV operation by 2035—and to high-priority private fleets (those with at least 50 vehicles or at least $50 million annual revenue) and state/local government fleets, which must meet escalating ZEV procurement targets through 2027, with all new fleet additions ZEV-only by the end of each vehicle's useful life. By 2036, only zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles may be sold in California.

However, on January 13, 2025, CARB officially withdrew its November 15, 2023 waiver and authorization request for the ACF regulation for enforcing the ZEV mandates on private drayage and high-priority fleets. State and local government fleet requirements, which do not require a federal waiver, remain fully in force while CARB evaluates next steps.

Assembly Bill 98

Assembly Bill (AB) 98, signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom on September 29, 2024, establishes statewide standards for the development and expansion of logistics facilities in California, aiming to mitigate their environmental and health impacts on nearby communities. Effective January 1, 2026, the law mandates that new or expanded logistics facilities adhere to specific design and operational requirements, particularly when located within 900 feet of sensitive receptors. Key provisions include maintaining a minimum distance of 300 to 500 feet between loading docks and neighboring property lines depending on facility size and implementing energy-efficient measures like solar panels and electric vehicle charging stations. More stringent standards apply to warehouses over 250,000 sf and those located within 900 feet of a sensitive receptor. Additionally, the law requires the establishment of designated truck routes to direct heavy-duty truck traffic away from residential areas, the replacement of any demolished housing units with two affordable units within the same jurisdiction, and the use of zero-emission technology by 2030.

Regional

Monterey Bay Air Resources District

The MBARD regulates air quality in the North Central Coast Air Basin (NCCAB) and is responsible for attainment planning related to criteria air pollutants, as well as for district rule development and enforcement. MBARD also reviews air quality analyses prepared for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) assessments and published the CEQA Air Quality Guidelines document (last revised February 2016) for use in evaluation of air quality impacts.

Air Quality Management Plan

In accordance with the CCAA, MBARD has developed the 2012 Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) for the Monterey Bay Region. The 2012 AQMP is a transitional plan shifting focus of MBARD's efforts from achieving the 1-hour component of the State O_3 AAQS to achieving the 8-hour O_3 requirement. The plan includes an updated air quality trends analysis, which reflects both the 1- and 8-hour standards, as well as an updated emission inventory, which includes the latest information on stationary, area and mobile emission sources.

In March 2017, MBARD adopted the 2012-2015 Triennial Plan Revision, which assesses and updates elements of the 2012 AQMP, including the air quality trends analysis, emission inventory, and mobile source programs. The 2017 AQMP Revision only addresses attainment of the State O_3 standard. In 2012, EPA designated the NCCAB as attainment of the current national 8-hour O_3 standard of 0.075 ppm.

MBARD Regulations and Rules

The following MBARD regulations and rules would limit emissions of air pollutants from construction and operation of residential development pursuant to the Plan Update:

Regulation II (Permits)

- Rule 207 (Review of New or Modified Sources) – The MBARD regulate criteria air pollutant emissions from new and modified stationary sources through this rule.
- Rule 1000 (Permit Guidelines and Requirements for Sources Emitting Toxic Air Contaminants) – This rule applies to any source that requires a permit to construct or operate pursuant to MBARD regulations and has the potential to emit carcinogenic or noncarcinogenic TACs. This rule also requires sources of carcinogenic TACs to install best control technology and reduce cancer risk to less than one incident per 100,000 population. Sources of noncarcinogenic TACs must apply reasonable control technology.

Regulation IV (Prohibitions)

- Rule 400 (Visible Emissions) – Discharge of visible air pollutant emissions into the atmosphere from any emission source for a period or periods aggregating more than 3 minutes in any 1 hour, as observed using an appropriate test method, is prohibited.
- Rule 402 (Nuisances) - No person shall discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other materials which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public; or which endanger the comfort, repose, health, or safety of any such persons or the public; or which cause, or have a natural tendency to cause, injury or damage to business or property. MBARD enforces permit and nuisance rules to control odorous emissions from stationary sources.
- Rule 403 (Particulate Matter). This rule provides particulate matter emissions limits for sources operating within the MBARD jurisdiction.
- Rule 425 (Use of Cutback Asphalt) – The use of cutback asphalt (asphalt cement that has been blended with petroleum solvents) is restricted.
- Rule 426 (Architectural Coatings) – This rule limits the emissions of reactive organic gases (ROGs) from the use of architectural coatings.

4.3.1.2 Existing Conditions

Background

Air pollutants are governed by multiple federal and state standards to regulate and mitigate health impacts. At the federal level, there are six criteria pollutants for which NAAQS have been established: CO, Pb, NO_2, O_3, suspended PM: 2.5 microns ($PM_{2.5}$) and10 microns (PM_{10}), and SO_2. California sets standards, similar to the NAAQS as CAAQS. Health effects of the primary criteria pollutants (i.e., the NAAQS) and their potential sources are described below and summarized in **Table 4.3-1**. Note that California includes pollutants or contaminants that are specific to certain industries and not associated with this Plan Update. These include hydrogen sulfide and vinyl chloride.

Ozone

Ozone is a secondary air pollutant produced in the atmosphere through a complex series of photochemical reactions involving ROGs and NO_X. The main sources of ROG and NO_X, often referred to as O_3 precursors, are combustion processes (including combustion in motor vehicle engines) and the evaporation of solvents, paints, and fuels. In the Bay Area, automobiles are the single largest source of O_3 precursors. O_3 is referred to as a regional air pollutant because its precursors are transported and diffused by wind concurrently with O_3 production through the photochemical reaction process. O_3 causes eye irritation, airway constriction, shortness of breath, and can aggravate existing respiratory diseases such as asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema.

Carbon Monoxide

CO is an odorless, colorless gas usually formed as the result of the incomplete combustion of fuels. The single largest source of CO is motor vehicles. While CO transport is limited, it disperses with distance from the source under normal meteorological conditions. However, under certain extreme meteorological conditions, CO concentrations near congested roadways or intersections may reach unhealthful levels that adversely affect local sensitive receptors (e.g., residents, schoolchildren, the elderly, hospital patients, etc.). Typically, high CO concentrations are associated with roadways or intersections operating at unacceptable levels of service or with extremely high traffic volumes. Exposure to high concentrations of CO reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood and can cause headaches, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, impair central nervous system function, and induce angina (chest pain) in persons with serious heart disease. Very high levels of CO can be fatal.

Nitrogen Dioxide

NO_2 is a reddish-brown gas that is a byproduct of combustion processes. Automobiles and industrial operations are the main sources of NO_2. Aside from its contribution to O_3 formation, NO_2 also contribute to other pollution problems, including a high concentration of fine particulate matter, poor visibility, and acid deposition. NO_2 may be visible as a coloring component on high pollution days, especially in conjunction with high O_3 levels. NO_2 decreases lung function and may reduce resistance to infection.

Sulfur Dioxide

SO_2 is a colorless, irritating gas formed primarily from incomplete combustion of fuels containing sulfur. Industrial facilities also contribute to gaseous SO_2 levels in the region. SO_2 irritates the respiratory tract, can injure lung tissue when combined with fine particulate matter, and reduces visibility and the level of sunlight.

Particulate Matter

Particulate matter is the term used for a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air. Coarse particles are those that are larger than 2.5 microns but smaller than PM_{10}. $PM_{2.5}$ refers to fine suspended particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 microns or less that is not readily filtered out by the lungs. Nitrates, sulfates, dust, and combustion particulates are major components of PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$. These small particles can be directly emitted into the atmosphere as by-products of fuel combustion, through abrasion, such as tire or brake lining wear, or through fugitive dust (wind or mechanical erosion of soil). They can also be formed in the atmosphere through chemical reactions. Particulates may transport carcinogens and other toxic compounds that adhere to the particle surfaces and can enter the human body through the lungs.

Lead

Lead is a metal found naturally in the environment as well as in manufactured products. The major sources of lead emissions have historically been mobile and industrial sources. As a result of the phase-out of leaded gasoline, metal processing is currently the primary source of lead emissions. The highest levels of lead in air are generally found near lead smelters. Other stationary sources are waste incinerators, utilities, and lead-acid battery manufactures.

Twenty years ago, mobile sources were the main contributor to ambient lead concentrations in the air. In the early 1970s, the U.S. EPA established national regulations to gradually reduce the lead content in gasoline. In 1975, unleaded gasoline was introduced for motor vehicles equipped with catalytic converters. The EPA banned the use of leaded gasoline in highway vehicles in December 1995. As a result of the EPA's regulatory efforts to remove lead from gasoline, emissions of lead from the transportation sector and levels of lead in the air decreased dramatically.

Toxic Air Contaminants

In addition to the criteria pollutants discussed above, toxic air contaminants (TACs) are another group of pollutants of concern. TACs are injurious in small quantities and are regulated by the EPA and the CARB. Some examples of TACs include benzene, butadiene, formaldehyde, and hydrogen sulfide. The identification, regulation, and monitoring of TACs is relatively recent compared to that for criteria pollutants.

High-volume freeways, stationary diesel engines, and facilities attracting heavy and constant diesel vehicle traffic (distribution centers, truck stops) are typically identified as posing the highest risk to nearby receptors. Other facilities associated with increased risk include warehouse distribution centers, large retail or industrial facilities, and high-volume transit centers. Health risks from TACs are a function of both concentration and duration of exposure.

Table 4.3-1 Health Effects of Air Pollutants

Pollutants	Sources	Primary Effects
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	• Incomplete combustion of fuels and other carbon-containing substances, such as motor exhaust • Natural events, such as	• Reduced tolerance for exercise • Impairment of mental function • Impairment of fetal development • Death at high levels of exposure

Pollutants	Sources	Primary Effects
	decomposition of organic matter	• Aggravation of some heart diseases (angina)
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	• Motor vehicle exhaust • High temperature stationary combustion • Atmospheric reactions	• Aggravation of respiratory illness • Reduced visibility • Reduced plant growth • Formation of acid rain
Ozone (O_3)	• Atmospheric reaction of organic gases with nitrogen oxides in sunlight	• Aggravation of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases • Irritation of eyes • Impairment of cardiopulmonary function • Plant leaf injury
Lead (Pb)	• Contaminated soil	• Impairment of blood functions and nerve construction • Behavioral and hearing problems in children
Suspended Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10})	• Stationary combustion of solid fuels • Construction activities • Industrial processes • Atmospheric chemical reactions	• Reduced lung function • Aggravation of the effects of gaseous pollutants • Aggravation of respiratory and cardiorespiratory diseases • Increased cough and chest discomfort • Soiling • Reduced visibility
Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2)	• Combustion of sulfur-containing fossil fuels • Smelting of sulfur-bearing metal ores • Industrial processes	• Aggravation of respiratory diseases (asthma, emphysema) • Reduced lung function • Irritation of eyes • Reduced visibility • Plant injury • Deterioration of metals, textiles, leather, finishes, coatings, etc.
Toxic Air Contaminants	• Cars and trucks, especially diesels • Industrial sources such as chrome platers	• Cancer • Chronic eye, lung, or skin irritation • Neurological and reproductive disorders

Pollutants	Sources	Primary Effects
	• Neighborhood businesses such as dry cleaners and service stations • Building materials and product	

Source: I&R, 2026

Local Climate and Air Quality

Air quality is a function of both local climate and local sources of air pollution. Air quality is the balance of the natural dispersal capacity of the atmosphere and emissions of air pollutants from human uses of the environment. Climate and topography are major influences on air quality.

Climate and Meteorology

Watsonville is located in the NCCAB. A semi-permanent high-pressure cell in the eastern Pacific is the basic controlling factor in the climate of the NCCAB. In the summer, the high-pressure cell is dominant and causes persistent west and northwest winds over the entire California coast. Air descends in the Pacific High-pressure cell, forming a stable temperature inversion of hot air over a cool coastal layer of air. The onshore air currents pass over cool ocean waters to bring moist and relatively cool air (i.e., a marine layer) into the coastal valleys. The warmer air aloft acts as a lid, inhibiting vertical air movement. The generally northwest-southeast orientation of mountainous ridges tends to restrict and channel the summer onshore air currents. Surface heating in the interior portion of the Salinas and San Benito Valleys creates a weak low pressure that intensifies the onshore air flow during the afternoon and evening. In the fall, the surface winds become weak, and the marine layer grows shallow, dissipating altogether on some days. The airflow is occasionally reversed in a weak offshore movement, and the relatively stationary air mass is held in place by the Pacific High-pressure cell, which allows pollutants to build up over a period of a few days. It is most often during this season that the north or east winds develop to transport pollutants from either the San Francisco Bay Area or the Central/San Joaquin Valley into the NCCAB.

During the winter, the Pacific High migrates southward and has less influence on the NCCAB. Air frequently flows in a southeasterly direction out of the Salinas and San Benito Valleys, especially during night and morning hours. The general absence of deep, persistent inversions and the occasional storm systems usually result in good air quality for the basin as a whole in winter and early spring.

Air Pollution Potential

O_3 and fine particle pollution ($PM_{2.5}$) are the major regional air pollutants of concern in the NCCAB. O_3 is primarily a problem in the summer, and $PM_{2.5}$ in the winter. A cool marine air usually reaches across Santa Cruz County in summer. O_3 frequently forms on hot summer days when the prevailing seasonal northerly winds carry O_3 precursors southward across the county, causing health standards to be exceeded. The area experiences many exceedances of the $PM_{2.5}$ standard each winter. This is due to the high population density, wood smoke, industrial and freeway traffic, and poor wintertime air circulation caused by extensive hills to the east and west that block wind flow into the region.

Attainment Status Designations

The CARB is required to designate areas of the state as attainment, nonattainment, or unclassified for all state standards. An "attainment" designation for an area signifies that pollutant concentrations did not violate the standard for that pollutant in that area. A "nonattainment" designation indicates that a pollutant concentration violated the standard at least once, excluding those occasions when a violation was caused by an exceptional event, as defined in the criteria. An "unclassified" designation signifies that data does not support either an attainment or nonattainment status. The CCAA divides districts into moderate, serious, and severe air pollution categories, with increasingly stringent control requirements mandated for each category.

Table 4.3-2 shows the State and federal standards for criteria pollutants and provides a summary of the attainment status for the NCCAB with respect to national and state ambient air quality standards.

Table 4.3-2 NAAQS, CAAQS, and North Central Coast Air Basin Attainment Status

Pollutant	Averaging Time	California Standards		National Standards	
		Concentration	Attainment Status	Concentration	Attainment Status
Ozone (O_3)	8-Hour	0.07 ppm (137 µg/m^3)	Nonattainment	0.070 ppm	Attainment
	1-Hour	0.09 ppm (180 µg/m^3)	Nonattainment	Not Applicable	Attainment
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	8-Hour	9 ppm (10 mg/m^3)	Unclassified	9 ppm (10 mg/m^3)	Attainment
	1-Hour	20 ppm (23 mg/m^3)	Unclassified	35 ppm (40 mg/m^3)	Attainment
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)	Annual Mean	0.030 ppm (57 mg/m^3)	Attainment	0.053 ppm (100 µg/m^3)	Attainment
	1-Hour	0.18 ppm (339 µg/m^3)	Attainment	0.100 ppm	Attainment
Suspended Particulate Matter (PM_{10})	Annual Mean	20 µg/m^3	Nonattainment	Not Applicable	Attainment
	24-Hour	50 µg/m^3	Nonattainment	150 µg/m^3	Attainment
Suspended Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$)	Annual Mean	12 µg/m^3	Attainment	9.0 µg/m^3	Attainment
	24-Hour	Not Applicable	Attainment	35 µg/m^3	Attainment
Sulfur Dioxide	Annual Mean	Not Applicable	Attainment	0.03 ppm	Attainment

Pollutant	Averaging Time	California Standards		National Standards	
		Concentration	Attainment Status	Concentration	Attainment Status
(SO_2)				80 µg/m^3	
	24-Hour	0.04 ppm (105 µg/m^3)	Attainment	0.14 ppm (365 µg/m^3)	Attainment
	1-Hour	0.25 ppm (655 µg/m^3)	Attainment	0.075 ppm (196 µg/m^3)	Attainment

Note: Lead (Pb) is not listed in the above table because it has been in attainment since the 1980s. ppm = parts per million, mg/m^3 = milligrams per cubic meter, µg/m^3 = micrograms per cubic meter ‘
Source: I&R, 2026

Existing Air Pollutant Levels

The CARB monitors air pollution at various sites within California. The closest air monitoring station is located at 2544 Soquel Avenue in Santa Cruz, approximately 11-12 miles from the plan area. Note that this site does not monitor CO, PM_{10}, or NO_2. The data shows that during the most recently available period of 2020 through 2024, the plan area has exceeded the federal $PM_{2.5}$ ambient air quality standards. **Table 4.3-3** lists air quality trends in data collected for the 2020 through 2024 period and published by CARB, which is the most recent time-period available. O_3 standards, based on the 1- and 8-hour average concentrations, were exceeded 0 days annually in Santa Cruz. Measured 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations are exceeded on 0 to 13 monitoring days in Santa Cruz. Note that $PM_{2.5}$ levels were influenced by smoke from wildfires. Air pollutants that include CO, Pb, and SO_2 have been historically measured at low levels in the plan area and are, therefore, not measured anymore.

Table 4.3-3 Measured Ambient Air Quality Concentrations from 2020 through 2024

Pollutant	Standard	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Ozone in Santa Cruz						
Max 1-hr concentration		70 ppb	72 ppb	60 ppb	70 ppb	62 ppb
No. days exceeded: CAAQS	90 ppb	0	0	0	0	0
Max 8-hr concentration		58 ppb	58 ppb	51 ppb	55 ppb	57 ppb
No. days exceeded:						
CAAQS	70 ppb	0	0	0	0	0
NAAQS	70 ppb	0	0	0	0	0
$PM_{2.5}$ in Santa Cruz						
Max 24-hr concentration		90.4 µg/m^3	17.5 µg/m^3	14.7 µg/m^3	47.4 µg/m^3	13.7 µg/m^3
No. days exceeded: NAAQS	35 µg/m^3	13	0	0	1	0
Annual Concentration		8.1 µg/m^3	4.8 µg/m^3	5.4 µg/m^3	5.0 µg/m^3	6.1 µg/m^3
No. days exceeded:						
CAAQS	12 µg/m^3	0	0	0	0	0
NAAQS	9 µg/m^3	0	0	0	0	0
CO – No measurements made						
PM_{10} – No measurements made						
Nitrogen Dioxide – No measurements made						

Source: I&R, 2026

Sensitive Receptors

There are groups of people more affected by air pollution than others. CARB has identified the following persons who are most likely to be affected by air pollution: children under 16, the elderly over 65, athletes, and people with cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases. These groups are classified as sensitive receptors. Locations that may contain a high concentration of these sensitive population groups include residential areas, hospitals, daycare facilities, elder care facilities, and elementary schools. For cancer risk assessments, infants and small children are the most sensitive receptors, since they are more susceptible to cancer causing TACs. Residential locations are assumed to include infants and small children. All these types of sensitive receptors are located within and around the plan area. General Plan 2050 would also include new residential dwellings that are considered sensitive receptors.

Odors

Odor impacts are subjective in nature and are generally regarded as an annoyance rather than a health hazard. The ability to detect and react to odors varies considerably among people. A strong or unfamiliar odor is more easily detected and are more likely to cause complaints. The occurrence and severity of odor impacts depends 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 physical harm, they can still be 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 violate the MBARD standards.

4.3.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.3.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

Per Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and MBARD recommendations, air quality impacts are considered significant if implementation of General Plan 2050 would:

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

b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is 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.

MBARD's CEQA Guidelines provide the most recent guidance and thresholds of significance, as shown in **Table 4.3-4**. Though not necessarily a CEQA issue, the effect of existing TAC sources on future sensitive receptors (e.g., residences) is analyzed to comply with MBARD's 2012-2015 AQMP key goal of reducing population TAC exposure and protecting public health in the Monterey Bay Area.

Table 4.3-4 MBARD CEQA Thresholds of Significance

Criteria Air Pollutants and Precursors (Regional)	Construction-Related	Operational-Related
	Average Daily Emissions (lbs./day)	Average Daily Emissions (lbs./day)
NO_X	137	137
ROG	137	137
PM_{10}	82	82
$PM_{2.5}$	55	55
CO	550	550
Health Risks and Hazards	**Single Sources/Individual Project**	
Excess Cancer Risk	>10 in a million	
Hazard Index	>1.0	

Source: I&R, 2026

4.3.2.2 Methodology

Construction-related emissions associated with buildout of General Plan 2050 were evaluated qualitatively because MBARD has not established a plan-level threshold for construction-related GHG emissions. The qualitative analysis considers the types of construction equipment and activities typically associated with residential, commercial, industrial, infrastructure, and other development anticipated under General Plan 2050.

Operational emissions associated with buildout of General Plan 2050 were estimated using the CalEEMod model. CalEEMod uses the CARB's EMFAC2021 model to predict traffic emissions, assuming a mix of different vehicles. This model assumes implementation of California's heavy-duty vehicle regulations. The United States Congress rescinded the waiver for such regulations in June 2025 through Public Law 119-15 and Public Law 119-17, and the recent repeal of the U.S. EPA's Endangerment Finding.6 The CalEEMod model used may underpredict emissions from trucks in the future due to this federal action. The modeling quantifies the net change in emissions between full buildout of General Plan 2050 in 2050 and 2023 existing conditions based on the projected increase in residential, commercial, industrial, office, hotel, and park uses. Because General Plan 2050 establishes a long-term development framework rather than specific development projects, the analysis relies on General Plan-level land use and transportation data, applicable utility-specific emission factors, and CalEEMod default assumptions where detailed project-specific information is not available. The modeling assumptions and limitations are described below.

CalEEMod Modeling Assumptions

Operational air emissions from General Plan 2050 would be generated primarily from autos driven by future residents and employees. Evaporative emissions from architectural coatings and maintenance products (classified as consumer products) are typical ROG emissions from these types of land uses. CalEEMod was used to estimate the net emissions of the operation of General Plan 2050 assuming full buildout in 2050 from the operations of the 2023 existing conditions.

CalEEMod Land Uses

An operational model scenario for the net change of General Plan 2050 (i.e., General Plan 2050 – 2023 Existing Conditions) was developed for CalEEMod. Inputs are summarized in **Table 4.3-5**.

Table 4.3-5 Operational Land Uses Entered into CalEEMod

Project Land Uses	Size	Units
Proposed General Plan 2050 Project – 2023 Existing Conditions		
Single Family Housing	426	Dwelling Units
Apartments Low Rise	1,090	Dwelling Units
Apartments Mid Rise	4,464	Dwelling Units
General Heavy Industry*	280.217	1,000 sf
Refrigerated Warehouse – No Rail	49.399	1,000 sf
Unrefrigerated Warehouse – No Rail	419.910	1,000 sf
Discount Club	200	1,000 sf
Strip Mall	833.344	1,000 sf
Automobile Care Center	32.182	1,000 sf
Convenience Market (24 hour)	28.577	1,000 sf
General Office Building	263.977	1,000 sf
Hotel	421.082	1,000 sf
Research & Development	142.924	1,000 sf
City Park	62	Acres

Note: General Heavy Industry was used as CalEEMod limits the General Light Industry square footage to a maximum of 50,000-sf.
Source: I&R, 2026

Model Year

Emissions associated with vehicle travel depend on the year of analysis because emission control technology requirements are phased-in over time. Therefore, the earlier the year analyzed in the model, the higher the emission rates utilized by CalEEMod. Emissions associated with build-out later than 2050 may be lower.

Traffic and Truck Emissions Modeling Assumptions

The air quality modeling uses General Plan-level traffic assumptions based on total daily trips and total daily VMT. Because project-specific land use details and truck trip data were not available, the modeling relies on CalEEMod default trip types and CARB EMFAC2021 vehicle fleet assumptions. These defaults include a regional mix of vehicle types, including trucks; however, they may not accurately reflect the actual truck traffic mix, trip lengths, or truck activity associated with future warehouse or industrial projects. Therefore, truck emissions from individual future projects could vary from the modeled estimates and would need to be evaluated at the project level when more detailed information is available.

Stationary and Off-Road Equipment

Some non-residential uses may include stationary and off-road equipment that emits air pollutants. Emergency generators, forklifts, aerial lifts, and other off-road equipment powered by diesel fuel or natural gas are common sources. Large commercial boilers powered by natural gas could be included in some industrial projects or hotels. These types of sources cannot be identified at this level of analysis, but may be included in projects built out under General Plan 2050. These emissions cannot be predicted at this level of analysis.

Energy

CalEEMod defaults for energy use were used which include the 2019 Title 24 Building Standards. These defaults are conservative, as General Plan 2050 would need to meet the latest Title 24 Building Standards. For General Plan 2050 uses, an emission factor of 417 pounds of CO_2 per megawatt of electricity produced was entered into CalEEMod, which is based on Central Coast Community Energy's (3CE) annual content power label for 2024.

Other Inputs

Default model assumptions for emissions associated with solid waste generation were used. Wastewater treatment for General Plan 2050 was changed to 100-percent aerobic conditions to represent the use of City services (i.e., General Plan 2050 would not send wastewater to septic tanks or facultative lagoons).

4.3.2.3 Project Impacts

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

MBARD is the regional agency responsible for overseeing compliance with state and federal laws, regulations, and programs within the NCCAB. MBARD, with assistance from Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, has prepared and implements plans to meet the applicable laws, regulations, and programs. The most recent and comprehensive plan, which is the 2012-2015 AQMP, focuses on reaching attainment status for O_3. The MBARD has also developed CEQA guidelines to assist lead agencies in evaluating the significance of air quality impacts. In formulating compliance strategies, MBARD relies on planned land uses established by local general plans. Land use planning affects vehicle travel, which in turn affects region-wide emissions of air pollutants.

According to the MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines, a consistency analysis and determination serve as the project's analysis of cumulative impacts on regional air quality, i.e., O_3 levels. Project emissions which are not consistent with the AQMP are not accommodated in the AQMP and would have a significant cumulative impact unless offset. Under the MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines, projects related directly to population growth, such as General Plan, will generate population-related emissions (e.g., motor vehicles, residential heating and cooling emissions). Population-related emissions have been forecasted in the AQMP using population forecasts adopted by AMBAG. Thus, population-related projects which are consistent with these forecasts are consistent with the AQMP. Thus, this impact is addressed by assessing the growth in population and employment expected in the region. General Plan 2050 does increase both the amount of housing and the number of workers.

Table 4.3-6 provides population and traffic projections for General Plan 2050 and compares these projections with 2023 existing conditions. The service population of residences and workers would increase by approximately 34 percent. This increase would be due to an increase in residents and workers (i.e., industrial, retail, and service space).

Table 4.3-6 General Plan 2050 Land Use, Traffic, and Population Projections

Scenario	Population	Daily Trips	Daily VMT (miles)	Dwelling Units	Industrial & Warehousing (Square Feet)	Retail (Square Feet)	Service (Square Feet)
Existing Conditions (2023)	52,314	264,680	2,562,780	14,779	-	-	-
General Plan 2050 Project	70,186	312,120	2,640,120	20,759	749,526	1,094,103	827,983
Net New	+17,872	+47,440	+77,340	+5,980	+749,526	+1,094,103	+827,983
Rate of Increase	34%	18%	3%				

Source: I&R, 2026

Daily VMT for the existing conditions and General Plan 2050 were provided by the traffic consultant (Fehr & Peers). Using the existing as a baseline condition (2,562,780 miles), daily VMT attributable to General Plan 2050 is anticipated to increase by approximately three percent (2,640,120 miles). However, the VMT per capita is anticipated to decrease from 28.1 miles per person under the existing conditions to 22.9 miles per person with General Plan 2050. Traffic is anticipated to increase by 18 percent over existing conditions. The buildout of General Plan 2050 would not increase VMT at a greater rate than the increase in population.

The Watsonville GPU would facilitate planned growth within the City of Watsonville, including approximately 5,980 new homes and an increase of approximately 17,872 residents by 2050. This population growth of approximately 34 percent between 2023 and 2050 would result in a total population of approximately 70,186, which is significantly higher than AMBAG's current projections for the City.

However, anticipated growth has been accounted for in General Plan 2050, as described in **Section 2.5.1**, Project Objectives. In addition, planned single and multi-family residential and mixed used development is reflected in the City's current Cycle 6 Housing Element and likely subsequent next two cycles covering buildout of General Plan 2050. Additionally, all developments are anticipated to be consistent with General Plan 2050 land use designations and would not add growth beyond what is anticipated with plan implementation. For these reasons, and consistent with anticipated lower VMT, population growth associated with plan implementation was found to be less than significant. As part of project implementation, and for purposes of AQMP consistency, construction and operation air quality impacts of each discretionary land use application will be evaluated to assess whether the emissions exceed daily thresholds established by MBARD. As described under **Impact b)**, development under the Watsonville GPU would not exceed regional emissions for criteria air pollutants except for ROG and CO. Further, a wide variety of control measures are included in the regional air quality plans, such as reducing or offsetting emissions from construction and operations associated with land use developments. Potential future development projects that would occur in the buildout horizon of the General Plan 2050 would be required to adhere to the MBARD control measures, as outlined in the air quality plans and implemented through MBARD rules and regulations.

Nevertheless, MBARD guidance identifies population growth as a consideration in evaluating consistency with regional air quality planning efforts because population-related emissions are primarily associated with motor vehicle travel and building energy use. In addition, the latest AMBAG forecast projects a 2050 population of 52,251, while General Plan 2050 would accommodate a population of approximately 70,186. Therefore, based on MBARD's population-based methodology, implementation of General Plan 2050 could be considered to conflict with the AQMP and are potentially significant.

Mitigation Measures AQ-1 and **AQ-2** would be required to be implemented to reduce potentially significant impacts.

Mitigation Measure AQ-1: Require Project-Level Construction Assessment for Projects in the Plan Area.

Prior to discretionary approval by the City of Watsonville for development projects subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (i.e., non-exempt projects), project applicants shall submit construction criteria pollutant and TAC quantification for individual projects developed under General Plan 2050 to the City once those details are available through modeling (in accordance with the latest guidance provided by the MBARD) to identify impacts prior to project approval and, if necessary, include measures to reduce emissions below the applicable MBARD construction thresholds. Reductions in emissions can be accomplished through, but are not limited to the following measures:

- Construction equipment selection for low emissions (e.g., U.S. EPA Tier 4 standards);
- Use of alternative fuels, engine retrofits, and added exhaust devices;
- Low- Volatile Organic Compounds paints;
- Modify construction schedule; and
- Implementation of measures to control fugitive dust due to construction, including but not limited to:

- Water all active construction areas at least twice daily. Frequency should be based on the type of operation, soil, and wind exposure.
- Prohibit all grading activities during periods of high wind (over 15 mph).
- Cover all trucks hauling dirt, sand, or loose materials.
- Cover inactive storage piles.
- Maintain at least 2'0" of freeboard in haul trucks.
- Apply chemical soil stabilizers on inactive construction areas (disturbed lands within construction projects that are unused for at least four consecutive days).

Mitigation Measure AQ-2: Require Project-Level Operational Assessment for Projects in General Plan 2050.

Prior to discretionary approval by the City of Watsonville for development projects subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (i.e., non-exempt projects), project applicants shall submit operational criteria pollutant analysis to the City in accordance with the latest guidance provided by the MBARD. The MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines provide project screening level (**Table 4.3-4**) to determine if projects warrant modeling to evaluate their emissions. Projects that are found to not meet these screening criteria or have emissions above significant thresholds would be required to implement additional mitigation including but not limited to:

- Proposed residential and commercial developments within General Plan 2050 should implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs to reduce VMT as recommended by a traffic consultant. The TDM programs would be reviewed and approved by the City prior to issuance of building permits. An annual TDM monitoring report shall be submitted to the City to document each development is meeting the required TDM program reductions.
- Proposed developments within General Plan 2050 shall have electricity delivered from 3CE and participate in the 3Cchoice program at a minimum.
- Proposed developments within General Plan 2050 that have stationary or off-road equipment with diesel engines larger than 50-HP would be subject to CARB's Stationary Diesel Airborne Toxics Control Measure (ATCM) and require permits from the MBARD that will have to meet. Best Available Control Technology (BACT) for air toxics.
- Proposed development within General Plan 2050 shall incorporate additional green building measures such as rooftop solar photovoltaic systems, rough-ins for electric vehicle charging, use of efficient lighting and irrigation, and recycled water, as feasible, to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director.
- Developed parcels shall require within their Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions and/or ground leases requirements for all future interior spaces to be repainted only with architectural coatings that meet the "Low- Volatile Organic Compounds" or "Super-Compliant" requirements.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-1** and **AQ-2**, in addition to applicable regulatory State measures and MBARD rules related to reducing construction and operational-related emissions, would reduce criteria air pollutant emissions from construction and operational-related activities to the extent feasible and may result in reducing construction and operational-related regional air quality impacts of subsequent individual projects to less than significant levels. However, it is unknown if these reductions would reduce all General Plan 2050 projects' construction and operational emissions to below regulatory thresholds. Additionally, there are no feasible mitigation measures available to reduce population and be consistent with the objectives of General Plan 2050. Therefore, impacts related to conflict with MBARD AQMP would remain, and the impact would be significant and unavoidable. The identification of this program-level impact does not preclude the finding of less-than-significant impacts for subsequent individual projects that meet applicable project-level thresholds of significance. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

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?

The NCCAB is in attainment for most air pollutants regulated under the NAAQS. However, the NCCAB is a non-attainment area for ground-level O_3 and PM_{10} under the CCAA. The area has attained federal ambient air quality standards for carbon monoxide and is unclassified under state standards. As part of an effort to attain and maintain ambient air quality standards for O_3 and particulate matter (i.e., $PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10}), the MBARD has established thresholds of significance for these air pollutants and their precursors. These thresholds are for O_3 precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_X), PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ and apply to both construction period and operational period impacts for projects. They generally do not apply to plans, such as General Plan 2050.

Past, present, and future development projects contribute to the region's adverse air quality impacts on a cumulative basis. By its very nature, air pollution is largely a cumulative impact. No single project is sufficient in size by itself to result in non-attainment of ambient air quality standards. Instead, a project's individual emissions contribute to existing cumulatively significant adverse air quality impacts. If a project's contribution to the cumulative impact is considerable, then the project's impact on air quality would be considered significant.

Construction Period Emission

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in temporary emissions from construction activities associated with subsequent development, including demolition, site grading, asphalt paving, building construction, and architectural coating. Emissions commonly associated with construction activities include fugitive dust from soil disturbance, fuel combustion from mobile heavy-duty diesel- and gasoline-powered equipment, portable auxiliary equipment, and worker commute trips. During construction, fugitive dust, the dominant source of PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ emissions, is generated when wheels or blades disturb surface materials. Uncontrolled dust from construction can become a nuisance and potential health hazard to those living and working nearby. The potential health risk impact from construction is described under project impact analysis **c)**.

Construction activities, particularly during site preparation and grading, would temporarily generate fugitive dust in the form of PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$. Sources of fugitive dust include disturbed soils at the construction site and trucks carrying uncovered loads of soils. Unless properly controlled, vehicles leaving the site would deposit mud on local streets, which would be an additional source of airborne dust after it dries. Construction exhaust emissions include those from equipment (i.e., off-road) and traffic (on-road

vehicles and trucks). Off-road construction equipment is often diesel-powered and can be a substantial source of NO_X emissions, in addition to PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ emissions. In addition, NO_X emissions are also caused during grading and soil import/export. Architectural coatings and application of asphalt pavement are dominant sources of ROG emissions.

The MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines do not identify quantified plan level thresholds for construction emissions. There are project-level thresholds of 137 pounds per average day for NO_X, and ROG, 82 pounds per average day for PM_{10}, 55 pounds per average day for $PM_{2.5}$, and 550 pounds per average day for CO. Unless controlled, the combination of temporary dust from activities and diesel exhaust from construction equipment and related traffic may pose a nuisance impact to nearby receptors or exceed acceptable levels for projects.

Construction measures would be in accordance with the applicable Goals, Policies, and Actions of General Plan 2050 to reduce potential construction emissions.

General Plan 2050 Goal, Policies, and Actions that Mitigate Potential Impacts:

> **Goal C-4 Energy and Air Quality:** Maximize energy efficiency and protect regional air quality.
>
> **Policy C-4.1. Energy Efficiency and Emissions Reduction in Municipal Operations.** The City shall implement measures in the operation of City facilities and its vehicle fleet that reduce energy use, reduce exhaust emissions and contribute to the improvement of local, regional and global air quality.
>
> **Action C-4.1.1 Air Quality Evaluation.** As part of the review process for discretionary projects the City shall refer projects to the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) for recommendations on appropriate air quality impact mitigations.
>
> **Policy C-4.2, Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Implementation and Monitoring.** The City shall continue to implement and update as necessary the CAAP to ensure that City operations, actions, and land use approvals are consistent with the CAAP. The City shall monitor and report on progress toward the emissions reduction targets on a periodic basis.
>
> **Action C-4.2.1 Climate Action & Adaptation Plan:** Maintain an updated and current Climate Action & Adaptation Plan. Implement policies and actions listed in the Climate & Adaptation Action Plan.
>
> **Action C-4.2.6. Green Building Leadership and Private Development Guidance.** The City shall provide leadership and guidance to encourage the application of green building practices in private sector development. This policy is expected to yield long-term cost savings to the City's taxpayers due to substantial improvements in life-cycle performance and reduced life-cycle costs.

However, without application of appropriate control measures to reduce construction dust and exhaust, construction period impacts at the program level would be considered a potentially significant impact. **Mitigation Measure AQ-1** would be required to be implemented to reduce construction period impacts.

Significance After Mitigation

Build out of General Plan 2050 would occur over 20 years. Construction activities associated with development allowed under the proposed General Plan could generate construction emissions that exceed the MBARD's significance thresholds during this time and cumulatively contribute to the non-attainment designations of the MBARD. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-1**, in addition to applicable regulatory measures (e.g., MBARD rules) related to reducing construction-related emissions, would reduce criteria air pollutant emissions from construction-related activities to the extent feasible

and may result in reducing construction-related regional air quality impacts of subsequent individual projects to less than significant. However, due to the programmatic nature of the proposed project, construction time frames and equipment for individual site-specific projects are not available and there is potential for multiple developments to be constructed at any one time, resulting in significant construction-related emissions. Therefore, despite implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-1**, this impact would be significant and unavoidable. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

Operational Period Emissions

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in long-term area and mobile source emissions from operation and use of subsequent development. There are no significance thresholds applicable to emissions associated with plan-level development; however, there are project-level thresholds. There are project-level thresholds of 137 pounds for NO_X and ROG, 82 pounds for PM_{10}, 55 pounds for $PM_{2.5}$, and 550 pounds for CO.

Summary of Operational Period Emissions

Table 4.3-7 reports the predicted emissions from General Plan 2050 net change (i.e., General Plan 2050 – 2023 Existing Conditions) in terms of average daily operational emissions. There are no emission thresholds that apply to potential emissions generated by a plan, such as General Plan 2050. As shown in **Table 4.3-7**, average daily emissions for ROG and CO would exceed the MBARD significance thresholds that is applied to projects.

Table 4.3-5 General Plan 2050 Operational Period Emissions

Scenario	NOx	ROG	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$	CO
General Plan 2050 Daily Emissions in 2045 (lbs./*day*) (General Plan 2050 Project – 2023 Existing Conditions)	88.97	**339.00**	62.34	22.27	**697.50**
MBARD Project-Level Thresholds (lbs./day)	*137*	*137*	*82*	*55*	*550**

Note: *Significant if emissions that exceed the threshold and cause violations of ambient air quality standards.
Source: I&R, 2026

While the emissions associated with General Plan 2050 are above the MBARD project-level significance thresholds, General Plan 2050 is a plan level document and cannot as a whole be held to these project-level thresholds. Only ROG emissions would exceed the thresholds. CO emissions exceed the thresholds; however, these emissions do not lead to violations of ambient air quality standards (see discussion below). Additionally, there are conditions that may change the pollutant analysis. As discussed above, these include warehouse and industrial projects that could have truck traffic with long travel distances or stationary and off-road equipment that emit air pollutants. These specific conditions cannot be modeled on a plan level analysis, and therefore the operational criteria pollutant emissions could be potentially significant. Therefore, **Mitigation Measure AQ-2** would be required to be implemented to reduce operational period impacts.

Significance After Mitigation

Application of State and MBARD rules and regulation and implementation of General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions would contribute to reducing operation-related criteria air pollutants generated from energy, area, and mobile sources to the extent feasible. Incorporation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-2** would also contribute in reducing criteria air pollutants. Implementation of the aforementioned rules,

goals and policies, and mitigation could contribute in reducing operation-phase criteria pollutants of future individual projects to a less than significant level. However, it is unknown if these reductions would reduce General Plan 2050's operational emissions to below regulatory thresholds. Therefore, the impacts would be significant and unavoidable for operational emissions. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

Carbon Monoxide

CO is a pollutant that affects air quality locally, as it is primarily caused by traffic. Areas of vehicle congestion with poor air circulation have the potential to create pockets of CO called hotspots. These pockets have the potential to exceed the State 1-hour standard of 20 ppm or the 8-hour standard of 9.0 ppm. Monitoring data from all ambient air quality monitoring stations in the NCCAB indicate that existing carbon monoxide levels are currently below national and California ambient air quality standards. Monitored CO levels have decreased substantially since 1990 as newer vehicles with greatly improved exhaust emission control systems have replaced older vehicles. The NCCAB has been designated as an attainment area for the CO standards. No CO hotspots have been reported in the NCCAB even at the most congested intersections.

The entire State has met CO NAAQS and CAAQS. This includes highly urbanized areas with much greater traffic conditions than those found in Watsonville. Additionally, the draft transportation analysis studied 20 street segments in Watsonville and found that all segments (under existing and cumulative scenarios) would have traffic congestion operating within acceptable or minimum acceptable level of service. Therefore, buildout under General Plan 2050 would not cause CO levels to exceed ambient air quality standards. (No Impact)

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

To address exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant levels, the MBARD CEQA Guidelines developed thresholds that address health risk impacts. These include increased cancer risk and non-cancer hazards. Sources of TACs led to increased health risk levels. DPM is the predominant TAC in the area.

Impacts related to increased health risk can occur either by introducing a new source of TACs with the potential to adversely affect existing sensitive receptors in the plan area vicinity or by significantly exacerbating existing cumulative TAC impacts. The build-out of General Plan 2050 would introduce a new temporary source of TACs during construction (i.e., on-site construction and truck hauling emissions) and long-term sources of TACs during operation (i.e., mobile and stationary sources).

Potential TAC impacts to sensitive and worker receptors are evaluated within 1,000 feet of a plan area to make sure that any potential significant health risk impacts are identified and evaluated. There are sensitive receptors within 1,000 feet of General Plan 2050. The plan area construction activity would generate dust and equipment exhaust that would affect nearby sensitive receptors. In addition, General Plan 2050 would place sensitive receptors within the plan area. Traffic would be generated by General Plan 2050 and may introduce new stationary sources such as emergency diesel-powered generators, which would produce TAC and air pollutant emissions in the area.

General Plan 2050 impacts to existing sensitive receptors were addressed for temporary construction activities and long-term operational conditions. There are also several sources of existing TACs and localized air pollutants in the vicinity of the plan area. The impact of the existing sources of TAC was also assessed in terms of describing the cumulative risk which includes General Plan 2050 contribution, as well as the risk on the new sensitive receptors introduced by General Plan 2050.

Construction TAC Exposure

Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of General Plan 2050 could include short-term construction sources of TACs. There are sensitive receptors adjacent to many portions of the plan area and there will be future residents in General Plan 2050 development areas that could potentially be exposed to construction TACs during construction activity.

Construction equipment and associated heavy-duty truck traffic generate diesel exhaust, which is a known TAC. The construction exhaust emissions may pose health risks for sensitive receptors such as nearby residents. The primary health risk impact issues associated with construction emissions are cancer risk. Diesel exhaust poses both a potential health and nuisance impact to nearby receptors. A health risk assessment of the construction activities would have to be conducted at a project level to quantify these impacts.

Since specific construction plans and schedules for construction are not known, it is not possible to quantify the impacts and determine the significance. For large construction projects of two acres or greater and lasting more than one year, there is the potential to cause significant health risk impacts. There are various measures that can be incorporated into construction plans that could minimize these potential impacts. Because residential development in General Plan 2050 would be developed over time, there could be new on-site residences (sensitive receptors) occupied while construction would be occurring in other areas of General Plan 2050. Health risks impacts to nearby existing and future sensitive receptors associated with temporary construction of the future development is considered potentially significant.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-1**, in addition to applicable regulatory measures (e.g., MBARD rules) related to reducing construction-related emissions, would reduce health risk concentrations from construction-related activities to the extent feasible and may result in reducing construction-related health risk impacts of subsequent individual projects to less than significant. However, due to the programmatic nature of the proposed project, construction time frames and equipment for individual site-specific projects are not available and there is a potential for multiple developments to be constructed at any one time, resulting in significant construction-related health risk impacts. Therefore, despite adherence to **Mitigation Measure AQ-1**, this impact would be significant and unavoidable (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

Operation TAC Exposure

Traffic

Traffic volumes would increase with the implementation of General Plan 2050. However, TAC emissions from traffic are anticipated to decrease for several reasons:

- Vehicles, especially heavy-duty trucks, that meet newer diesel emissions standards will replace older vehicles (Note that trucks are the highest source of traffic TAC emissions);
- Overall increase in fuel efficiency of automobiles and trucks; and
- An increase in the percentage of vehicles that have zero emissions.

Nonetheless localized increases in traffic emissions of TACs may occur as General Plan 2050 is built out. These increases would likely be dependent on the specific types and sizes of land uses and the amount of truck traffic generated. Increased build out of General Plan 2050 would involve residential and local-serving retail, which would not generate substantial truck traffic that leads to significant health risk impacts.

Stationary Sources

Development of General Plan 2050 may include stationary equipment such as backup power generators powered by diesel engines. Operation of diesel generators would be a source of TAC emissions in the form of DPM. There are no specific plans to include this equipment nor plans that would reasonably allow identification of potential equipment. These diesel engines would be subject to CARB's Stationary Diesel ATCM, since they will be equipped with engines larger than 50-horsepower BACT for Toxics requirements would apply to these generators that would limit DPM emissions. As part of the MBARD permit requirements for toxics screening analysis, the engine emissions will have to meet BACT for Toxics and pass the toxic risk screening level of less than ten in a million. The risk assessment would be prepared by MBARD. Depending on results, MBARD would set limits for DPM emissions (e.g., more restricted engine operation periods). Sources of air pollutant emissions complying with all applicable MBARD regulations generally will not be considered to have a significant air quality health risk impact on their own. However, combined with other General Plan 2050 sources, such as traffic or construction equipment, this could lead to a significant impact.

Health Risk Impacts – Construction and Operation

Sources of TAC emissions associated in the Plan Update Area have not been identified. The mix of land uses envisioned under the MBARD could include sources such that significant exposures might occur. The impacts may be caused by a combination of construction activity, truck traffic, diesel-powered emergency generators or other equipment. This would be considered a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measure AQ-3: Require Project-Level Health Risk Assessments for Projects near Sensitive Receptors.

Prior to discretionary approval by the City of Watsonville for development projects subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (i.e., non-exempt projects), project applicants proposing development of two acres or greater and lasting more than one year within 1,000 feet of existing sensitive receptors or worker receptors as defined by the MBARD (e.g., residential, schools) shall prepare a site-specific construction and operational health risk assessment (HRA) in accordance with the latest MBARD guidance and submit to the City. If the HRA demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the City, that the health risk exposures for adjacent receptors will be less than MBARD project-level thresholds, then additional mitigation would be unnecessary. However, if the HRA demonstrates that health risks would exceed MBARD project-level thresholds, additional feasible on- and off-site mitigation shall be analyzed to further reduce risks to the greatest extent practicable. Measures to reduce significant health risk impacts include:

- Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-1**.
- Site design modifications, such as locating TAC emitting equipment at portion of a site that have the least impact.
- Operational modifications, such as limiting the number of operational hours of TAC emitting equipment or activities.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of measures identified in **Mitigation Measure AQ-3** through future project-specific assessments would reduce on-site diesel exhaust emissions. The implementation of General Plan 2050 goal, policies, and actions discussed above in project impact **d)**, measures described under **Mitigation Measure AQ-1**, and those listed above would reduce emissions substantially. For example, the use of

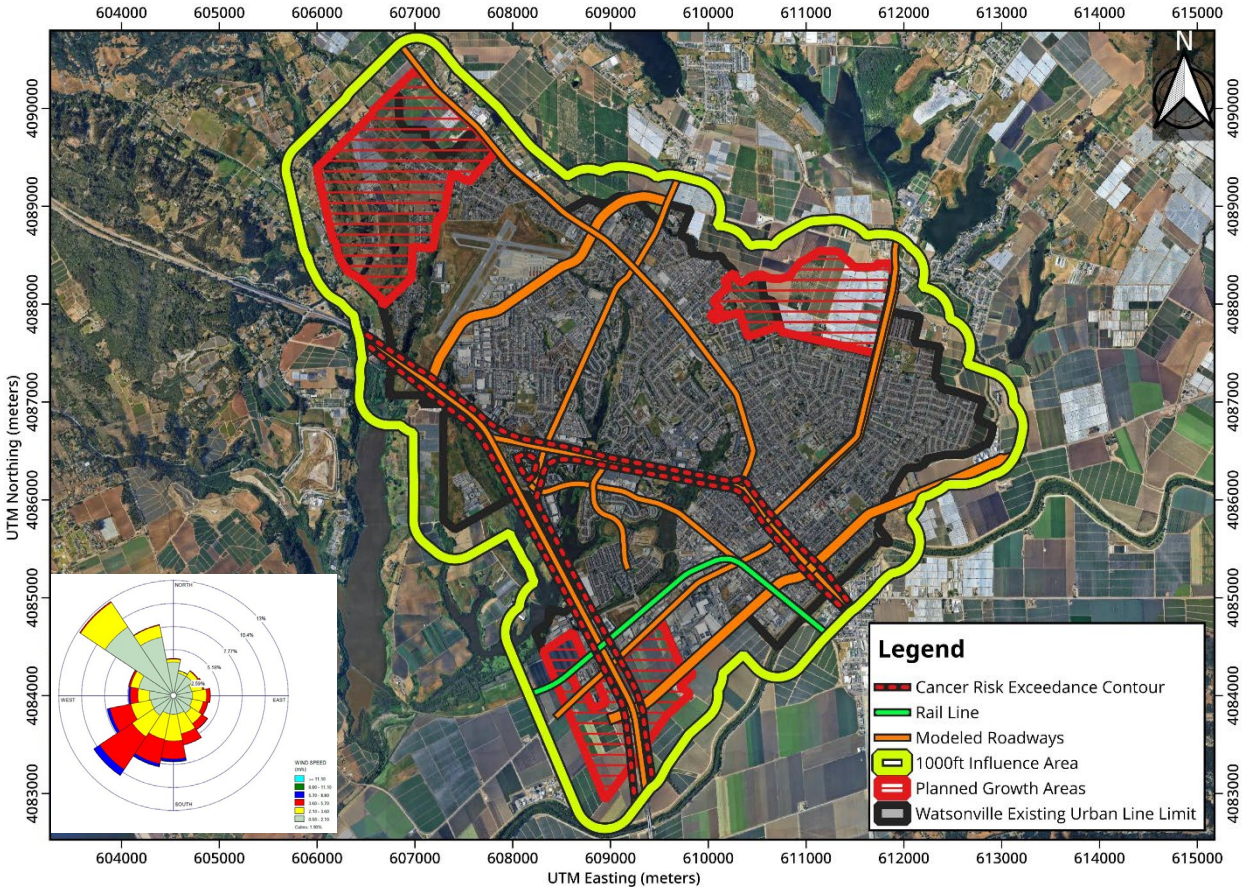
diesel-powered construction equipment that meets U.S. EPA particulate matter emissions standards for Tier 4 engines or included DPM filters certified by CARB would substantially reduce DPM emissions. Additional measures to reduce TAC emissions would include hourly limits for equipment use, electrification or use of alternative fuels for equipment, and appropriate siting and design of equipment. Implementation of the aforementioned rules, goals and policies, and mitigation could contribute in reducing health risk impacts of future individual projects to a less than significant level. However, it is unknown if these reductions would reduce the health risk caused by projects developed under General Plan 2050 to below regulatory thresholds. Therefore, the impacts would be significant and unavoidable. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

TAC Effects on General Plan 2050 Sensitive Receptors

General Plan 2050 would include new sensitive receptors, primarily in the form of residents. Substantial sources of existing air pollution can adversely affect sensitive receptors proposed as part of new projects. MBARD does not have a recommended screening radius for identifying health risk impacts from citing a new source of TACs or new sensitive receptors; therefore, the Bay Area Air District's screening radius of 1,000-feet around a plan area was used. A review of the plan area was conducted to identify the existing health risks from nearby TAC sources. Traffic projections provided by the plan's traffic consultant were also reviewed to confirm roadways with the potential to emit significant TAC. Of the roadways in the plan area, nine have the potential to affect new sensitive receptors: Airport Boulevard, Beach Street, East Lake Avenue, Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, Main Street, Ohlone Parkway, Riverside Drive, and Walker Street. These roadways were identified because they are projected to carry more than 10,000 average daily trips (ADT), a level that has historically been used by Bay Area Air District as an indicator of roadway segments that may warrant further evaluation for potential health risks to nearby sensitive receptors due to vehicle emissions.[1] **Figure 4.3-1** shows the existing TAC sources, the plan area, a wind rose from the Watsonville Municipal Airport, and the 1,000-foot influence area. For existing stationary sources, MBARD provides a map (**Figure 4.3-2**) that shows the location of every existing stationary source in the plan area.

[1] Bay Area Air District guidance has historically identified roadways carrying approximately 10,000 or more average daily trips as major roadway sources warranting consideration in screening-level evaluations of potential health risks from mobile-source emissions. Bay Area Air District 's current screening guidance continues to identify major roadways with at least 10,000 average annual daily traffic (ADT) within 1,000 feet of a project as potential mobile sources for evaluation. However, Bay Area Air District's current CEQA methodology does not establish 10,000 ADT as a threshold of significance; rather, roadway-related health risks are evaluated through screening and, where appropriate, a site-specific health risk assessment.

Figure 4.3-1 Plan Area, Road & Rail TAC Sources, Watsonville Airport Wind Rose, and 1,000-foot Influence Area



Source: I&R, 2026

High-Volume Roadways

TAC exposure from the busiest roadways in Watsonville were modeled. The exposure caused by other sources (i.e., rail and permitted stationary sources) were addressed using available information reported by MBARD or CARB.

Highways – State Route 1

State Route 1 (SR-1) runs through the western side of the plan area. A refined analysis of the impacts of TACs to potential new sensitive receptors is necessary to evaluate cancer risks from SR-1. A review of the traffic information reported by Caltrans indicates that SR-1 traffic includes 46,500 vehicles per day (based on an annual average) that are about 8 percent trucks, of which 3.4 percent are considered diesel heavy duty trucks and 4.6 percent are medium duty trucks.

While parts of Main Street, East Lake Avenue, and Beach Street are included in SR-152 and part of Riverside Drive is included in SR-129, these sections have relatively low traffic volumes for a highway and are more indicative of local roadway traffic volumes. Therefore, Main Street, East Lake Avenue, Beach Street, and Riverside Drive are analyzed as local roadways, as discussed below.

Local Roadways – Airport Boulevard, Beach Street, East Lake Avenue, Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, Main Street, Ohlone Parkway, Riverside Drive, and Walker Street

Local roadways with traffic volumes of over 10,000 vehicles per day that are within the influence area could potentially have a significant TAC effect on the proposed plan area. Based on traffic projections provided by the plan's traffic consultant, Airport Boulevard, Beach Street, East Lake Avenue, Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, Main Street, Ohlone Parkway, Riverside Drive, and Walker Street are projected to have ADT counts over 10,000 vehicles per day. **Figure 4.3-1** shows the locations of these roadways.

Traffic Emissions Modeling

This analysis involved the development of DPM and organic TACs emissions for traffic on SR-1, Airport Boulevard, Beach Street, East Lake Avenue, Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, Main Street, Ohlone Parkway, Riverside Drive, and Walker Street using the Caltrans version of the CARB EMFAC2021 emissions model, known as CT-EMFAC2021.

To estimate TAC emissions over the 30-year exposure period used for calculating the increased cancer risks for sensitive receptors within General Plan 2050, the CT-EMFAC2021 model was used to develop vehicle emission factors for the year 2030.[2] Emissions associated with vehicle travel depend on the year of analysis because emission control technology requirements are phased-in over time. Therefore, the earlier the year analyzed in the model, the higher the emission rates utilized by CT-EMFAC2021. Year 2030 emissions were conservatively assumed as being representative of future conditions over the time period that cancer risks are evaluated since, as discussed above, overall vehicle emissions, and in particular diesel truck emissions, will decrease in the future.

[2] The year 2030 was selected because it is the earliest year in which major development projects anticipated under General Plan 2050 could reasonably be completed. Selection of the earliest feasible analysis year provides a conservative assessment of TAC emissions because vehicle emissions are projected to decrease over time as cleaner vehicles are phased into the fleet and older vehicles are retired. Consequently, earlier analysis years generally result in higher vehicle emission factors than later years and, therefore, higher estimated health risk impacts.

The ADT volumes and truck percentages were based on Caltrans data for SR-1. Traffic volumes were assumed to increase 1 percent per year due to overall regional growth for a total of 49,755 vehicles. Hourly traffic distributions specific to these segments of SR-1 were obtained from Caltrans Performance Measurement System (PeMS). PeMS data is collected in real-time from nearly 40,000 individual detectors spanning the freeway system across all major metropolitan areas of California. The fraction of traffic volume each hour was calculated and applied to the 2030 average daily traffic volumes estimate to estimate hourly traffic emission rates for SR-1. The hourly traffic distributions calculated for SR-1 were averaged together then utilized for both travel directions on each local roadway.

Based on traffic data from the Caltrans PeMS, traffic speeds during the daytime and nighttime periods were identified. For all traffic on northbound and southbound SR-1, a travel speed of 65 miles per hour (mph) was utilized for the modeling.

The ADT for each local roadway was provided by the plan's traffic consultant while travel speeds were based on speed limit signs posted along each roadway. The following ADTs and vehicle speeds were used for each roadway.

- Airport Boulevard – 20,300 vehicles, 45 mph
- Beach Street – 13,300 vehicles, 25 mph
- East Lake Avenue – 17,800 vehicles, 25 mph
- Freedom Boulevard – 25,300 vehicles, 30 mph
- Green Valley Road – 24,300 vehicles, 35 mph
- Main Street – 32,500 vehicles, 25 mph
- Ohlone Parkway – 11,000 vehicles, 35 mph
- Riverside Drive – 23,000 vehicles, 25 mph
- Walker Street – 12,100 vehicles, 30 mph

TAC concentrations were developed by inputting the emissions rates into an air quality dispersion model (AERMOD). Buffer distances for cancer risk were then computed using the modeled TAC concentrations and MBARD methods and exposure parameters described in the CEQA guidance document. These buffer distances represent the modeled extent at which roadway cancer risk equals MBARD's significance threshold; receptors within the buffer may experience impacts exceeding the threshold.

Dispersion Modeling

Dispersion modeling of TAC emissions was conducted using the EPA AERMOD air quality dispersion model. Pollutant emissions from traffic on each roadway within 1,000 feet of the plan area were evaluated as RLINE sources (roadway line sources) for each opposing travel direction on the roadways. The modeling used a five-year meteorological data set (2015-2019) from the Watsonville Municipal Airport prepared for use with the AERMOD model by the CARB. Other inputs to the model included road geometry, hourly traffic emissions, and receptor locations and heights. Annual TAC concentrations using 2030 emissions from traffic on each roadway were calculated using the model. Concentrations were calculated along each roadway at a receptor height of 1.5 meters (5 feet) above ground level, consistent with standard practice for near-road dispersion modeling and representative of the breathing zone where ground-level roadway concentrations are typically maximized. Receptors were placed every 100 meters along each roadway at setback distances of 100, 200, and 500 feet.

Computed Cancer and Non-Cancer Health Impacts

The buffer distances along the roadways within the plan area that had health risk exceedances are shown in **Table 4.3-8**. **Figure 4.3-1** shows the roadway links modeled and receptor locations where concentrations were calculated.

Table 4.3-6 General Plan 2050 Area Roadway TAC Sources and Buffer Distances for Exceedance

Source	Type	Buffer Distance for Exceedance (feet)
State Route 1	Traffic 49,755 ADT	300
Main Street	Traffic 32,500 ADT	200

Source: I&R, 2026

Railway

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) has begun preliminary plans for reactivating passenger rail service as part of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail (ZEPRT) Project, which, if implemented, would provide passenger rail service between Santa Cruz and Pajaro through Watsonville. A potential Downtown Watsonville Passenger Rail Station is also proposed at the Walker Street junction and would create a new regional transit connection. Future phases of the ZEPRT project would require separate environmental reviews and funding. There is an existing Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line that runs within Main Street until it intersects with Beach Street, then proceeds west until it exits the plan area. This existing rail line would be used as the potential passenger rail line. Although it is uncertain if the passenger rail would occur, to be conservative this analysis assumed this service would occur.

Per the Federal Railroad Administration's Highway-Rail Crossing Inventory, the Santa Cruz Branch Line through the plan area currently sees approximately four freight trains per week. The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's planned Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project would introduce passenger service using zero-emission trainsets, avoiding the DPM emissions associated with conventional passenger rail. Given the low existing freight activity and the zero-emission nature of planned passenger service, rail-related TAC emissions are anticipated to be less-than-significant at General Plan 2050 level and the project level.

MBARD Permitted Stationary Sources

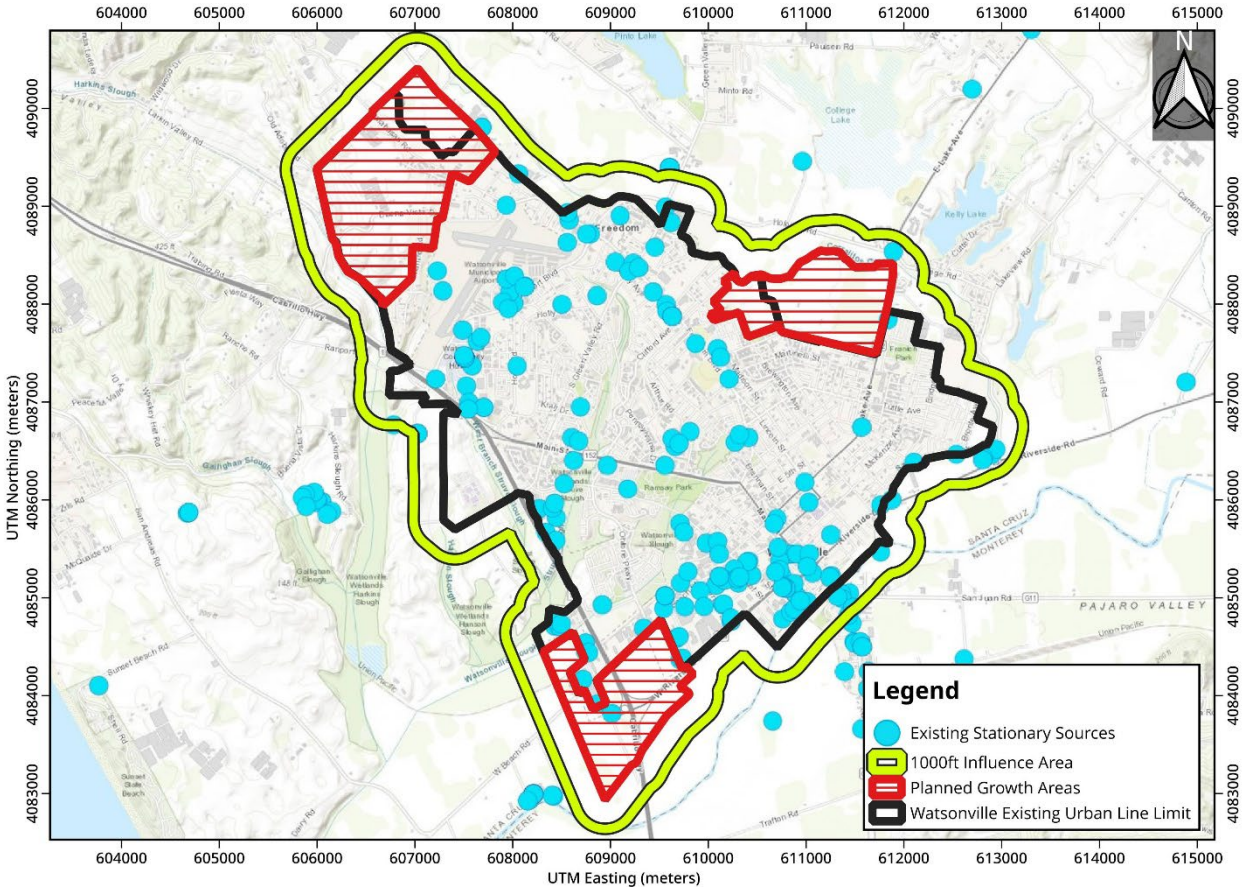
Permitted stationary sources of air pollution within and near the plan area were identified using MBARD's Permit Map, which identifies the location of nearby stationary sources. Over 100 existing stationary sources are within the plan area. However, since MBARD's website does not identify the stationary sources risk and hazard impacts, the estimated distance sensitive receptors should be from these sources in order to have health risk impacts below the significance thresholds could not be calculated. Generally, the risks from the types of sources listed in **Table 4.3-9** are low, and therefore, the risks are localized. Projects located near such sources should be evaluated for adverse effects. This would be done by submitting public records requests to MBARD to determine source health risk impacts. **Figure 4.3-2** shows the stationary sources within the plan area. Estimated screening buffer distances are provided in **Table 4.3-9**.

Table 4.3-7 General Plan 2050 Area Roadway TAC Sources and Buffer Distances for Exceedance

Source	Type	Estimated Screening Buffer Distance for Exceedance (feet)
Gas Stations	Benzene from evaporative emissions	300
Diesel generators	Diesel particulate matter from testing and maintenance operation	300

Source: I&R, 2026

Figure 4.3-2 Plan Area, Existing Stationary Sources, and 1,000-foot Influence Area



Source: I&R, 2026

Summary of Existing TAC Health Risks

Figure 4.3-1 and **Figure 4.3-2** identify the existing TAC sources within the plan area. Any development of sensitive receptors within affected areas identified in the sections above would potentially expose sensitive receptors to significant exposure of cancer and non-cancer risks. This would be a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measure AQ-4: Projects developed within the plan area that are affected by TAC sources shall implement appropriate measures to minimize long-term TAC exposure for new project occupants.

a. This mitigation measure applies to any project developed within the affected plan area that are near high volume roadways or stationary sources, as indicated above. For such a project, the Project Applicant would either need to include measures to reduce long-term exposure to TAC, as described below, or conduct site-specific analysis to identify the level of exposure to TACs in terms of cancer risk concentrations. The analysis shall use procedures prescribed by MBARD (e.g., the MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines) to predict these exposures. Where cancer risk exceeds 10 chances per million from any single source (i.e., within 1,000 feet) and where HI exceeds 1.0 from any single source, the following measures to reduce risk impacts may include but are not limited to: Design project developments to limit exposure from sources of TACs emissions, using setbacks to buffer sensitive portions of the development.

b. Install air filtration at units that have predicted cancer risk levels above 10 chances per million and HI above 1.0. Air filtration devices shall be rated MERV13 or higher. Alternately, at the approval of the City, equivalent control technology may be used if it is shown by a qualified air quality consultant or heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) engineer that it would reduce risk below significance thresholds.

c. As part of implementing this measure, an ongoing maintenance plan for the building's HVAC air filtration system shall be required.

d. Ensure that any lease agreements and other property documents (1) require cleaning, maintenance, and monitoring of the affected units for air flow leaks; (2) include assurance that new owners and tenants are provided information on the ventilation system; and (3) include provisions that fees associated with owning or leasing a unit(s) in the building include funds for cleaning, maintenance, monitoring, and replacements of the filters, as needed.

e. Require that, prior to building occupancy, an authorized air pollutant consultant or HVAC engineer verify the installation of all necessary measures to reduce cancer risk below 10 chances per million and HI below 1.0 from any source.

Measures identified in the HRA shall be identified as mitigation measures in the environmental document and/or incorporated into the site development plan as a component of the proposed project.

Significance After Mitigation

Air filtration systems should be installed on either an individual unit-by-unit basis, with individual air intake and exhaust ducts ventilating each unit separately, or through a centralized building ventilation system. The ventilation system should be certified to achieve certain effectiveness.

The air filtration systems using MERV13, can reduce exposures by 70 to 85 percent. There are filtration systems that can achieve greater reductions. The effective particulate control efficiency using a MERV13 filtration system is about 85 percent and 70 percent when accounting for 3 hours of non-filtered air (e.g., being outside or having windows open). Assuming the effectiveness of filtration systems described above, implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-4** would reduce maximum cancer risk and HI to below respective threshold levels. Therefore, with implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-4**, this impact would be reduced to a less-than-significant level. (Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation)

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

The construction of projects built out under General Plan 2050 would generate localized emissions of diesel exhaust during construction equipment operation and truck activity. These emissions may be noticeable from time to time by adjacent receptors. However, they would be localized and are not likely to adversely affect people off site by resulting in confirmed odor complaints. General Plan 2050 does not identify any uses that are typical sources of odors that could lead to objectionable odors that generate frequent odor complaints.

Odor impacts could occur if residents associated with the project experienced objectionable odors and made complaints. 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 methodologies to determine the presence of a significant odor impact. The significance of odor impacts is based on the potential to cause odor complaints.

Land uses typically producing objectionable odors include agricultural uses, wastewater treatment plants, food processing plants, chemical plants, composting, refineries, landfills, animal farms, fiberglass molding, and other industrial uses. While the majority of land uses identified under General Plan 2050 would not be associated with objectionable odors, there is the potential for some of the industrial development envisioned in General Plan 2050 to fall within food processing or other potential odor source categories in proximity to residential uses. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would have the potential to result in significant impacts during operation of development envisioned in General Plan 2050.

During construction activities for development in General Plan 2050, short-term, temporary odors from vehicle exhaust and construction equipment would occur. The plan area does not have substantially tall buildings that would block air movement and possibly cause a buildup of odors. Construction-related odors would disperse and dissipate fairly quickly and would not cause substantial odors at the closest sensitive receptors. In addition, construction-related odors would be relatively short-term. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures AQ-1** and **AQ-2** would further reduce impacts associated with project-related odors.

Mitigation Measures: Implementation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1 and AQ-2 is required.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1 and AQ-2 requires the analysis of air pollutant emissions of future individual projects in the plan area subject to CEQA. As part of the analysis, odor emissions would be analyzed for those projects that may fall into an odor source category. Where emissions of odors are found to be potentially significant, odor emissions would be mitigated to less than significant levels. In addition, projects would be subject to MBARD regulations, including Rule 402 (Nuisances), which prohibits emissions that create a nuisance or annoyance affecting a considerable number of persons or the public. Therefore, with the implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-1, Mitigation Measure AQ-2**, and applicable MBARD regulations, overall General Plan odor impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels. (Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation)

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4.4 Biological Resources

This section describes biological resources in the plan area based on a review of recent information on special-status species occurrences and habitat mapping, coupled with a reconnaissance-level site visit. The Watsonville General Plan 2050 Update prepared by H. T. Harvey & Associates, which documented biological resources and impacts within the current contiguous City limits (hereafter referred to simply as City limits), was updated with new information from a variety of sources. A site visit was conducted by H. T. Harvey & Associates ecologists on July 24, 2025 to document conditions within the City limits and potential annexation areas within the Urban Limit Line. New growth areas that were inspected in the field include Area A (Buena Vista), Area B (Atkinson Lane), Area C, and Highway 1 Gateway. This report incorporates relevant discussion from the 2005 General Plan analysis and new analysis from the 2025 site visit and review of recent mapping and occurrence data.

During the public scoping process, several commenters raised concerns about potential biological resources impacts. Specifically, commenters requested that the EIR consider the following issues:

- Impacts to special-status species
- Impacts to bed, channel, bank, and riparian habitat, and the direct and indirect effects to fish, wildlife, and their habitat
- Tree removal in the Buena Vista new growth area
- Land use changes resulting from rezoning
- Changes in hydrological conditions
- Expansion of urban limit line and impacts to wetlands
- Operational features of the project, including level of anticipated human presence, artificial lighting/light reflection, noise, traffic generation, and other features

Each of these topics is covered in **Section 4.4.2.2, Project Impacts**.

4.4.1 Environmental Setting

4.4.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

Federal Endangered Species Act

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) protects federally listed wildlife species from harm or take, which is broadly defined as “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct.” Take can also include habitat modification or degradation that directly results in death or injury of a listed wildlife species. An activity can be defined as take even if it is unintentional or accidental. Listed plant species are provided less protection than listed wildlife species. Listed plant species are legally protected from take under the FESA only if they occur on federal lands.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have jurisdiction over federally listed, threatened, and endangered species under FESA. The USFWS also maintains lists of proposed and candidate species. Species on these lists are not legally protected under FESA but may become listed in the near future and are often included in their review of a project.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), 16 U.S.C. Section 703, prohibits killing, possessing, or trading of migratory birds except in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior. The MBTA protects whole birds, parts of birds, and bird eggs and nests, and it prohibits the possession of all nests of protected bird species whether they are active or inactive. An active nest is defined as having eggs or young, as described by the USFWS in its June 14, 2018, memorandum "Destruction and Relocation of Migratory Bird Nest Contents". Nest starts (nests that are under construction and do not yet contain eggs) and inactive nests are not protected from destruction.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act is the primary federal law protecting eagles, including individuals and their nests and eggs. The USFWS implements the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 USC Section 703-711) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 USC Section 668). Under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act's Eagle Permit Rule (50 CFR 22.26), USFWS may issue permits to authorize limited, non-purposeful take of bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*).

Clean Water Act

Areas meeting the regulatory definition of waters of the U.S. are subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) under provisions of Section 404 of the 1972 Clean Water Act (CWA) and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. Waters of the U.S. include other waters, such as intrastate lakes, rivers, streams, mudflats, sandflats, playa lakes, natural ponds, territorial seas, and wetlands. Wetlands are generally identified by examining the vegetation, soils, and hydrology of an area use the "Routine Determination Method, On-Site Inspection Necessary (Section D)" outlined in the Corps Manual. The May 25, 2023, U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency* limited the definition of waters of the U.S. by including only wetlands that have a continuous surface connection with traditional navigable waters. On August 29, 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and USACE issued a final implementing rule to amend the definition of waters of the U.S. to conform with the Sackett decision.

In non-tidal waters, USACE jurisdiction extends to the ordinary high water mark, which is defined in Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 328.3, as "the line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics, such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of the soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation or the presence of litter and debris." This guidance is based on the identification of the ordinary high water mark through examination of physical evidence of surface flow in the stream channel; there is no hydrologic definition of the ordinary high-water mark. Construction activities that directly impact waters of the U.S., such as grading and fill placement, require a Section 404 permit from the USACE. Under the existing Conforming Rule defining waters of the U.S. (adopted September 2023), ephemeral streams, which only flow during and shortly following rain events and previously were considered waters of the U.S. when connected to intermittent and perennial tributaries to traditional navigable waters, are no longer considered jurisdictional federal waters.

River and Harbors Act

Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 prohibits the creation of any obstruction to the navigable capacity of waters of the U.S., including discharge of fill and the building of any wharfs, piers,

jetties, and other structures without Congressional approval or authorization by the Chief of Engineers and Secretary of the Army (33 U.S.C. 403).

Navigable waters of the U.S., which are defined in 33 CFR, Part 329.4, include all waters subject to the ebb and flow of the tide, and/or those which are presently or have historically been used to transport commerce. The shoreward jurisdictional limit of tidal waters is further defined in 33 CFR, Part 329.12 as "the line on the shore reached by the plane of the mean (average) high water." It is important to understand that the USACE does not regulate wetlands under Section 10, only the aquatic or open waters component of Bay habitat, and that there is overlap between Section 10 jurisdiction and Section 404 jurisdiction. According to 33 CFR, Part 329.9, a waterbody that was once navigable in its natural or improved state retains its character as "navigable in law" even though it is not presently used for commerce as a result of changed conditions and/or the presence of obstructions. Historical Section 10 waters may occur behind levees in areas that are not currently exposed to tidal or muted-tidal influence, and meet the following criteria: (1) the area is presently at or below the mean high water line; (2) the area was historically at or below mean high water in its "unobstructed, natural state"; and (3) there is no evidence that the area was ever above mean high water.

As mentioned above, Section 404 of the CWA authorizes the USACE to issue permits to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. If a project also proposes to discharge dredged or fill material and/or introduce other potential obstructions in navigable waters of the U.S., a Letter of Permission authorizing these impacts must be obtained from the USACE under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act.

State

California Endangered Species Act

The California Endangered Species Act (California Fish and Game Code, Chapter 1.5, Sections 2050-2116) (CESA) prohibits the take of any plant or animal listed or proposed for listing as rare (plants only), threatened, or endangered. In accordance with the California Endangered Species Act, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has jurisdiction over state-listed species (Fish and Game Code § 2070). CDFW regulates activities that may result in "take" of individuals (i.e., "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill"). Habitat degradation or modification is not expressly included in the definition of take under the California Fish and Game Code. CDFW, however, has interpreted take to include the "killing of a member of a species which is the proximate result of habitat modification."

California Environmental Quality Act

CEQA is a state law that requires state and local agencies to document and consider the environmental implications of their actions and to refrain from approving projects with significant environmental effects if there are feasible alternatives or mitigation measures that can substantially lessen or avoid those effects. CEQA requires the full disclosure of the environmental effects of agency actions, such as approval of a general plan update or the projects covered by that plan, on resources such as air quality, water quality, cultural resources, and biological resources. The State Resources Agency promulgated guidelines for implementing CEQA known as the State CEQA Guidelines.

Section 15380(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines provides that a species not listed on the federal or state lists of protected species may be considered rare if the species can be shown to meet certain specified criteria. These criteria have been modeled after the definitions in the FESA and the CESA and the section of the California Fish and Game Code dealing with rare or endangered plants and animals. This section

was included in the guidelines primarily to deal with situations in which a public agency is reviewing a project that may have a significant effect on a species that has not yet been listed by either the USFWS or CDFW or species that are locally or regionally rare.

The CDFW has produced four lists (amphibians and reptiles, fishes, birds, and mammals) of "species of special concern" that are of limited distribution or the extent of their habitats has been reduced substantially, such that threat to their populations may be imminent. Thus, their populations should be monitored. They may receive special attention during environmental review as potential rare species, but do not have specific statutory protection. All potentially rare or sensitive species, or habitats capable of supporting rare species, are considered rare and/or sensitive for purposes of this environmental review per Section 15380(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

California Fish and Game Code

Ephemeral and intermittent streams, rivers, creeks, dry washes, sloughs, blue line streams on USGS maps, and watercourses with subsurface flows fall under CDFW jurisdiction. Canals, aqueducts, irrigation ditches, and other means of water conveyance may also be considered streams if they support aquatic life, riparian vegetation, or stream-dependent terrestrial wildlife. A stream is defined in Title 14, California Code of Regulations Section 1.72, as "a body of water that follows at least periodically or intermittently through a bed or channel having banks and that supports fish and other aquatic life. This includes watercourses having surface or subsurface flow that supports or has supported riparian vegetation." Using this definition, CDFW extends its jurisdiction to encompass riparian habitats that function as a part of a watercourse. California Fish and Game Code Section 2786 defines riparian habitat as "lands which contain habitat which grows close to and which depends upon soil moisture from a nearby freshwater source." The lateral extent of a stream and associated riparian habitat that would fall under the jurisdiction of CDFW can be measured in several ways, depending on the particular situation and the type of fish or wildlife at risk. At minimum, CDFW would claim jurisdiction over a stream's bed and bank. Where riparian habitat is present, the outer edge of riparian vegetation is generally used as the line of demarcation between riparian and upland habitats.

Pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 1603, CDFW regulates any project proposed by any person that will "substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow or substantially change the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake designated by the department, or use any material from the streambeds." California Fish and Game Code Section 1602 requires an entity to notify CDFW of any proposed activity that may modify a river, stream, or lake. If CDFW determines that proposed activities may may result in substantial adverse effects on fish and wildlife resources, a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSAA) must be prepared. The LSAA sets reasonable conditions necessary to protect fish and wildlife, and must comply with CEQA. The applicant may then proceed with the activity in accordance with the final LSAA.

Certain sections of the California Fish and Game Code describe regulations pertaining to protection of certain wildlife species. For example, Code Section 2000 prohibits taking of any bird, mammal, fish, reptile, or amphibian except as provided by other sections of the code.

The California Fish and Game Code Sections 3503, 3513, and 3800 (and other sections) protect native birds, including their nests and eggs, from all forms of take. Disturbance that causes nest abandonment and/or loss of reproductive effort is considered take by CDFW. Raptors (i.e., eagles, hawks, and owls) and their nests are specifically protected in California under Code Section 3503.5. Section 3503.5 states that it is "unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the order Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds of prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto."

Bats and other non-game mammals are protected by California Fish and Game Code Section 4150, which states that all non-game mammals or parts thereof may not be taken or possessed except as provided otherwise in the code or in accordance with regulations adopted by the commission. Activities resulting in mortality of nongame mammals (e.g., destruction of an occupied nonbreeding bat roost, resulting in the death of bats), or disturbance that causes the loss of a maternity colony of bats (resulting in the death of young), may be considered take by CDFW.

California Fish and Game Code Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515 afford fully protected status to numerous specifically identified birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. These species cannot be taken, even with an incidental take permit, unless authorized by a Natural Communities Conservation Plan. The Fish and Game Commission may authorize the collecting of fully protected birds and mammals for necessary scientific research. The commission may also authorize the live capture and relocation of fully protected bird species pursuant to a permit for the protection of livestock. Legally imported fully protected birds and mammals, or parts thereof, may be possessed under a permit by CDFW.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

Under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne), the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has the ultimate authority over state water rights and water quality policy. Porter-Cologne broadly defines waters of the state as "any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state." Porter-Cologne also establishes nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) to oversee water quality on a day-to-day basis. Pursuant to Section 401 of the federal CWA, projects that are regulated by the USACE must obtain water quality certification from the appropriate RWQCB. This certification ensures that the Project would uphold state water quality standards. The RWQCB also claims jurisdiction over areas not claimed by the USACE that directly affect water quality, such as areas below top of bank in streams, and may require a joint Section 401 Water Quality Certification/Waste Discharge Requirement for impacts to areas within the bank but outside federal CWA jurisdiction.

On April 2, 2019, the SWRCB adopted the State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State and subsequently revised these guidelines on April 6, 2021. In these new guidelines, riparian habitats are not specifically described as waters of the state but instead as important buffer habitats to streams that do conform to the State Wetland Definition. The Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State describe riparian habitat buffers as important resources that may be included in required mitigation packages for permits for impacts to waters of the state, as well as areas requiring permit authorization from the RWQCBs for impacts. The RWQCBs may impose mitigation requirements even if the USACE does not, and it should be noted that the State of California's jurisdiction to regulate its water resources is much broader than that of the federal government. The SWRCB works in coordination with the RWQCBs to preserve, protect, enhance, and restore water quality. Each RWQCB makes decisions related to water quality for its jurisdiction, and has the authority to approve, with or without conditions, or deny projects that could affect waters of the state under CWA Section 401 and Porter-Cologne.

Local

Santa Cruz County General Plan

The Santa Cruz County General Plan and certified Local Coastal Program (LCP) include policies for the identification, protection, and management of sensitive biological resources within the County's Coastal Zone. Policies ARC-3.1.1 through ARC-3.1.13 designate sensitive habitat areas, define the types of habitats that qualify for protection, require protection of special-status species, and require evaluation of

proposed development for the presence of environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs), including wetlands, riparian corridors, streams, rare plant communities, habitats supporting special-status species, and other areas of biological significance.

The County's General Plan and LCP require that sensitive habitats and ESHAs be protected from significant disruption of habitat values. Development within or adjacent to these resources must avoid or minimize impacts through appropriate siting and design, clustering of development outside sensitive habitat areas where feasible, establishment of development envelopes, conservation easements or deed restrictions, protection of native vegetation, limitations on invasive landscaping and domestic animal access, and other measures that maintain or enhance habitat function. Where impacts cannot be adequately avoided or mitigated, projects may be modified or denied, except where approval is legally necessary to allow a reasonable use of the property.

The County's General Plan and LCP also require biological review of development proposed within mapped or unmapped sensitive habitats and areas that may contain ESHAs. Biological assessments and, where necessary, more detailed biological studies are used to identify sensitive resources and appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures. The General Plan and LCP further include policies supporting protection of special-status species, wildlife movement, and important aquatic resources, including implementation of the County's Steelhead and Coho Salmon Conservation Strategy.

Santa Cruz County Water Quality Control Ordinance

The Santa Cruz County Water Quality Control Ordinance (Chapter 16.24) restricts any activity that would significantly degrade water quality by increasing turbidity or settleable solids in surface waters beyond natural background levels. Specific thresholds are outlined based on existing turbidity levels, and the discharge of settleable solids is limited to no more than 0.5 mL/L/hour above natural conditions. Activities that may impact water quality require prior approval from the County Administrator, who may impose conditions or deny the request. Certain projects may be exempt if they have valid environmental documentation (e.g., EIR or Negative Declaration) and comply with permit requirements.

Santa Cruz County Riparian Corridor Protection Ordinance

The Santa Cruz County Riparian Corridor Protection Ordinance (Chapter 16.30) establishes standards to restrict development in riparian and wetland areas. It sets administrative procedures for exceptions and outlines required setbacks, permitting, and protection of sensitive habitats.

- A riparian exception is required for actions such as grading, land clearing, construction of buildings, and removal of trees or shrubs in protected riparian corridors.
- The deposition of debris and the use of pesticides within these corridors are prohibited.
- Certain activities are exempt, including:
    - Continued use of pre-existing agricultural and non-agricultural uses
    - Work performed under a valid State Timber Harvesting Permit
    - Pest control activities authorized under the California Food and Agricultural Code
    - Drainage, erosion control, or habitat restoration measures required as a condition of County project approval.

Santa Cruz County Sensitive Habitats Protection Ordinance

The Santa Cruz County Sensitive Habitats Protection Ordinance (Chapter 16.32) was designed to minimize disturbance in sensitive habitats and to protect these areas for their genetic, scientific, and educational value. The ordinance defines sensitive habitat as any area supporting rare, endangered, or unique plant or animal communities—including wetlands, riparian corridors, coastal strand or dune, native grassland, and habitats identified in federal or state listings or County inventories. The ordinance states that:

- No toxic substance that will have adverse effects on the biotic community can be used in a sensitive habitat. In some instances, such substances can be used for agricultural purposes but only if mitigation measures can ensure protection.
- No development activities or land disturbance can occur in a sensitive habitat until a biotic review has been completed. This review determines what kinds of development activities can be conducted and what mitigation measures may be necessary to ensure protection of the habitat.
- Development activity includes any action that results in disturbance to rare, endangered, or locally unique plants and animals or to their habitats. Development includes, but is not limited to:
    - building, reconstruction, or alteration of structures on land, in or near natural bodies of water
    - grading, land clearing
    - change in density (including land divisions) or intensity of land use
- These activities may be restricted depending on the specific sensitive habitat under consideration. Development may be permitted as long as the habitat remains undisturbed; permitted as long as mitigation measures can correct any resulting adverse effects; or prohibited.

Additionally, a formal biotic approval process is required—ranging from site visit through full biotic report review—culminating in written approval that outlines conditions to protect sensitive species and habitats. Mitigation may include deed restrictions, restoration plans, or conservation easements. Existing agricultural operations, projects with sufficient prior biotic review, and CEQA-reviewed projects may be exempt.

Santa Cruz County Significant Trees Protection Ordinance

The Santa Cruz County Significant Trees Protection Ordinance (Chapter 16.34) aims to preserve scenic and ecological value within the Coastal Zone by regulating the removal, trimming, or destruction of large trees. The ordinance states that:

- A permit is required to remove, trim more than one third of foliage, poison, or otherwise destroy any significant tree within the Coastal Zone unless exempt. Violating these requirements is unlawful without a valid permit or emergency justification.
- The ordinance defines a "significant tree" as any tree, sprout clump, or group of trees meeting size and location thresholds:
    - Inside urban or rural service lines: individual trees ≥ 20 inches diameter at breast height (DBH); sprout clumps of five or more stems each > 12 inches DBH; or groups of five or more trees on a parcel all > 12 inches DBH.
    - Outside service lines, visible from scenic roads, beaches, or within scenic resource areas: individual trees ≥ 40 inches DBH.; sprout clumps of five or more stems each > 20 inches DBH; or groups of ten or more trees on a parcel each > 20 inches DBH.

  - Any tree located within a sensitive habitat as defined in Chapter 16.32.

- Exemptions include timber operations under valid timber harvesting permits, tree removals addressed under discretionary permits (e.g. grading, sensitive habitats, riparian protection), and standard agricultural tree crops.

Applications for removal must include arborist reports and details; replacement trees or in lieu fees may be required as mitigation. Emergency removals are allowed only for hazards with prompt reporting required. Violations are subject to enforcement per County land use enforcement rules.

City of Watsonville Local Coastal Program Implementation Plan

Within the City's Coastal Zone, development is also subject to the City's certified Local Coastal Program (LCP), including the Implementation Plan codified in Chapter 9-5 (Coastal Zone Implementation Plan) of the Watsonville Municipal Code. The Implementation Plan establishes development standards intended to protect environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs), consistent with the California Coastal Act.

The LCP requires that ESHAs be maintained in a natural state and protected from significant disruption of habitat values. Only uses dependent on the protected habitat resources are permitted within ESHAs. Development adjacent to ESHAs must be sited and designed to avoid or minimize indirect effects, including intrusion by people and domestic animals, erosion, sedimentation, polluted runoff, noise, lighting, glare, and visual disturbance.

The Implementation Plan also requires that ESHAs be separated from development by habitat buffer areas. Buffer widths vary depending on the applicable coastal zone designation, with minimum setbacks of 50 feet in some areas and 100 feet in others. Buffers are intended to shield sensitive habitats from adjacent development while enhancing habitat function through restoration. Permitted activities within buffers are generally limited to low-intensity habitat restoration, such as removal of invasive species and revegetation with native vegetation, unless additional uses are expressly authorized for a particular buffer area. Biological Restoration Plans prepared by qualified biologists are required for development adjacent to ESHAs to establish appropriate restoration, management, and buffer treatments.

The LCP further requires development adjacent to ESHAs to incorporate native trees, shrubs, and grasses that provide visual screening, discourage human access, restore habitat functions, and enhance bird roosting and nesting habitat. Development must minimize lighting, noise, glare, and other disturbances through project design and screening measures. Polluted runoff controls, erosion control plans, and construction best management practices are required to prevent sediment and contaminants from affecting wetlands, riparian habitats, and the Watsonville Slough System.

To ensure the long-term protection of coastal biological resources, the Implementation Plan requires that ESHAs and associated buffer areas be permanently protected through deed restrictions, conservation easements, or similar legal instruments. Depending on the location and type of development, coastal development permits may also require habitat restoration plans, monitoring, financial assurances for mitigation and restoration, and other conditions necessary to achieve consistency with the certified Local Coastal Program and the Coastal Act.

City of Watsonville Water Quality

The City of Watsonville Municipal Code establishes requirements to protect surface water quality by regulating discharges to the City's storm drain system and requiring measures to prevent erosion, sedimentation, and accidental releases of pollutants. These requirements are codified in Chapter 3 (City Utilities) of Title 6 (Sanitation and Health) of the Watsonville Municipal Code.

WMC § 6-3.515 Protection from accidental discharges.

Section 6-3.515 requires all dischargers to provide protection against accidental discharges of prohibited materials or other regulated waste. Facilities necessary to prevent accidental discharges must be provided and maintained at the discharger's expense. Detailed plans showing the facilities and operating procedures to provide such protection must be submitted to the Public Works Director for review and approval prior to the construction.

WMC § 6-3.525 Discharge of pollutants into City storm water sewer system.

Section 6-3.525 prohibits non-stormwater discharges into the City's stormwater sewer system unless authorized under the City's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit or otherwise exempt under the Municipal Code. Limited exceptions are provided for specified non-polluting or properly managed discharges, such as potable water line flushing, landscape irrigation, uncontaminated pumped groundwater, air conditioning condensation, flows from wetlands and riparian habitats, and firefighting activities.

WMC § 6-3.532 Erosion and sediment control plan requirement.

To minimize erosion and sediment transport from construction activities, Section 6-3.532 requires all projects requiring grading or building permits, regardless of size, to prepare and submit a site-specific erosion and sediment control plan that complies with the City's erosion control standards. The City may require implementation of specific best management practices (BMPs) as part of the erosion and sediment control plan to prevent sediment and other pollutants from entering the storm drain system and receiving waters.

City of Watsonville Zoning to Protect Sensitive Habitat

The City has established as part of its Zoning Code/Map areas designated as Environmental Management Open Space (EM-OS) for the purpose of protecting sensitive habitat, such as sloughs, wetlands, and open space areas.

City of Watsonville Tree Protection Ordinance

General Plan 2050 includes the following applicable Policy and Action:

> **Policy C-5.1 Tree Protection.** The City shall protect certain trees from being removed since trees provide a variety of aesthetic and environmental values.
>
> **Action C-5.1.1 Tree Protection Ordinance.** The City shall adopt a tree preservation ordinance and tree planting guidelines. The ordinance and guidelines shall set forth the types of trees to be protected and the conditions under which trees may be removed.

4.4.1.2 Existing Conditions

Land Cover Types

The City of Watsonville is in the Pajaro Valley of southern Santa Cruz County, a productive agricultural region with a distinctly rural character. The planning boundary encompasses significant, though disturbed, natural areas, including wetland habitat within Watsonville, Struve, and Harkins Sloughs, important remnants of riparian habitat along the sloughs, the Pajaro River, Salsipuedes Creek, and Corralitos Creek, and small areas of intact oak woodland and grasslands. These areas provide important

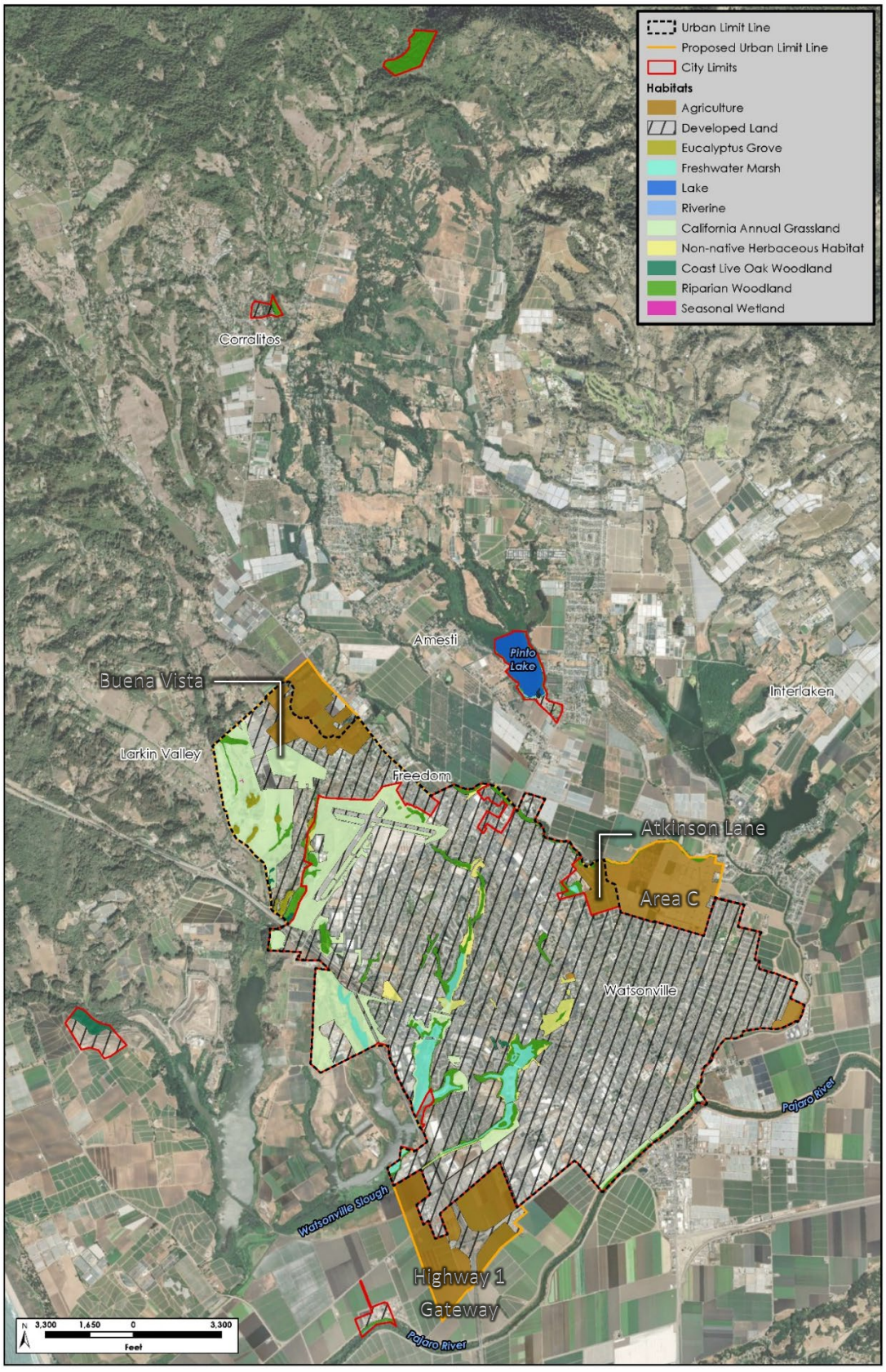
habitat for wildlife, including migratory birds and several species listed under the federal and state Endangered Species Acts. However, the plan area is dominated by the urbanized core of Watsonville and residential areas predominantly to the north and west and industrial areas to the south. Bordering the City limits within the new growth areas are agricultural, residential, rural and undeveloped land. Biotic habitats within General Plan 2050 area are shown in **Figure 4.4-1**, and the biotic habitats only within the contiguous plan area are shown in **Figure 4.4-2**. The biological communities that occur within the plan area and their approximate acreages are summarized in **Table 4.4-1**.

Table 4.4-1 Biotic Habitats within the Plan Area

Biotic Habitat	Area within the City Limit (acres)	Area within New Growth Areas (acres)	Area within the total Plan Area (acres)
California annual grassland	363.9	233.7	597.6
Coast live oak woodland	16.6	4.3	20.9
Riparian woodland	182.1	46.5	228.6
Freshwater marsh	100.2	1.5	101.7
Non-native herbaceous	59.1	0.8	59.9
Eucalyptus grove	1.9	16.9	18.8
Agriculture	17	685.8	702.8
Developed land	3,584.5	419.5	4,004.0
Seasonal wetland	0	0.2	0.2
Lake	60.4	0	60.4
Riverine	1.6	0	1.6
Total	**4,387.3**	**1,409.3**	**5,796.6**

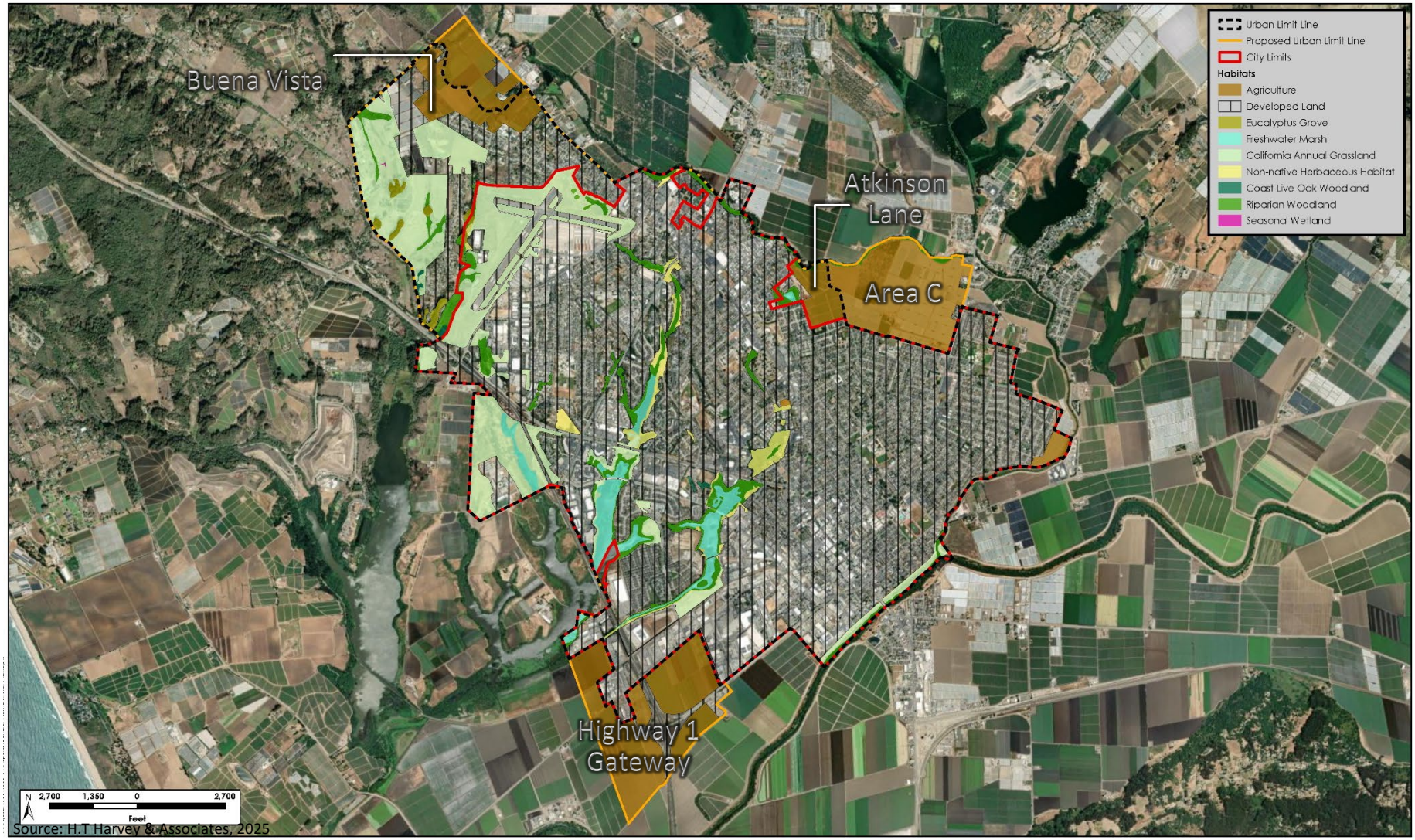
Source: H.T. Harvey, 2026

Figure 4.4-1 Biotic Habitats in 2050 General Plan Area



Source: H.T Harvey & Associates, 2025

Figure 4.4-2 Biotic Habitats in Contiguous General Plan 2050 Area



Source: H.T Harvey & Associates, 2025

Soils underlying the plan area are predominantly alluvial clays near the mouth of the Pajaro River and deep, fertile loams and sandy loams on its alluvial plains and fans (NRCS 2025). These areas provide some of the most productive agricultural land in the county and are used for irrigated crops such as strawberries, lettuce, broccoli, and cauliflower, and underlie the City's urban center. Areas of this soil type which are frequently or permanently flooded form the slough channels draining the Pajaro Valley, which are highly altered by adjacent land uses. North and west of the City limits, the Buena Vista and Atkinson Lane new growth areas are underlain by sandy or sandy loam soils derived from mixed alluvium or old marine sand deposits. These areas once supported species-rich coastal terrace prairie and coastal scrub habitat; remnant species associated with these communities can still be found in some areas.

The plan area is mapped on the Watsonville East and Watsonville West USGS Quadrangles; elevations range from approximately 5 feet within the deepest slough channels to approximately 100 feet north of the airport. Topography is generally level, with low hills northwest of the City limits in Buena Vista. According to 30-year monthly normals between the years 1991 and 2020, average annual rainfall is approximately 21.83 inches. Mean annual temperature for the area is approximately 56.4 degrees Fahrenheit (PRISM, 2025).

Sensitive Natural Communities and Wildlife Habitats

Freshwater Marsh

The most significant biological resource in the plan area is the system of sloughs and marshes that drain the Pajaro Basin and flow into Monterey Bay. Seasonal and perennial freshwater marshes occur within the channels of Watsonville, Struve, and Harkins Sloughs in the southern portion of the plan area. Within and adjacent to the low flow channels of the sloughs, permanently moist soils support water-loving plants including cattail (*Typha* spp.), bur-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), and bulrush (*Scirpus* spp.). During the winter months, open aquatic habitat is available in the deepest areas of the sloughs. In contrast, higher zones within the marsh dry out in summer and are colonized by perennial herbs such as bur marigold (*Bidens laevis*), dock (*Rumex* spp.), and rush (*Juncus* spp.). In general, sloughs within the plan area are highly degraded by agricultural runoff, urban fill for roadway crossings, and invasion by non-native species. Himalayan knotweed (*Persicaria wallichii*), a noxious weed of seasonally-moist soils, and feathered mosquito-fern (*Azolla filliculoides*), introduced for mosquito control, are particularly pervasive. Upland areas surrounding the sloughs are also highly degraded by invasive fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) and Harding grass (*Phalaris aquatica*), which greatly reduce habitat quality.

Restoration and protection of the sloughs is a high priority; efforts are underway to restore native plants to degraded wetland areas. Wetland enhancements plans are outlined in the Watsonville Sloughs Resource Conservation and Enhancement Plan (Swanson Hydrology & Geomorphology et al. 2003). The entire Watsonville Slough system is designated an Area of Special Biological Importance by RWQCB, designated as an Ecological Reserve by CDFW, identified as a Significant Biological Resource in the City of Watsonville Coastal Zone Implementation Plan, Santa Cruz County's Growth Management Plan, and the County's Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan, and in 2006, the Watsonville Slough system was formally designated a Critical Coastal Area by the California Coastal Commission.

In 2007, the Watsonville Slough Restoration Project (Phase 1a/1b), led by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD), and the City of Watsonville, rebuilt the Watsonville Slough channel, located in the southwestern portion of Watsonville, converting a straight agricultural ditch into a functioning wetland with sediment basins, erosion controls, and native revegetation. In 2012, Phase 2 of the Watsonville Slough Restoration Project was completed, widening the channel from roughly 30 feet to over 100 feet along the stretch between Ohlone Parkway and Highway 1.

As indicated in **Table 4.4-1**, approximately 100.2 acres of freshwater marsh (including open aquatic habitat) occur within the City limits, including Struve Slough and Watsonville Slough. A diked pond with approximately 1.5 acres of freshwater marsh occurs within an isolated basin at the southeastern boundary of the Atkinson Lane new growth area. This diked marsh habitat is located on the property with the recently constructed Cienega Heights housing project and is designated as Natural Open Space for preservation.

No freshwater marsh occurs within City limits planned for infill development or in the Buena Vista, Area C, or Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas.

Freshwater marsh provides habitat for a wide variety of animal species. Wetlands in southern Santa Cruz County support northwestern pond turtles (*Emys marmorata*) and various amphibians, including Pacific treefrogs (*Pseudacris regilla*) and California red-legged frogs (*Rana draytonii*). Several species of birds forage in aquatic habitats, including snowy egrets (*Egretta thula*) and other waders, American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), double-crested cormorants (*Nannopterum auritum*), and many species of waterfowl. Red-winged blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), marsh wrens (*Cistothorus palustris*), and common yellowthroats (*Geothlypis trichas*) are among bird species that nest in vegetation surrounding wetlands. Breeding waterbirds and waterfowl in southern Santa Cruz County include pied-billed grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*), American coot (*Fulica americana*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), and cinnamon teal (*Anas cyanoptera*). Small mammals, such as raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) and striped skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*), are likely to be found near wetlands, as well as several reptile species, especially garter snakes (*Thamnophis* spp.).

Special-status wildlife species that could occur in freshwater marsh in the plan area include the California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*), Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum*), California red-legged frog, northwestern pond turtle, bald eagle, and tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*).

Riparian Woodland

The Pajaro River, Watsonville Slough system, Corralitos Creek, Salsipuedes Creek, Browns Creek, and various drainage swales throughout the plan area provide important remnants of riparian habitat. In most of the riparian woodland habitat, arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) and red willow (*Salix laevigata*) dominate these canopies, often to the point of shading out understory species. Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*) and California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) are common associates especially along Pajaro River near the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Plant or along Browns Creek near the Browns Valley Intake area. Browns Valley Intake area is unique from other riparian woodland habitats in the plan area, dominated by coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) canopy.

Understory vegetation, when present, is typically a dense thicket of California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) or Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) and non-native species such as Harding grass, fennel, pampas grass (*Cortaderia* spp.), and poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). The upper reaches of riparian corridors in the plan area, particularly within the Buena Vista new growth area, are degraded by stands of planted blue-gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*). Riparian areas are protected by CDFW regulations in Sections 1601-1603 of the Fish and Game Code, and are recognized as sensitive by the City of Watsonville and Santa Cruz County (see **Section 4.4.1.1, Regulatory Framework**, above). CDFW jurisdiction extends up to the canopy dripline of riparian woodland both along Corralitos Creek in the Atkinson Lane area and associated with ephemeral drainages in the Buena Vista area.

Approximately 135 acres of riparian habitat occur within City limits. Approximately 46.5 acres of riparian habitat occur within the new growth areas including the northwest corner of the Buena Vista new growth area, Atkinson Lane new growth area, and Area C new growth area along Corralitos Creek.

Riparian habitats are of very high value to wildlife in southern Santa Cruz County. The presence of year-round water and abundant invertebrate fauna provide foraging opportunities, and the diverse habitat structure provides cover and nesting opportunities. Riparian vegetation provides habitat for a high diversity of wintering and migrating birds, such as ruby-crowned kinglets (*Regulus calendula*) and yellow-rumped warblers (*Setophaga coronata*), and breeding habitat for Neotropical migrants that breed in the region, including western warbling vireos (*Vireo swainsoni*), orange-crowned warblers (*Leiothlypis celata*), Wilson's warblers (*Cardellina pusilla*), Swainson's thrushes (*Catharus ustulatus*), and black-headed grosbeaks (*Pheuticus melanocephalus*). Downy woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*), black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), and spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) are other bird species typically found in mature riparian habitats. The mixed understory in riparian habitats usually supports a variety of mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, including raccoons, brush rabbits (*Sylvilagus bachmani*), dusky-footed woodrats (*Neotoma fuscipes*), deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), garter snakes, and Pacific treefrogs.

Special-status wildlife species that could occur in riparian habitats in the plan area include the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, California red-legged frog, northwestern pond turtle, yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia*), white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), and San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes annectens*).

Coast Live Oak Woodland

Small areas of oak woodland dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) occur as narrow remnant corridors just upslope of riparian areas. This habitat is best represented at Ramsey Park, on the west side of Hanson Slough, and on the east side of Harkins Slough, although isolated oak trees occur elsewhere. Coyote brush (*Baccharis piluaris*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), and herbaceous species typical of California annual grassland communities form the understory.

Approximately 1.9 acres of coast live oak woodland habitat occur within City limits. Approximately 4.4 acres of coast live oak woodland habitat occur within the new growth areas in patches, such as the south part of the Buena Vista new growth area.

Oak woodlands in southern Santa Cruz County support a considerable diversity of wildlife species. Mammals likely to be found here include western gray squirrels (*Sciurus griseus*) and dusky-footed woodrats, as well as other small rodents. Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) also occur in oak woodlands. Several avian species rely heavily on acorns for food, including acorn woodpeckers (*Melanerpes formicivorous*), California scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), and California quail (*Callipepla californica*). Chestnut-backed chickadees (*Poecile rufescens*), oak titmice (*Baeolophus inornatus*), Hutton's vireos (*Vireo huttoni*), dark-eyed juncos (*Junco hyemalis*), and Nuttall's woodpeckers (*Dryobates nuttallii*) are among other birds that nest in this habitat, often taking advantage of numerous nesting cavities in mature oak trees. Several species of amphibians, such as the arboreal salamander (*Aneides lugubris*), can be found in oak woodlands, in which moisture is retained under fallen wood and in crevices in oaks. Reptiles may include the ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus*) and western skink (*Plestiodon skiltonianus*).

Special-status wildlife species that could occur in oak woodlands within the plan area include the white-tailed kite.

Stream Channels and Open Aquatic Habitat

Seasonal aquatic habitat occurs within the Watsonville, Struve, and Harkins sloughs, Corralitos Creek, Salsipuedes Creek, and the freshwater marsh in the Atkinson Lane new growth area. All these bodies of

water are also classified as waters of the U.S. Slow-moving or stagnant areas of open water may be colonized by non-native species such as Himalayan knotweed and feathered mosquito-fern, with native aquatic emergent plants appearing as water levels decrease in the spring. Because the relative amount of open aquatic and wetland habitat varies seasonally within the plan area, aquatic habitat was included with wetland habitat in acreage calculations and habitat mapping.

Wildlife species likely to occur in local open aquatic habitat include many of the species that can be found in the freshwater marsh ecosystem. Belted kingfishers (*Megaceryle alcyon*) and green herons (*Butorides virescens*) are also likely to forage for fish in local streams. Streams may support a variety of fishes, including native South Central California Coast steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Pacific lamprey (*Entospehnus tridentatus*), and non-native mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*) and carp (*Cyprinus carpio*). Special-status wildlife species that could occur in aquatic habitats within the plan area include steelhead, California red-legged frogs, and northwestern pond turtles.

Seasonal Wetlands

Seasonal wetlands occur in depressions and swales scattered across the plan area where shallow soils or underlying clay layers restrict drainage. These wetlands typically pond water during the rainy season and dry out by late spring or early summer, supporting a mix of hydrophytic vegetation such as dock, perennial ryegrass (*Festuca perennis*), bristly ox-tongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), and annual rabbitsfoot grass (*Polypogon monspeliensis*). Obligate wetland species are generally less abundant, though species such as cattail may occur. In less disturbed areas, native species including tall flatsedge (*Cyperus eragrostis*) and California blackberry may be present.

No seasonal wetland is mapped in the City limits. Approximately 0.2 acres of seasonal wetland is mapped within the Buena Vista new growth area. There may be additional unmapped seasonal wetland throughout grasslands in the plan area.

Seasonal wetlands provide important foraging habitat for migrating shorebirds, such as Wilson's snipes (*Gallinago delicata*), waterfowl such as mallard, gadwall (*Mareca americana*), and northern shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), and residents species such as killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), snowy egret, and great egret (*Ardea alba*). Mammals such raccoon, striped skunk, and mule deer are attracted to forage and drink. Seasonal wetlands provide habitat for native northwestern pond turtle, California red-legged frog, and Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, and if they retain water long enough, may support breeding amphibians.

Lake

Lake habitat occurs at Pinto Lake in the plan area. Pinto Lake is a shallow, eutrophic lacustrine habitat characterized by warm, slow-moving waters, high nutrient loading, and extensive emergent and floating vegetation. Pinto Lake receives water from Pinto Lake Creek, stormwater runoff, and groundwater seepage. Vegetation includes floating macrophytes such as pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.) and coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*). In the plan area, approximately 60.4 acres of lake is mapped within the Pinto Lake area. Pinto Lake is not within any new growth areas.

Lake habitat provides important foraging habitat for many of the same waterbird species that are found in freshwater marsh habitat, including the snowy egret, American white pelican, double-crested cormorant, pied-billed grebe, ring-billed gull (*Larus delawarensis*), California gull (*Larus californicus*), eared grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*), western grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*), American coot, mallard, gadwall, northern shoveler, and green-winged teal (*Anas crecca*). Raptors such as osprey (*Pandon haliaetus*) are frequently observed hunting Pinto Lake for fish, and in the case of the bald eagle,

waterbirds as well. Northwestern pond turtles are also known to occur in the lake, where they both forage and utilize open areas for basking.

Riverine

Riverine habitat in the plan area is comprised of a segment of the Pajaro River about 3 miles away from the coast. Pajaro River is a low-gradient, tidally influenced alluvial river system shaped by highly variable seasonal flows and, in lower reaches, a brackish water regime created by tidal backwater from Monterey Bay. Substrates range from coarse gravels and cobbles in higher-velocity zones to sands and silts deposited along slower margins and backwaters. Riverine habitat supports sparse emergent species such as water primrose (*Ludwigia* spp.), cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*), watergrass (*Echinochloa* spp.), tules (*Schoenoplectus* spp.), and patches of algae, while brackish-tolerant species such as cattails and bulrush occur where tidal influence persists.

Riverine habitat supports many of the same avian species found in freshwater marsh and lake habitat. In addition, the riverine habitat supports a mix of native fish species such as the prickly sculpin (*Cottus asper*), riffle sculpin (*Cottus gulosus*), and three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*), as well as non-native species such as the largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), green sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*), and bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*). Steelhead utilize riverine habitat while migrating up and down the Pajaro River, and depending upon salinity conditions in the Pajaro River, may also support the tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*).

Mapping of biological resources within the plan area indicates that 1.6 acres of riverine habitat occur within the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Plant area, while no riverine habitat is mapped elsewhere in the City limits or new growth areas.

Tidal waters occur within the City limits of Watsonville, and their lowest elevation is approximately 5 feet, which is above the mean high water elevation of 4.86 feet. Section 10 waters are not present within the City limits or new growth areas.

Common Natural Communities or Artificial Communities and Wildlife Habitats

California Annual Grassland

California annual grassland, a ubiquitous community of European pasture grasses, native wildflowers, and introduced weedy forbs, occurs on well-developed, finely-textured soils that are moist or waterlogged during the winter and very dry in the summer and fall. Common dominants of non-native grassland in the plan area include ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), brome fescue (*Festuca bromoides*), and wild oat (*Avena fatua*); associated forbs include filaree (*Erodium botrys*), plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), and wild radish (*Raphanus sativus*). The diversity of plant species within this habitat varies greatly with levels of disturbance; on relatively undisturbed sites, remnant inclusions of coastal prairie may occur. Coastal prairie is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the United States (Noss et al., 1995) and is given a high priority for conservation by CDFW. Coastal prairie contains a significant proportion of native perennial grasses, primarily purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*) and California oatgrass (*Danthonia californica*), annual grass species, and a high diversity of native forbs, including several special-status species. Limited areas of coastal prairie remain at the Watsonville Municipal Airport. Populations of Santa Cruz tarplant (*Holocarpha macradenia*), a federally-threatened plant species associated with this habitat, persist here as well as in degraded grassland areas.

Approximately 363.9 acres of California annual grassland habitat occur within City limits, particularly on Airport property and in the Coastal Zone near the Pajaro Valley High School. Approximately 233.7 acres

of California annual grassland habitat occur throughout the proposed new growth areas, largely in Buena Vista.

Annual grasslands provide little cover for wildlife, yet numerous species forage, and several species breed, in this habitat. Small mammals such as deer mice, California ground squirrels (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), and Botta's pocket gophers (*Thomomys bottae*) are common residents in annual grasslands in Santa Cruz County. Larger mammals such as coyotes (*Canis latrans*) and bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) occasionally forage in this habitat as well as adjacent to larger tracts of undeveloped land. A variety of birds use annual grasslands as foraging habitat, including savannah sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), horned larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), western meadowlarks (*Sturnella neglecta*), lesser goldfinches (*Spinus psaltria*), and barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica*). Western meadowlarks and mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*) may nest in grasslands in the plan area. Raptors, such as red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and white-tailed kites commonly forage over grasslands as well. Western fence lizards (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), gopher snakes (*Pituophis catenifer*), and other snakes are also likely to occur in this habitat in the plan area.

Special-status wildlife species that could occur in grasslands in the plan area include the loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) and burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*). California tiger salamanders may occur if temporary freshwater, either in the form of ephemeral pools or human-made ponds, is present for breeding.

Non-native Herbaceous Habitat

Non-native herbaceous vegetation colonizes disturbed soils throughout the plan area, and is targeted for eradication along area sloughs. Common plant species include pasture grasses, fennel, poison hemlock, wild radish, black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), as well as landscape or introduced trees such as blue-gum eucalyptus and Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*). The distinction between non-native herbaceous habitat and California grassland is not always clear, as these habitats may intergrade into one another based on level of disturbance and non-native species colonization. Both habitats tend to be dominated by annual grasses and may support Santa Cruz tarplant.

Approximately 59.1 acres of non-native herbaceous habitat occur within City limits, mainly along and above slopes of Struve and Watsonville sloughs. Approximately 0.8 acres of non-native herbaceous habitat occur throughout the new growth areas, in patches adjacent to California annual grassland habitat.

The wildlife community present in non-native herbaceous habitats depends on the type of vegetation present and on the proximity to native habitats. In general, wildlife use of non-native herbaceous habitats is likely to be similar to that of California annual grassland (above). Near wetland areas, song sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*), red-winged blackbirds, and Pacific treefrogs are likely to use this habitat. Brewer's blackbirds (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) and house finches (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) are also species that regularly use habitats altered by humans, such as those with non-native vegetation. Reptiles likely to be found here include western fence lizards and garter snakes. Mammals that may occur here include the California vole (*Microtus californicus*), brush rabbit, and non-native rats (*Rattus* spp.).

The only special-status wildlife species that is likely to occur in this habitat in the plan area is the white-tailed kite, which may nest in Monterey pines or other trees.

Eucalyptus Grove

Blue-gum eucalyptus is the sole canopy species in distinct areas in the northern portion of the plan area. The large amount and chemical composition of eucalyptus litter prevents the growth of herbaceous plants, and poison oak is typically the sole species found in the understory.

Approximately 1.9 acres of eucalyptus grove habitat occur within City limits. Approximately 16.9 acres of eucalyptus grove habitat occur throughout the proposed new growth areas, in patches in Buena Vista.

Eucalyptus groves generally provide poor habitat for reptiles, amphibians, and mammals, but provide foraging and nesting habitat for a number of bird species, and roosting habitat for wintering monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*). Raptors such as red-tailed hawks, red-shouldered hawks (*Buteo lineatus*), and great-horned owls (*Bubo virginianus*) often nest in eucalyptus groves. Yellow-rumped warblers, hooded orioles (*Icterus cucullatus*), Anna's hummingbirds (*Calypte anna*), and a variety of other birds forage on eucalyptus flowers, or on insects in these trees.

Special-status species that may occur in eucalyptus groves include white-tailed kites and monarch butterflies.

Agricultural

Irrigated fields of strawberry, raspberry, and lettuce, as well as extensive apple orchards, occur in the plan area. The Highway 1 Gateway new growth area, Area C new growth area, much of the Atkinson Lane new growth area, and the northwestern portion of the Buena Vista new growth area are cultivated. Native vegetation has long since been eradicated from these areas through tillage practices and herbicide treatment.

Agricultural lands generally support few wildlife species because of the lack of diversity in vegetation and foraging opportunities. California ground squirrels often occur along margins of cropland, and raptors such as red-tailed hawks often forage for ground squirrels over this habitat. Fallow fields can attract other foraging birds, including Brewer's blackbirds, red-winged blackbirds, and killdeer. A pair of osprey is known to nest on a power pole within agricultural fields in the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area.

The only special-status wildlife species that may occur in agricultural fields in the plan area is the burrowing owl.

Developed Land

Most of the plan area consists of low- to high-density residential development, commercial and industrial infrastructure, and landscaped parks and hardscape. Vegetation in these areas is maintained for aesthetic purposes and consists of many exotic or horticultural species, as well as planted native trees. Common species include blue-gum eucalyptus, cheesewood (*Pittosporum* spp.), plane tree (*Platanus* sp.), Monterey and other California-native pines, and fruit trees. Native herbaceous vegetation is absent from developed areas.

Developed habitats can support certain wildlife species adapted to the unique nesting and foraging opportunities found there, but wildlife abundance and diversity is generally low. Striped skunks, raccoons, non-native rats, and Virginia opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*) occur regularly in urban habitats. Bird species adapted to the urban landscape include house finch, northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), mourning dove, and non-native European starling (*Sturna vulgaris*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), and rock pigeon (*Columba livia*).

The only special-status wildlife species with the potential to occur in developed habitats in the plan area is the pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*).

Special-Status Species

Special-status species are those plants and animals listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as threatened or endangered by the USFWS or NMFS under the Federal Endangered Species Act; those listed or candidates for listing as rare, threatened, or endangered by CDFW under the California Endangered Species Act; animals designated as "Species of Special Concern" by CDFW; animals fully protected in California under the California Fish and Game Code, and CDFW Special Plants, specifically those with a California Rare Plant Rank of 1A, 1B and 2 as assigned by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (2025). A number of special-status wildlife species are also considered to be of "local concern" by the County of Santa Cruz. Animals in this category are of concern because they have limited distributions, are experiencing local or regional population declines, are vulnerable to current or future threats to their preferred habitat, and/or are of unusual scientific, recreational, or educational value.

Data used to characterize the biological resources on and adjacent to the plan area included aerial photographs, topographic maps, and accepted scientific texts to identify species. Other data on biological resources were collected from numerous sources, including relevant literature, maps of natural resources, and queries of the Information for Planning and Consultation system (IPaC), California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), and online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (Inventory). The methodology for analyzing the presence of and impacts to biological resources in the plan area is described in greater detail in Appendix D, Biological Resources Report.

Table 4.4-2 identifies special-status species known to occur in the vicinity of Watsonville and with potential to occur within the plan area. This table also summarizes the legal status, distribution, and habitat for each special-status species.

Special-Status Plant Species

In the previous biological study for the 2005 Watsonville General Plan Update, a query of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) was performed prior to field surveys to identify species potentially occurring in the Watsonville area. Specific habitats specified in the query included valley and foothill grasslands, marshes and swamps, valley and foothill riparian, and cismontane woodland. These California Native Plant Society designated habitats were chosen for the similarity of their constituent species to those in the plan area. Three species, Santa Cruz tarplant, Gairdner's yampah (*Perideridia gairdneri* ssp. *gairdneri*), and saline clover (*Trifolium depauperatum* var. *hydrophilum*), were determined to have potential to occur within the plan area.

Reconnaissance-level surveys were conducted on July 24, 2025 and December 3, 2025 for habitats capable of supporting special-status plant species. A query of the California Natural Diversity Database was performed prior to field surveys to identify species potentially occurring in the Watsonville area. Specific habitats specified in the query included valley and foothill grasslands, marshes and swamps, valley and foothill riparian, and cismontane woodland. These California Native Plant Society (CNPS) designated habitats were chosen for the similarity of their constituent species to those in the plan area. The methodology for evaluating special-status plan species is described further in Appendix D, Biological Resources Report.

Additional plant species were considered in General Plan 2050 evaluation by querying fourteen quadrangles surrounding the plan area, including Loma Prieta, Watsonville West and Watsonville East, in the CNDDB database. Ninety-six special-status plant species occur in the fourteen-quadrangle area

including and surrounding the plan area. One species did not appear in the fourteen-quadrangle search, but a record exists within the plan area. Eighty-eight of these species were determined to be absent from within the plan area due to a combination of factors including absence of suitable habitat, lack of specific microhabitat or soil requirements, such as serpentine, alkaline, or sandy soils, and/or the elevation range of the species outside the range of the plan area (Appendix D, Biological Resources Report).

Those special-status plant species for which suitable habitat occurs in the plan area are listed in **Table 4.4-2**. Eight CNPS-ranked species, including California bottle-brush grass (*Elymus californicus*), Gairdner's yampah, harlequin lotus (*Hosackia gracilis*), Hickman's popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys chorisianus* var. *hickmanii*), Mexican mosquito fern (*Azolla microphylla*), saline clover, Santa Cruz tarplant, and western leatherwood (*Dirca occidentalis*), are known or have potential to occur within the plan area. Expanded descriptions for these species are presented below.

Table 4.4-2 Special-Status Plant and Animal Species, Their Status, and Potential Occurrence in the Plan Area

Name	*Status	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence in or Adjacent to the Plan Area
Federal or State Endangered, Threatened, or Candidate, or CNPS-Ranked Plant Species			
Santa Cruz Tarplant (*Holocarpha macradenia*)	FT, SE, CNPS 1B.1	Coastal prairie, Coastal scrub, Valley and foothill grassland	**Present.** Numerous documented occurrences within the plan area.
Harlequin lotus (*Hosackia gracilis*)	CNPS 4.2	Broad-leafed upland forest, Cismontane woodland, Closed-cone coniferous forest, Coastal bluff scrub, Coastal prairie, Coastal scrub, Marshes and swamps, Meadows and seeps, North Coast coniferous forest, Valley and foothill grassland	**May be Present.** Not documented to occur in the plan area, but suitable habitat present within seasonal wetlands throughout grasslands in new growth areas: edge of freshwater marsh in the Atkinson Lane new growth area, or edge of riparian woodland habitats along Corralitos Creek.
Gairdner's yampah (*Perideridia gairdneri ssp. Gairdneri*)	CNPS 4.2	Broad-leafed upland forest, Chaparral, Coastal prairie, Valley and foothill grassland, Vernal pools	**May be Present.** Potentially occurs in mesic grassland in the plan area, in California annual grassland near riparian woodland, or in riparian woodland along Corralitos Creek.
Hickman's popcorn-flower (*Plagiobothrys chorisianus var. hickmanii*)	CNPS 4.2	Chaparral, Closed-cone coniferous forest, Coastal scrub, Marshes and swamps, Vernal pools	**May be Present.** Not documented to occur in the plan area, but suitable habitat present within riparian woodland openings along Corralitos Creek, or at the edge of freshwater marsh in Atkinson Lane new growth area.
Saline clover (*Trifolium depauperatum var. hydrophilum*)	CNPS 1B.2	Marshes and swamps, Valley and foothill grassland (mesic, alkaline), Vernal pools	**May be Present.** Not documented to occur in the plan area, but suitable habitat present within seasonal wetlands of the Watsonville Slough system, or freshwater marsh in Atkinson Lane new growth area.

Name	*Status	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence in or Adjacent to the Plan Area
Federal or State Endangered, Threatened, Proposed, or Candidate Animal Species, and California Species of Special Concern			
Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)	FC	Adults forage on a wide variety of flowers for nectar and occur in a variety of habitats, but egg-laying and larval development occurs on milkweeds, which are more limited in distribution. Typically roosts on the branches and leaves of trees which receive appropriate sun exposure and thermal buffering.	**Present.** Milkweed has been observed in the plan area, therefore this species could breed here. The closest documented overwintering sites are located at Seascape Golf Course and New Brighton/Potbelly in Aptos, approximately 4.6 miles northwest and 7.3 miles northwest of the plan area, respectively. No overwintering sites are known from the plan area (Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation 2025). Individuals occur throughout the plan area as migrants, but this species is not known or expected to form large roosts, and would likely only breed in the plan area where milkweeds naturally occur or have been ornamentally planted.
South-Central California coast ESU steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)	FT, SSC	Cool streams with suitable spawning habitat and conditions allowing migration between spawning and marine habitats.	**Present.** Occurs in Pajaro River and its tributaries in the plan area, including Corralitos Creek and Salsipuedes Creek.

Name	*Status	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence in or Adjacent to the Plan Area
Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum*)	FE, SE	Wet meadows near sea level in a few restricted locales in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties.	**May be Present.** This species is known to occur near the plan area at three subpopulation complexes, including the Larkin Valley Complex, Ellicott-Buena Vista Complex, and Freedom Complex. Known breeding ponds in the Larkin Valley Complex include Calabasas Pond near the intersection of White Road and Larkin Valley Road, as well as Suess Pond, Olives Pond, and Winterwind Way on private property (USFWS 2019). Within the Ellicott-Buena Vista Complex, breeding ponds include the Ellicott Pond and Buena Vista Pond in the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander Ecological Reserve and Prospect Pond in the Ellicott Slough National Wildlife Refuge, all located approximately 0.6-0.8 miles northwest from the Buena Vista Landfill (CNDDB 2025). Additional breeding in this pond may also occur at several ponds on private property. At the Freedom Complex, breeding is known to occur at the Millsap Pond (managed by CDFW) and Merk Pond and may also occur at several ponds on private property. Due to the presence of suitable breeding habitat on private property in all three complexes, including the Larkin Valley complex that has not been adequately surveyed for Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders, additional breeding sites may occur in these complexes. If located within 3,199 feet, the maximum distance at which this species has been recorded dispersing from a known breeding pond (Stemle et al. 2024), dispersing individuals could occur in upland habitats within the Buena Vista new growth area.
California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*)	FT	Breeds in seasonal and perennial pools/ponds in grasslands or open woodlands; spends most time in subterranean refugia such as small mammal burrows or deep rock crevices.	**May be Present.** This species is known to occur in Ellicott Pond and Buena Vista Pond in the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander Ecological Reserve and Prospect Pond in the Ellicott Slough National Wildlife Refuge located approximately 0.6-0.8 miles northwest from the Buena Vista Landfill (CNDDB 2025). There are no other recent records from the rest of the plan area; could potentially occur in wetlands and adjacent grasslands in the Buena Vista new growth area.
California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*)	FT, SSC	Streams, freshwater pools, and ponds with emergent or overhanging vegetation	**Present.** This species is known to occur in Ellicott Pond and Buena Vista Pond in the Santa Cruz Long-Toed Salamander Ecological Reserve and Galligan Slough, located approximately 0.6-0.8 miles northwest from the Buena Vista Landfill (CNDDB 2025). Few records from within the rest of the plan area, but known to occur in Struve Slough and Watsonville Slough. One adult found dead on the road in the Buena Vista new growth area away from wetlands following rain (CNDDB 2025). May occur in other wetlands.

Name	*Status	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence in or Adjacent to the Plan Area
Foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylii*)	FT, SE	Shallow rocky streams, freshwater pools, and ponds with emergent or overhanging vegetation	**Absent.** There are historic collection records of this species from 1920 in upper Corralitos Creek and from 1970 in Harkins Slough, and extant populations are known to occur in a tributary of the Pajaro River on the east side of the Santa Cruz Mountains and in Soquel Creek 10 miles west of the plan area (CNDDB 2025). Creeks in the plan area have been heavily modified and do not currently provide suitable habitat. Furthermore, due to the intervening distance between current populations of this species and the plan area, it is unlikely that this species would disperse to nearby waters. Therefore, this species is considered absent.
Northwestern pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*)	FPT, CSSC	Permanent or nearly permanent water in a variety of habitats	**Present.** This species is known to occur in Struve Slough, at Pinto Lake, freshwater marsh in the Atkinson Lane new growth area, and along the Pajaro River up and downstream of the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Plant. Additional suitable aquatic habitat is present in freshwater marsh in Watsonville Slough and seasonal wetland in the Buena Vista new growth area. Adults and nests may be found in California annual grassland habitat within approximately 328 feet of aquatic habitats.
Central California Coast coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)	FT, ST	Open ocean, estuaries, and rivers	**Absent.** Central California Coast coho salmon occurred historically in the nearby San Lorenzo watershed, but the San Lorenzo River and its tributaries no longer support natural occurrences of coho (CNDDB 2025). It is unclear if the Pajaro River watershed ever supported coho salmon, but it is considered unsuitable for this species due to the lack of cool, low-gradient rearing habitat and regular access to the watershed. Determined to be absent.
Western bumble bee (*Bombus occidentalis*)	SC	Meadows and grasslands with abundant floral resources.	**Absent.** Although the species was historically found throughout much of central and northern California (CDFW 2019), including the plan area, it is not expected to occur there due to recent range contractions. Further, this species has not been observed in the plan area since the 1960s (CNDDB 2025).
Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*)	SC	Grasslands and shrublands with abundant floral resources, undisturbed nesting and overwintering sites.	**Absent.** Although the species was historically found throughout much of central California and portions of northern California (CDFW 2019), including the plan area, it is not known to occur in the plan area due to recent range contractions and lack of suitable habitat. The closest recent observation of this species was in 2025 at Pleasure Point Park, approximately 9.2 miles west from the plan area (iNaturalist 2025).

Name	*Status	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence in or Adjacent to the Plan Area
Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)	SE, SP	Occurs mainly along seacoasts, rivers, and lakes; nests in tall trees or in cliffs, occasionally on electrical towers; feeds mostly on fish and waterfowl	**Present.** Bald eagles attempted to nest unsuccessfully near the plan area at Pinto Lake in 2012 (CNDDB 2025). Since 2014, they have nested in most years in a eucalyptus grove along Gallighan Slough, located approximately 0.5 miles east of the Buena Vista Landfill (Santa Cruz Bird Club 2014, Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2025). This species is occasionally observed hunting in Struve Slough and Watsonville Slough (Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2025).
Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*)	SC, CSSC	Prefers grasslands and ruderal habitats, typically with sparse or nonexistent tree or shrub canopies. In California, burrowing owls are found in close association with California ground squirrels; owls use the abandoned burrows of ground squirrels for shelter and nesting.	**May be Present as a Non-Breeder.** May occur in agricultural and grassland habitats in the plan area during the non-breeding season, especially in the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area. The probability of occurrence as a breeder is very low.
Pacific lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*)	CSSC	Medium- and large-sized, low-gradient cold rivers and streams, with a wide range of habitats (e.g., gravel, low-gradient riffles).	**Present.** This species is known to occur in the lower Pajaro River and Corralitos Creek adjacent to the plan area (Boyce et al. 2022, iNaturalist 2025).
Monterey hitch (*Lavinia exilicauda harengus*)	CSSC	Warm, lowland, waters including clear streams, turbid sloughs, lakes, and reservoirs.	**Present.** This species is known to occur widely in the Pajaro River watershed, including in Salsipuedes Creek and Pajaro River adjacent to the plan area.
Southern coastal roach (*Hesperoleucus venustus subditus*)	CSSC	Generally found in small streams, they are well-adapted to intermittent watercourses (e.g., tolerant of high temperatures and low oxygen levels).	**Present.** This species is found in Corralitos Creek and Salsipuedes Creek, but no longer occurs in the mainstem of the Pajaro River (Baumsteiger and Moyle 2019).
Northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*)	CSSC (nesting)	Nests in marshes and moist fields, forages over open areas	**Present.** Occurs in plan area as a forager in freshwater marsh and California annual grassland habitats, and may possibly breed in more remote freshwater marsh in the plan area.

Name	*Status	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence in or Adjacent to the Plan Area
Yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia*)	CSSC (nesting)	Nests in riparian woodland	**Present.** This species breeds in riparian woodland habitat throughout the plan area.
Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)	CSSC (nesting)	Nests in tall shrubs and dense trees; forages in grasslands, marshes, and ruderal habitats	**Present.** This species may occasionally nest in large expanses of California annual grassland in the plan area, such as adjacent to the West Branch Struve Slough. It may also occur as a forager in California annual grassland and the edge of freshwater marsh throughout the plan area.
Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*)	ST	Highly colonial nester that establishes dense breeding colonies in emergent vegetation, grain fields, fallow fields, extensive thickets of blackberry, ruderal vegetation such as mustard or thistle, and occasionally in early-successional riparian habitat. Nesting colonies usually are located near fresh water.	**Present.** This species is not currently known to nest within the plan area, but suitable habitat is present in freshwater marsh. This species occurs as a forager in freshwater marsh, California annual grassland, and agricultural fields.
American badger (*Taxidea taxus*)	CSSC	Burrows in grasslands and occasionally in infrequently disked agricultural areas	**Absent.** Primarily occurs in extensive grasslands and scrub habitats. This species is known to occur in the Santa Cruz Mountains (CNDDB 2025, iNaturalist 2025). There is one record of this species from 1909 in Larkin Valley, approximately 0.8 mile west of the plan area, and a recent record further to the west in Aptos, but no records in the plan area. Badgers are not expected to occur in the plan area or establish a den there due to habitat fragmentation and disturbance. Determined to be absent.
Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*)	CSSC	Forages over many habitats; roosts in caves, rock outcrops, buildings, and hollow trees	**May be Present.** This species is known to occur around Elkhorn Slough (Caffrey et al. 2001), approximately three miles south of the plan area. Although it has not been confirmed in the plan area, it could forage over a variety of habitats in the plan area and roost in larger trees or in buildings in the plan area.

Name	*Status	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence in or Adjacent to the Plan Area
Western red bat (*Lasiurus frantzii*)	CSSC	Roosts in foliage in forest or woodland habitat, especially in or near riparian habitat.	**May be Present as a Non-Breeder.** This species may occur as a migrant and winter resident but does not breed in the plan area. Individual red bats may roost within foliage of trees in riparian woodland habitat in the plan area, especially along Corralitos Creek and in the Buena Vista new growth area.
Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)	CSSC	Roosts in caves, mine tunnels, and occasionally in deep crevices in trees such as redwoods or in abandoned buildings, in a variety of habitats.	**May be Present as a Non-Breeder.** This species may occur as a migrant and winter resident in abandoned or unused buildings and large coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) trees, but is not known to breed in the plan area due to lack of suitable habitat and high levels of disturbance.
San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes annectens*)	CSSC	Nests in a variety of habitats including riparian areas, oak woodlands, and scrub. Nests are often present where oaks and/or poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) are mixed with coyote brush scrub.	**Present.** This species is present in live oak woodland and riparian woodland habitats in the plan area, including along Pajaro River, Corralitos Creek, and Salsipuedes Creek.
Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)	SP	Breeds on cliffs or in large trees (rarely on electrical towers), forages in open areas	**Present as Non-Breeder.** Golden eagles are not known to nest in the plan area, but they occur as foragers over California annual grassland and agricultural lands in the plan area.
White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*)	SP	Nests in tall shrubs and trees, forages in grasslands, marshes, and ruderal habitats	**Present.** This species likely nests at the edge of riparian woodlands, live oak woodlands, and California annual grassland habitats with suitable nesting trees and large shrubs adjacent to open foraging habitat.

California bottle-brush grass (*Elymus californicus*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: None; CNPS List: 4.3. California bottle-brush grass is a perennial bunchgrass in the Poaceae family native to broadleaved upland forest, cismontane woodland, North Coast coniferous forest and riparian woodland habitats. The species is characterized by its loosely tufted growth form, slender stems, and inflorescences resembling bottle brushes. Dense spikelets with awns that give the flowering head a bristled appearance. Flowering generally occurs from May to August. California bottle-brush grass is distributed primarily in the Coast Ranges from Marin County south to Santa Clara County, with one older record further south in Monterey.

In the plan area, potential habitat occurs in the Browns Valley Intake area along Browns Creek in riparian woodland habitat. The riparian woodland habitat in the Browns Valley Intake area is described in **Section 4.4.1.2, Existing Conditions**.

Gairdner's yampah (*Perideridia gairdneri* ssp. *gairdneri*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: None; CNPS List 4. Gairdner's yampah is a tuberous perennial plant in the carrot family (Apiaceae) associated with moist soils along the coast. Plants have pinnately dissected leaves and erect flowering stems. Flowers are produced during June and July in a compound umbel, a type of radiate floral cluster characteristic of the family. Gairdner's yampah can be distinguished from common species of yampah occurring in Santa Cruz County by the type of leaf divisions and the shape of its fruit.

Gairdner's yampah occurs in coastal counties from Mendocino south to San Luis Obispo; it is considered a "plant of limited distribution" by CNPS, and can be locally abundant in the northern portion of its range. Little published data are available on the distribution of this species in Watsonville area. Like Santa Cruz tarplant, Gairdner's yampah favors heavy soils that retain water longer into the dry season. Suitable habitat for this species occurs in the mesic grasslands adjacent to sloughs and creeks, which includes at the edge of the freshwater marsh in the Atkinson Lane new growth area, or edge of Corralitos Creek in the Atkinson Lane and Area C new growth areas. Suitable habitat may also occur in riparian woodland in the Buena Vista new growth area.

Within the new growth areas, important populations of Santa Cruz tarplant occur on the east side of Larkin Valley Road within Buena Vista. Within City limits, though outside the new growth areas, Santa Cruz tarplant occurs at several locations including the Watsonville Municipal Airport, near Harkins Slough, and within the Apple Hill and Bay Breeze development areas, where portions of habitat were set aside as part of the development projects. Furthermore, 309 acres of federally designated Critical Habitat for Santa Cruz tarplant occur in City limits at the airport and Pajaro Valley High School.

Harlequin lotus (*Hosackia gracilis*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: None; CNPS List 4. Harlequin lotus is a perennial plant in the legume family (Fabaceae) found in coastal habitats, particularly in areas with sandy or gravelly soils. This species is characterized by its trifoliate leaves and showy clusters of bright yellow to orange pea-like flowers, which bloom from March to July. The flowers are arranged in an umbel, a type of inflorescence where flowers arise from one central point. Harlequin lotus can be differentiated from other similar species in the region by its petal claw exserted from the calyx tube and 3-parted bracts.

Harlequin lotus is primarily found along the central and southern coast of California, from Monterey County to Santa Barbara County. It is considered a species of special concern due to its restricted range and the loss of suitable habitat. The plant thrives in coastal scrub and grassland communities, particularly in areas with well-drained, low-nutrient soils. Like many coastal plants, Harlequin lotus is adapted to the harsh, dry conditions of the area, and its ability to withstand salt and drought makes it a resilient presence in these ecosystems. In the new growth areas, suitable habitat is present in disturbed habitats near the edge of Corralitos Creek in the Atkinson Lane and Area C new growth areas.

Hickman's Popcornflower (Plagiobothrys chorisianus var. hickmanii). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: None; CNPS List 4. Hickman's Popcornflower is a rare, perennial herb in the borage family (Boraginaceae) endemic to the coastal regions of central California. This plant is typically low-growing with small, white flowers, which resemble popcorn kernels, and are arranged in coiled clusters called cymes. These delicate flowers bloom between April and June. Hickman's Popcornflower can be distinguished from other members of its genus by the shape and scarring of its nutlets.

Hickman's Popcornflower is found primarily in the coastal areas of Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties, often in moist, disturbed habitats such as vernal pools, salt marshes, and floodplains. It is considered a species of conservation concern due to its limited distribution and vulnerability to habitat destruction. Suitable habitats are typically located in low-lying areas with heavy clay or alkaline soils that retain moisture during the wet season, allowing the plant to flourish during springtime before the hot, dry summer months. Suitable habitat for this species occurs in the ephemeral habitats along riparian woodland or freshwater marsh habitat, which includes at the edge of the freshwater marsh in the Atkinson Lane new growth area, or along the periphery of Corralitos Creek in the Atkinson Lane and Area C new growth areas.

Mexican mosquito fern (*Azolla microphylla*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: None; CNPS List: 4.2. Mexican mosquito fern is a small, free-floating aquatic fern in the Azollaceae family that forms dense mats on the surface of still or slow-moving freshwater systems. It is identifiable by its minute, overlapping, scale-like leaves that give the plant a velvety texture, and its ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen through symbiosis with the cyanobacterium Anabaena azollae. The species typically appears reddish to dark green depending on environmental conditions. This species occurs in ponds, sluggish streams, ditches, and marshes throughout California, though it is considered rare or uncommon in many regions due to habitat alteration, eutrophication, and competition from non-native aquatic plants.

Although it does not appear in the fourteen-quadrangle search, a record of Mexican mosquito fern exists at Pinto Lake, observed by C.J. Rothfels in 2021 at the north end of the lake. The lake's calm, nutrient-influenced waters provide suitable conditions for the species, particularly along sheltered coves and margins where water movement is minimal.

In the plan area, suitable habitat for Mexican mosquito fern occurs in the Pinto Lake area.

Saline clover (*Trifolium depauperatum* var. *hydrophylum*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: None; CNPS List 1B. Saline clover is a small, somewhat fleshy plant in the pea family (Fabaceae) with pink to purple flowers appearing from April through June. Populations are found along the coast from Sonoma County south to San Luis Obispo, as well as in the inland counties of Solano and Colusa. Saline clover requires moist soils, occurring on the edges of salt marshes and within alkali meadow. Populations of saline clover occur along Elkhorn and Moro Cojo Sloughs and associated wet meadows south of Watsonville, and at Soda Lake, a rare alkaline habitat north of Highway 129 near where it crosses the Pajaro River. This species has never been observed in the Watsonville Slough System or elsewhere in City limits, but has a low potential for occurrence in seasonal wetlands or freshwater marsh within the Atkinson Lane and Buena Vista new growth areas.

Santa Cruz tarplant (*Holocarpha macradenia*). Federal Listing Status: Threatened; State Listing Status: Endangered; CNPS List 1B. Santa Cruz tarplant is an aromatic, resinous annual herb in the aster family (Asteraceae) associated with coastal prairie and grassland habitats along the central California coast. Historically a member of the coastal prairie community, Santa Cruz tarplant is now most frequently found within non-native annual grassland. Common associates include wild oat, foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*), rattlesnake grass (*Briza maxima*), and other introduced grasses. Native associates include California oatgrass, rushes, and other tarplants in the genus *Hemizonia*. Populations occur on sandy or

sandy-loam soils on marine terrace platforms that are separated by steep gulches, including the Watsonville, Tierra, Elkhorn, Santa Inez, and Pinto series. These soils typically have a subsurface clay component, whose moisture-retentive properties may reduce competition from plants favored by well-drained soils. Once known from as far north as Marin County, native populations of Santa Cruz tarplant are currently restricted to Santa Cruz and northern Monterey counties within the San Lorenzo-Soquel, Pajaro, and Alisal-Elkhorn Slough watersheds. Approximately 21 populations are considered extant.

Within the new growth areas, important populations of Santa Cruz tarplant occur at on the east side of Larkin Valley Road within Buena Vista. Within City limits, though outside the new growth areas, Santa Cruz tarplant occurs at several locations including the Watsonville Municipal Airport, near Harkins Slough, and within the Apple Hill and Bay Breeze development areas, where portions of habitat were set aside as part of the development projects. Furthermore, 309 acres of federally designated Critical Habitat for Santa Cruz tarplant occur in City limits at the airport and Pajaro Valley High School.

Western leatherwood (*Dirca occidentalis*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: None; CNPS List: 1B.2. Western leatherwood is a rare deciduous shrub in the Thymelaeaceae family, endemic to the San Francisco Bay Area. It is recognized by its smooth, yellow-green branches; pliable, leathery bark; and broad elliptic leaves. Early spring blooms consist of clusters of small, fragrant, yellow tubular flowers that emerge before leaf-out. The species can be distinguished from other shrubs by its unique flexible stems and early flowering phenology. Flowering occurs from January to March. Dirca occidentalis is highly range-restricted, occurring in scattered populations along the inner Coast Ranges surrounding the Bay Area, typically on shaded slopes, riparian margins, and mixed hardwood forests with well-drained but moisture-retentive soils. Suitable habitat for western leatherwood occurs in the Browns Valley Intake area.

Special-Status Wildlife Species

Based on the database and literature review, 35 special-status wildlife species occur in the eleven-quadrangle area including and surrounding Watsonville West and Watsonville East. Given the urbanized condition of the plan area, it does not contain adequate habitat to support the 35 special-status wildlife species. A number of these species, primarily birds, have a low potential to occur within the plan area for brief periods of time as they disperse from more suitable habitat surrounding the plan area. For the purposes of CEQA analysis, non-listed special-status species with low potential to occur on site will not be addressed further.

Reconnaissance-level surveys were conducted in July 2025 for habitats capable of supporting special-status wildlife species. A query of the California Natural Diversity Database was performed prior to field surveys to identify species potentially occurring in the Watsonville area. Special-status wildlife species that are likely to occur in the plan area are listed in **Table 4.4-2**. This list includes federally and state listed species, species of special concern, and state-protected species. These species are described below, but expanded accounts are provided only for species that are of highest concern (Appendix D, Biological Resources Report).

Several bird species that have special-status only at breeding sites could pass through the plan area during migration or occur as winter visitors. However, breeding habitat for these bird species is not present in the plan area. These include the American white pelican, Vaux's swift (*Chaetura vauxi*), and black swift (*Cypseloides niger*). Other bird species that do not breed locally, but have special-status even away from breeding areas, could occur in the General Plan area. Several of these species are relatively uncommon locally, and are unlikely to be affected by plan implementation, including the California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*), willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), and bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*). All native

bird species that occur in the Watsonville General Plan 2050 area are protected under the MBTA except for California quail, which is among the groups explicitly exempted from MBTA protection.

Animal species that are likely to breed within the plan area, are likely to be affected by General Plan implementation, or may be of particular concern to state and federal agencies, are described below.

Federal or State Endangered or Threatened Species

Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), South-Central California Coast ESU. Federal Listing Status: Threatened; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern. The steelhead is an anadromous form of rainbow trout that migrates upstream from the ocean to spawn. Steelhead usually migrate upstream to spawning areas in late fall or early winter when flows are sufficient to allow them to reach suitable habitat in far upstream areas. Spawning occurs between December and June. Steelhead eggs remain in gravel depressions, known as redds, for one and one-half to four months before hatching. After hatching, young steelhead use the deeper reaches of streams as rearing areas, and will remain in freshwater for one to four years before migrating to the ocean. After migration, steelhead typically grow rapidly for two to three years before returning to freshwater streams to spawn. Unlike other salmonids, steelhead do not necessarily die after spawning. Many adults survive and return to the ocean after spawning, coming back to spawn for one or more additional seasons.

Steelhead usually spawn in clear, cool, perennial sections of relatively undisturbed streams. Preferred streams typically support dense canopy cover that provides shade, woody debris, and organic matter. Streams in which spawning occurs are usually free of rooted or aquatic vegetation. Gravel substrates are the optimum spawning habitat. Steelhead usually cannot survive long in pools or streams with water temperatures above 70 F. Despite their general requirement for cool water, steelhead can use warmer habitats if food is available, such as at fast water riffles where fish can feed on drifting insects.

Steelhead populations have declined due to degradation of spawning habitat, introduction of barriers to upstream migration, over-harvesting by recreational fisheries, and reduction in winter flows due to damming and spring flows due to water diversion. Steelhead and other salmonids have been categorized into subpopulations, or Evolutionarily Significant Units (ESUs). In 1997, the National Marine Fisheries Service published a final rule to list the South-Central California Coast ESU of the steelhead as threatened under the FESA. This ESU includes all steelhead spawning from the Pajaro River south to (but not including) the Santa Maria River. In 2005, NMFS designated critical habitat for this and other ESUs as areas documented as occupied at the time of listing within the range of each listed ESU. Ecology of southern steelhead (including the South/Central California Coast ESU) differs slightly from northern steelhead. Southern steelhead can cope with higher water temperatures, but because southern coastal streams may become very warm, Southern steelhead probably spend more time at-sea than their northern counterparts.

The Pajaro River supports a substantial population of steelhead. Steelhead use accessible tributaries of the Pajaro River as well, including Corralitos Creek and Salsipuedes Creek. All three of these waterways are designated as critical habitat. Migrating steelhead are likely to occur in the Pajaro River and its tributaries during periods of high flow, and suitable habitat for juvenile steelhead also occurs in the shaded portions of these waterways that retain water year-round.

California Red-legged Frog (*Rana draytonii*). Federal Listing Status: Threatened; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern. The California red-legged frog is a medium-sized frog that is generally restricted to riparian and lacustrine habitats in California and northern Baja California. Red-legged frogs prefer deep, calm pools (usually more than 2.3 feet deep) in creeks, rivers, or lakes below 4,921 feet in elevation. Habitat requirements include fresh emergent, or dense, riparian vegetation, especially willows adjacent to shorelines. Predators such as non-native fishes and bullfrogs (*Rana catesbeiana*) can

extirpate local populations of red-legged frogs. Red-legged frogs can survive in seasonal bodies of water that are dry for short periods if a permanent water body or dense vegetation stands are nearby.

Adult red-legged frogs are normally active at night and breed in still water during the late winter or early spring after waters recede. Females attach eggs in a single cluster to a vegetation brace just under the surface of the water. The eggs hatch in just over a week and the resulting larvae feed on plant and animal material on the bottom of the pond. It takes at least four months for the larvae to metamorphose into juvenile frogs. On rare occasions, larvae overwinter before metamorphosing.

The USFWS listed the California red-legged frog as threatened in 1996, due to continued habitat degradation throughout the species' range, and population declines. Critical habitat for this species was designated in 2001 and revised in 2010. Within the plan area, red-legged frogs have been found at Struve Slough (near Ohlone Parkway) and at Watsonville Slough at Harkins Slough Road and Lee Road. The portions of Struve Slough and Watsonville Slough located west of Highway 1 (except a narrow reach of Watsonville Slough located between developed and agricultural land in the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area) are designated as critical habitat. Potentially suitable habitat exists at several other sites, including the pond near the Atkinson Lane new growth area, Buena Vista new growth area, and in riparian habitat along Corralitos Creek and Salsipuedes Creek. One dead individual was observed on Buena Vista Drive approximately 0.4 miles west of Watsonville Municipal Airport. This individual was found run over in the road after rain and was likely dispersing, providing confirmation that this species may occur in the Buena Vista new growth area.

Santa Cruz Long-toed Salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum*). Federal Listing Status: Endangered; State Listing Status: Endangered. The Santa Cruz long-toed Salamander (hereafter long-toed salamander) is a medium-sized salamander endemic to southern Santa Cruz County and northern Monterey County. Long-toed salamanders typically breed in shallow, ephemeral, freshwater ponds, but spend most of their lives underground in small mammal burrows, or in other moist, protected areas, such as dense willow thickets. Known breeding populations occur in areas of sandy loam soils.

After the onset of winter rains, long-toed salamanders migrate from retreat sites to breeding ponds at night. Females attach eggs to submerged vegetation; eggs hatch after 15 to 30 days. Larvae can metamorphose quickly if the breeding pond begins to dry up. The disjunct distribution and the very restricted range of the species make it susceptible to population declines. As a result, the USFWS listed the long-toed salamander as Endangered in 1967, and the state of California listed the long-toed salamander as Endangered in 1971.

Currently, the long-toed salamander is known from a total of 23 locations, including 18 locations near Watsonville. The species is thought to breed in three metapopulations: Southern or Moro Cojo (South of Elkhorn Slough in Monterey County), Central or McClusky (north of Moss Landing), and the Northern or Santa Cruz metapopulation. Within the northern metapopulation, Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders occur in four primary regions, or "complexes:" Valencia-Seascape, Larkin Valley, Ellicott-Buena Vista, and Freedom. The only breeding complex that is nearby to the plan area is the Larkin Valley complex. This complex includes upland habitat north of Buena Vista Drive, between Freedom Boulevard and Highway 1. The species breeds at Calabasas Pond (near the intersection of White Road and Larkin Valley Road), which is managed by the Ellicott Slough National Wildlife Refuge; three additional breeding locations are known from the complex, including Suess Pond, Olives Pond, and Winterwind Way. Breeding is also known to occur near the plan area at Merk Pond (on Merk Road in the adjacent Pleasant Valley complex). Most of the Larkin Valley complex is private property, and has not been adequately surveyed for Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders. Additional breeding sites may occur in this complex, and if located within 3,199 feet, the maximum distance at which this species has been recorded dispersing from a known breeding pond, dispersing individuals could occur in upland habitats or wetlands associated with upper Harkins Slough, within the Buena Vista new growth area.

California Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*). Federal Listing Status: Threatened; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern. The California tiger salamander's preferred breeding habitat is temporary pond environments (e.g., vernal pool, ephemeral pool, or human-made ponds lasting for at least three months) surrounded by uplands that support small mammal burrows. The species will utilize permanent ponds provided that aquatic vertebrate predators are not present. Such ponds provide breeding and larval rearing habitat, while small mammal burrows (e.g., ground squirrel and pocket gopher) in the upland habitats support juvenile and adult salamanders during the dry season. They may migrate up to 6,863 feet during dispersal in search of suitable burrows; however, the average distance of dispersal is 1,676 feet or less (Search and Shaffer 2011). The USFWS listed this species as threatened in August 2004. The species is separated into three distinct population segments (DPS), including the Central California, Sonoma County, and Santa Barbara County DPS.

The range of the Central California DPS is restricted to the Central Valley and Inner Coast Range from Sacramento and Yolo counties to Tulare and San Luis Obispo counties in the south. This species has disappeared from a significant portion of its range due to habitat loss from agriculture and urbanization and the introduction of non-native aquatic predators.

The only records of California tiger salamanders in the Pajaro Valley area are from west of Highway 1, north of Buena Vista Road, outside the plan area. These locations are within one mile of the plan area however, and there is the possibility that this species could occur in the vicinity of upper Harkins Slough or other wetland habitats in the Buena Vista new growth area.

Tricolored Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*). Federal listing status: None; State Listing Status: Threatened. Tricolored Blackbirds are found almost exclusively in the Central Valley and central and southern coastal areas of California. This species was first proposed for federal listing in 1991 after the population was estimated at approximately 35,000 adults in the late 1980s. However, surveys conducted in 1992 by CDFW determined that the population of this species may have numbered over 300,000 adults, resulting in the withdrawal of the petition. The species subsequently experienced a large decline in population to approximately 50,000 adults by 2015. As a result, the species was listed as threatened under CESA in 2018. The tricolored blackbird is highly colonial and forms dense breeding colonies of up to tens of thousands of pairs. This species typically nests in tall, dense stands of cattails or tules, but also nests in blackberry, wild rose bushes, and tall herbaceous vegetation near water. There are no recent records of tricolored blackbirds nesting in the plan area. They nested in the vicinity of Hanson Slough and through 1988, but are currently extirpated from the lower Pajaro Valley. The most recent record of tricolored blackbirds nesting near the plan area is in 2003 at Soda Lake, near the Santa Clara and San Benito County borders. Suitable habitat occurs for this species in the plan area, especially at Struve and Watsonville Sloughs, and tricolored blackbirds could colonize such areas.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). Federal listing status: None; State Listing Status: Threatened, Fully Protected. In California, the state endangered and fully protected bald eagle is an uncommon permanent resident and migrant throughout the state. The species' breeding range in California has notably expanded in recent years. The bald eagle nests in forests within mountains and foothills, as well as woodlands adjacent to large bodies of water and free flowing rivers with abundant fish and perches from which to hunt. Bald eagles often nest in the upper canopy of the tallest tree within the stand, although below the crown, and prefer stands with less than 40 percent canopy cover. The nesting season begins in January and continues through August. Following nesting, adult eagles usually remain in or near their breeding territory as long as winter conditions are not too severe. Conversely, young birds in California tend to disperse hundreds of miles to the north within several weeks after fledging before returning to California in late winter. Bald eagles unsuccessfully attempted to nest at Pinto Lake near the plan area in 2012. In 2014 they successfully nested west of the plan area in a eucalyptus grove along Gallighan Slough, a small tributary of Harkins Slough located approximately 1.0 mile west of the plan

area. They have continued to nest there in most years, and occasionally occur as foragers in Struve Slough and Watsonville Slough within the plan area.

Northwestern Pond Turtle (*Emys marmorata*). Federal Listing Status: Proposed as Threatened; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern. The western pond turtle is an aquatic turtle that usually leaves the aquatic site to reproduce, to aestivate, and to overwinter. This turtle requires some slack or slow water, although it will occur where sufficient food resources occur in faster moving water. Nesting areas usually occur in upland areas from March to July, in hard-packed clay soil. Northwestern pond turtles may establish nests up to 1,377 feet from aquatic habitat, although typically they are established within 256 feet. Hatchlings disperse from the nest with winter rains. Within the plan area, pond turtles have been reported in freshwater marsh habitat in Struve Slough and the Atkinson Lane growth area. Pond turtles also occur in Pinto Lake, outside the contiguous plan area.

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: State Candidate, Species of Special Concern. The burrowing owl is a small, terrestrial owl of open country. Burrowing owls favor flat, open grassland or gentle slopes and sparse shrubland ecosystems. In California, burrowing owls are found in close association with California ground squirrels. Ground squirrels provide nesting and refuge burrows, and maintain areas of short vegetation height, providing foraging habitat and allowing for visual detection of avian predators by burrowing owls. Burrowing owls are semi-colonial nesters, and group size is one of the most significant factors contributing to site constancy by breeding burrowing owls. The nesting season, as recognized by CDFW, runs from February 1 through August 31. Burrowing owls occasionally occur in the plan area as wintering migrants, especially within the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area along the railroad tracks. Burrowing Owls are apparently extirpated from the Pajaro Valley as breeders, as there have been no recent records of this species nesting anywhere in Santa Cruz County. Nevertheless, suitable habitat occurs within the plan area, and there is the possibility that Burrowing Owls could recolonize the Pajaro Valley.

State Species of Special Concern

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern (Nesting). The Northern Harrier is commonly found in open grasslands, agricultural areas, and marshes. Nests are built on the ground in areas where long grasses or marsh plants provide cover and protection. Harriers hunt for a variety of prey, including rodents, birds, frogs, reptiles, and insects by flying low and slow in a traversing manner utilizing both sight and sound to detect prey items. Northern Harriers are common during winter in the Pajaro Valley, and nest in spring and summer. This species is not currently known to nest within the plan area, although nests of these species are secretive and difficult to locate. Potentially suitable nesting habitat occurs in marshy undeveloped portions of the plan area, including Struve Slough, Watsonville Slough, and potentially, portions of the Buena Vista new growth area where relatively undisturbed grasslands present.

Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*); Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern (Nesting). Yellow Warblers breed in well-developed riparian vegetation, and feed on insects. The Yellow Warbler is a migratory species that is common during migration, but migratory birds in California are mostly of one of the northern subspecies. Most California Yellow Warblers migrate to Mexico and South America in the fall and return to California to breed from May through August. This species is expected to nest in largely native riparian habitat along portions of Corralitos Creek, the Pajaro River, and in the vicinity of Struve and Watsonville Sloughs.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern (Nesting). Loggerhead shrikes are year-round residents in grassland and scrub habitats in California, where they forage primarily on large insects, lizards, and small mammals. Shrikes generally

build their nests in shrubs in fairly open areas. Populations of this species have been declining throughout portions of their range, particularly east of the Rocky Mountains. Loggerhead shrikes are uncommon in the Pajaro Valley, but are expected to nest in suitable habitat, for example scrubby areas near open grasslands, within the plan area.

Pallid Bat (*Antrozous pallidus*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern. Pallid bats are pale to light brown in color, and, at about 24 grams, the Pacific race is one of the state's largest bats. Coastal colonies commonly roost in deep crevices in rocky outcroppings, in buildings, under bridges, and in hollow trees. Colonies can range from a few individuals to over a hundred and are non-migratory. Some female/young colonies (typical of the coastal subspecies) may or may not use their day roost for their nursery as well as for winter roosting. Pallid bats can breed from March 15 through August 15. Although crevices are important for day roosts, night roosts often include porches, garages, barns, and highway bridges. Pallid bats may travel up to several miles for water or foraging sites if roosting sites are limited. Pallid bats prefer foraging on terrestrial arthropods in dry open grasslands, vineyards, orchards, or oaks near water and rocky outcroppings or old structures. Occurrence in this area of Santa Cruz County is poorly known, but the species could forage over a variety of habitats, and could potentially roost in trees or in human-made structures such as old barns.

Western Red Bat (*Lasiurus blossevillii*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern. Western red bats are amber colored with white patches on their shoulders. At approximately 7-15 grams, they are considered a medium-sized bat. They are locally common within their range in California, which extends from Shasta County to the Mexican border west of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade crest. This species undertakes north-south migrations between summer and winter ranges, although several winter records in California indicate that where the winter climate is mild, such as in the plan area, they may instead hibernate when foraging conditions are not suitable. Mating occurs during August and September, however due to a combination of delayed fertilization and an approximately 3 month gestation period, births typically occur in late May through early July. This species roosts primarily in trees in edge habitats along riparian areas, fields, and urban areas, and on occasion may utilize larger shrubs. They select for roost sites with closed canopies, and although adults are usually solitary, nursery colonies may sometimes form. Western red bats are insectivorous, using echolocation to forage for prey between the tree tops and ground. This western red bat does not breed in Santa Cruz County, and although its occurrence in Santa Cruz County is poorly understood, it could forage over a variety of habitats and roost in trees, especially at the edge of the plan area along riparian areas.

Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern. Townsend's big-eared bats are a species of vesper bat found throughout nearly all of California except Alpine and Subalpine zones. They are a medium-sized bat at approximately 7-12 grams. This species is not known to be migratory, with the longest recorded movement of this species being 20 miles. This species requires caves, tunnels, mines, buildings, and in some cases, large hollow trees such as coast redwood for day and night roosts, maternity roosts, and hibernacula, which act as a limiting factor for this species. This species typically hibernates from October to April. Mating occurs November through February prior to hibernation, with sperm storage and delayed ovulation resulting in births occurring in May through June. Townsend's big-eared bats forage primarily on moths, either in the air using echolocation or by gleaning vegetation. The Townsend's big-eared bat is not known to breed in Santa Cruz County, although it is documented to occur in caves near the UC Santa Cruz campus located approximately 15 miles from the plan area. As such, although it is not expected to breed in the plan area, migrants could roost in large redwood trees and abandoned buildings in or near the plan area and forage over a variety of habitats within the plan area.

San Francisco Dusky-footed Woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes annectens*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: Species of Special Concern. This species prefers hardwood forests, riparian habitats, and brushlands and often forages above ground. Food includes berries, fungi, leaves, flowers, and nuts. Woodrats construct large nests of sticks. The species is expected to occur in suitable riparian habitat along the Pajaro River, Corralitos Creek, Salsipuedes Creek, Buena Vista and in the vicinity of Struve and Watsonville Sloughs.

State Fully Protected Species

White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*). Federal Listing Status: None; State Listing Status: Fully Protected. White-tailed kites are raptors that forage for small rodents and other prey primarily in open grassy or scrubby areas. They nest in large shrubs or trees adjacent to this habitat. Kites are likely to be found foraging in a variety of habitats throughout the plan area. CNDDB reports no local nesting records, but the species is a common forager in the vicinity of Struve Slough, and likely nests locally. White-tailed kites could potentially nest in suitable trees throughout the plan area.

Wildlife Corridors

Wildlife movement within and in the vicinity of the 2050 General Plan area takes many forms and is different for the various suites of species associated with these lands. Bird and bat species move readily over the landscape in the project vicinity, foraging over and within both natural lands and landscaped areas. Mammals of different species move within their home ranges, but also disperse between patches of habitat. Generally, reptiles and amphibians similarly settle within home ranges, sometimes moving to central breeding areas, upland refugia, or hibernacula in a predictable manner, but also dispersing to new areas. Some species, especially among the birds and bats, are migratory, moving into or through the vicinity during specific seasons. Aside from bats, there are no other mammal species in the vicinity of the site that are truly migratory. However, the young of many mammal species disperse from their natal home ranges, sometimes moving over relatively long distances in search of new areas in which to establish.

Movement corridors are segments of habitat that provide linkage for wildlife through the mosaic of suitable and unsuitable habitat types found within a landscape while also providing cover. On a broader level, corridors also function as paths along which wide-ranging animals can travel, populations can move in response to environmental changes and natural disasters, and genetic interchange can occur. In California, environmental corridors often consist of riparian areas along streams, rivers, or other natural features.

Within the plan area, the creeks, rivers, and sloughs and adjacent uplands found within the plan area provide good quality terrestrial and aquatic wildlife corridors for a number of species, including for California red-legged frogs, northwestern pond turtles, common mammals such as raccoons and skunks, in addition to providing high quality habitat for a wide variety of shorebirds, waterbirds, and songbirds. The Pajaro River, which drains an approximately 13,000 square mile watershed area with headwaters in Pinnacles National Park, is an especially important corridor for wildlife because it connects terrestrial wildlife on the Pacific Coast and Santa Cruz Mountains to the Diablo Range. The Pajaro River, Corralitos Creek, and Salsipuedes Creek also support special-status migratory fish such as the steelhead and lamprey. The rest of the plan area is thoroughly urbanized and more suitable habitat is nearby but outside of the plan area, and thus these areas do not provide value as a wildlife corridor.

4.4.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.4.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

Watsonville General Plan 2050 is a planning document to guide development; it does not propose specific development projects. Therefore, the following discussions provide program-level review of the potential biological impacts that could result from implementation of Watsonville General Plan 2050. This analysis is based on biologists' assessment of how development envisioned in Watsonville General Plan 2050 could or would impact existing biological resources, based on the results of data collected during the literature review and evaluation of database query results described in **Section 4.4.1, Environmental Setting**.

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the proposed project would result in potentially significant environmental effects on biological resources if it would:

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, or 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.

4.4.2.2 Methodology

The analysis in this section is based on the Biological Resources Technical Report prepared by H.T. Harvey & Associates that evaluated biological resources within the contiguous City limits. This was updated via a reconnaissance-level site visit on July 24, 2025 that assessed conditions within the City limits and potential new growth areas, including the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C, and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas. Publicly available databases regarding special-status species listing and habitat presence were also used in preparing this section.

4.4.2.3 Project Impacts

The potential impacts of General Plan 2050 on biological resources are described below. Impacts resulting from Citywide plans and policies were analyzed separately from impacts resulting from development of both new growth areas and urban infill areas. Impacts due to ongoing activities in areas where no new growth is proposed by the General Plan were not assessed. Within each section, the

analysis is organized by habitat type and affected species, with references to specific planning units. Individual components of the General Plan were analyzed within this general context.

The mitigation measures established in this document fulfill the City's obligations under CEQA with respect to biological resources. However, the City recognizes that development activity within the plan area may require one or more permits from a variety of state and federal resources agencies. Development project proponents within the plan area will be responsible for obtaining all such necessary permits. Those permits may impose mitigation requirements which are different from and/or greater than the mitigation measures established in this EIR.

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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Special-Status Plants

Future citywide activities (e.g., infrastructure repair and development) resulting from the proposed General Plan could cause the loss of special-status plant populations or indirect impacts that could degrade the habitat of special-status plant populations. Known populations of Santa Cruz tarplant occur on the east side of Larkin Valley Road within the Buena Vista parcel within the new growth area, and Watsonville Municipal Airport, near Harkins Slough, Apple Hill and Bay Breeze developments in the plan area.

Impacts to CNPS-ranked species may be considered significant, depending on several factors such as the size and geographic uniqueness of the population and the magnitude of the impact to that population. Conservation of CRPR-ranked species is important because their populations contribute to preserving genetic resources and help ensure persistence of these rare species in the county and state. Due to the regional rarity of these species, impacts that could lead to the extirpation of a population could reduce that species' range or lead to the loss of important genetic diversity, which would be considered a substantial adverse effect. Plant species that are listed under the California or federal Endangered Species Acts tend to be rarer than CRPR 1-4 species that are not formally listed, and the populations of listed plant species may be more sensitive to impacts.

As depicted on **Figure 4.4-1** and **Figure 4.4-2**, approximately 233.7 acres of California annual grassland and 685.8 acres of agricultural land suitable for development occurs within the existing and proposed urban limit line, including the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas (**Table 4.4-1**). Although some of the California annual grassland is expected to be highly disturbed due to proximity to residential and commercial land uses, special-status plants could potentially occur. Santa Cruz tarplant is most often associated with non-native annual grasses and may be present on weedy sites, especially those with appropriate soil types. In the new growth area, suitable habitat for new occurrences of Santa Cruz tarplant occurs in California annual grassland in the Buena Vista new growth area.

As for the other potential special-status plant species, suitable habitat for Hickman's Popcornflower and harlequin lotus occurs within the freshwater marsh near Atkinson Lane and in the riparian woodland along Corralitos Creek. Saline clover may also be found within the freshwater marsh near Atkinson Lane. Gairdner's yampah may occur in mesic grasslands bordering freshwater marsh and riparian woodland, as well as within riparian woodland along Corralitos Creek adjacent to agricultural areas.

Direct impacts to special-status plants could occur through grading, which could remove, crush, and/or bury individual plants or the seed bank for a population. Additionally, temporary direct impacts could occur from construction impacts, such as trampling or dust deposition onto leaves. Indirect impacts could

include erosion or sedimentation associated with grading of adjacent areas, shading, and alteration of hydrologic conditions.

Critical habitat for Santa Cruz tarplant comprised of California annual grassland, eucalyptus grove and riparian woodland is mapped on the east side of Larkin Valley Road. Impacts to critical habitat for Santa Cruz tarplant may occur; such impacts would be considered significant if individuals of this species are also impacted.

Special-Status Amphibians and Turtles

Impacts to water quality, construction impacts, or other impacts to aquatic habitat within the Highway 1 Gateway, Atkinson Lane, Area C, and Buena Vista new growth areas could affect three federally listed amphibians: the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and Santa Cruz long-toed salamander. Designated critical habitat for the California red-legged frog occurs adjacent to the plan area, including directly adjacent to the Highway 1 new growth area. In addition, the northwestern pond turtle (federally proposed as threatened and a California species of special concern) could be present in aquatic habitats.

These special-status species could also occur in upland habitats adjacent to aquatic habitat. California tiger salamanders may aestivate (become dormant during the summer season) in burrows up to 6,863 feet from breeding habitat and can disperse and aestivate in grassland and oak woodland habitats near aquatic habitat in the plan area. Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders are expected to occur closer to their aquatic habitat, while California red-legged frogs may disperse long distances overland (especially during the wet season) among aquatic breeding areas. Northwestern pond turtles may establish nests in upland habitat up to 1,377 feet from aquatic habitat.

Construction activities and land-use changes in upland habitats near or between aquatic breeding sites could impact these species by resulting in direct impacts to individuals and the loss of upland refugial habitat. These impacts are potentially significant but can be mitigated to less-than-significant levels with the mitigation measures described below.

In addition, if development in upland areas restricts or eliminates dispersal among breeding populations of these species, the extirpation of local populations may result. Such impacts to upland dispersal habitat would be considered significant and unavoidable and would remain significant even with the implementation of the mitigation measures described below.

Special-status amphibians may also be impacted by artificial light at night (ALAN) in new growth areas. Amphibians are largely nocturnal, and due to their mode of transportation and need for moisture, may be unable to avoid ALAN. Amphibians rely upon seasonal photoperiod cues for both development and to adapt to changing conditions throughout the year. These cues trigger hormonal changes that aid in adaptation, but constant exposure to ALAN disrupts the timing of hormonal changes, affecting amphibians' ability to survive throughout the year. As such, increased exposure to ALAN could impact the survival of special-status amphibians in the plan area.

Impacts to aquatic habitat from citywide, new growth areas, and infill areas General Plan policies are addressed under **Impact Analysis c)**. Activities associated with city-wide policies and infill areas are not expected to affect upland habitat for these species, although impacts to upland habitat for these species could occur as a result of construction in new growth areas.

Impacts to Steelhead, Pacific Lamprey, and Monterey Hitch

Impacts to water quality, construction impacts, other impacts to aquatic habitat, and impacts to shaded riverine habitat (SRA) within the plan area could affect the federally listed steelhead and two California species of special concern, the Pacific lamprey and Monterey hitch.

Exposure to ALAN may also affect steelhead, lamprey, and hitch in a variety of ways. For example, an increase in nighttime illuminance can disturb the seasonal and diel light cycles of freshwater invertebrates that steelhead feed on by disrupting their nocturnal drift periods, which is timed with low predation risk. This can reduce the nocturnal drift activity by freshwater invertebrates and potentially reduce the availability of prey for foraging steelhead. In addition, an increase in nighttime illuminance can disrupt the temporal and spatial movement patterns of steelhead fry that typically disperse and migrate at night to decrease their risk of predation. Numerous studies have shown that an increase in nighttime illuminance on bodies of water can inhibit foraging activity, increase predation risk on fish, and significantly change the composition of fish communities that occur across a day-night period. As such, the health and viability of the steelhead, lamprey, and hitch populations that occur in the plan area could be impacted by exposure to ALAN.

Impacts to Burrowing Owls

Burrowing owls could occur in California annual grassland habitat and margins of agricultural areas in the Highway 1 Gateway, Buena Vista, and Atkinson new growth areas where ground squirrels are present. In addition, burrowing owls are known to occur along the train tracks in the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area where riprap provide suitable burrows. Construction-related disturbance during the breeding season could result in the incidental loss of fertile eggs or nestlings or otherwise lead to nest abandonment. Disturbance that causes nest abandonment and/or loss of reproductive effort is considered take by CDFW. Any loss of burrowing owls or fertile eggs, any activities resulting in nest abandonment, or the destruction of occupied burrowing owl burrows would constitute a significant impact.

Development in California annual grassland habitat may also result in the loss of habitat. There is no evidence that the availability of grassland habitat is limiting populations of the nonbreeding owls that occupy grasslands in Santa Cruz County in winter, given the very low numbers of individuals relative to the abundance of ostensibly suitable habitat. However, if burrowing owls were breeding in California annual grassland habitat that was developed, then the loss of occupied habitat would be considered significant.

Animals are adapted to the natural sounds in their environment, either from abiotic (e.g., wind, rain) or biotic (other animals) sources. Natural sounds provide information to wildlife to assess threats, find food, locate mates, and navigate terrain. Animals may alter their behavior due to noise, becoming more vigilant of predators where sounds are masked and reducing time spent foraging and hunting in areas due to fear of encountering humans. Following construction, increased levels of human disturbance and noise in and adjacent to suitable habitat may result in burrowing owls avoiding otherwise suitable habitat.

Burrowing owls may also be impacted by an increase in ALAN in growth areas due to development. ALAN has been shown to increase the nocturnal activity of predators like owls, hawks, and mammalian predators. As a result, burrowing owls in the plan area may be exposed to increased levels of predation risk. The presence of ALAN may also influence habitat use by breeding birds, by causing avoidance of well-lit areas, resulting in a net loss of habitat availability and quality.

Activities associated with city-wide policies and infill areas are not expected to affect this species. Impacts could occur as a result of construction and ALAN in new growth areas.

Impacts to Other Special-Status Birds

Several special-status bird species (not listed under the Federal or State Endangered Species Acts) could potentially be impacted by construction activities during the nesting season (March 1 to August 31 1). These species include the northern harrier, yellow warbler, loggerhead shrike, and white-tailed kite.

Construction could result in direct loss or desertion of nests and impacts to occupied habitat for these birds. Because projects within the plan area are expected to result in only limited impacts to suitable habitat for these species, impacts to their habitat are considered less than significant. Loss of individual birds, including chicks, or loss of active nests would be in violation of federal and state regulations, but depending on the severity of the impact, may not be considered a significant impact under CEQA.

These species may also be impacted by increased ALAN, possibly resulting in reduced breeding success due to increased nest predation and avoidance of otherwise suitable habitat.

Activities associated with city-wide policies and infill areas are not expected to affect these species. Impacts could occur as a result of construction and ALAN in new growth areas.

Impacts to Special-Status and Common Bats

The western red bat (a California species of special concern) usually roosts in the foliage of trees. Day and night roosts are often located along the edges of riparian areas, near streams, grasslands, and even urban areas. During the breeding season, western red bats establish individual tree roosts and occasionally small maternity colonies in riparian habitats. Western red bats are not known to breed in Santa Cruz County but are known to occur as migrants and winter residents in the county and adjacent counties. Although little is known about the habitat use of western red bats during the nonbreeding season, there is ample suitable habitat for this species within the plan area, and it could occur as individual migrants and/or winter residents.

The pallid bat (a California species of special concern) is a crevice-roosting bat. There are large enough trees to provide roosting for individual bats, and buildings within the plan area may provide suitable habitat for maternity roosts. As such, although pallid bats have not been documented in the plan area, they could occur as individual migrants and foragers, in large roosts, or in maternity colonies.

The Townsend's big-eared bat (a California species of special concern) roosts in large, open areas rather than crevices. Although this species has not been documented in the plan area, it is known to occur in suitable habitat in Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, San Benito, and Monterey Counties. Barns and abandoned buildings provide suitable habitat for day roosts and night roosts.

In addition to these species, other common species of bats occur in the plan area and may form large day roosts, night roosts, and/or hibernacula.

Unlike most birds, bats experience daily bouts of torpor (decreased physiological activity marked by a reduction in metabolic rate, heart rate, and respiratory rate) to save energy during seasonally cool periods. As a result, torpid bats cannot immediately fly away when disturbed and typically require upwards of 40 minutes to arouse and flee. Therefore, there is the potential for tree removal, building demolition, or construction to injure or kill bats.

Bats may also be negatively impacted by ALAN. Bats may reduce activity or fly faster past lit roadways and buildings, resulting in overall reduced habitat availability and connectivity. ALAN may also impact the activity of insects in that area, as some orders such as Coleoptera (beetles), Diptera (flies), and Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) may be attracted to ALAN, while Blattodea (cockroaches and termites) and Dermaptera (earwigs) may be repulsed by ALAN. As a result, bat species that avoid areas with increased ALAN may have reduced prey availability within adjacent areas.

Western red bats, pallid bats, Townsend's big-eared bats, and common species of bats may roost in foliage, large trees, or buildings in the plan area. Impacts to roosting individuals, foraging individuals, or foraging habitat would not be considered significant. Loss of maternity colonies or large roosts would be a significant impact because when trees or buildings containing roosting colonies are removed or modified, individual bats could be physically injured or killed; subjected to physiological stress from being

disturbed during torpor; or face increased predation because of exposure during daylight. Construction during the maternity season (April 1 to July 31) near maternity roosts may cause mothers to attempt to relocate to new roosts. Some females may find alternative roosts in other trees or buildings. If females are forced to abandon a roost early in the maternity season (e.g., in April or May), their young may be small enough that the females can carry the young to a new roost. However, if females leave the roost later in the maternity season (e.g., June or July), the young may be too large to carry, and abandonment of young or unsuccessful attempts to relocate young could lead to their mortality.

Project construction could result in the loss of trees in coast live oak woodland and riparian woodland. These areas may serve as roost sites for pallid bats, western red bats, and Townsend's big-eared bats. Further, construction within Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, and Area C new growth areas would result in the loss of vegetated foraging habitat for these three bat species, including California annual grassland for the pallid bat and riparian woodland for the Western red bat and Townsend's big eared bat. If these species abandon a roost during construction, but the tree containing the roost is not removed, they may return to the roost once construction has been completed. However, unless high-quality alternative roost sites are present in the vicinity, the population may decline before the bats can re-occupy the roost due to permanent dispersal of females away from the roost, lower reproductive success by females using inferior roost sites (such as roosts located farther from high-quality foraging habitat), or predation of bats that are unable to find suitable roost sites. Loss of vegetation may also reduce prey abundance and availability for foraging bats. Therefore, the impact of project construction on special-status bats and their habitat would be significant.

Activities associated with city-wide policies, infill areas, and new growth areas could impact bats if buildings or trees that support roosting or maternity colonies are removed.

Special-status species and their habitats would be protected within the plan area in accordance with the following Goals, Policies and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

> **Goal C-1: Protection of Ecologically Sensitive Areas.** Encourage protection of ecologically sensitive areas in the various environmental settings found in Watsonville.
>
> **Policy C-1.1 Protection of Ecologically Sensitive Areas.** The City shall seek to protect ecologically sensitive areas, including the Pajaro River, Salsipuedes Creek, Corralitos Creek, and the Wetlands of Watsonville.
>
> **Action C-1.1.1 Resource Zoning.** The City shall continue to limit urban development and to preserve natural open spaces and wildlife corridors, in identified environmentally sensitive areas that are zoned EM-OS (Environmental Management Open Space).
>
> **Action C-1.1.2 Rewilding of Slough, Riparian Corridors and other environmentally sensitive areas.** The City shall support the rewilding of sensitive environmental areas as appropriate and recommended by resource agencies.
>
> **Action C-1.1.3 Identifying Riparian Corridors.** For each proposed plan area within or adjacent to riparian habitat, the City will require detailed mapping of the riparian corridor and required buffer zone. The riparian corridor shall be defined as the topographic top-of bank or the limit of riparian vegetation, whichever is greater. Surveys will be conducted by qualified biologists and will include recommendations for avoiding impacts to riparian habitat to the extent feasible, demarcation of the riparian corridor on site, identify wildlife corridors, and protection of vegetation using Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing. This requirement shall apply prior to City consideration of any project proposal for the site.

Action C-1.1.4 Use of Native Plants. The City shall, for the maintenance and operation of its property within ecologically sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands), use native plants and shall avoid the planting of non-native plants.

Action C-1.1.5 Invasive Plants. The City shall make every effort to remove invasive plants from City property that threaten to disrupt natural habitat areas. Any vegetation along waterways that is removed should be replaced with native species. This not only prevents erosion and stabilizes backs, but it also improves wildlife habitat. Projects adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas shall be conditioned to install native plants adjacent to the sensitive area. The City shall require private developers to install low-water native planting whenever feasible.

Action C-1.1.6 Rewilding. The City shall support the rewilding of riparian and wetland habitat by requiring it as a condition of development where it abuts private projects, and by seeking grants and other resources for restoration in other areas. Rewilding efforts shall be planned comprehensively and use native plants from regional seed stocks.

Action C-1.1.7 Chemical Usage and Integrated Pest Management. The City shall use integrated pest management techniques when appropriate. Chemical usage for the control of pests and invasive species will use the least toxic products available.

Policy C-1.2 Setbacks and Detrimental Activity Limitations. The City shall protect ecologically sensitive areas and provide for their continued health through the use of appropriate setbacks and limitations on potentially detrimental activities.

Action C-1.2.1 Buffering Riparian Areas. The City shall prepare an Ordinance that clarifies the process for determining appropriate buffers from development. The Ordinance shall clarify how to determine when a wetland/riparian area meets the Army Corps criteria for wetlands and how to clearly delineate the boundaries of the wetland/riparian area with a to-scale map as part of the process. Additionally, the map shall establish an appropriate size and configuration of areas required to buffer the wetland/riparian area, allowing for wildlife corridors and/or the natural flow of water through the area. For each proposed project with a wetland/riparian area, the City will require an analysis of the site to be prepared by a qualified biologist. The wetland/riparian buffer should be no less than 100 feet from the edge of the riparian area and shall be of sufficient size to protect wetland/riparian area species and their habitat from the impacts of human and urban activity (noise, lights, and human traffic). No development is to occur within the buffer area. The buffer may be reduced to below 100 feet under certain circumstances, following resource analysis by a qualified biologist and subject to criteria defined in the buffer ordinance. In considering the reduction of the buffer requirement, the ordinance shall consider:

- Biological condition of the environmentally sensitive resource;
- Existence of structures or other improvements currently within the resource setback;
- Average setback to housing, commercial buildings and other development on adjacent properties;
- Occurrence of plan area within an urban location where most properties are already developed and parcels are generally small;
- Potential of the project construction or operations to disrupt the continuity of riparian habitat or preclude restoration of vegetation along a creek channel where upstream and downstream habitat are of good quality;
- The potential for occurrence of special-status species within the riparian corridor; and

- Potential for a project to significantly reduce the moisture that stream side vegetation receives from natural drainage of upland areas.

Projects adjacent to or containing riparian or wetland habitats that cannot provide a protective buffer shall undergo environmental review under CEQA to protect these resources and avoid potential impacts.

Goal C-2 Water Conservation and Quality. Conserve scarce water resources and preserve water quality for the variety of local uses.

Policy C-2.1 Promotion of Water Conservation. The City shall promote the conservation of water and provide for the protection of water quality to assure its use for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological needs.

Action C-2.1.3 Point and Non-Point Pollutants. The City shall continue to control pollutants from point and non-point sources through a comprehensive NPDES Storm water program.

Goal C-3: Storm Water Management. Ensure that stormwater runoff is effectively managed to minimize pollutants and debris, protect natural drainage systems and water bodies, and promote the use of sustainable, site-integrated practices that enhance environmental quality and community character.

Policy C-3.1 Stormwater runoff free from urban pollutants and refuse. The City shall minimize pollutants and debris in stormwater runoff through appropriate regulations, maintenance practices, and public education.

Action C-3.1.1 The City shall require all projects to reduce the use of impervious surfaces to the maximum extent practicable. Wherever possible, natural BMPs (such as grassy swales, ponds and biofilters) shall be used. These BMPs should be incorporated into site landscaping design, for recreational and aesthetic enhancement. Engineered BMPs (such as vaults and interceptors) shall only be used when no natural BMP can be incorporated into the site design, or when a critical natural resource requires protection beyond that attainable by natural BMPs alone.

Action C-3.1.2 Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs). The City shall require all construction sites to implement erosion and sediment control BMPs to the maximum extent practicable. Construction sites shall comply with City Erosion Control Standards, and an Erosion Control Plan shall be required for project approval.

Action C-3.1.3 Evaluate Grading Ordinance. The City shall regularly evaluate its grading ordinance and determine if revisions should be made to further enhance environmental protection.

Action C-3.1.4 Municipal and Industrial Stormwater Compliance. The City shall implement all applicable State and Federal regulations governing stormwater discharges, including requirements under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit as a regulated small Phase II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) to reduce pollutants in runoff to the maximum extent practicable, thereby helping protect local sloughs, creeks, rivers, and other natural resources.

Goal C-6: Environmental Education. Foster an increase in knowledge and understanding of the local environment and actions residents can take to help maintain and conserve local water quality.

> **Policy C-6.1 Public Education for Resource Conservation and Waste Reduction.** The City shall continue to expand its education efforts to promote water conservation and efficiency, reduce water pollution, and reduce solid waste disposal.
>
> **Action C-6.1.2 Storm Water Pollution Prevention.** The City shall continue to expand its residential storm water pollution prevention program that includes placement of storm drain warning markers on all drainage inlets, provision of educational materials and tools door-to-door, continued collection of used motor oil at the curb and at convenient drop-off locations, continued regularly scheduled street sweeping, and continued general education and enforcement in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors regarding storm water pollution prevention. The City shall continue public education programs on water quality issues, including Best Management Practices, for residents, businesses, contractors and City employees.

Additionally, the following specific mitigation measures are proposed to further reduce impacts to special-status species:

Mitigation Measure BIO-1: Conduct Floristic Surveys for Proposed Development and Infrastructure Projects

Prior to the City deeming a development or infrastructure project application complete that is within or adjacent to natural open space or is on a site containing possible suitable habitat features, the project applicant or applicable City department (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct protocol-level floristic surveys for special-status plant species within all suitable habitat, including riparian woodland, freshwater marsh, and California annual grassland.

Floristic surveys shall be conducted during the appropriate blooming periods for all potentially occurring special-status plant species and must follow the most current CDFW and CNPS survey protocols.

A Floristic Survey Report, including maps that depict all survey areas, identified populations, and recommended avoidance or protection zones, shall be submitted by the applicant for review, oversight, and approval by City staff prior to issuance of any project-specific CEQA clearance or discretionary approval.

All approved maps and avoidance areas shall be incorporated into final project design and included on all project plan sets prior to the issuance of grading or building permits.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2: Establish Sensitive Habitat Setback Requirements to Avoid Impacts to Special-Status Plants

In consultation with a qualified plant ecologist, the project applicant or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) shall design development footprints during the project-specific CEQA review process to be sited to avoid potential impacts to special-status plants plus an avoidance buffer determined by a qualified plant ecologist for the population and project. For Santa Cruz tarplant, this avoidance should also include critical habitat. If avoidance of listed plant species is not feasible, then formal consultation with USFWS and CDFW and the issuance of an incidental take permit would be required and evidence of such authorization provided to the City prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits. Impacts to non-listed species would likely involve informal discussions with CDFW prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits.

Special-status plant occurrences located within temporary construction areas should be fenced or flagged for avoidance prior to construction in consultation with a qualified biologist, and a biological monitor should be present to ensure compliance with off-limits areas. Seasonal avoidance measures (i.e., limited operating periods based on timing of annual plant dormancy), combined with topsoil salvage and site restoration, may be acceptable in some cases, as determined by a qualified biologist. Compensation for permanent loss of special-status plant occurrences, in the form of land purchase or restoration, must be provided to the level acceptable to the resource agencies, and evidence of such compensation shall be provided to the City prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3: Compensate for Loss of Special-Status Plants

In consultation with a qualified plant ecologist, compensatory measures will be determined by the project applicant or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) as part of the project application process on a case-by-case basis for project losses that exceed the significance criteria for CNPS-ranked species (i.e., impacts to more than 10 percent of the population), or for any impacts to the federally listed Santa Cruz tarplant. Compensation for loss of special-status plants typically involves the purchase and permanent stewardship of known occupied habitat at a 1:1 (mitigation:impact) ratio or the restoration and reintroduction of populations in degraded, unoccupied habitat at a minimum 1.5:1 ratio. Restoration/reintroduction may be located on- or off-site. In the latter case, a Site Restoration Plan would be required which includes the following information:

- Location of areas to restore lost plant populations;
- A description of propagation and planting techniques to be employed in the restoration effort. Plants to be impacted should have their seeds collected so that the seeds can be planted within the restoration areas;
- A timetable for implementation of the restoration plan, including pilot-phase studies;
- A five-year monitoring plan and performance criteria;
- A description of remedial measures to be performed in the event initial restoration measures are unsuccessful in meeting the performance criteria; and
- A description of the site maintenance activities to follow restoration activities. These may include weed control, irrigation and control of herbivory by livestock and wildlife.

Evidence of such compensation/restoration shall be provided to the City prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits.

Mitigation Measure BIO-4: Conduct Surveys for Special-Status Amphibians and Turtles

To determine if any special-status amphibian and turtle species would be affected by any given project element, the project applicant or applicable City department (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) shall conduct surveys within the project site area with suitable habitat prior to construction by a qualified biologist, following standard USFWS or CDFW protocol for each species, if potential habitat could be affected by project implementation. Potential habitat for the California red-legged frog is defined as streams, freshwater pools, and ponds in riparian woodlands, seasonal wetlands, freshwater marsh, and California annual grassland with emergent or overhanging vegetation, which may occur in or directly adjacent to the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C; and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas. Potential

habitat for the California tiger salamander and Santa Cruz long-toed salamander is defined as freshwater pools and ponds in riparian woodlands, seasonal wetlands, freshwater marsh, and California annual grassland, and these two species could occur in the Buena Vista new growth area. Potential habitat for the northwestern pond turtle includes permanent or nearly permanent water and adjacent uplands in riparian woodlands, seasonal wetlands, freshwater marsh, and California annual grassland in the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C; and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas. If it is determined that any of these federally and/or state-listed species are present, consultation with the USFWS and/or CDFW will be necessary if impacts are possible.

Mitigation Measure BIO-5: Avoid Impacts to Special-Status Amphibians and Turtles

If feasible, in consultation with a qualified, construction of project elements shall be designed by the applicant or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) as part of the project application and review process to avoid aquatic and associated upland habitat for these special-status species. If construction occurs adjacent to riparian woodlands, seasonal wetlands, freshwater marsh, or California annual grassland, prior to issuance of grading or construction permits, the project applicant or applicable City departments shall work with a qualified biologist to identify measures to avoid or minimize impacts to individuals, which could include:

1. Prior to any construction activities, the boundaries of construction areas will be clearly delineated with orange plastic construction fencing to prevent workers or equipment from inadvertently straying from the construction area, as determined by a qualified biologist. All construction personnel, equipment, and vehicle movement shall be confined to designated construction areas and connecting roadways. Movement of construction and personal vehicles shall be prohibited outside designated construction areas or off established roadways.
2. Prior to the onset of any ground disturbing activities, exclusion fencing will be established around areas of potentially occupied habitat, as determined by a qualified biologist. Exclusion fencing will consist of silt-fencing or similar material at least 36 inches in height that is buried six inches in the ground to prevent incursion under the fence. Exclusion fencing may be installed at the base of the construction fencing described in A above. This fence will be surveyed each morning before construction, to verify that no individuals of these species have entered the construction site.
3. Before any construction activities begin, a qualified biologist will conduct a training session with construction personnel to describe the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, and northwestern pond turtle, as well as these species' habitat, the specific measures being implemented to minimize effects to these species, and the boundaries of the construction area.
4. All food-related trash items will be enclosed in sealed containers and removed daily from plan area to discourage the concentration of potential predators in habitat potentially occupied by these species.

Mitigation Measure BIO-6: Protect Water Quality

Water quality will be protected under the City's BMPs, per the City's Stormwater Control and Prevention Ordinance (WMC § 6-3.525) and General Plan **Policies C-2.1** and **3.1** and **Actions C-2.1.3, 3.1.4,** and **6.1.2**. Applicants or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works &

Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) will implement the following BMPs, as applicable, during construction, and include them as notes on construction drawings:

- No debris, soil, silt, sand, bark, slash, sawdust, cement, concrete, washings, petroleum products or other organic or earthen material should be allowed to enter into, or be placed where, it may be washed by rainfall or runoff into aquatic habitats.
- Silt fencing should be constructed where work will occur near aquatic habitats to protect water quality.
- A hazardous materials spill prevention plan will be developed and implemented. Hazardous material will be stored in secured structures with secondary spill containment features. Refueling of construction equipment and vehicles will not occur within 256 feet of any water body or anywhere that spilled fuel could drain to a water body. The contractors will check and maintain equipment and vehicles daily to prevent leaks of fuels, lubricants, or other fluids.

These mitigation measures will be sufficient to reduce most impacts to less-than-significant levels. If construction must occur directly in habitat of a species listed under the FESA, or otherwise could result in take of individuals, additional mitigation (and consultation with the USFWS) will be required.

Mitigation Measure BIO-7: Compensate for Lost Aquatic and Upland Habitat

If aquatic habitats such as freshwater marsh or seasonal wetland that supports special-status amphibians (and the northwestern pond turtle if it is listed under FESA at the time of project implementation) will be impacted, compensatory mitigation will be required to be identified by project applicants or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) in consultation with a qualified biologist as part of the project application process and implemented by the applicants prior to the grading or construction permits. Mitigation for impacts to wetlands is addressed under **Impact Analysis c)**. For impacts to habitat for federally-listed amphibians, mitigation areas providing similar or better habitat shall be preserved and protected in perpetuity. Essential aquatic habitat (including verified aquatic breeding habitat) and associated upland habitat within 256 feet of essential aquatic habitat for the California red-legged frog (and northwestern pond turtle, if the species is listed), and aquatic breeding habitat for the two listed salamanders, should be replaced at a 3:1 ratio.

All three federally listed amphibians can potentially estivate (remain dormant) in upland habitat in coast live oak woodland, riparian woodland, or California annual grassland, such as ground squirrel burrows near wetland breeding areas. In addition, some upland areas may provide important dispersal habitat between breeding sites and northwestern pond turtles may lay nests in these areas. The location of potential aestivation, refugial, dispersal, and nesting habitat will be identified by surveys (**Mitigation Measure BIO-4**). The extent of lost upland aestivation habitat should be determined on a case by case basis by a qualified biologist based on proximity to aquatic habitat, availability of aestivation sites such as small mammal burrows, land disturbance, and barriers to dispersal (such as fences, extensive developed areas, or wide, busy roads).

If avoidance of upland habitat for federally listed amphibians and the northwestern pond turtle (if listed at the time of project implementation) is infeasible, then mitigation lands providing similar or better habitat adjacent to occupied or suitable aquatic habitat shall be preserved and protected in perpetuity and evidence of such mitigation shall be provided to the City prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits. Upland aestivation and nesting habitat should be replaced at a 1:1 replacement ratio on an acreage basis. Alternately, this ratio may be reduced at the discretion of the City (subject to approval by the USFWS) if additional aquatic breeding habitat is provided. The amount of reduction shall

be proportional to the amount of additional essential habitat provided, up to a maximum reduction of fifty percent. In selecting off-site mitigation lands, preference shall be given to preserving large blocks of habitat rather than many small parcels, linking preserved areas to existing open space and other high-quality habitat, and excluding or limiting public use within preserved areas.

Mitigation Measure BIO-8. Implement Lighting Impact Reduction Measures[1]

The following measures shall be implemented by project applicants or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) during construction to reduce spillover of lighting into freshwater marsh, seasonal wetland, riparian woodland, coast live oak woodland, and California annual grassland habitat, or glare/increased luminance perceived by special-status animals as well as adverse effects of lighting on migratory birds. As part of the project design process, the City shall require that the project applicant or applicable City department(s) incorporate information from these measures as notes on construction drawings and renderings. Compliance with these measures will also be assessed and assured during the building plan review process.

- Through a combination of appropriate fixture selection that suits its purpose, low mounting height, glare shielding, and orientation/aiming of light fixtures, new construction in the plan area shall actively control light spill towards sensitive habitat areas and towards the sky. Exterior lighting adjacent to freshwater marsh, seasonal wetland, riparian woodland, coast live oak woodland, and California annual grassland habitat shall be fully shielded to block illumination from shining outward towards these habitats and to prevent the lit portions of these fixtures (i.e., the lamps) from being visible to amphibians, fish, or birds in the water. Limited uplighting may apply to select building façade areas and landscape features that are at least 50 feet from the edge of these habitats. These uplight fixtures shall incorporate glare shields and strategic aiming to prevent light from being visible beyond the feature being lit (i.e., the feature being lit shall block luminance from view of birds flying overhead); shall incorporate timeclock control to turn off uplighting from 10 pm until the next evening; and shall use 40-Watt maximum lamps to minimize light output. Low-intensity (100-200 lumens) and warm-colored (2700K-3000K) lighting will be used in these areas to minimize brightness and emission of blue lights that can disrupt wildlife circadian rhythms.
- Except as indicated in the previous bullet (and the exceptions for public streets below), fixtures shall comply with lighting zone LZ-2, Moderate Ambient, as recommended by the International Dark-Sky Association (2011) for multifamily residential uses, institutional residential uses, schools, churches, hotels, commercial and/or business areas in predominately residential areas, and/or mixed-used development with a predominance of residential uses. The allowed total initial luminaire lumens for development in the plan area adjacent to freshwater marsh, riparian woodland, and seasonal wetland habitat is 1.25 lumens per square foot of hardscape, and the BUG rating for individual fixtures shall not exceed B3 or G1, as follows:
    - B3: 2,500 lumens high (60–80 degrees), 5,000 lumens mid (30–60 degrees), 2,500 lumens low (0–30 degrees)

[1] Impacts related to light and glare are discussed in greater detail in **Section 4.1, Aesthetics**.

    - G2: 225 lumens (forward/back light 80–90 degrees), 5,000 lumens (forward 60–80 degrees), 1,000 lumens (back light 60–80 degrees asymmetrical fixtures), 5,000 lumens (back light 60–80 degrees quadrilateral symmetrical fixtures)

- Lighting for public roadways and traffic signage lighting, including lighting for driveway entrances occurring in the public right-of-way, shall be excluded from these BUG rating limitations to support public safety and proper illumination of public streets.
- Exterior lighting shall be minimized in accordance with recommendations from the International Dark-Sky Association (2011) from midnight until dawn, at a minimum, except as needed for safety and City code compliance.
- Spillage of lighting from building interiors shall be minimized using occupancy sensors, dimmers, or other mechanisms from 10 pm until dawn, at a minimum, during bird migration seasons (February–May and August–November). If desired, this measure may be voluntarily implemented year-round.

Mitigation Measure BIO-9: Reduce Direct Impacts to Special-Status Fish

The following measures shall be implemented by project applicants or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) during construction to reduce impacts to special-status fish, and include them as notes on construction drawings:

1. Construction within the channel will be restricted to the dry season (June 1 - September 30), the period in which there is minimal water in the channel and in which movement of steelhead and lamprey within the project area is expected to be minimal.
2. When work in a flowing stream is unavoidable, any stream flow shall be diverted around the work area by a barrier, temporary culvert or a new channel capable of permitting upstream and downstream fish movement. The temporary construction of a diversion structure within a water of the U.S. (jurisdictional water) will require permits from the USACE and CDFW prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits by the City. Construction of the barrier or the new channel shall normally begin in the downstream area and continue in an upstream direction and the flow shall be diverted only when construction of the diversion is completed.

Mitigation Measure BIO-10: Mitigate for Lost Shaded Riverine Aquatic Habitat.

Impacts to riparian habitat will be addressed under **Impact Analysis b)**. This mitigation shall include replacement of shaded riverine aquatic (SRA) habitat at a 2:1 ratio on a linear footage basis, and shall be identified by project applicants or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) as part of the project application and review process, in consultation with a qualified biologist, and implemented by the applicants or applicable City departments prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits by the City for the project.

Mitigation Measure BIO-11: Avoid Impacts to Burrowing Owls

This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) prior to construction if ground disturbance occurs in or within 250 feet of potentially suitable burrowing owl habitat.

Preconstruction Surveys. Preconstruction surveys for burrowing owls should be completed in all potentially suitable habitat within 250 feet of ground disturbance by a qualified biologist in conformance with CDFW protocols, no more than 14 days prior to the start of construction. To maximize the likelihood of detecting owls, the preconstruction survey shall last a minimum of three hours. The survey shall begin one hour before sunrise and continue until two hours after sunrise (three hours total) or begin two hours before sunset and continue until one hour after sunset. A minimum of two surveys shall be conducted (if owls are detected on the first survey, a second survey is not needed). Owls observed shall be counted and their location shall be mapped. Surveys shall conclude no more than two calendar days prior to construction; thus, surveys must begin no less than four days prior to the start of construction, operations, or reclamation activities (two days of surveying plus up to two days between surveys and construction).

To avoid last-minute changes in schedule that may occur if burrowing owls are found, a preliminary survey may be conducted up to 14 days before construction by a qualified biologist. This preliminary survey may count as the first of the two required surveys, as long as the second survey concludes no more than two calendar days in advance of construction. If the preconstruction survey does not identify the presence of burrowing owls on or within 250 feet of the site, no further measures are necessary. However, should the preconstruction survey determine the presence of burrowing owls on or within 250 feet the site, then the applicant shall implement the following avoidance measures, which the City shall ensure are included as notes on construction drawings during the building plans review process.

1. Avoidance during the Breeding Season. If evidence of burrowing owls is found during the breeding season (February 1 to August 31), all nesting or roosting sites that could be disturbed by construction shall be avoided during the remainder of the breeding season (if owls remain throughout the breeding season) or while the nest (i.e., a burrow occupied during the period February 1 to August 31) is occupied by adults or young (occupation includes individuals or family groups foraging on or near the site following fledging). Although burrowing owls are unlikely to nest in the plan area, there is a remote possibility that nesting may occur. Wintering owls in Santa Cruz County often remain past February 1, at which time they cannot be distinguished from breeding birds. As a result, any owl present between February 1 and August 31 will be considered a potential breeder unless and until it leaves the site.

   Avoidance shall include establishment of a 250-foot non-disturbance buffer zone around nests. Demolition and construction may occur outside of the 250-foot non-disturbance buffer zone. Demolition and construction may occur inside of the 250-foot non-disturbance buffer during the breeding season only if the nest is not disturbed, and a qualified biologist develops an avoidance, minimization, and monitoring plan prior to project construction that includes all of the following criteria:

   - A qualified biologist monitors the owls for at least 3 days prior to construction to determine baseline nesting and foraging behavior (i.e., behavior without construction).
   - The same qualified biologist monitors the owls during construction and finds no change in owl nesting and foraging behavior in response to construction activities.
   - If there is any change in owl nesting and foraging behavior as a result of construction activities, all disturbance activities shall cease within the 250-foot buffer. Construction shall not resume within the 250-foot buffer until the adults and juveniles from the occupied burrows have moved out of the project area and 250-foot buffer.
   - If monitoring indicates that the nest is abandoned prior to the end of the nesting season (as would occur if a wintering owl lingered past February 1 and then eventually migrated to its breeding areas outside the region), and the burrow is no longer in use by owls, the

non-disturbance buffer zone may be removed. The qualified biologist will excavate the burrow to ensure that no owls are present and to prevent reoccupation after receiving approval from CDFW.

2. Avoidance during the Non-Breeding Season. During the non-breeding season (September 1 through January 31), a 250-foot non-disturbance buffer shall be established around occupied burrows as determined by a qualified biologist. Construction activities outside of this 250-foot buffer are allowed. Construction activities within the 250-foot buffer are allowed if all the following criteria are met to prevent owls from abandoning important overwintering sites:

    - A qualified biologist monitors the owls for at least three days prior to construction to determine baseline foraging behavior (i.e., behavior without construction).
    - The same qualified biologist monitors the owls during construction and finds no change in owl foraging behavior in response to construction activities.
    - If there is any change in owl nesting and foraging behavior as a result of construction activities, all disturbance activities shall cease within the 250-foot buffer.
    - If the owls are gone for at least one week, the project applicant may request approval from CDFW that a qualified biologist excavate or block usable burrows to prevent owls from re-occupying the site. After all usable burrows are excavated, the buffer zone will be removed and construction may continue. Monitoring must continue as described above for the non-breeding season as long as the burrow remains active.

Construction Monitoring. Based on the avoidance, minimization, and monitoring plan developed during construction, all non-disturbance buffer zones shall be established in consultation with a qualified biologist and maintained. A qualified biologist shall monitor the site, consistent with the requirements described above to ensure that buffers are enforced and owls are not disturbed. The biological monitor shall also conduct training of construction personnel on the avoidance procedures, buffer zones, and protocols in the event that a burrowing owl flies into an active construction zone or within 250 feet of such zone.

Owls present on site after February 1 will be assumed to be nesting on or adjacent to the site unless evidence indicates otherwise. This protected area will remain in effect until August 31, or at CDFW's discretion and based upon monitoring evidence, until the young owls are foraging independently.

Relocation. If construction will directly impact occupied burrows, eviction outside the nesting season may be permitted pending evaluation of eviction plans by, and receipt of formal written approval of the relocation from, CDFW. No burrowing owls will be evicted from burrows during the nesting season (February 1 through August 31) unless evidence indicates that nesting is not actively occurring (e.g., because the owls have not yet begun nesting early in the season, or because young have already fledged late in the season).

Mitigation Measure BIO-12: Compensate for Impacts to Occupied Burrowing Owl Habitat

This mitigation shall be identified in consultation with a qualified biologist during the project application and review process and implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) prior to or concurrent with impacts if destruction of habitat known to be occupied by breeding burrowing owls within the past three years is unavoidable. A qualified biologist will determine the extent of habitat impacted by the project. In consultation with the qualified biologist, compensatory mitigation for individual project impacts on the burrowing owl habitat will be provided via

the purchase of credits from a conservation bank or mitigation bank that has restored suitable habitat for the burrowing owl; project-specific mitigation via the preservation and management of suitable habitat for this species; or some combination of the two approaches, evidence of such mitigation shall be provided to the City prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits for the project. If no CDFW-approved conservation banks specifically for the burrowing owl are available, credits in a bank that provides suitable habitat for, and is expected to be occupied by, this species would be adequate. Compensatory mitigation shall be provided at a minimum ratio of 3:1 (mitigation: impact) on an acreage basis if project-specific mitigation is performed or 1:1 if credits are purchased from a mitigation or conservation bank. Compensatory mitigation shall be provided for any potentially suitable habitat for these species that is permanently lost to development or that is present within 50 ft of any new or higher-intensity lighting installed by General Plan activities.

If project-specific mitigation is provided as compensatory mitigation, the applicant will prepare an HMMP describing the measures that will be taken to create, restore, or enhance habitat for the burrowing owl and monitor the effects of the mitigation on this species. The HMMP will include, at a minimum, the following:

- A summary of project impacts on the burrowing owl and the proposed mitigation of these impacts;
- A description of the location and boundaries of the mitigation site and a description of existing mitigation site conditions;
- A description of measures to be undertaken, if necessary, to enhance (e.g., through focused management) the mitigation site for the burrowing owl;
- Proposed management activities, such as management of invasive plants, to maintain high-quality habitat conditions for the burrowing owl;
- A description of community and species monitoring measures on the mitigation site, including specific, objective goals and objectives, performance indicators, success criteria, monitoring methods, data analysis, reporting requirements, and monitoring schedule. At a minimum, success criteria will include demonstration that habitat conditions are suitable for occupancy by the burrowing owl. Monitoring will occur until these criteria are achieved but for no less than 5 years;
- A description of the HMMP's adaptive component, including potential contingency measures for mitigation elements that do not meet performance criteria; and
- A description of the funding mechanism to ensure the long-term maintenance and monitoring of the mitigation lands.

The HMMP will be submitted to the CDFW for review and approval prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits.

Mitigation Measure BIO-13: Avoid Nesting Birds

This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) prior to construction activities. This mitigation shall be included as notes in project plans for staff to confirm its implementation during construction. Seasonal Avoidance. The nesting season for most birds in Santa Cruz extends between February 1 and August 31. If construction in or near suitable habitat for these species can be scheduled outside of this nesting season, nesting birds will not be impacted, and no further mitigation is necessary.

Preconstruction Surveys and Buffer Zones. If construction in or near suitable habitat for these species must occur during the breeding season ((typically February 15 to August 31 for small bird species such as passerines; January 15 to September 15 for owls; and February 15 to September 15 for other raptors), a qualified ornithologist shall conduct two preconstruction surveys wherever suitable habitat is present no more than 14 days prior to the initiation of disturbance, with a final survey conducted within 48 hours prior to construction. The project applicants and applicable City departments shall work with qualified ornithologist to determine appropriate minimum survey radii, but appropriate minimum survey radii surrounding the work area are typically the following: i) 250 feet for passerines; ii) 500 feet for small raptors such as accipiters; and iii) 1,000 feet for larger raptors such as buteos. Surveys shall be conducted at the appropriate times of day and during appropriate nesting times. If active nests are found to be present within or adjacent to work sites during the breeding season, a qualified biologist should determine the species-appropriate width of this buffer. The buffer shall be clearly marked and maintained until the young have fledged and are foraging independently. Prior to construction, the qualified biologist shall conduct baseline monitoring of the nest to characterize "normal" bird behavior and establish a buffer distance which allows the birds to exhibit normal behavior. The qualified biologist shall monitor the nesting birds daily during construction activities and increase the buffer if the birds show signs of unusual or distressed behavior (e.g., defensive flights and vocalizations, standing up from a brooding position, and/or flying away from the nest). If buffer establishment is not possible, the qualified biologist shall have the authority to cease all construction work in the area until the young have fledged, and the nest is no longer active.

Mitigation Measure BIO-14. Conduct Preconstruction Surveys for Roosting Bats and Implement Avoidance Measures

This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) prior to construction activities. This mitigation shall be included as notes in the project plans for staff to confirm its implementation during construction.

A preconstruction survey for roosting bats should be conducted prior to any construction adjacent to suitable habitat or demolition of buildings, particularly those with closed areas such as an attic space, or trees >12 inches in diameter at 4.5 feet above grade. Pallid bats occasionally roost in the walls of occupied and abandoned buildings without showing any signs of occupying the attic and will roost in tree branch cavities only 6 inches in diameter. The survey should be conducted by a qualified bat biologist. No activities that would result in disturbance to active roosts would proceed prior to the completed surveys. If no active roosts are found, then no further action would be warranted. If a maternity roost is present, a qualified bat biologist would determine the extent of construction-free zones around active nurseries since these species are known to abandon young when disturbed. If either a maternity roost or hibernacula is present, **Mitigation Measure BIO-15** would be implemented. CDFW should also be notified of any active nurseries within the construction zone. If active maternity roosts or hibernacula are found, the project could be redesigned to avoid the loss of the building or tree occupied by the roost.

Mitigation Measure BIO-15. Exclude Bats Prior to Demolition of Roosts

This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) prior to construction activities. This mitigation shall be included as notes in the project plans for staff to confirm its implementation during construction.

If an active nursery roost is located and the project cannot be redesigned to avoid removal of the occupied tree or structure, demolition of that tree or structure should commence before maternity colonies form (i.e., prior to April 1) or after young are volant (flying) (i.e., after July 31). The disturbance-free buffer zones described in above in **Mitigation Measure BIO-14** should be observed during the maternity roost season (April 1 - July 31).

If the preconstruction survey reveals any structure is suitable roosting habitat for bats, then the appropriate exclusionary measures will be implemented prior to construction in consultation with a qualified biologist. Potential avoidance may include exclusionary blocking or filling potential cavities with foam, visual monitoring and staging project work to avoid bats. If bats are known to use the structure, exclusion netting shall not be used.

If the habitat assessment reveals suitable bat habitat in trees and tree removal is scheduled, such tree removal shall be removed using a two-day phased method. The two-phase system shall be conducted over two (2) consecutive days. On day one (1), (in the afternoon) under the supervision of a qualified biologist, all tree limbs containing bat habitat shall be removed using chainsaws or other hand tools. Limbs with cavities, crevices, or deep bark fissures are avoided and only branches or limbs without those features are removed. On day two (2), the next day, the rest of the tree shall be removed.

Mitigation Measure BIO-16. Compensate for Loss of Maternity Roosts

This mitigation shall be implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) prior to construction activities. This mitigation shall be included as notes in the project plans for staff to confirm its implementation during construction.

If a tree or any other structure containing a bat maternity roost must be removed as part of the project, a qualified biologist shall design and determine an appropriate location for an alternative roost structure, based on the location of the original roost and habitat conditions in the vicinity prior to removal of the maternity roost. The roost structure shall be built to specifications as determined by a qualified biologist and CDFW, or it may be purchased from an appropriate vendor, though the design must be approved by a qualified biologist and CDFW. The structure shall be placed as close to the impacted roost site as feasible, though it will be located far enough from future project activities so as to avoid disturbance of bats using the roost. The Applicant shall monitor the roost for three years or until occupancy is determined (whichever occurs first) to determine use by bats and submit annual reports verifying monitoring results to the County Department of Planning and Development.

Mitigation Measures BIO-4 through **BIO-8** shall be implemented to reduce impacts to special-status amphibian and turtle species to a less-than-significant level. Impacts to water quality will be mitigated under **General Plan Action 3.1.2** and **Mitigation Measure BIO-6**. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-8** through **BIO-11** will reduce other impacts to steelhead, lamprey, and hitch species to less-than-significant levels. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-8**, **BIO-11**, and **BIO-12** will reduce impacts to riverine habitat to a less-than-significant level. **Mitigation Measure BIO-8** will reduce impacts to nesting birds due to ALAN, and **Mitigation Measure BIO-13** will reduce any impacts to the nests of these birds due to construction to a less-than-significant level. **Mitigation Measures BIO-8** will reduce any impacts to this nesting birds to a less-than-significant level. **Mitigation Measures BIO-8**, **BIO-14**, **BIO-15**, and **BIO-16** will reduce any impacts to bats to a less-than-significant level.

With the implementation of the relevant General Plan Policies and Actions, as well as the proposed mitigation measures, potential impacts to special-status species and habitats within the plan area would be less than significant. (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

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 Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Citywide activities, including infrastructure repair and construction projects, flood control activities, construction of recreational trials, and the general increase in impervious surfaces, could result in the loss or degradation of riparian habitat within the Watsonville slough system, the Pajaro River, Corralitos Creek, and Salsipuedes Creek. Riparian habitat within the City limits is highly fragmented and degraded by invasion of non-native species, human use, and changes in hydrology.

Relatively intact riparian habitat occurs along an unnamed eastern tributary to the east of Manfre Road in the South Manfre Road area, which is southeast of the Buena Vista new growth area within an existing residential neighborhood in unincorporated Santa Cruz County and is not slated for development under General Plan 2050. Instead, sensitive habitats and natural riparian habitats would be preserved and maintained as Natural Open Space lands, and these habitats would remain undeveloped. Additionally, although portions of this habitat are degraded by residential encroachment, domestic sewage, grazing, and stands of blue-gum eucalyptus, it represents the most important relatively intact riparian habitat remaining within the plan area.

As shown in **Figure 4.4-2**, riparian woodland occurs in the northwestern area of the Buena Vista growth area and at the edge of Corralitos Creek, which runs along portions of the city limits in the Freedom area as well as the northern edge of the Atkinson Lane and Area C new growth areas. Existing natural features, including the diked pond with freshwater marsh habitat in the western portion of the Atkinson Lane new growth area and riparian woodland in the northwestern area of Buena Vista and along Corralitos Creek, are designated as Natural Open Space and would be preserved throughout General Plan 2050 implementation. The City's post-construction stormwater requirements would minimize potentially adverse impacts related to increased runoff in areas of development.

Riparian habitat is a regionally-limited biological resource, is subject to the regulatory jurisdiction of CDFW, and is protected by City regulations in the Coastal Zone (WMC § 9-5.705) and more widely by policies in General Plan 2050. For new growth areas currently in unincorporated Santa Cruz County, any riparian habitat is protected by County regulations (Chapter 16.30). Significant impacts to riparian habitats would include the disturbance or removal of substantial riparian vegetation, the filling, alteration or disturbance of stream channel bed and banks, the encroachment into riparian setback (buffer) areas and the disruption of stream channel flows. Discharge of fill into riparian areas, including the freshwater marsh in the Atkinson Lane area, may also require a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit from the USACE and a Section 401 certification from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), as well as consultation with USFWS if federally-listed species are present. Furthermore, impacts from encroachment into riparian buffer zones may be considered significant.

Riparian and sensitive habitats would be protected within the plan area in accordance with the following Policies and Actions in the General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Policies and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

> **Policy C-1.1 Protection of Ecologically Sensitive Areas.** The City shall seek to protect ecologically sensitive areas, including the Pajaro River, Salsipuedes Creek, Corralitos Creek, and the Wetlands of Watsonville.
>
> **Action C-1.1.1 Resource Zoning.** The City shall continue to limit urban development and to preserve natural open spaces and wildlife corridors, in identified environmentally sensitive areas that are zoned EM-OS (Environmental Management Open Space).

Action C-1.1.2 Rewilding of Slough, Riparian Corridors and other environmentally sensitive areas. The City shall support the rewilding of sensitive environmental areas as appropriate and recommended by resource agencies.

Action C-1.1.3 Identifying Riparian Corridors. For each proposed plan area within or adjacent to riparian habitat, the City will require detailed mapping of the riparian corridor and required buffer zone. The riparian corridor shall be defined as the topographic top-of bank or the limit of riparian vegetation, whichever is greater. Surveys will be conducted by qualified biologists and will include recommendations for avoiding impacts to riparian habitat to the extent feasible, demarcation of the riparian corridor on site, identify wildlife corridors, and protection of vegetation using Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing. This requirement shall apply prior to City consideration of any project proposal for the site.

Action 1.1.4 Use of Native Plants. The City shall, for the maintenance and operation of its property within ecologically sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands), use native plants and shall avoid the planting of non-native plants.

Action 1.1.5 Invasive Plants. The City shall make every effort to remove invasive plants from City property that threaten to disrupt natural habitat areas. Any vegetation along waterways that is removed should be replaced with native species. This not only prevents erosion and stabilizes backs, but it also improves wildlife habitat. Projects adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas shall be conditioned to install native plants adjacent to the sensitive area. The City shall require private developers to install low-water native planting whenever feasible.

Action C-1.1.6 Rewilding. The City shall support the rewilding of riparian and wetland habitat by requiring it as a condition of development where it abuts private projects, and by seeking grants and other resources for restoration in other areas. Rewilding efforts shall be planned comprehensively and use native plants from regional seed stocks.

Action C-1.1.7 Chemical Usage and Integrated Pest Management. The City shall use integrated pest management techniques when appropriate. Chemical usage for the control of pests and invasive species will use the least toxic products available.

Policy C-1.2 Setbacks and Detrimental Activity Limitations. The City shall protect ecologically sensitive areas and provide for their continued health through the use of appropriate setbacks and limitations on potentially detrimental activities.

Action C-1.2.1 Buffering Riparian Areas. The City shall prepare an ordinance that clarifies the process for determining appropriate buffers from development. The ordinance shall clarify how to determine when a wetland/riparian area meets the Army Corps criteria for wetlands and how to clearly delineate the boundaries of the wetland/riparian area with a to-scale map as part of the process. Additionally, the map shall establish an appropriate size and configuration of areas required to buffer the wetland/riparian area, allowing for wildlife corridors and/or the natural flow of water through the area. For each proposed project with a wetland/riparian area, the City will require an analysis of the site to be prepared by a qualified biologist. The wetland/riparian buffer should be no less than 100 feet from the edge of the riparian area and shall be of sufficient size to protect wetland/riparian area species and their habitat from the impacts of human and urban activity (noise, lights, and human traffic). No development is to occur within the buffer area. The buffer may be reduced to below 100 feet under certain circumstances, following resource analysis by a qualified biologist and subject to criteria defined in the buffer ordinance. In considering the reduction of the buffer requirement, the ordinance shall consider:

- Biological condition of the environmentally sensitive resource.

- Existence of structures or other improvements currently within the resource setback.
- Average setback to housing, commercial buildings and other development on adjacent properties.
- Occurrence of plan area within an urban location where most properties are already developed and parcels are generally small.
- Potential of the project construction or operations to disrupt the continuity of riparian habitat or preclude restoration of vegetation along a creek channel where upstream and downstream habitat are of good quality.
- The potential for occurrence of special-status species within the riparian corridor.
- Potential for a project to significantly reduce the moisture that stream side vegetation receives from natural drainage of upland areas.

Projects adjacent to or containing riparian or wetland habitats that cannot provide a protective buffer shall undergo environmental review under CEQA to protect these resources and avoid potential impacts.

Goal C-3 Storm Water Management. Ensure that stormwater runoff is effectively managed to minimize pollutants and debris, protect natural drainage systems and water bodies, and promote the use of sustainable, site-integrated practices that enhance environmental quality and community character.

Policy C-3.1 Stormwater runoff free from urban pollutants and refuse. The City shall minimize pollutants and debris in stormwater runoff through appropriate regulations, maintenance practices, and public education.

Action C-3.1.1 The City shall require all projects to reduce the use of impervious surfaces to the maximum extent practicable. Wherever possible, natural BMPs (such as grassy swales, ponds and biofilters) shall be used. These BMPs should be incorporated into site landscaping design, for recreational and aesthetic enhancement. Engineered BMPs (such as vaults and interceptors) shall only be used when no natural BMP can be incorporated into the site design, or when a critical natural resource requires protection beyond that attainable by natural BMPs alone.

Action-3.1.2 Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs). The City shall require all construction sites to implement erosion and sediment control BMPs to the maximum extent practicable. Construction sites shall comply with City Erosion Control Standards, and an Erosion Control Plan shall be required for project approval.

Additionally, the following specific mitigation measures are proposed to be added to General Plan 2050 to further reduce impacts to riparian habitats:

Mitigation Measure BIO-17: Establish Riparian Habitat Setback Requirements

This measure is applicable in the time between the adoption of General Plan 2050 and the establishment of a new riparian buffer ordinance, as outlined in General Plan 2050 Action C-1.2.1. Once established, the ordinance will supersede this measure, and the measure will no longer apply.

For each proposed plan area adjacent to riparian habitat, the City will require the applicant or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) to conduct an analysis of an appropriate riparian setback by a qualified biologist during the project application process to be reviewed by the City. The

riparian buffer shall be a minimum of 50 feet from the edge of the riparian corridor (defined above), or of sufficient size to protect sensitive species and their habitat from the impacts of human and urban activity (noise, lights, and human traffic). A riparian setback of at least 100 feet is typically appropriate for high-quality riparian habitat. No development will occur within the buffer area. In highly degraded areas, the setback requirement may be reduced following habitat analysis by a qualified biologist. In considering the reduction of the setback requirement, the following conditions shall be considered:

- Biological condition of the riparian habitat.
- Existence of structure or other improvements currently within the riparian setback.
- Average setback on adjacent properties.
- Occurrence of plan area within an urban location where most properties are already developed and parcels are generally small.
- Potential of the project construction or operations to disrupt the continuity of riparian habitat or preclude restoration of vegetation along a creek channel where upstream and downstream habitat are of good quality.
- Occurrence or potential for occurrence of special-status species within the riparian corridor.
- Potential for project to significantly reduce the moisture streamside vegetation receives from natural drainage from upland areas.

Mitigation Measure BIO-18: Obtain Appropriate Permits and Compensate for Riparian Habitat Loss

This mitigation shall be identified during the project application process and implemented by project applicants and applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) prior to issuance of grading or other construction permits.

Riparian habitat that will be permanently impacted, or indirectly affected by setback encroachment, by future projects would be replaced at a level that will ensure no net loss of habitat functions and values. In-kind and onsite replacement of lost habitat will be done where possible. The determination of impacts and the subsequent location and design of potential mitigation sites would be determined by qualified biologists. All mitigation sites will be protected in perpetuity.

Acceptable riparian mitigation ratios are based on habitat quality characteristics (e.g., vegetation structure and complexity), which correspond to fish and wildlife habitat value. Impact ratios of 3:1, 2:1, and 1:1 should be applied for impacts to high, medium and low-quality habitats, respectively:

- High quality – Native overstory with continuous understory or occurring in dense thickets; dense native overstory with sparse, non-native or no understory; and native willow thicket.
- Medium quality – Sparse native overstory with sparse, non-native or no understory, non-native overstory with native understory, and dense non-native overstory with sparse, non-native or no understory.
- Lower quality – Sparse non-native overstory with sparse, non-native or no understory. In addition, any areas not included in medium or high quality categories that will be covered with riprap, gabions, etc. (e.g., ruderal habitat and bare ground).

A Mitigation and Monitoring Plan for the biological resource in question will be prepared by a qualified restoration ecologist and will provide the following:

1. Summary of habitat impacts and proposed mitigation ratios
2. Goal of the restoration to achieve no net loss of habitat functions and values
3. Location of mitigation site(s) and description of existing site conditions
4. Mitigation design:
    a. existing and proposed site hydrology
    b. grading plan if appropriate, including bank stabilization or other site stabilization features
    c. soil amendments and other site preparation elements as appropriate
    d. planting plan
    e. irrigation and maintenance plan
    f. remedial measures/adaptive management, etc.
5. Monitoring plan (including final and performance criteria, monitoring methods, data analysis, reporting requirements, monitoring schedule, etc.)
6. Success shall be evaluated relative to a nearby reference site, which shall be established to document pre-project environmental conditions. Performance criteria include the following: by the end of Year 1, restored areas shall achieve a minimum of 40 percent of the average vegetation cover observed at the reference site. Restored areas shall also demonstrate consistent increases in vegetative cover. By the end of Year 3, restored areas shall attain at least 75 percent of the vegetation cover documented at the reference site. In addition, invasive species ranked as "High" by the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) shall not exceed 5 percent absolute cover within the restoration area.
7. Contingency plan for mitigation elements that do not meet performance or final success criteria

Impacts from encroachment into riparian buffer zones may be considered significant. **General Plan Policy C-1.1** encourages the protection of riparian habitat through resource zoning, establishment of buffer zones, setback requirements, requiring restoration as a condition of private development, and agency coordination. **General Plan Action 3.1.1** requires stormwater management BMPs to be incorporated into project design, and **General Plan Action 3.1.2** requires all construction sites to implement erosion and sediment control BMPs to the maximum extent practicable. With the implementation of these General Plan Policies and Actions, as well as the proposed Mitigation Measures, impacts to riparian habitats are expected to be reduced to a less than significant level. (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

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?

Citywide activities, including transportation infrastructure projects and associated stormwater runoff, and the establishment of public access and recreation trails, may directly impact wetland and aquatic habitat. In addition, the increase in impervious surfaces due to new construction of urban infrastructure is expected to increase the runoff of pollutants, including oil and grease, heavy metals, animal feces, fertilizers and pesticides, domestic and industrial chemicals, and soil sediments, into wetland and aquatic habitat. Runoff could cause adverse effects to water quality, resulting in impacts to sensitive aquatic species. In the new growth areas, 0.2 acres of aquatic habitat occurs within seasonal wetland habitat in a portion of the Buena Vista new growth area presently used as farmland but not planned for new

residential development. A diked freshwater marsh also exists in the Atkinson Lane new growth area on the property with the recently constructed Cienega Heights housing project and is designated as Natural Open Space for preservation. Additional seasonal wetlands could occur in low-lying depressions in grassland habitat areas. Temporary and permanent direct effects to these habitats may occur during proposed build-out of General Plan 2050, and increased runoff from impervious surfaces could affect water quality unless treated. However, planned development within city limits and in new growth areas would not occur in protected wetlands, sensitive habitat areas, or other areas designated as Natural Open Space. Additionally, the seasonal wetlands are in the vicinity of riparian habitat, which would also be preserved and remain undeveloped. This would further reduce potential impacts related to runoff due to the addition of impervious surface area.

Potential impacts to federally protected wetlands would be minimized within the plan area in accordance with the following Policies and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Policies and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

Policy C-1.1 Protection of Ecologically Sensitive Areas. The City shall seek to protect ecologically sensitive areas, including the Pajaro River, Salsipuedes Creek, Corralitos Creek, and the Wetlands of Watsonville.

Action C-1.1.1 Resource Zoning. The City shall continue to limit urban development and to preserve natural open spaces and wildlife corridors, in identified environmentally sensitive areas that are zoned EM-OS (Environmental Management Open Space).

Action C-1.1.2 Rewilding of Slough, Riparian Corridors and other environmentally sensitive areas. The City shall support the rewilding of sensitive environmental areas as appropriate and recommended by resource agencies.

Action C-1.1.3 Identifying Riparian Corridors. For each proposed plan area within or adjacent to riparian habitat, the City will require detailed mapping of the riparian corridor and required buffer zone. The riparian corridor shall be defined as the topographic top-of bank or the limit of riparian vegetation, whichever is greater. Surveys will be conducted by qualified biologists and will include recommendations for avoiding impacts to riparian habitat to the extent feasible, demarcation of the riparian corridor on site, identify wildlife corridors, and protection of vegetation using Environmentally Sensitive Area fencing. This requirement shall apply prior to City consideration of any project proposal for the site.

Action C-1.1.4 Use of Native Plants. The City shall, for the maintenance and operation of its property within ecologically sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands), use native plants and shall avoid the planting of non-native plants.

Action C-1.1.5 Invasive Plants. The City shall make every effort to remove invasive plants from City property that threaten to disrupt natural habitat areas. Any vegetation along waterways that is removed should be replaced with native species. This not only prevents erosion and stabilizes backs, but it also improves wildlife habitat. Projects adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas shall be conditioned to install native plants adjacent to the sensitive area. The City shall require private developers to install low-water native planting whenever feasible.

Action C-1.1.6 Rewilding. The City shall support the rewilding of riparian and wetland habitat by requiring it as a condition of development where it abuts private projects, and by seeking grants and other resources for restoration in other areas. Rewilding efforts shall be planned comprehensively and use native plants from regional seed stocks.

Action C-1.1.7 Chemical Usage and Integrated Pest Management. The City shall use integrated pest management techniques when appropriate. Chemical usage for the control of pests and invasive species will use the least toxic products available.

Policy C-1.2 Setbacks and Detrimental Activity Limitations. The City shall protect ecologically sensitive areas and provide for their continued health through the use of appropriate setbacks and limitations on potentially detrimental activities.

Action C-1.2.1 Buffering Riparian Areas. The City shall prepare an Ordinance that clarifies the process for determining appropriate buffers from development. The Ordinance shall clarify how to determine when a wetland/riparian area meets the Army Corps criteria for wetlands and how to clearly delineate the boundaries of the wetland/riparian area with a to-scale map as part of the process. Additionally, the map shall establish an appropriate size and configuration of areas required to buffer the wetland/riparian area, allowing for wildlife corridors and/or the natural flow of water through the area. For each proposed project with a wetland/riparian area, the City will require an analysis of the site to be prepared by a qualified biologist. The wetland/riparian buffer should be no less than 100 feet from the edge of the riparian area and shall be of sufficient size to protect wetland/riparian area species and their habitat from the impacts of human and urban activity (noise, lights, and human traffic). No development is to occur within the buffer area. The buffer may be reduced to below 100 feet under certain circumstances, following resource analysis by a qualified biologist and subject to criteria defined in the buffer ordinance. In considering the reduction of the buffer requirement, the ordinance shall consider:

- Biological condition of the environmentally sensitive resource;
- Existence of structures or other improvements currently within the resource setback;
- Average setback to housing, commercial buildings and other development on adjacent properties;
- Occurrence of plan area within an urban location where most properties are already developed and parcels are generally small;
- Potential of the project construction or operations to disrupt the continuity of riparian habitat or preclude restoration of vegetation along a creek channel where upstream and downstream habitat are of good quality;
- The potential for occurrence of special-status species within the riparian corridor; and
- Potential for a project to significantly reduce the moisture that stream side vegetation receives from natural drainage of upland areas.

Projects adjacent to or containing riparian or wetland habitats that cannot provide a protective buffer shall undergo environmental review under CEQA to protect these resources and avoid potential impacts.

Policy C-2.1 Promotion of Water Conservation. The City shall encourage the conservation of water and provide for the protection of water quality to assure its use for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological needs.

Action C-2.1.3 Point and Non-Point Pollutants. The City shall continue to control pollutants from point and nonpoint sources through a comprehensive NPDES Stormwater Program.

Action C-3.1.1 The City shall require all projects to reduce the use of impervious surfaces to the maximum extent practicable. Wherever possible, natural BMPs (such as grassy swales, ponds

and biofilters) shall be used. These BMPs should be incorporated into site landscaping design, for recreational and aesthetic enhancement. Engineered BMPs (such as vaults and interceptors) shall only be used when no natural BMP can be incorporated into the site design, or when a critical natural resource requires protection beyond that attainable by natural BMPs alone.

Action C-3.1.2 Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs). The City shall require all construction sites to implement erosion and sediment control BMPs to the maximum extent practicable. Construction sites shall comply with City Erosion Control Standards, and an Erosion Control Plan shall be required for project approval.

Action C-3.1.3 Evaluate Grading Ordinance. The City shall evaluate its grading ordinance and determine if revisions should be made to further enhance environmental protection.

Policy C-6.1 Public Education for Resource Conservation and Waste Reduction. The City shall continue and expand its education efforts to promote water conservation and efficiency, reduce water pollution, and reduce solid waste disposal.

Action C-6.1.1 Water Conservation. The City shall continue the water conservation program which encourages existing rebates and provision of water conserving devices. Public education methods include the use of local print and electronic English and Spanish language media, including social media, as well as articles in the City's own newsletter and inserts in the City utility bills. The City shall expand its educational efforts to promote low or no-water use plantings as well as a more efficient use of landscape water on lawns, and to promote reuse, recycling, and composting of discarded materials. The City shall use multiple methods of communication in English, Spanish, and any other significant language group identified.

Action C-6.1.2 Storm Water Pollution Prevention. The City shall continue to expand its residential stormwater pollution prevention program that includes placement of storm drain warning markers on all drainage inlets, provision of educational materials and tools door-to-door, continued collection of used motor oil at the curb and at convenient drop-off locations, continued regular scheduled street sweepings, and continued general education and enforcement in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors regarding stormwater pollution prevention. The City shall continue public education programs on water quality issues, including Best Management Practices, for residents, businesses, contractors and City employees.

Action C-6.1.3 Wetlands Protection. The City shall increase awareness among residents of the delicate nature of the local wetlands and how individuals can protect them. The City shall continue and expand its education programs based at the Wetlands Nature Center, the Wetland Educational Resource Center located at Pajaro Valley High School, in the local schools, and in the community.

Additionally, the following specific mitigation measures are proposed to be added to General Plan 2050 to further reduce impacts to federally protected wetlands:

Mitigation Measure BIO-19: Obtain Appropriate Permits and Compensate for Wetland Habitat Loss

During the project application process, the project applicant or applicable City departments (e.g., Community Development Department, Public Works & Utilities Department, and/or Parks & Community Services Department) shall conduct a wetland delineation per the USACE Wetland Delineation Manual (Environmental Laboratory 1987), and using the one-parameter approach in areas within the Coastal Zone, prior to construction. A delineation report should be prepared and submitted to the USACE and

California Coastal Conservancy (CCC) for verification. Through this process, final calculations of wetland area present in the plan area will be obtained for project permitting. In addition, plans for proposed alteration to any watercourse should be submitted to CDFW for their review. These agencies' determinations, permits, and approved mitigation plans should be submitted as part of the final environmental package.

The wetland habitat that will be lost under any given project element would be functionally replaced as part of the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan required for permit issuance. In-kind and onsite replacement of lost wetland habitats must be done where possible. If multiple impacts to wetlands occur from the construction of facilities, larger wetland mitigation areas will be created that provide greater functions and values than numerous small mitigation sites. The determination of wetland impacts and the subsequent location and design of potential mitigation sites would be determined by qualified biologists in coordination with resource agency personnel.

Minimum replacement ratios should be established as follows: 2:1 for wetlands (by restoration, enhancement, or creation) and 3:1 for riparian habitat and streams (by restoration or enhancement). These ratios ensure no net loss of habitat area or ecological function.

Mitigation and habitat restoration plans should provide the following:

- Replacement of lost acreage and functions of wetland habitat
- Location of restoration opportunities, complete with an analysis of the technical approach to create high quality wetlands.
- Prior to construction of any project element that may impact wetland habitats, the project proponent will apply for permits from the USACE and RWQCB. The project proponent will comply with the conditions of the permit.

Detailed plans will be prepared for wetland mitigation construction that include excavation elevations, location of hydrologic connections, planting plans and soil amendments, if necessary. Maintenance and monitoring plans are to be prepared in consultation with a qualified habitat restoration specialist. Any mitigation wetlands will be monitored for a period of 5 years, during which the site will achieve the performance criteria (as determined by a wetland delineation) by Year 5. Specific performance criteria will be the same as those outlined in **Mitigation Measure BIO-19** above. Monitoring reports will be provided annually to the appropriate resource agencies.

Significant impacts to aquatic and wetland habitats may include direct removal and filling, as well as creating hydrological interruption. In addition, while some wetland features may be artificial in origin, have ephemeral hydrology, and otherwise may be partially maintained, their loss may also constitute a significant impact. **General Plan Policy C-1.1** is expected to minimize direct impacts to wetland and aquatic habitat. **Policy C-3.1.1** requires all projects to reduce the use of impervious surfaces to the maximum extent possible; **Action C-3.1.1** requires stormwater runoff to be engineered to avoid impacts to water quality and requires the implementation of Water Quality BMPs and the establishment of a protective vegetative buffer during construction; and **Policy C-6.1** encourages protection of water quality through environmental education. These policies will minimize impacts to wetland and aquatic habitat. Additionally, the proposed **Mitigation Measure BIO-19** would require appropriate permitting and monitoring for federally-protected wetlands. With the implementation of these General Plan Policies and Actions, as well as the proposed Mitigation Measures, impacts to federally protected wetlands would be less than significant. (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

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?

For many species, the landscape is a mosaic of suitable and unsuitable habitat types. Environmental corridors are segments of land that provide a link between these different habitats while also providing cover. On a broader level, corridors also function as avenues along which wide-ranging animals can travel, plants can propagate, genetic interchange can occur, populations can move in response to environmental changes and natural disasters, and threatened species can be replenished from other areas. The Pajaro River, Corralitos Creek, Salsipuedes Creek, Watsonville Wetland sloughs, and adjacent uplands within the plan area represent suitable movement pathways for many animal species, allowing animals to move within the landscape.

Activities that fragment natural habitats (i.e., break them into smaller, disjunct pieces) can have a twofold impact on wildlife: first, as habitat patches become smaller they are unable to support as many individuals (patch size); and second, the area between habitat patches may be unsuitable for wildlife species to traverse (connectivity). However, the General Plan would not be expected to alter these communities and corridors substantially due to the developed nature of the majority of the plan area, limited development that would occur near waterways and adjacent upland areas, and the remaining undeveloped land outside of the plan area that would continue to provide wildlife corridors. Thus, the General Plan would not create barriers to wildlife movement.

General Plan development and associated disturbance and temporary habitat modifications can potentially disrupt wildlife movement in the plan area. For example, wildlife movement along Corralitos Creek, which provides a movement corridor for wildlife, could be temporarily disrupted while work is occurring along land to the south of the creek. However, the disruption associated with development of these lands is not expected to be so extensive or of such long duration as to result in long-term impacts or disruption of regional wildlife movement. Common wildlife species may also be somewhat acclimated to existing conditions due to agricultural activities and/or urban development. In addition, development under the General Plan would not be so extensive as to create barriers to wildlife movement or remove large areas of habitat and result in a loss of connectivity.

The plan would not create barriers to wildlife movement. Projects in the plan area would not cause substantial impacts to any important native wildlife nursery sites (i.e., an area where breeding is concentrated such as a heron rookery, pinniped pupping area, or seabird colony). Impacts on breeding animals, including breeding colonies of animals (e.g., bat maternity colonies and swallow colonies), may occur as described in **Impact Analysis a)** above, but no breeding areas for the species addressed in those impacts are so large or regionally important that they rise to the level of an “important native wildlife nursery site.” Furthermore, with implementation of the General Plan Policies and Actions, appropriate BMPs, and Mitigation Measures described in the above impact sections, all impacts of development in the plan area on breeding animals would be less than significant. (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

e) Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

For the purpose of this assessment, ordinance trees are defined based on the applicable local ordinance. Often, ordinance trees must meet a minimum size requirement. However, some ordinances are not size-based but species based (e.g., all oaks) and, in some cases, no distinction is made between native and nonnative species. These trees would be protected under General Plan 2050 policies and actions to preserve the City’s tree canopy. In addition to providing habitat functions and values for common and special-status wildlife species, larger trees are particularly valuable because they provide the highest-quality nesting sites for raptors, they may contain cavities that serve as roost sites for bats or

nesting/denning sites for other animals, they provide large amounts of coarse woody debris to the stream ecosystem, and they promote high foliage height diversity, which in turn increases the local diversity of birds. They also provide important shading and aesthetic values. As a result of their high value, such trees are protected by Watsonville city ordinances.

Trees in the plan area would be protected in accordance with the following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

> **Goal C-5 Trees.** Encourage protection and planting of trees for aesthetic and environmental value.
>
> **Policy C-5.1 Tree Protection.** The City shall protect certain trees from being removed since trees provide a variety of aesthetic and environmental values.
>
> **Action C-5.1.1 Tree Protection Ordinance.** The City shall adopt a tree preservation ordinance and tree planting guidelines. The ordinance and guidelines shall set forth the types of trees to be protected and the conditions under which trees may be removed.
>
> **Action C-5.1.2 Tree Planting Guidelines.** The City shall adopt street tree planting requirements and guidelines that identify a citywide tree planting program, including a list of appropriate street trees suitable for various areas of the community. New projects will be required to follow the established tree planting guidelines.
>
> **Action C-5.1.3 Preserve the Tree Canopy.** Conduct necessary actions to preserve and expand the tree canopy. Carry out actions related to promoting tree planting and expanding the City's tree canopy, as noted in the Urban Greening Plan and Urban Forest Management Plan.

These trees merit special consideration in assessing impacts of the General Plan. However, the project is not expected to conflict with existing tree protection ordinances. Furthermore, the implementation of Policy C-5.1 and Action C-5.1.1 of General Plan 2050 would establish a local ordinance for tree preservation and protection. This local ordinance would apply to the City, and the County-level tree protection policy would apply to new growth areas until they are annexed. Following annexation, the new growth areas would be subject to the requirements outlined in the City's tree protection ordinance. With the implementation of these General Plan Goals, Policies, and Actions, impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

No adopted HCPs, NCCPs, or any other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans, apply to the plan area. Therefore, there is no impact. (No Impact)

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4.5 Cultural Resources

This section describes the conditions of cultural resources within the plan area and vicinity and assesses the potential impacts that may result with implementation of General Plan 2050.

During the public scoping process, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) issued a notification acknowledging the receipt of the NOP and outlined requirements for compliance with AB 52 and SB 18, recommending the preparation of Cultural Resources Assessments. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of San Juan Bautista made suggestions to conduct a search of the Sacred Lands Files and California Historical Resource Information Systems, as well as to coordinate with the Native American Heritage Commission if this has not yet been done. Additionally, they suggested that recommendations be followed if cultural or historic sensitivity is identified within one mile of the project area. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band also requested an opportunity to consult on the project. See **Section 4.18, Tribal Cultural Resources** for information regarding this tribal consultation.

A CHRIS search was requested from the Northwest Information Center (NWIC) on April 28, 2026, and a response from NWIC was provided on May 12, 2026.

4.5.1 Environmental Setting

4.5.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

National Historic Preservation Act

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 is the basis for most of the historic preservation legislation that exists today. NHPA established guidelines to "preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and to maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choice." The NHPA includes regulations specifically for federal land-holding agencies and regulations that pertain to all projects that are funded, permitted, or approved by any federal agency and that have the potential to affect cultural resources as specified in Section 106. All projects that are subject to NEPA are also subject to compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA and NEPA requirements concerning cultural resources. Provisions of NHPA establish a National Register of Historic Places (the National Register) which is maintained by the National Park Service, the Advisory Councils on Historic Preservation, State Historic Preservation Offices, and grants-in-aid programs.

National Register of Historic Places

Properties which are listed in or have been formally determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are automatically listed in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) and are therefore considered historical resources per CEQA. The NRHP was authorized by Section 101 of the NHPA and is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. The NRHP recognizes the quality of significance in American, state, and local history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects. Per 36 CFR Part 60.4, a property is eligible for listing in the NRHP if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

Criterion A: Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Criterion B: Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of installation, or that represent the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Criterion D: Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

In addition to meeting at least one of the above designation criteria, resources must also retain integrity. The National Park Service recognizes seven aspects or qualities that, considered together, define historic integrity. To retain integrity, a property must possess several, if not all, of these seven qualities, defined as follows:

Location: The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

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 of 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.

Certain properties are generally considered ineligible for listing in the NRHP, including cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions, relocated structures, or commemorative properties. Additionally, a property must be at least 50 years of age to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. The National Park Service states that 50 years is the general estimate of the time needed to develop the necessary historical perspective to evaluate significance (National Park Service 1997:41). Properties which are less than 50 years must be determined to have "exceptional importance" to be considered eligible for NRHP listing.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979

The Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 was enacted to protect archaeological resources and sites that are on public lands and tribal lands, to foster increased cooperation and exchange of information between government representatives, the professional archaeological community, and private individuals. Section 4 of the statute and Sections 16.5-16.12 of the uniform regulations describe the requirements that must be met before federal authorities can issue a permit to excavate or remove any archaeological resource on federal or tribal lands. The curation requirements of artifacts, other materials excavated or removed, and the records related to the artifacts and materials are described in Section 5 of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979. This section also authorizes the

Secretary of the Interior to issue regulations describing in more detail the requirements regarding these collections.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

Native American remains are protected by the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA). NAGPRA protects Native American graves on federal and tribal lands and recognizes tribal authority over the treatment of unmarked graves. It also prohibits the selling of Native American remains. The law provides guidelines for the return of Native American human remains and cultural objects from any collection (e.g., museum, university, or government) that receives federal funding. Civil and criminal penalties can be imposed for noncompliance and illegal trafficking (such as knowingly selling or purchasing sacred objects stolen from graves).

State

California Environmental Quality Act

California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21804.1 requires lead agencies to determine if a project could have a significant impact on historical or unique archaeological resources. As defined in PRC Section 21084.1, a historical resource is a resource listed in, or determined eligible for listing in, the CRHR; a resource included in a local register of historical resources or identified in a historical resources survey pursuant to PRC Section 5024.1(g); or any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant. PRC Section 21084.1 also states resources meeting the above criteria are presumed to be historically or culturally significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates otherwise. Resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are automatically listed in the CRHR and are, therefore, historical resources under CEQA. Historical resources may include eligible built environment resources and archaeological resources of the precontact or historic periods.

Section 15064.5(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines provides further guidance on the consideration of archaeological resources. If an archaeological resource does not qualify as a historical resource, it may meet the definition of a “unique archaeological resource” as identified in PRC Section 21083.2. PRC Section 21083.2(g) defines a unique archaeological resource as an 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) it 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; or 3) is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person.

If an archaeological resource does not qualify as a historical or unique archaeological resource, the impacts of a project on those resources would be less than significant and need not be considered further (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5[c][4]). CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 also provides guidance for addressing the potential presence of human remains, including those discovered during the implementation of a project.

According to CEQA, an impact that results in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource is considered a significant impact on the environment. A substantial adverse change could result from physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of the historical resource would be materially impaired (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5[b][1]). Material impairment is defined as demolition or alteration in

an adverse manner of those characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for inclusion in, the CRHR or a local register (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5[b][2][A]).

If it can be demonstrated that a project would cause damage to a unique archaeological resource, the lead agency may require reasonable efforts be made to permit any or all of these resources to be preserved in place or left in an undisturbed state. To the extent that resources cannot be left undisturbed, mitigation measures are required (PRC § 21083.2[a], [b]).

Section 15126.4 of the CEQA Guidelines stipulates an EIR shall describe feasible measures to minimize significant adverse impacts. In addition to being fully enforceable, mitigation measures must be completed within a defined time period and be roughly proportional to the impacts of the project. Generally, a project which is found to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (the Standards) is considered to be mitigated below a level of significance (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4[b][1]). For historical resources of an archaeological nature, lead agencies should also seek to avoid damaging effects where feasible. Preservation in place is the preferred manner to mitigate impacts to archaeological sites; however, data recovery through excavation may be the only option in certain instances (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4[b][3]).

California Register of Historical Resources

The CRHR was established in 1992 and codified by PRC Sections 5024.1 and 4852. The CRHR is an authoritative listing and guide to be used by State and local agencies, private groups, and citizens in identifying the existing historical resources of the State and to indicate which resources deserve to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change (PRC § 5024.1[a]). The criteria for eligibility for the CRHR are consistent with the NRHP criteria but have been modified for state use in order to include a range of historical resources that better reflect the history of California (PRC § 5024.1[b]). Unlike the NRHP however, the CRHR does not have a defined age threshold for eligibility; rather, a resource may be eligible for the CRHR if it can be demonstrated sufficient time has passed to understand its historical or architectural significance (California Office of Historic Preservation, 2006). Further, resources may still be eligible for listing in the CRHR even if they do not retain sufficient integrity for NRHP eligibility (California Office of Historic Preservation, 2006). Generally, the California Office of Historic Preservation recommends that resources over 45 years of age be recorded and evaluated for historical resources eligibility (California Office of Historic Preservation, 1995:2).

Properties are eligible for listing in the CRHR if they meet one of more of the following criteria:

> **Criterion 1:** Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage.
>
> **Criterion 2:** Is associated with the lives of persons important to our past.
>
> **Criterion 3:** 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:** Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Senate Bill 18

Senate Bill 18 (SB 18) law requires planning agencies, during the preparation or amendment of the general plan, to provide opportunities for the involvement of citizens, California Native American tribes,

public agencies, public utility companies, and civic, education, and other community groups, through public hearings and any other means the city deems appropriate. 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.

California Health and Safety Code

Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code requires that construction or excavation be stopped in the vicinity of discovered human remains until the county coroner can determine whether the remains are those of a Native American. If the remains are determined to be Native American, the coroner must contact the California Native American Heritage Commission.

Public Resources Code

Section 5097.5(a) of the Public Resources Code specifies that a person shall not knowingly and willfully excavate upon or remove, destroy, injure, or deface any of the following that are situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency having jurisdiction over the lands:

- Historic or prehistoric ruins
- Burial grounds
- Archaeological or vertebrate paleontological sites, including fossilized footprints, inscriptions made by human agency, rock art, or any other archaeological, paleontological, or historical feature

As used in this section, "public lands" means lands owned by or under the jurisdiction of the State, or any city, county, district, authority, or public corporation, or any agency thereof.

California Code of Regulations

The California Code of Regulations (Title 14, Division 3, Chapter 1) address paleontological and archaeological resources on lands administered by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), as follows:

1. Section 4307: Geological Features - No person shall destroy, disturb, mutilate, or remove earth, sand, gravel, oil, minerals, rocks, paleontological features, or features of caves.
2. Section 4308: Archaeological Features - No person shall remove, injure, disfigure, deface, or destroy any object of archaeological or historical interest or value.

Local

Santa Cruz County General Plan/Local Coastal Program

The Santa Cruz County General Plan/Local Coastal Program includes policies intended to identify, evaluate, and protect archaeological resources, Native American cultural resources, tribal cultural resources, and historic buildings, sites, and districts. These policies emphasize avoidance and preservation of cultural resources where feasible, archaeological surveys and professional evaluations for potentially sensitive sites, consultation with culturally affiliated Native American tribes, procedures for accidental discoveries, environmental review of projects that may affect cultural resources, and protection and maintenance of designated historic properties.

City of Watsonville Historic Preservation Ordinance

Chapter 8-21 of the City of Watsonville's municipal code authorizes the City Council, by ordinance, to designate structures, features, or integrated groups of structures and features on a single lot or site as "historic structures" if they have special character, or historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest (Municipal Code Chapter 8-21, Section 8-21.02[a]). "Historic structures" are further defined in Chapter 9-2, Section 9-2.200 as:

1. Listed individually in the NRHP (a listing maintained by the Department of the Interior) or preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior as meeting the requirements for individual listing on the NRHP;
2. Certified or preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior as contributing to the historical significance of a registered historic district or a district preliminarily determined by the Secretary of Interior to qualify as a registered historic district;
3. Individually listed on a state inventory of historic places in states with historic preservation programs which have been approved by the Secretary of Interior; or
4. Individually listed on a local inventory of historic places.

Alterations to historic structures as defined above are subject to review by the Planning Commission and Section 8-21.12 of Chapter 8-21 of the municipal code, which states:

> The Planning Commission shall be guided by the standards set forth in this section in its review of permit applications for work or change of conditions on a historical structure. In appraising the effects and relationships established herein, the Planning Commission in all cases shall consider the factors of architectural style, design, arrangement, texture, materials and color, and any other pertinent factors.
>
> a) The proposed work shall be appropriate for and consistent with the effectuation of the purposes of this chapter and shall preserve or enhance the characteristics and particular features specified in the designating ordinance.
>
> b) The proposed work shall not adversely affect the exterior architectural features of the structure and, where specified in the designating ordinance for a publicly owned structure, its major interior architectural features; nor shall the proposed work adversely affect the special character or special historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value of the structure and its site, as viewed both in themselves and in their setting.

Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan

The Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP), adopted in 2023 and amended in 2025, establishes the land use, development, design, and implementation framework governing public and private development within downtown Watsonville. All applications for new construction, substantial modification of existing buildings, and changes in land use within the DWSP area are subject to review for consistency with the Specific Plan. Chapter 2 of the DWSP establishes the following goal and policies intended to maintain and enhance downtown Watsonville's historic character, protect significant historic buildings and development patterns, encourage adaptive reuse, and ensure that new development is compatible with historic resources:

Goal 8 Historic Preservation: Maintain and enhance the historic character of the Downtown through coordinated planning that builds upon its key assets and reinforces its historic development patterns.

Policy 8.1 Historic Identity: Identify and protect the integrity of the historic core around the Plaza.

Policy 8.2 Historic Preservation: Continue to identify, designate, and maintain significant buildings, homes, and landmark features.

Policy 8.4 Adaptive Reuse: Protect historic structures by strongly encouraging their adaptive reuse.

Policy 8.5 Sensitive Infill: Use development and design regulations to develop sensitively designed infill projects.

Policy 8.6 Historic Districts: Evaluate and designate groupings of historic structures as historic districts.

Policy 8.7 Historic Ordinance: Update the City's historic ordinance to reflect best practices for the preservation and modification of historic structures.

Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan EIR

The 2023 Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) EIR evaluated the potential for future infill development, redevelopment, demolition, and ground-disturbing activities to affect historical and archaeological resources or disturb human remains. The EIR concluded that development could adversely affect known and previously unidentified historical resources through alteration or demolition and that this impact, including the DWSP's cumulative contribution to impacts on historic-era resources, would remain significant and unavoidable despite mitigation. Potential impacts to archaeological resources would be reduced to less-than-significant levels through site-specific investigation, construction monitoring, and inadvertent-discovery procedures, while impacts related to human remains would be less than significant through compliance with applicable state requirements. The DWSP EIR adopted the following mitigation measures to address these potential effects:

- **CUL-1(a) Historical Resources Evaluation:** During the planning phase for projects and development envisioned in the DWSP, and prior to permit approval for said projects and development, the City shall confirm the presence of historical resources with the potential to be impacted by the particular project or development. If the property on which the project or development is proposed is not currently designated but contains built environment features over 45 years of age, a historical resources evaluation shall be prepared by an architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Professional Qualification Standards (PQS) in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61). The qualified architectural historian or historian shall conduct an intensive-level survey and perform the historical evaluation in accordance with the guidelines and best practices promulgated by the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). Properties shall be evaluated within their historic context and documented in a report meeting the California OHP guidelines. All evaluated properties shall be documented on California Department of Parks and Recreation Series 523 Forms. The report with attached DPR forms shall be submitted to the City for review and concurrence.

- **CUL-1(b) Compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties:** If it is determined that a proposed plan area located in the DWSP plan area contains a historical resource, efforts shall be made to avoid impacts as feasible. Any relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of a resource shall be implemented consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatments of Historic Properties (the Standards). Application of the Standards shall be overseen by a qualified architectural historian or historical architect meeting the SOI PQS in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61). In conjunction with any development application that may impact a historical resource, a report identifying and specifying proposed construction activities and the treatment of character-defining features shall be provided to the City for review and concurrence, in addition to the historical resources evaluation required by CUL-4.
- **CUL-1(c) Historical Resource Documentation:** If historical resources are identified on a proposed plan area located in the DWSP plan area and compliance with Mitigation Measure CUL-1(b) and/or avoidance is not feasible, the project applicant or developer shall provide a report explaining why compliance with the Standards and/or avoidance is not feasible for the City's review and approval. Site-specific mitigation measures shall be established and undertaken, including, but not limited to, documentation of the historical resource in a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) or HABS-like report. If a HABS or HABS-like report is proposed, it shall be commissioned by the project applicant or their consultant to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Architectural and Engineering Documentation (Federal Register Vol. 48, No. 190, pp. 44730-34) and shall generally follow the Historic American Buildings Survey Level III requirements, including digital photographic recordation, detailed historic narrative report, and compilation of historical research. The documentation shall be completed by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the SOI PQS in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61) and submitted to the City prior to issuance of permits for the demolition or alteration of the historical resource.

4.5.1.2 Existing Conditions

Prehistoric Setting

The prehistoric history of Watsonville, California, highlights its long-standing indigenous heritage and rich environmental resources. The Pajaro Valley, where Watsonville is located, has evidence of human habitation going back over 10,000 years. At the time of Euroamerican contact, the Native Americans that lived in the area were speakers of a Mutsun language, part of the Costanoan/Ohlone language family. Indigenous groups, such as the Mutsun-speaking Calendaruc Tribe, utilized the area's abundant wildlife, plants, and waterways. This community's descendants today are part of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and are still located in the region after significant changes from European and Mexican influences (UCSC, 2026). There are no Native American resources within or adjacent to the plan area that are referenced in the ethnographic literature.

Based on the CHRIS results, the evaluation of the environmental setting and features associated with known sites, Native American resources in this part of Santa Cruz County have been found in areas near the ocean, and inland near intermittent and perennial freshwater courses. Sites have also been found near areas populated by oak, buckeye, manzanita, and pine, as well as near a variety of plant and animal resources. The plan area is near the coast, located inland from Monterey Bay and immediately north of the Pajaro River. The proposed project area contains and is adjacent to wetlands and waterways which

support plant and animal resources that were used by Mutsun people. Given the similarity of these environmental factors, there is a high potential for unrecorded Native American resources to be within the plan area. See **Section 4.18.1.2, Existing conditions**, for a more detail account of the City's prehistoric setting.

Historical Setting

Review of historical literature and maps indicates historic-period activity within the plan area. General Land Office survey maps show development in the plan area as early as 1858 and there has been continued use of the area since. As such, there is a high potential for unrecorded historic-period archaeological resources to be within the plan area.

The 1954 Watsonville West and 1955 (pr. 1968) Watsonville East USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles depict multiple buildings and structures within the plan area. These unrecorded buildings or structures meet the Office of Historic Preservation's minimum age standard that buildings, structures, and objects 45 years or older may be of historical value.

Historic Resources

National Register of Historic Places

According to the National Register of Historic Places, Watsonville has nine properties within its city limits that are registered on the NRHP. These properties include the Godfrey M. Bockius House, Judge Lee House, Lettunich Building, Madison House, Mansion House Hotel, Redman House, Stoesser Block and Annex[1], Watsonville City Plaza[2], and Watsonville-Lee Road Site (NHRP, n.d.). **Figure 4.5-1** shows the location of the National Register of Historic Places within Watsonville.

The Watsonville City Plaza, established in 1860, was originally a part of the Bolsa del Pajaro land grant but was later donated by Don Sebastian Rodriguez. The plaza has served as a communal center through numerous modifications and improvements (NoeHill, n.d.).

The Judge Lee House is a private residence located on East Beach Street, originally constructed in late 1894. Julius Lee, who arrived in California in 1859, was a central figure in Watsonville's early legal and civic scene. He served as district attorney for two terms and was later nominated for the role of superior judge, though he declined the position to continue his law practice in Watsonville. This landmark was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 (Santa Cruz Public Libraries, 2002).

The Redman House is a private residence located outside the City boundaries, but within the proposed ULL. Due to severe deterioration and failed restoration attempts, the County of Santa Cruz formally removed the resource from the County's Historic Resource Inventory in August 2025. However, the Redman House is still listed as a Historic Resource at the state and federal levels. The County is currently undertaking the process to delist the resource at the state and federal level (Santa Cruz County Department of Community Development & Infrastructure, 2025).

Lastly, the Lettunich Building, situated in downtown Watsonville on Main Street, is a 20th-century commercial property that reflects the economic expansion of Watsonville as an agricultural hub. As an

[1] Stoesser Block and Annex at 331-341 Main Street: Listed in the NRHP in 1983, but destroyed by the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the previously registered resource is no longer extant and the property is presently a greenspace.

[2] Watsonville-Lee Road Site: Cultural burial site, location information is not publicly available.

enduring feature of Watsonville's downtown commercial area, the Lettunich Building represents the material history of Watsonville's commercial growth, making it an essential component of the City's NRHP-recognized sites (NoeHill, n.d.).

California State Office of Historic Preservation Built Environment Resources Directory

Based on the CHRIS search results for the project, the California OHP Built Environment Resources Directory, which includes listings of the California Register of Historical Resources, California State Historical Landmarks, California State Points of Historical Interest, and the National Register of Historic Places, lists 320 recorded buildings or structures that may be within or adjacent to the plan area. In addition to these inventories, the NWIC base maps show 124 recorded buildings or structures within the plan area.

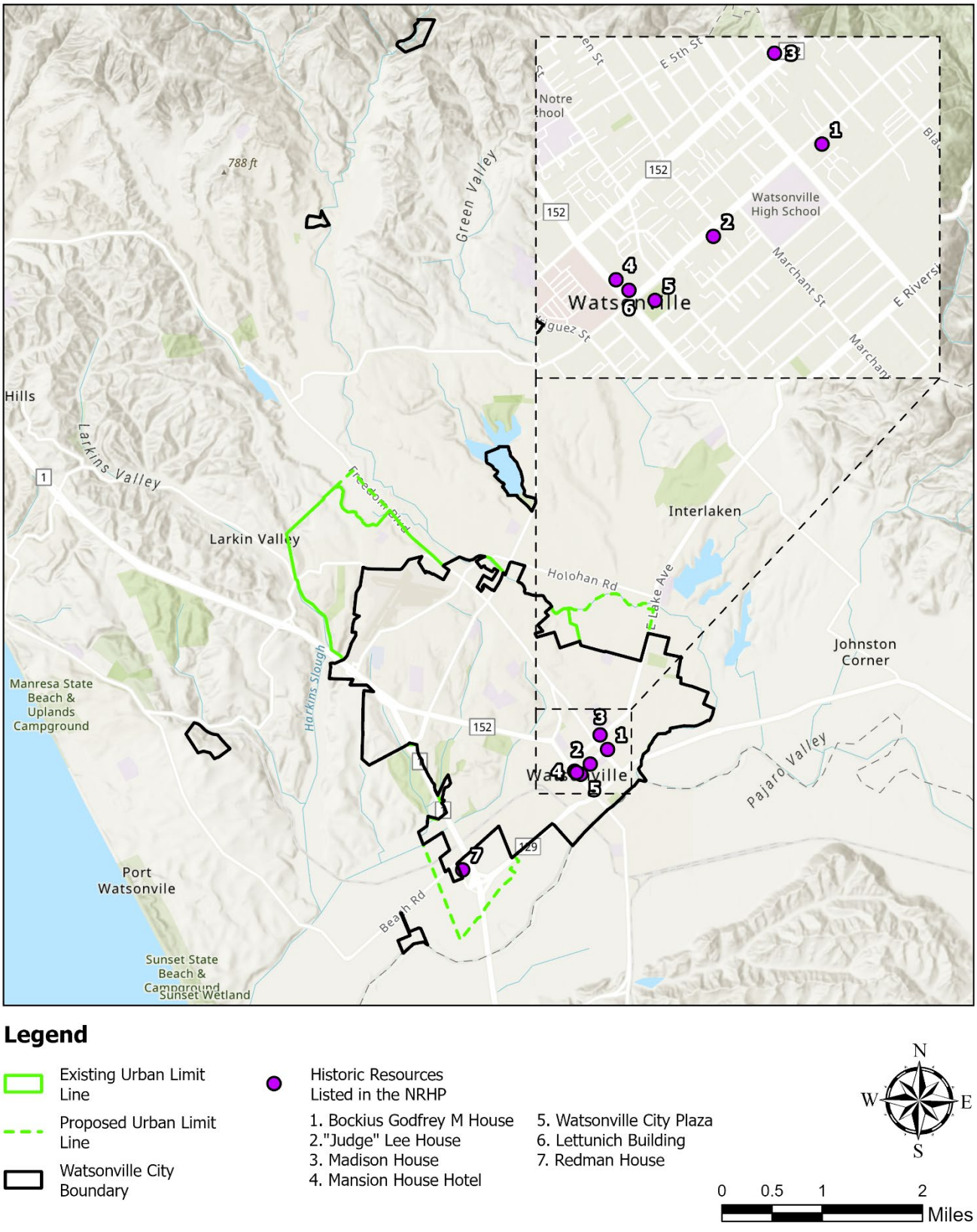
Watsonville Historic Resources

The City has undertaken several efforts over the past two decades to identify, inventory, and evaluate its historic resources. One of the most substantial citywide surveys occurred in 2003 as part of the preparation of the WatsonvilleVISTA 2030 General Plan. As documented in Appendix A of the WatsonvilleVISTA 2030 General Plan, an extensive field survey of potentially important properties was conducted at that time. The survey served as the basis for the draft City of Watsonville Historic Register, which identified numerous properties that had been inventoried or recorded but were not officially listed on a local register, the CRHR, or the NRHP.

Although the WatsonvilleVISTA 2030 General Plan was later rescinded, the list of properties developed through the 2003 survey has continued to function as the City's de facto local historic register and is included on the City's website (City of Watsonville, n.d). The 2003 draft register identified 14 historic properties that were listed on the Watsonville Historic Register and/or the NRHP at that time. These properties include:

- 261-261A East Beach Street, Richard Pearson Home
- 332 East Beach Street, Bockius-Orr House (National Register)
- 128 East Beach Street, Julius Lee Home (National Register)
- 12 Brennan Street, Watsonville Women's Club
- 225 East Lake Avenue
- 305 East Lake Avenue, Mitchell Resetar Home
- 335 East Lake Avenue, Madison House (National Register)
- 280 Main Street, Porter Building
- 406 Main Street, Lettunich Building (National Register)
- 418-428 Main Street, Mansion House (National Register)
- 426-434 Main Street, Kalich Building
- Main / Beach / Peck / Union Streets, Watsonville City Plaza (National Register)
- 139 Maple Street, Horgan House
- 37 Sudden Street, Pajaro Valley Arts Council

Figure 4.5-1 National Register of Historic Places in Watsonville



Source: Circlepoint, 2026

In 2021, as part of preparation of the DWSP, the City completed a new historic resource survey report focused on the DWSP plan area. Within the DWSP boundary, 13 designated historic resources were confirmed, as shown in **Figure 4.5-2** and listed in **Table 4.5-1**. These include four buildings listed in the NRHP, three buildings formally determined eligible for National Register listing, and six properties listed on the local Watsonville Historic Register. All properties listed on the National Register are also listed in the CRHR and the Watsonville Historic Register. Because the 13 extant properties are listed or formally determined eligible for listing in the NRHP, CRHR, and/or Watsonville Historic Register, they meet the definition of historical resources under CEQA (PRC Section 21084.1).

Figure 4.5-2 Designated Historic Resources in Downtown Watsonville



Source: DWSP, Figure 7-1 Historic Resources

Table 4.5-1 Designated Historic Resources

#	Resource	Architectural Style/ Associated Architect	Date of Construction	Designation
1	Watsonville Woman's Club 12 Brennan Street	Tudor Revival Frank Wyckoff, Architect	1917	Watsonville HR
2	"Judge" Julius Lee House/Lewis Home 128 East Beach Street	Queen Anne Victorian William Weeks, Architect	1884	NRHP, CRHR and the Watsonville HR
3	Tyler/Ash House 225 East Lake Avenue	Queen Anne Victorian William Weeks, Architect	1890s	Watsonville HR
4	Porter Building 280 Main Street	Classical Revival William Weeks, Architect	1903	Watsonville HR
5	Wells Fargo Building 326 Main Street	Art Deco H.H. Winner, Architect	1940	Determined eligible for listing in the NRHP (2S2)
6	Lettunich Building 406 Main Street	Renaissance Revival/Chicago Style William Weeks, Architect	1911	NRHP, CRHR and the Watsonville HR
7	Mansion House Hotel 418-428 Main Street	Second Empire Thomas Beck, Architect	1871	NRHP, CRHR and the Watsonville HR
8	Kalich Building 426-434 Main Street	Renaissance Revival William Weeks, Architect	1914	Watsonville HR
9	Watsonville City Plaza Bounded by Main, Peck, Union, and East Beach Streets	William Weeks, Architect (bandstand)	1906 (bandstand)	NRHP, CRHR and the Watsonville HR
10	318 Union Street	Spanish Colonial Revival Lorimer Rich, Architect	1937	Determined eligible for listing in the NRHP (2S2)
11	Resetar Hotel 15 West Lake Avenue	Spanish Colonial William Weeks, Architect	1927	Determined eligible for listing in the NRHP (2S2)
12	26 West Beach Street	Neoclassical Revival William Weeks, Architect	1911	Watsonville HR
13	Jefsen Hotel 6 East Lake Avenue	Italianate	1902-1907	Watsonville HR

Source: DWSP, Table 7-1 Designated Resources

The 2021 DWSP historic resource survey also identified 75 potentially eligible individual resources within the DWSP plan area. To support future planning and evaluation efforts, these properties were classified into two tiers based on their degree of historic integrity and their ability to convey historical associations or architectural attributes according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Tier I resources were identified as having a high degree of integrity, while Tier II resources possess reduced integrity but may still warrant consideration upon further study. The survey identified 58 Tier I and 17 Tier II resources, which are listed in Appendix C of the DWSP.

Together, the 2003 survey for the WatsonvilleVISTA 2030 General Plan and the 2021 DWSP historic resource survey provide the most comprehensive documentation of historic and potentially historic properties within the City. While the DWSP list is currently the most formal and adopted component of the City's local register, the 2003 survey continues to serve as an important informational resource for CEQA review and for identifying historic properties outside the DWSP area that may warrant future designation pending an update to the citywide Historic Context Statement and formal register update.

Cultural Resources[3]

Based on the CHRIS search results for the project, there have been 147 cultural resource studies that cover approximately 80 percent of the plan area. The plan area contains four recorded Native American archaeological resources consisting of lithic scatters, habitation debris, a plant gathering site and burials. One is listed in the Archaeological Resource Directory with a status code of 1S meaning it is listed in the National Register and the California Register. The plan area also contains five historic-period archaeological resources, which consist of historic-era refuse, a monument, a farm, and a bridge footing. Additionally, the plan area contains one informal resource of an unknown age.[4]

Historical literature and maps indicate historic-period activity within the plan area. General Land Office survey maps show development in the plan area as early as 1858 and there has been continued use of the area since. With this information in mind, there is a high potential for unrecorded historic-period archaeological resources to be within the plan area.

Outreach to Native American Tribes and Tribal Consultation

As part of its tribal cultural resources consultation process under SB 18, the City of Watsonville sent letters via certified mail on October 11, 2024 to the following Native American tribes that that were identified by the NAHC's SLF as being traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area:

- Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
- Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of Mission San Juan Bautista
- Costanoan Ohlone Rumsen-Mutsun Tribe
- Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan
- Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band

[3] According to the NWIC, cultural resources includes both archaeological resources and historical buildings and/or structures.

[4] Informal resources are those resources that have not been recorded on Department of Parks and Recreation 523A Primary Record forms and have not been submitted in CHRIS standard format to an Information Center by the OHP.

- Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe

Copies of the consultation letters sent to these tribes are included as **Appendix G** to this EIR. Results of the tribal consultation can be found in **Section 4.18, Tribal Cultural Resources, of this EIR**.

4.5.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.5.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

Criteria for a significant impact under CEQA focus on whether a project will cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. This occurs when demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of a resource (or its immediate surroundings) materially impairs its significance (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5[b][1]). A resource is considered materially impaired if the project demolishes or adversely alters the physical characteristics that convey its historic significance and justify its inclusion in the CRHR, a local register, or a recognized historic survey. As such, the test for determining whether or not the project will have a significant impact on identified historic resources is whether it will materially impair physical integrity of the historic resource such that it could no longer be listed in the CRHR or a local landmark program.

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the proposed project would result in potentially significant environmental effects on cultural resources if it would:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5;

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5;

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

4.5.2.2 Methodology

The evaluation of cultural resources for this project was conducted in accordance with CEQA and other relevant state and federal laws. The analysis involved a comprehensive review of existing data sources to identify any known cultural resources within the plan area. The following were consulted to gather information about archaeological, historical, and architectural resources that may be affected by the project:

- CHRIS
- Local historic registers
- NRHP
- SLF, this search was conducted with the California NAHC to identify potential tribal cultural resources.

The assessment of impacts on cultural resources was based on the CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G) and relevant local and state regulations. Cultural resources were evaluated for their significance using criteria established under CEQA and other relevant frameworks, including the NHPA. The project's potential to directly or indirectly impact cultural resources, such as archaeological sites, historic buildings, and tribal cultural resources, was thoroughly considered. If significant cultural resources were identified, the project was evaluated for the potential impacts of activities such as construction, grading, or alteration of

historic structures, and mitigation measures were proposed to avoid, minimize, or compensate for those impacts.

4.5.2.3 Project Impacts

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to in §15064.5?

&

b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5

As discussed above in **Section 4.5.1.2, Existing Conditions** of this EIR, there are nine NRHP-recorded historic resources in the plan area based on 147 cultural resources studies that cover approximately 80 percent of the proposed project area. As such, there is a high potential of encountering known and unknown Native American archaeological resources and historic-period archaeological resources within the plan area.

Given that the plan area covers such a large area with known archaeological sensitivity, it is recommended that these future development projects be considered on an individual basis under the NWIC's Project Review Program. This Program is organized to aid cities and counties in meeting their CEQA obligations on a project-by-project basis. These reviews result in project specific information and recommendations.

As described in **Section 4.5.1.2**, the plan area contains 320 recorded building or structures that may be considered historic, including the Godfrey M. Bockius House, Judge Lee House, Lettunich Building, Madison House, Mansion House Hotel, Redman House, Stoesser Block and Annex, Watsonville City Plaza, and Watsonville-Lee Road Site which are all registered on the NRHP (NHRP, n.d.). As such, future development allowed under General Plan 2050 could affect known or unknown historical architectural and archaeological resources.

General Plan 2050 has a future land use scenario that promotes infill development along Watsonville's commercial corridors, neighborhood centers, and in and adjacent to downtown. Because future infill development could be located near or adjacent to existing historic structures, the integrity of such structures could be indirectly or directly impacted as a result. For example, future infill development could consist of modern-style architecture, which if located near a historic building, could adversely change the historic context or setting in which the historic building occurs. Moreover, if future infill development would involve redevelopment/demolition of existing structures, it is possible that such structures could have historical significance (as determined by site specific evaluation) given the presence of structures that are over 50 years old within the plan area. Redevelopment or demolition could result in the permanent loss of or permanent adverse changes to historic structures. For example, redevelopment could replace the architectural elements of a building that contribute to its historic designation. General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions contain development standards to guide the design and would serve as program-level mitigation for impacts relating to cultural resources.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal LC-1 A Well Planned City of Places.** A well-planned City that: supports a wide range of complementary land uses developed and operated at intensities that accommodate anticipated growth; achieves the vision of a beautiful, diverse, and well-connected community; features

unique places that respect Watsonville's agricultural and architectural heritage; and remains rooted in its unique climate, topography, history, and cultural traditions.

Policy LC-1.2 Contextual Design. Celebrate Watsonville's agricultural history, culture, and significance, as well as the ongoing importance of agricultural processing, through architecture, public art, signage, and spaces for community events.

Policy LC-1.3 Infill and Preservation of Small Town Character. Promote, encourage, and cultivate infill, reuse, and revitalization along Watsonville's commercial corridors, neighborhood centers, and in and adjacent to downtown.

Policy LC-1.4 Adaptive Reuse. Support the adaptive reuse of older and historic buildings, especially within Downtown Watsonville.

Action LC-1.1.1 Public Arts Master Plan. Continue to highlight and celebrate Watsonville's historic and cultural heritage by implementing the Watsonville Public Arts Master Plan in the City's parks, schools, trails, streets, and buildings.

Policy LC-4.1 Environmental Impacts. In accordance with the CEQA, the California Endangered Species Act, and other federal and state laws, new development shall: minimize impacts to air, water, and soil quality; avoid or mitigate the loss of sensitive habitat; limit greenhouse gas emissions; and preserve historic, cultural, and tribal resources.

Goal C-7 Archaeological Resources. Protect archaeological resources from adverse impacts of development.

Policy C-7.1 Historic and Cultural Resource Identification and Preservation. The City shall identify, maintain, and protect historic and prehistoric resources through ongoing inventory and regulatory measures, while encouraging private participation in their preservation and stewardship.

Action C-7.1.1 Inventory. The City shall periodically update and maintain the City of Watsonville Historic Building Register to include an inventory of historic and pre-historic sites, structures, and landmarks of historic and cultural significance in order to determine the potential impacts on these resources from proposed projects.

Action C-7.1.2 Private Participation. The City shall foster and encourage private efforts to preserve historic and prehistoric sites and cultural artifacts.

Action C-7.1.3 Ordinance. The City shall continue to enforce the historic preservation ordinance and consider modifications that will increase protection of historic and prehistoric resources.

Archaeological sites are principally located along the flanks of the Pajaro River Valley and tribes harvested from sloughs along the coast (Bureau of Reclamation Mid-Pacific Region Sacramento, California, 1992). The plan area is located within the Pajaro River Valley, bordered by the Santa Cruz Mountains to the northwest and adjacent to rolling hillsides. The area is also in close proximity to sloughs. Subsequent development and infrastructure projects would also be analyzed for potential environmental impacts, consistent with the requirements of CEQA. General Plan 2050 includes policies and actions that would reduce impacts to cultural, historic, and archaeological resources, as well as policies and actions for the conservation of cultural, historic, and archaeological resources.

Future development that would be allowed by the project could result in physical changes to a built historic resource or its immediate surroundings, such that the resources' ability to convey its significance is materially impaired, resulting in a potentially significant impact. As such, **Mitigation Measures CUL-1(a)**

through **CUL-3(c)** have been incorporated from the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan EIR and would apply to the entire plan area.

Mitigation Measure CUL-1(a): Archaeological Resources Investigation

At the time of application for discretionary land use permits that involve grading, trenching, excavation or other ground disturbance in native soil with the potential for encountering unknown archaeological resources, the project applicant shall retain a qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior standards in archaeology to complete a Phase 1 cultural resources assessment of the development site. A Phase 1 cultural resources assessment shall include an archaeological pedestrian survey of the development site, if possible, and sufficient background archival research and field sampling to determine whether subsurface prehistoric or historic remains may be present.

The City shall ensure that a cultural resources records search is performed at the Northwest Information Center (NWIC) of the California Historical Resources Information System and a Sacred Lands File (SLF) search conducted with the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for the plan area for multi-family development projects arising that require ground disturbance (i.e., excavation, trenching, grading, etc.), and that record searches are current (no more than one-year old). To receive project approval, an archaeologist meeting the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SOIS) for Archeology must review the results and identify if the project would potentially impact cultural resources. If the archaeologist determines that known cultural resources or potential archaeologically sensitive areas may be impacted by the project, a pedestrian survey must be conducted under the supervision of a SOIS-qualified archaeologist of all accessible portions of the project area, if one has not been completed within the previous five years.

Additional research, including subsurface testing, monitoring during construction, and/or a cultural resources awareness training may be required to identify, evaluate, and mitigate impacts to cultural resources, as recommended by the SOIS-qualified archaeologist. If avoidance is not feasible, the City shall consult with California Native American tribes identified by the NAHC to be affiliated with the plan area for the purposes of tribal consultation under Chapter 905, California Statutes of 2004 (if the resource is pre-contact or indigenous) to determine treatment measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any potential impacts to the resource pursuant to PRC Section 21083.2 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4. This shall include documentation of the resource and may include data recovery (according to PRC Section 21083.2), if deemed appropriate, or other actions such as treating the resource with culturally appropriate dignity and protecting the cultural character and integrity of the resource (according to PRC Section 21084.3). A cultural report detailing the results of the research shall be prepared and submitted for review by the City and a final draft shall be submitted to the NWIC. Once the report has been approved by the City, the City may issue appropriate permits.

Identified prehistoric or historic archaeological remains shall be avoided and preserved in place, where feasible. Where preservation is not feasible, the significance of each resource shall be evaluated for significance and eligibility for listing in the CRHR through a Phase 2 evaluation. A Phase 2 evaluation shall include any necessary archival research to identify significant historical associations as well as mapping of surface artifacts, collection of functionally or temporally diagnostic tools and debris, and excavation of a sample of the cultural deposit to characterize the nature of the sites, define the artifact and feature contents, determine horizontal boundaries and depth below surface, and retrieve representative samples of artifacts and other remains.

Cultural materials collected from the sites shall be processed and analyzed in the laboratory according to standard archaeological procedures. The age of the materials shall be determined using radiocarbon dating and/or other appropriate procedures; lithic artifacts, faunal remains, and other cultural materials

shall be identified and analyzed according to current professional standards. The significance of the sites shall be evaluated according to the criteria of the CRHR. The results of the investigations shall be presented in a technical report following the standards of the California Office of Historic Preservation publication "Archaeological Resource Management Reports: Recommended Content and Format (1990 or latest edition)" (http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1054/files/armr.pdf). Upon completion of the work, all artifacts, other cultural remains, records, photographs, and other documentation shall be curated an appropriate curation facility. All fieldwork, analysis, report production, and curation shall be fully funded by the applicant.

If the resources meet CRHR significance standards, the City shall ensure that all feasible recommendations for mitigation of archaeological impacts are incorporated into the final design and permits issued for development. If necessary, Phase 3 data recovery excavation, conducted to exhaust the data potential of significant archaeological sites, shall be carried out by a qualified archaeologist meeting the SOI standards for archaeology according to a research design reviewed and approved by the City prepared in advance of fieldwork and using appropriate archaeological field and laboratory methods consistent with the California Office of Historic Preservation Planning Bulletin 5 (1991), Guidelines for Archaeological Research Design, or the latest edition thereof.

As applicable, the final Phase 1 Inventory, Phase 2 Testing and Evaluation, and/or Phase 3 Data Recovery reports shall be submitted to the City prior to issuance of construction permit. Recommendations contained therein shall be implemented throughout all ground disturbance activities.

Mitigation Measure CUL-1(b): Archaeological Resources Construction Monitoring.

During construction of the development, construction activities involving ground disturbance such as grading or excavation shall be monitored by a qualified archaeologist. Archaeological monitoring shall be performed under the direction of an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for archaeology (National Park Service, 1983). Should the construction site be determined to have little if any potential to yield subsurface cultural resources deposits, the qualified archaeologist may recommend that monitoring be reduced or eliminated after consulting with the City and Native American representatives.

Mitigation Measure CUL-2: Unanticipated Discovery of Archaeological Resource

In the event that archaeological resources are unexpectedly encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work within 50 feet of the find shall halt and an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for archaeology (National Park Service 1983) shall be contacted immediately to evaluate the find. If the resource is determined by the qualified archaeologist to be prehistoric, then a Native American representative shall also be contacted to participate in the evaluation of the resource. If the qualified archaeologist and/or Native American representative determines it to be appropriate, archaeological testing for CRHR eligibility shall be completed. If the resource proves to be eligible for the CRHR and impacts to the resource cannot be avoided via project redesign, a qualified archaeologist shall prepare a data recovery plan tailored to the physical nature and characteristics of the resource, per the requirements of CCR Guidelines Section 15126.4(b)(3)(C).

Mitigation Measure CUL-3(a): Historical Resources Evaluation

For a discretionary project that would demolish, relocate, or substantially alter the exterior of a building or structure 45 years of age or older, at the time of complete project application submittal but prior to project approval, the Community Development Director shall determine whether the affected property is

a designated historical resource, has previously been evaluated for historical significance, or has a reasonable potential to qualify as a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5.

At this stage, City staff shall conduct an initial screening using information reasonably available to the City. Such information may include the City's historic resource inventories and surveys; the Downtown Watsonville Historic Resources Survey; designations made pursuant to Chapter 8-21 of the Watsonville Municipal Code; California Historical Resources Inventory information; previous environmental documents or historical evaluations; assessor records; historic maps and photographs; building permit records; photographs of the existing property; and other readily available information. In conducting the screening, City staff shall consider whether the property: (1) has previously been identified as historically significant or potentially significant; (2) appears to retain sufficient integrity to convey its historical character; (3) exhibits distinctive architectural characteristics; (4) has a known association with significant persons, events, institutions, cultural groups, industries, or patterns of development in Watsonville; or (5) may contribute to an existing or potential historic district.

No Further Evaluation. If the property has previously been evaluated and found ineligible for historical designation and no substantial new information indicates that the property's historical significance has changed, or if City staff determines based on the initial screening that there is no reasonable potential for the property to qualify as a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5, no additional historical resource evaluation shall be required under this measure.

Further Evaluation. If the initial screening indicates that the property has a reasonable potential to qualify as a historical resource, or if available information is insufficient for City staff to make that determination, a historical resources evaluation shall be prepared by an architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61) to evaluate the building or structure for eligibility for listing on the National Register, California Register, and for local eligibility. The qualified architectural historian or historian shall conduct an intensive-level survey and perform the historical evaluation in accordance with the guidelines and best practices promulgated by the California OHP. Properties shall be evaluated within their historic context and documented in a report meeting the California OHP guidelines. All evaluated properties shall be documented on California Department of Parks and Recreation Series 523 Forms. The report with attached Department of Parks and Recreation forms shall be submitted to the City for review and concurrence.

If the evaluation shall determine that the property qualifies as a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5, the project shall comply with **Mitigation Measures CUL-3(b)** and **CUL-3(c)**.

Mitigation Measure CUL-3(b): Compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

If it is determined by the City that a proposed project located in the plan area contains a historical resource, prior to any demolition or significant alteration of the historic resource, efforts shall be made to avoid adverse impacts as feasible, including actions that could compromise the character defining features of said resource. For projects located in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan area, project design shall be consistent with the historic preservation components listed in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatments of Historic Properties (the Standards), WMC Chapter 21 (Preservation of Historical, Architectural, and Aesthetic Structures) of Title 8 (Building Regulations) and DWSP Vision Themes and Guiding Principles, including but not limited to:

- Revitalize and showcase the beautiful historic architecture and urban fabric in downtown.
- Revitalize vacant historic structure into vibrant mixed use-buildings that incorporate housing.

- Reclaim and adaptively reuse vacant historic buildings for new, contemporary uses that contribute to the desired character.

Any relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of a resource in the plan area shall be implemented consistent with the Standards. Application of the Standards shall be overseen by a qualified architectural historian or historical architect meeting the Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualification Standards in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61). In conjunction with any development application that may impact a historical resource, a report identifying and specifying proposed construction activities and the treatment of character-defining features shall be provided to the City for review and concurrence as part of the planning process, in addition to a historical resources evaluation.

Mitigation Measure CUL-3(c): Historical Resource Documentation

If historical resources are identified on a proposed plan area located in the plan area and compliance with **Mitigation Measure CUL-3(b)** and/or avoidance is not feasible, the project applicant or developer shall provide a report explaining why compliance with the Standards and/or avoidance is not feasible for the City's review and approval. Site-specific mitigation measures shall be established and undertaken, including, but not limited to, documentation of the historical resource in a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) or HABS-like report. If a HABS or HABS-like report is proposed, it shall be commissioned by the project applicant or their consultant to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Architectural and Engineering Documentation (Federal Register Vol. 48, No. 190, pp. 44730-34) and shall generally follow the Historic American Buildings Survey Level III requirements, including digital photographic recordation, detailed historic narrative report, and compilation of historical research. The documentation shall be completed by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior Professional Qualification Standards in architectural history or history (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61) and submitted to the City prior to issuance of permits for the demolition or alteration of the historical resource.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of **Mitigation Measures CUL-1(a)** through **CUL-3(c)** in addition to General Plan 2050's goals, policies and actions would reduce the impact to historical and archaeological resources. However, even with incorporation of mitigation measures, development within the plan area could still adversely affect historic properties, especially with projects that involve demolition of such properties. Because demolition or material impairment of a historical resource constitutes a substantial adverse change under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable where feasible avoidance is not possible as part of implementation of General Plan 2050. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

There is currently no officially designated prehistoric cemeteries or Native American cemeteries in the planning area; however, various cemeteries are located throughout the planning area. Future development within the planning area would not impact existing cemeteries. Although there is no record of isolated human remains or unknown cemeteries, there is always a possibility that ground disturbing activities associated with future development may uncover previously unknown buried human remains. In the event that human remains are encountered, the potential impact is considered significant.

Therefore, excavation and construction activities allowed under General Plan 2050 may yield human remains that may not be marked in formal burials.

As future development and infrastructure projects are considered by the City, each project will be evaluated for conformance with the City's General Plan, Municipal Code, and other applicable State and local regulations. Subsequent development and infrastructure projects would also be analyzed for potential environmental impacts, consistent with the requirements of CEQA. Under CEQA, human remains are protected under the definition of archaeological materials as being "any evidence of human activity." Public Resources Code Section 5097 has specific stop---work and notification procedures to follow in the event that Native American human remains are inadvertently discovered during development activities.

Future development could disturb human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries, resulting in a significant impact. **Mitigation Measure CUL-4** would be implemented to reduce impacts associated with encountering human remains.

Mitigation Measures CUL-4: Encountering Human Remains

In the event that human remains are unearthed during excavation and grading activities of any future development project, the project applicant shall ensure that all activity shall cease immediately. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 7050.5, no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98(a). If the remains are determined to be of Native American descent, the coroner shall within 24 hours notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). The NAHC shall then contact the most likely descendent of the deceased Native American, who shall then serve as the consultant on how to proceed with the remains. Pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98(b), upon the discovery of Native American remains, the landowner shall ensure that the immediate vicinity, according to generally accepted cultural or archaeological standards or practices, where the Native American human remains are located is not damaged or disturbed by further development activity until the landowner has discussed and conferred with the most likely descendants regarding their recommendations, if applicable, taking into account the possibility of multiple human remains. The landowner shall discuss and confer with the descendants all reasonable options regarding the descendants' preferences for treatment.

Significance After Mitigation

Compliance with **Mitigation Measure CUL-4** would reduce impacts to less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation)

4.6 Energy

This section discusses the impacts on energy and energy consumption that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. No public scoping comments related to energy use were received.

4.6.1 Environmental Setting

Energy relates directly to environmental quality. Energy use, when sourced from fossil fuels, can adversely affect air quality, and generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that contribute to climate change. Fossil fuels are burned to create electricity to power residences and commercial/industrial buildings, heat and cool buildings, and power vehicles. Transportation energy use is related to the fuel efficiency of cars, trucks, and public transportation; choice of different travel modes such as auto, carpool, and public transit; and miles traveled by these modes. Construction and routine operation and maintenance of transportation infrastructure also consume energy.

4.6.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is an independent agency responsible for ensuring reliable, safe, and economically efficient energy for consumers across the United States (US). FERC reviews proposals for natural gas terminals, interstate natural gas pipelines, and hydropower projects.

National Energy Conservation Policy Act

The National Energy Conservation Policy Act (NECPA) acts as the federal authority on energy management and goals. Formed by Public Law 95-619 in 1978, NECPA established energy efficiency standards for consumer products and new construction. NECPA is regularly updated by subsequent laws and regulations related to energy efficiency.

Energy Policy Act of 1992

The Energy Policy Act of 1992 was implemented to reduce US dependence on foreign petroleum sources and to improve air quality by restricting overall petroleum usage. This act aimed to build a large inventory of alternative-fueled vehicles with a specific focus on large, centrally-fueled fleets in metropolitan areas. Certain federal, state, and local governments are required to purchase a minimum percentage of light-duty, alternative-fueled vehicles. Incentive programs to promote the acquisition of alternative-fueled vehicles are also included in this act.

Energy Policy Act of 2005

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 allows for expanded and renewed tax credits for electricity produced by qualified energy sources, bond financing and tax incentives for clean renewable energy, and establishes a federal purchase requirement for renewable energy. This act requires federal facilities to draw a minimum percentage of energy from renewable sources and tripled the amount of biofuel that must be mixed with gasoline sold in the United States (to reach 7.5 billion gallons of biofuel used annually by 2012). Overall, this act established stricter standards regarding energy efficiency and promoted the use

of renewable energy sources – like wind, hydro, and geothermal energy – at both the individual and federal level.

Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards (CAFE)

In 1975, the US Congress established the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, which aim to reduce the energy consumption of cars and light trucks by increasing their fuel economy. CAFE standards are enforced by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In April 2022, the NHTSA announced an update to CAFE standards, including a requirement that an industry fleet-wide average of 49 miles per gallon (mpg) by model year 2026. These updates apply to light trucks and passenger cars. It is anticipated that the 2024-2026 CAFE standards will reduce fuel usage by more than 200 billion gallons through 2050.

Environmental Protection Agency Energy Efficiency Resource Standards

The US EPA outlines energy efficiency resource standards (EERS) that may be implemented by state governments. EERS require obligated parties – often retail distributors of electricity – to meet a specific portion of their electricity demand through energy efficiency. Overall reductions in usage, or a shift towards renewable energy, are considered energy efficient.

State

California Energy Efficiency Resource Standards

California's EERS prioritize cost-effective energy conservation as a means of energy efficiency. Additionally, onsite power generation and renewable energy generation are practices considered beneficial for energy efficiency. For the future, California utilities providers are expected to reduce their demand forecasts so as to meet long-term energy savings goals.

California Public Utilities Commission

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates privately owned utilities, including services that provide electricity, gas, water, telecommunications, rail transit, and passenger transportation. CPUC also regulates the planning and approval of electric generation facilities as well as natural gas distribution pipelines. CPUC is responsible for ensuring that utilities are provided in a safe, reliable, and efficient manner and are available at affordable rates.

California Energy Commission

The California Energy Commission (CEC) is primarily responsible for energy policy and planning in California. The major responsibilities of this agency include: the maintenance of historical energy data and forecasting of future trends, the licensing of thermal power plants that are 50W or larger, the promotion of energy efficiency with building standards, the development of energy technologies and support of renewable energy practices, and the creation of plans for state-level energy emergencies.

Assembly Bill 32 (California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006), Senate Bill 32, and Assembly Bill 197

Assembly Bill (AB) 32, or the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, requires a sharp reduction in California greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2020. AB 32 required California to reduce its GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, approximately a 15 percent reduction of projected emissions with no mitigation. The CEC and CPUC were tasked with providing comprehensive energy analysis and recommendations to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) for GHG reduction strategies. In 2016, Senate Bill (SB) 32 and AB 197 were signed into law. Together, these companion bills established a GHG pollution reduction target of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

Airborne Toxic Control Measure to Limit Diesel-Fueled Commercial Motor Vehicle Idling

This measure, passed in 2004, aims to reduce diesel particulate matter emissions from commercial diesel-fueled vehicles weighing over 10,000 lbs. Eligible vehicles may not idle for longer than 5 minutes at any location, as this unnecessarily increases fuel consumption and worsens air quality.

Airborne Toxic Control Measure for Stationary Compression Ignition Engines

Passed in 2004, this measure aims to reduce public exposure to engine-related diesel particulate matter and criteria pollutants. Any person who owns or operates a vehicle with a stationary compression ignition engine with over 50 brake horsepower is subject to this measure.

Truck and Bus Regulation

The 2008 California Air Resources Board approved the Truck and Bus Regulation, a set of policies that reduce the emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and particulate matter from diesel vehicles operating in California. For vehicles with diesel engines, it is required that soot filters be installed on the engines. Additionally, these regulations encouraged the retirement and replacement of older engine types with emission-controlled models. Full implementation of these regulations was planned by 2023. The emissions standards set under these regulations were also established for off-road diesel construction equipment.

California Air Resources Board

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) aims to protect the public from the adverse effects of air pollution. To combat these harms, CARB develops actionable programs and strategies to address climate change and support a shift towards renewable energy.

CARB 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality

The 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality (2022 Scoping Plan) is CARB's latest iteration of its plan to achieve carbon neutrality targets and reduce GHG emission by 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045. The first scoping plan was drafted in 2008 following the passage of AB 32, which created a comprehensive, multi-year program to reduce GHG emissions in California. The 2022 Scoping Plan evaluates progress toward meeting these goals since 2008 and adjusts protocols and targets in accordance with the latest GHG standards.

CARB Advanced Clean Trucks Program

Under the Advanced Clean Trucks Program, truck manufacturers must transition away from diesel vehicles and move towards electric, zero-emissions vehicles starting in 2024. Currently, CARB is aiming for a 100 percent zero-emission fleet by 2045. This program is intended to support the 40 percent GHG reduction goal established by AB 32. Truck manufacturers must also sell an increasing percentage of zero-emission vehicles, and reporting will be required from companies with large distribution fleets.

CARB Advanced Clean Cars Program

Approved by CARB in 2012, this emissions-control program requires a greater number of zero-emissions vehicle models to be produced for years 2015 to 2025. New regulations aim to reduce emissions of criteria air pollutants and GHGs from light- and medium-duty vehicles. Under this program, vehicle manufacturers are also required to produce an increasing number of zero-emission vehicles each year.

CARB Mobile Source Strategy

Approved by CARB in 2016, this strategy is an expansion of the Clean Cars program – it calls for a more stringent regulation on emissions from light-duty vehicles beyond 2025. GHG reductions from medium-duty and heavy-duty vehicles are also included in this strategy. Lastly, the Mobile Source Strategy includes measures to reduce total light-duty VMT by 15 percent compared to projected 2050 levels.

Senate Bill 1075 – Hydrogen Development, Deployment, and Use

Senate Bill (SB) 1075 called for CARB to consult with the California Energy Commission and California Public Utilities Commissions (CPUC) to produce a report on hydrogen. The report would discuss the development, production, deployment, and use of hydrogen as an energy source across all sectors.

California Building Standards Code

- Title 24, Part 6: California Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings
    - These standards were adopted to ensure building construction, system design, and installation achieve energy efficiency
    - 2025 Building Energy Efficiency Standards (Energy Code) aim to reduce overall energy usage by strengthening solar power systems and battery storage in new homes, strengthening ventilation standards, and encouraging efficient electric heat pumps.
- Title 24, Part 11: California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen Code)
    - 2025 CALGreen measures include mandatory measures for non-residential development, including regulations on site development, energy efficiency, material and resource conservation, and environmental quality.

Senate Bill 1383 – Short-Lived Climate Pollution Reduction Strategy

Senate Bill (SB) 1383 was established to address food waste and related emissions in California. SB 1383 diverts organic waste from landfills to prevent the release of methane emissions from landfills. Instead of processing surplus edible food as waste, it is donated to food recovery organizations and distributed to underserved populations.

Senate Bill 1389 (CA PRC Sections 25300-25323)

Senate Bill (SB) 1389 requires the CEC to prepare a biennial energy policy report to evaluate trends and issues relating to electricity, natural gas, and transportation fuel sections. The CEC must also provide policy recommendations to conserve resources and protect the environment within California.

Senate Bill 350 – Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015

Enacted in 2015, this Act set new objectives for pollution reduction by 2030, including an aim to increase procurement of electricity from renewable sources (33 percent to 50 percent) and a goal to double energy efficiency savings of retail customers through energy efficiency and conservation.

Senate Bills 1078, 107, and Executive Order S-14-08

These bills adopted standards to increase the percentage of electricity that retail sellers provide that must be renewable. Retail sellers are required to increase the percentage of electricity obtained from renewable sources to 33 percent by 2020 and 50 percent by 2030.

Senate Bill 100

Senate Bill (SB) 100 established a policy requiring that 100 percent of electric retail sales are renewable energy and zero-emission resources by 2045. The CEC, CPUC, and CARB must jointly submit a report to State legislature every four years. SB 100 requires retail sellers and publicly owned electric utilities to procure eligible renewable electricity at increasing rates: 44 percent of retail sales by the end of 2024, 52 percent by the end of 2027, and 60 percent by the end of 2030.

Senate Bill 375 – Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008

In 2011, CARB approved GHG reduction targets for 18 regional planning bodies in the state. Senate Bill (SB) 375 supplements these reduction targets from new vehicle technologies and fuel standards. SB 375 also required that regions with a metropolitan planning organization must adopt a Sustainable Communities Strategy as a component of their regional transportation plan (RTP). The Sustainable Communities Strategy would be designed to achieve certain goals related to the reduction of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. The State Air Resources Board would review each regional strategy and ensure that it would contribute to desired reduction in greenhouse gases.

Assembly Bill 117 and Senate Bill 790

AB 117 was passed in 2002, allowing public agencies and joint power authorities to form a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA). CCAs allow a city, county, or collective of cities/counties to pool electricity demand and purchasing. Typically, CCAs purchase and/or generate power, which is delivered by regional utility providers, like Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), to customers. SB 790 strengthened AB 117 by introducing a code of conduct that must be followed by incumbent utilities agencies.

Assembly Bill 1493 – Pavley Regulations

AB 1493, also called the Pavley Regulations, was adopted by California in 2002 and approved by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) in 2004. The Pavley Regulations require CARB to set GHG emission standards for vehicles manufactured after 2009 whose primary use is non-commercial personal transportation (passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks).

Regional

Monterey Bay Air Resources District

The Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) is one of the 35 air districts in California, and the plan area is within its jurisdiction. MBARD established CEQA Air Quality Guidelines which focus on reducing dust and exhaust emissions and using lower-emissions construction equipment.

Monterey Bay Community Power

Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP) is a Community Choice Energy (CCE) program formed to provide locally-controlled, cleaner electricity to residents in the Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties. MBCP service began in spring 2025, and its energy is distributed through existing PG&E lines.

Connect Monterey Bay 2050

Connect Monterey Bay 2050, which is AMBAG's 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), was adopted in June 2026. The MTP/SCS acts as the long-range transportation plan for the Monterey Bay region, identifying regional transportation needs, investment priorities, and funding that the region expects to receive for these investments. In the MTP/SCS, AMBAG identifies two alternatives to reduce VMT in the area, either by focusing on infill development, a compact growth footprint, and transit programs or by focusing on infill development and a focus on Complete Streets projects. The MTP/SCS identifies mitigation measures to reduce long-term VMT and GHG emissions such that the AMBAG region can work toward state-established reduction targets.

Local

Watsonville Municipal Code, § 8-8.01 Adoption of the California Energy Code

The City adopted by reference the 2025 California Energy Code, as codified in Title 24, Part 6 of the California Building Standards Code, as the City of Watsonville's Energy Code. The California Energy Code includes energy conservation standards applicable to both residential and nonresidential buildings concerning the design, construction, quality of materials, installation, alteration, repair, replacement, use or maintenance of energy conserving systems and components. This adoption ensures that new construction in Watsonville complies with statewide baseline energy-efficiency standards.

Watsonville Municipal Code, § 8-13.01 Adoption of the California Green Building Code

The City adopted by reference the 2025 California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen Code), as codified in Title 24, Part 11 of the California Building Standards Code, as the City's green building standards code. The CALGreen Code regulates and governs the design, construction, installation, alteration, repair, replacement, and maintenance of green building systems and components for residential and nonresidential development. These standards include mandatory measures addressing

site development, energy efficiency, material and resource conservation, water efficiency, and overall environmental quality. This adoption ensures that new development in Watsonville meets statewide baseline green building requirements and supports the City's broader sustainability and energy-efficiency objectives.

Watsonville Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

The Watsonville Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) was certified in September 2021 and describes energy efficiency-related strategies and programs to be implemented in the City of Watsonville. Changes to the transportation sector of Watsonville are anticipated to be a major component of the City's climate action solution. In particular, the City aims to facilitate electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and electrify city vehicles to reduce transportation-related emissions. Building electrification, in conjunction with the phaseout of natural gas, is also a significant aspect of the plan. All new buildings would be all-electric, and it is anticipated that an electric-only ordinance for new development will be drafted. Where applicable, existing buildings will be retrofitted to be all-electric to reduce GHG emissions. The City also aims to shift more customers to Central Coast Community Energy's (3CE) Prime program, as 3CE Prime provides 100 percent renewable energy.

Key goals and strategies of the CAAP include expanded multimodal transportation facilities, reductions in community trips and commutes, vehicle and building electrification, reductions in carbon and GHG emissions, the use of renewable energy sources, and increased efficiency in the use and management of utilities. Chapter 3, Climate Adaptation, of the CAAP outlines viable energy alternatives for the City to pursue in the future. Stress on the electrical grid is expected to increase due to growing demands due to a growing population and increasing temperatures. To support this expanding need, the City will explore the viability of off-grid alternatives, like photovoltaic solar cells and battery systems.

4.6.1.2 Existing Conditions

Energy Production

Generation

As shown in **Table 4.6-1** below, California produced 216,181 gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity in 2024 (CEC, 2026b). 65,518 GWh of electricity was imported from outside of California. Of the imported electricity, the northwest region, encompassing Alberta, British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming, provided 15,813 GWh and the southwest region, including Arizona, Baja California, Colorado, Mexico, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah, provided 46,344 GWh. 62.23 percent of energy came from non-GHG and renewable resources, most of which was supplied by solar energy (21.3 percent of total production), large hydroelectric power (11.0 percent of total production), and wind power (11.9 percent of total production). 9.9 percent of total power was generated by nuclear energy, 1.9 percent by biomass, 4.6 percent by geothermal energy, and 1.5 percent by small hydroelectric power. 37.8 percent of generated power came from thermal sources, including 34.0 percent generated from natural gas, 2.2 percent generated from coal, and 0.01 percent generated by oil (CEC, 2026b).

Electricity is produced at power plants throughout the state and is delivered to consumers by networks of power lines. Diablo Canyon Power Plant in San Luis Obispo is the state's largest power station and produces approximately 18,000 GWh of electricity annually (PG&E, 2026b). Diablo Canyon Power Plant is also the only nuclear plant remaining in California. California is a part of the Western Interconnected System, a network of power plants and transmission lines for states to the west of the Rocky Mountain range (TANC, 2025). All of the power generated and transmitted by the Western Interconnection power grid are connected.

The California Independent System Operator (ISO) network is a high-voltage transmission system that delivers electricity to local utility providers for distribution (CISO, 2024). The ISO grid is the largest in the world, and it provides power to 75 percent of California and a portion of Nevada. Each year, the ISO grid provides approximately 260 million megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity to its customers.

Use

In 2024, the United States consumed 94.21 quadrillion British thermal units (Btu) of energy overall; 35 percent of this, 32.97 quadrillion Btu or 9,661,553 GWh, was attributable to electric power (USEIA, 2026d). In 2024, California consumed 964.9 trillion Btu, or 282,783 GWh, of electricity, 18.2 percent of the country's total power consumption (CEC, 2026a). In 2024, California's power consumption slightly increased, going from 944.1 trillion Btu in 2023 to 964.9 trillion Btu in 2024 (CEC, 2026a).

Petroleum

California is the 7th largest producer of petroleum in the United States and accounts for almost 2.5 percent of the nation's total oil production. Drilling operations are dispersed throughout the State with greater concentrations in the San Joaquin Valley and the Los Angeles basin. Approximately 73 percent of the California Resource Corporation's estimated proved reserves of oil are in the San Joaquin Basin. Crude oil pipelines connect production areas to 14 oil refineries in the Los Angeles area, the San Francisco Bay area, and the Central Valley (USEIA, 2026a). California's petroleum refineries have one-tenth of the nation's overall crude oil refining capacity. However, California's crude oil production has declined since its peak of 384 million barrels in 1985. In 2025, California produced 93.9 million barrels of crude oil, reflecting California's transition away from fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy (USEIA, 2026b).

Petroleum fuels are generally purchased by individual users such as residents and employees. According to the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM), there are approximately 38 petroleum wells and hundreds of gas stations in Santa Cruz County (CalGEM, 2026). Santa Cruz County has transmission pipelines for natural gas, but there are no pipelines for hazardous liquid transmission (National Pipeline Mapping System 2026).

Table 4.6-1 California 2024 Total System Electric Generation

Fuel Type	In-state Generation (GWh)	Percent of In-State Generation	Northwest Imports (GWh)	Southwest Imports (GWh)	State Energy Mix (GWh)	Total California Energy Mix (GWh)	Total CA Power Mix
Coal	263	0.12%	124	5,775	5,899	6,162	2.21%
Natural Gas	86,479	40.00%	84	8,091	8,176	94,655	34.01%
Oil	36	0.02%	-	0	0	36	0.01%
Other (Petroleum/ Waste Heat)	198	0.09%	13	9	22	220	0.08%
Unspecified	-	0.00%	80	3,971	4,051	4,051	1.46%
Total Thermal and Unspecified	86,976	40.23%	301	17,846	18,147	105,123	37.77%
Nuclear	18,379	8.50%	208	9,026	9,234	27,613	9.92%
Large Hydro	25,222	11.67%	4,479	1,079	5,558	30,780	11.06%
Biomass	4,754	2.20%	614	26	6440	5,394	1.94%
Geothermal	10,453	4.84%	212	2,139	2,351	12,803	4.60%
Small Hydro	3,969	1.84%	269	2	270	4,240	1.52%
Solar	50,666	23.44%	536	8,081	8,616	59,283	21.30%
Wind	15,761	7.29%	9,195	8,145	17,341	33,102	11.89%
Total Non-GHG and Renewable Resources	*129,205*	*59.77%*	*15,512*	*28,498*	*44,010*	*173,215*	*62.23%*
TOTAL	**216,181**	**100.00%**	**15,813**	**46,344**	**62,157**	**278,338**	**100.00%**

Source: CEC 2026b.

Alternative Fuels

A variety of alternative fuels are used to reduce petroleum-based fuel demand. The use of these fuels is encouraged through various statewide regulations and plans, such as the Low Carbon Fuel Standard and Senate Bill 32. Conventional gasoline and diesel may be replaced, depending on the capability of the vehicle with transportation fuels including the following:

Hydrogen

Hydrogen is a popular alternative fuel option as it results in zero tailpipe emissions and can be gathered from a variety of sources, including electrolysis, biomass conversion, and the reformation of natural gas. Vehicles that utilize hydrogen fuel can be fueled in under five minutes and drive for over 300 miles (AFDC, 2024b). Hydrogen can be produced domestically, which may strengthen long-term energy security and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels. Hydrogen fuel also reduces transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. However, hydrogen is difficult to store and requires larger fuel tanks than conventional fuel sources. Hydrogen fuel cells are also expensive when compared to conventional fuel tanks and sources. The cost of hydrogen fuel cells – as well as hydrogen fueling stations – is currently too expensive to be a competitive option in the consumer marketplace (AFDC, 2024c).

There are no hydrogen fueling stations in or around the plan area (AFDC, 2026c). The closest hydrogen fueling station is the True Zero - San Jose-Snell Avenue station, approximately 25 miles north of the plan area.

Biodiesel

Biofuels are renewable, biodegradable liquid fuels and fuel components produced from biomass materials, such as animal fat, vegetable oils, and recycled oil or grease from restaurant use (AFDC, 2024a). Unlike other renewable energy sources, biomass can be directly converted into liquid fuels, making it relatively straightforward to produce and use. Biodiesel is a biofuel typically blended with petroleum diesel for consumption. Biodiesel accounts for the second-largest portion of biofuel production (9 percent) and consumption (9 percent) in the US, following ethanol (USEIA, 2024). Biodiesel is more expensive than fossil fuels, which is a primary barrier to its widespread usage. However, a special engine or vehicle is not needed to use biodiesel; biodiesel concentrations of up to 5 percent are approved for safe usage in any diesel engine (US EPA, 2025).

There are no biodiesel fueling stations in or near the plan area (AFDC, 2026a). The closest biodiesel fueling station is a Chevron located in the City of Santa Nella, approximately 20 miles northeast of the plan area.

Biogas

California is the highest-ranked state for biogas production potential. Currently, California produces about 301 billion cubic feet (bcf) of biogas (American Biogas Council 2024). Wastewater accounts for 156 bcf of biogas production in California, approximately half of the total production, followed by 77 bcf from landfill, 38 bcf from manure, and 30 bcf from food waste. Biogas can occur naturally or be created through industrial processes. Biogas is captured from the decay of organic materials, so it can be created naturally and captured with little impacts to the environment. If compressed, biogas may be used as vehicle fuel (National Grid Group 2023). Biogas may also be processed to create biomethane, a replacement for natural gas that can be used in manners similar to methane. While biogas is generally cheaper and reduces environmental pollution, it may require extensive processing to reduce impurities and make it suitable for use. Furthermore, biogas production depends on the abundance of organic material, meaning that there is greater production potential in rural and suburban areas than in urban regions. Senate Bill 1383 requires the state board to implement a comprehensive strategy to reduce

emissions of short-lived climate pollutants, including methane emissions, organic waste, and landfills. As biogas captures methane, it presents a viable option for renewable energy that mitigates adverse environmental impacts from landfills and organic waste.

Electric Vehicles

There are 27 public electric vehicle charging stations in the City of Watsonville (AFDC 2026b). Per the CEC's Building Energy Efficiency Standards (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations), new construction projects must install at least one electric vehicle (EV) charging space for every 25 parking spaces. The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) allocates $384 million over 5 years to support the expansion of the electric vehicle charging network. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal also includes a provision allowing the State to apply for $2.5 billion in grant funding allocated for EV charging infrastructure.

Electricity

In compliance with Senate Bill 100, California is aiming to reach economywide carbon neutrality by 2045. This shift includes a move towards clean electricity systems. According to the 2025 California Integrated Energy Policy Report (IEPR), electricity net peak demand is forecasted to increase rapidly (from 45,000 MW in 2020 to 55,000 MW by 2035) (CEC, 2026d). The electrification of transportation, as well as climate change, have increased the forecasted demand in the upcoming decade. Furthermore, data centers are anticipated to increase their maximum demand from approximately 1,000 MW in 2024 to 8,400 MW by 2040 (CEC 2026d). The forecast of net peak demand for 2030 has increased by more than 5 GW over the last five updates and will likely continue to rise. To meet zero-carbon electricity demands by 2045, annual grid-scale solar and wind build rates must triple, and battery storage installation must increase eightfold.

The Clean Transportation Program funds the construction of new electric vehicle (EV) chargers to support the deployment of EVs throughout California (CEC, 2026d). By 2030, the projects funded under this program are expected to reduce GHG emissions reductions by at least 165.3 thousand metric tons each year, with the opportunity to reduce them by 522.2 thousand metric tons per year.

Senate Bill 1075 required that the CEC study and model the growth of hydrogen in decarbonizing the electric power and transportation sectors in California. Preliminary findings indicate that approximately 35 GW of renewable energy is needed to produce enough electrolytic hydrogen to replace the fossil fuel that is predicted to be combusted in 2045 (CEC, 2026d).

In 2024, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) produced 32,730 GWh of energy, 11.7 percent of the statewide fuel mix (PG&E 2025b). 23 percent of energy came from eligible renewable resources, including wind, geothermal, biomass, solar, and small hydroelectric sources. 63 percent was produced by non-emitting nuclear generation, and 12 percent was produced by large hydroelectric facilities. The remaining 2 percent of power was provided by natural gas (PG&E, 2026a).

In 2017, the City consumed 182,192.8 MWh, or 621,820.5 million of Btu (MMBtu), of electricity, with 127,293.1 MWh from the commercial/industrial sector and 54,898.7 MWh from the residential sector (City of Watsonville, 2021). It is forecasted that Watsonville will use 682,107.4 MMBtu of electricity by 2030, reflecting approximately a 10 percent increase in consumption in that time. By 2050, Watsonville's projected electricity use is 771,253 MMBtu, showing an approximately 24 percent increase in usage since 2017 (City of Watsonville, 2021).

Natural Gas

According to the 2024 California Gas Report prepared by PG&E, the demand for natural gas is forecasted to decline through 2040 (PG&E, 2025). The demand is expected to decline by approximately 2 percent each year between 2024 and 2040, resulting in a 1,338 million cubic feet per day (MMcf/d) decrease in average daily demand in that time.

In 2017, the City consumed approximately 8.32 million therms (MT), or 832,303.5 MMBtu, of natural gas. Approximately 4.48 MT of natural gas was utilized by the residential sector, and 3.85 MT was utilized by the commercial/industrial sector (City of Watsonville, 2021). By 2030, Watsonville's projected natural gas usage is 913,192.4 MMBtu. Natural gas usage is expected to increase to 1,029,205 MMBtu by 2050, reflecting an approximately 24 percent increase since 2017.

Energy Demand

Petroleum

According to the EIA, transportation accounted for approximately 50.4 percent of California's total energy demand in 2023, amounting to approximately 3,030.0 trillion Btu in 2023 (USEIA 2026b). The CEC produces the California Annual Retail Fuel Outlet Report, which is a compilation of gasoline and diesel fuel sales data from across the State available at the county level. As shown in **Table 4.6-2**, California's 2024 fuel sales totaled 11,681 million gallons of gasoline and 1,904 million gallons of diesel (CEC, 2026a).

Santa Cruz County reported consuming 63 million gallons of gasoline in 2024, representing approximately 0.54 percent of the state's total consumption (CEC, 2026a). Additionally, Santa Cruz County reported approximately 5 million gallons of diesel were sold in 2024, representing 0.46 percent of statewide consumption (CEC, 2026a).

In 2017, the City reported approximately 86,044 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (MTCO2e) were consumed by the transportation sector (City of Watsonville, 2021). This is equivalent to approximately 9.682 million gallons of gasoline or 8.452 million gallons of diesel consumed within the City (USEPA, 2026).

Table 4.6-2 2023 Annual Petroleum Consumption

Fuel Type	Santa Cruz County	California	Proportion of Statewide Consumption	County per Capita Consumption (gallons)	County per Capita Consumption (MMBtu)
Gasoline (million gallons)	63	11,681	0.54%	240.09	28.86
Diesel (million gallons)	5	1,094	0.46%	19.05	2.62

Source: CEC 2026a. For gasoline, 1 gallon = 120,214 Btu. For diesel, 1 gallon = 137,381 Btu.
Note: The Santa Cruz County population in 2024 was approximately 262,406.

Electricity

As shown in **Table 4.6-3** below, California consumed approximately 282,783 GWh of electricity in 2024, or approximately 981,345 billion Btu (CEC, 2026e). According to the CEC's Energy Consumption Database,

residential electricity demand accounted for approximately 36 percent of California's electricity consumption in 2020 while non-residential demand accounted for approximately 64 percent (CEC 2026e).

In 2024, Santa Cruz County consumed 1,174 GWh, or 4,474 kilowatt hours (kWh) per capita, of electricity, representing approximately 0.42 percent of California's total electricity consumption (CEC, 2026e). 53.5 percent of Santa Cruz County's electricity usage, approximately 627.5 GWh, was non-residential, and the remaining 546.2 GWh was consumed in the residential sector (CEC, 2026e). As Watsonville represents approximately 19.6 percent of Santa Cruz County's population, we can assume that about 107.1 GWh of energy were used by Watsonville's residential sector.

Table 4.6-3 2022 Annual Electricity Consumption

Energy Type	Santa Cruz County (GWh)	California (GWh)	Proportion of Statewide Consumption	County per Capita Consumption (kWh)	County per Capita Consumption (MMBtu)
Electricity (GWh)	1,174	282,783	0.42%	4,474.0	15.27

Source: CEC, 2026e. 1 kWh = 3,412 Btu.
Note: The Santa Cruz County population in 2024 was approximately 262,406.

Natural Gas

As shown in **Table 4.6-4** below, in 2024, California consumed a total of 11,104 million U.S. therms of natural gas, or approximately 1,110 trillion Btu (CEC, 2026c). According to the CEC's Gas Consumption Database, residential natural gas demand accounted for approximately 38.6 percent of California's total natural gas demand while non-residential natural gas demand accounted for approximately 61.4 percent (CEC, 2026c).

In 2024, Santa Cruz County consumed 49 million therms, or 4.90 billion Btu, of natural gas (CEC, 2026c). Approximately 40.5 percent of this was non-residential usage, while 59.5 percent was used for residential purposes. Watsonville residents account for about 19 percent of the County's population, so it can be estimated that Watsonville residents consumed approximately 9.31 million therms, or 9,310 MMBtu of natural gas.

Table 4.6-4 2024 Annual Natural Gas Consumption

Energy Type	Santa Cruz County (MT)	California (MT)	Proportion of Statewide Consumption	County per Capita Consumption (US therms)	County per Capita Consumption (MMBtu)
Natural Gas	49	11,104	0.44%	186.7	19.92

Source: CEC 2026c. 1 therm = 100,000 Btu.
Note: The Santa Cruz County population in 2024 was approximately 262,406.

4.6.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.6.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to energy would be considered significant if the project would:

a) Result in 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?

4.6.2.2 Methodology

Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines provides that the lead agency should consider specific topics related to energy use in the EIR. The topics to be discussed, if applicable to the project, include:

- The project's energy requirements and energy use efficiency during each stage of the project (construction, operation, maintenance, and/or removal);
- The effects of the project on local and regional energy supplies and on requirements for additional capacity;
- The effects of the project on base period and peak demands for electricity and other forms of energy;
- The degree to which the project complies with existing energy standards;
- The effects of the project on energy resources; and
- The project's protected transportation energy use requirements and its use of efficient transportation alternatives.

Energy demand and usage at the state, County, and City level were evaluated from publicly-available databases and the City's CAAP. Energy demand and usage were evaluated to assess changes in efficiency and progress on energy use reduction goals. Existing energy standards used for comparison originate from existing regulations and planning documents. General Plan 2050 was also evaluated against the factors identified in Appendix F to determine the plan's projected impacts related to energy usage, particularly its potential to increase energy demands such that the plan area needs new or expanded capacity.

4.6.2.3 Project Impacts

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

The general plan would accommodate future growth and development in Watsonville and thus, is leading to a direct increase in energy consumption relative to existing conditions. However, its implementation would establish guidelines for efficient energy usage for current and planned development, and along with the federal and state regulation and policies, is likely to result in reduction of per capita energy usage.

Following implementation, the plan is anticipated to guide development and expansion through 2050. There are no specific construction projects identified as part of the plan. However, the plan would place an emphasis on infill development that reduces energy consumption for transportation and promote the preservation of open space and agricultural lands. As the plan aims to promote sustainable development, there would be a greater focus on renewable energy sources over fossil fuels. However, this shift is anticipated to be gradual. For future construction projects, petroleum-based fuels are anticipated to be the primary sources of energy. Implementation of the Bay Area Air District Best Management Practices (BMPs) detailed as standard permit conditions in **Section 4.3 Air Quality** would promote energy efficiency during construction of future development projects, as it includes requirements to restrict equipment idling times and post related signage.

Accommodating the growth planned for in General Plan 2050 would directly result in the consumption of energy. However, future development projects within the plan area may consume energy for building heating and cooling, lighting, cooking, and water heating. With implementation of the MBARD Air Quality Guidelines and BMPs, the short-term energy impacts related to potential construction would be less than significant. The City's CAAP calls for all new buildings to be all-electric by 2030 to reduce natural gas consumption (City of Watsonville, 2021). Additionally, there are ongoing efforts to retrofit existing buildings to be all-electric. These measures include provisions to minimize wasteful energy consumption and prioritize projects near transit stops. The plan would encourage infill development which may decrease overall energy demand. Further, new development would be required to abide by all local, state, and federal regulations related to energy consumption, including the CALGreen Building Code and the California Energy Code. Conformance with these regulations would increase energy efficiency and lower the risk of energy demand exceeding the City's existing capacity.

CAFE standards regulate how far vehicles must travel per a gallon of fuel, and stricter regulations promote manufacturers to make more efficient vehicles. As these standards evolve over time, vehicle efficiency is anticipated to increase and reduce overall petrol consumption, including within the plan area. Furthermore, electric vehicle usage and infrastructure is expected to continue to grow and expand, further reducing dependence on petroleum. Additionally, General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions would serve as plan-level mitigation for potential increases in energy usage.

The City would minimize inefficient energy usage and promote a shift to renewable energy sources in conformance with the CAAP. The strategies outlined in the CAAP, including Strategies T7, T9, E1, E2, and E5, promote energy efficiency in the transportation, commercial, and residential sectors.

The wasteful or inefficient usage of energy anticipated from plan implementation would be minimized in accordance with following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Mitigate Potential Impacts:

> **Policy LC-4.3 Sustainable Construction and Operations.** Encourage siting and building practices that promote sustainable construction and operations, including, as appropriate: energy efficiency and renewable energy measures; battery storage; salvaged, recycled, and/or renewable construction materials; cool roofing; high U factor windows and insulation; topsoil preservation, bioretention and filtration systems, native and naturalized landscaping, and permeable paving; bicycle parking facilities; water reuse systems; and cogeneration (heat and power) systems.
>
> **Policy LC-11.6 Energy and Water Efficiency.** Promote enhanced energy and water efficiency measures for energy and water-intensive industrial uses.

Policy LC-11.3 Energy and Water Consumption Monitoring. Monitor energy and water consumption in large industrial facilities and consider fee structures that encourage energy and water efficiency.

Policy LC-15.3 Undergrounding of Electricity Lines. In coordination with Pacific, Gas, & Electric, pursue the undergrounding of existing and proposed electricity lines.

Goal C-4 Energy and Air Quality. Maximize energy efficiency and protect regional air quality.

Policy C-4.1 Energy Efficiency and Emissions Reduction in Municipal Operations. The City shall implement measures in the operation of City facilities and its vehicle fleet that reduce energy use, reduce exhaust emissions and contribute to the improvement of local, regional and global air quality.

Action C-4.1.1 Air Quality Evaluation. As part of the review process for discretionary projects the City shall refer projects to the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) for recommendations on appropriate air quality mitigations.

Action C-4.1.2 Enhance and Review Existing Pedestrian System. The City shall complete the construction of the Wetlands of Watsonville Trail System that connects neighborhoods with retail and employment centers. The City shall enhance pedestrian safety by reviewing circumstances of pedestrian and bicycle accidents, making needed infrastructure safety improvements and providing ongoing pedestrian and bicycle safety education to the community.

Action C-4.1.3 Low-Emission Vehicles. Prior to vehicle purchases, the City shall evaluate the benefits of alternative fuels such as vehicles propelled by electricity, hydrogen, or other zero-emission vehicles. When unavailable or infeasible for the designated usage, consider hybrid vehicles. The City shall encourage local businesses to invest in alternative fuel fleets.

Action C-4.1.4 Alternative Fuels. The City shall seek to establish distribution points for alternative fuels within Watsonville for general use by the public at such time these fuels become feasible for general usage.

Policy C-4.2 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Implementation and Monitoring. The City shall continue to implement and update as necessary the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) to ensure that City operations, actions, and land use approvals are consistent with the CAAP. The City shall monitor and report on progress toward the emissions reduction targets on a periodic basis.

Action C-4.2.2 Energy Efficient Buildings. The City shall encourage energy efficient building design by promoting the use of interior daylighting, LED lighting, shaded windows and heat-exchange units; reflective roofs; super-insulated windows; passive solar heating and hot water; natural cross-ventilation; high-efficiency appliances and heating/cooling systems; and the generation of electricity through wind generation, solar panels, and photovoltaics.

Action C-4.2.3 Energy Efficiency Rebates and Credits. The City shall encourage use of these energy efficient methods by encouraging applicants to pursue utility company rebates and encouraging financial institutions to credit real savings in energy consumption when calculating income available to pay back loans.

Based on the discussion above, implementation of the plan would not result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Energy consumption is anticipated to increase as the plan would accommodate planned growth; however, energy used would not be consumed in excess or inefficiently as accounted for in General Plan 2050. Energy consumption related to plan-related

construction and operation of new development would comply with General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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

General Plan 2050 accounts for planned growth through the plan area which would directly result in new development with the potential to conflict with or obstruct a plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. However, any new development would be required to comply with the current energy efficiency standards set forth in Title 24, CALGreen, the City of Watsonville's Municipal Code, and the City's CAAP, in addition to incorporation of GP 2050 policies pertaining to energy efficiency.

The 2022 Scoping Plan established protocols for California to reach carbon neutrality by 2045, specifically by reducing greenhouse gases by 85 percent, air pollution by 71 percent, and petroleum demand by 94 percent relative to 2022 levels. These goals are planned to be achieved by significantly increasing the state's generation of solar power, wind power, and renewable hydrogen, and by ensuring that 100 percent of passenger vehicles sold by 2035 are EVs.

California's per capita energy usage in the transportation sector increased slightly from 2016 (75.8 MMBtu) to 2024 (79 MMBtu) (CEC, 2026a). This usage comes primarily from the use of petroleum and diesel (CEC, 2026a). However, this change in consumption was paired with a shift toward electrification and a reduced dependence on nonrenewable resources (CEC, 2026a). California's commercial sector energy usage has slightly decreased over time, shifting from 33.1 MMBtu per capita in 2016 to 30.1 MMBtu per capita in 2024 (CEC, 2026a). Residential sector per capita energy usage has also decreased over time, going from 29.9 MMBtu in 2016 to 29.1 MMBtu in 2024 (CEC, 2026a). Reductions in per capita usage reflect California's push towards energy efficiency, which has been achieved in part by aligning with the energy reduction policies of the 2022 Scoping Plan and state-level energy efficiency programs.

The City consumed 621,820.5 MMBtu of electricity in 2017, or 11.85 MMBtu per capita (City of Watsonville, 2021). This is notably lower than the California average electricity usage of 17.86 MMBtu per capita (CEC, 2017). Furthermore, the City's electricity consumption in 2017 represented only 0.088 percent of the state's total energy expenditure (CEC, 2017). By 2050, the City is projected to use 771,253 MMBtu, or 10.99 MMBtu per capita, reflecting a 7.3 percent decrease in per capita electricity usage (City of Watsonville, 2021). This decrease in per capita electricity usage is anticipated to be paired with a reduction in use of fossil fuels and a greater focus on renewable resources.

The CAAP outlines specific local goals for achieving energy efficiency goals outlined in state and local policy, including promoting all-electric development and installation of electric or more efficient natural gas home heating and cooling systems, appliances, or water heaters for new development and an all-electric light-duty fleet for the City by 2035. As described in Measures E1-A, E1-B, and E2-A of the CAAP, the City is incentivizing reductions in natural gas usage, appliance retrofits, and infrastructure retrofits to minimize inefficient energy usage. The City is also incentivizing the installation of solar panels and battery storage in residential and commercial spaces in Measure E5-A, reducing financial and permitting barriers that may otherwise limit access to solar retrofits. Shifting toward renewable energy sources, especially in the transportation sector, would combat inefficient or wasteful energy usage and would reduce the need for additional energy supplies or capacity, even as the plan area grows. As analyzed in **Table 4.6-5**, General Plan 2050 would be consistent the goals and policies outlined in the CAAP and CALGreen Building Code. Compliance with these goals would promote energy efficiency, and the policies outlined in the General Plan 2050 contribute to these energy-related targets. Compliance with these programs and policies would promote energy efficiency and a greater usage of renewable energy sources over fossil fuels. The plan would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency, and impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

Table 4.6-5 Consistency with State and Local Energy Regulations

Goals and Policies	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
City of Watsonville Climate Action and Adaptation Plan	
Measure T7-A: Accelerated Vehicle Retirement Program Participate in an accelerated vehicle retirement program, such as the EV Purchase Guidance Program through Ecology Action, to replace at least 1,500 locally registered light duty gasoline or diesel powered vehicles with a ZEV by 2030. Replacement vehicle eligibility would be determined by program requirements. In the event that requirements are to be established by the City, cars eligible for replacement shall be at least 10 years old at the time of program implementation.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports the transition to lower-emission transportation through its VMT-reduction and multimodal mobility policies. The replacement target of 1,500 locally registered light-duty vehicles is a CAAP implementation commitment that aligns with General Plan 2050's policies. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and not conflict with Measure T7-A.
T7-B: Public Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Create at least 20 EV charging facilities in public parking areas (City-owned lots and parking spaces) by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports cleaner transportation choices and the infrastructure needed to reduce transportation-related GHG emissions. Its multimodal and VMT-reduction framework, including Policy MA-6.2, is compatible with installing EV charging in City-owned parking lots and spaces and integrating charging with Downtown and other activity centers. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T7-B of the CAAP.
Measure T9-A: Zero-Emissions Vehicle Fleet Continue to implement the City's Green Vehicle Policy to purchase or lease low emissions passenger vehicles and trucks, and heavy duty as well when possible.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports reducing transportation emissions by reducing fossil fuel consumption, and demonstrates consistency with a transition of the municipal fleet to zero-emission vehicles. General Plan 2050's Policy C-4.1 directs the City to reduce energy use and exhaust emissions in municipal operations and its vehicle fleet. Continued implementation and strengthening of the Green Vehicle Policy to require zero-emission passenger vehicles and trucks would directly advance these objectives. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T9-A of the CAAP.

Goals and Policies	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure E1-A: Natural Gas Reduction in New Development Require a 50 percent reduction in natural gas consumption compared to BAU in all new development through electric-only development and installation of electric or more efficient natural gas home heating and cooling systems, appliances, or water heaters. Explore implementation of an all-electric ordinance to achieve all-electric development by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports reduced reliance on natural gas in new development through Policy LC-4.3, which encourages energy efficiency, renewable energy, battery storage, and other sustainable building practices, and through Action C-4.2.2, which promotes energy-efficient building design and onsite renewable electricity generation. Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 further require continued implementation of the CAAP. These provisions provide a policy basis for promoting and incentivizing electric-only development. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E1-A of the CAAP.
Measure E1-B: Appliance Retrofits Incentivize retrofits of gas appliances such as home heating and cooling systems, cooking appliances, dryers, and water heaters with electric equivalents by 2030, with a target natural gas use reduction of 30 percent by 2030. The City shall work with 3CE or other funding sources to accomplish this measure.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports conversion of existing gas appliances to efficient electric alternatives through Policy LC-4.3, which promotes energy-efficient and renewable-energy building practices, and Actions C-4.2.2 and C-4.2.3, which encourage high-efficiency appliances and participation in utility rebates and incentives. Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 also direct continued implementation of CAAP electrification policies. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E1-B of the CAAP.
Measure E2-A: Existing Building Retrofits Facilitate and promote funding programs to retrofit 25 percent of existing (pre-2020) commercial spaces and residential units by 2030 to achieve 10 percent or greater energy efficiency compared to existing energy use. Example retrofits may include but are not limited to EnergyStar appliance replacements or boiler replacements.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 encourages improvements to existing buildings that reduce energy use and operating costs. General Plan 2050's Policy LC-4.3 promotes energy efficiency, renewable energy, improved insulation, high-performance windows, and other sustainable practices; Actions C-4.2.2 and C-4.2.3 promote efficient building systems and utility rebates; and Safety Element Action S-9.6.1 supports retrofit and weatherization resources for homeowners and businesses. Together, these provisions support widespread retrofits to increase energy efficiency. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E2-A of the CAAP.
Measure E3-A: 3CE Customer Participation Increase participation in 3CE Prime, with the goal of 50 percent of all residential and non-residential customers choosing 3CE Prime by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports increased use of renewable and zero-carbon electricity through Policy LC-4.3 and Action C-4.2.2, which promote renewable energy generation and energy-efficient development, and through Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1, which direct implementation of the CAAP. Increasing customer enrollment in 3CE Prime would reduce emissions associated with building electricity use. CAAP participation targets, customer outreach, and enrollment would occur through CAAP implementation and coordination with 3CE. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E3-A of the CAAP.

Goals and Policies	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure E3-B: City 3CE Prime Participation Switch all City electricity accounts to 3CE Prime, including Watsonville Municipal Airport.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 directs the City to reduce energy use and emissions through enrollment in energy programs that prioritize renewable and zero-emissions energy. General Plan 2050 policies C-4.1 and C-4.2, as well as Action C-4.2.1, support Measure E3-B of the CAAP by increasing the renewable content of municipal electricity. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E3-B of the CAAP.
Measure E4-A: Cool Roofs for New Development Require installation of cool roof technology for new commercial, municipal, and multi-family residential projects to achieve at least 50 percent cool roofs in new development. A cool roof treatment, green space, or photovoltaic panels would qualify for compliance with this measure.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports cool-roof requirements through Policy LC-4.3, which encourages energy-efficient construction practices, and Action C-4.2.2, which promotes reflective roofs, shaded windows, insulation, and efficient building systems. Safety Element Policies S-9.3 and S-9.4 also support heat mitigation and cooling strategies in the built environment. These provisions provide a policy basis for requiring cool-roof technology in new commercial, municipal, and multifamily projects. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E4-A of the CAAP.
Measure E5-A: Existing Building Solar Retrofits Provide incentives and/or promote available funding programs to retrofit 15 percent of existing residences and commercial space with solar panels with battery storage to provide at least 50 percent of individual building energy demand. Incentives may include removal of administrative barriers, removing fees, improving permitting process to provide online and same day approval.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 promotes onsite renewable energy and battery storage through Policy LC-4.3 and Action C-4.2.2, and encourages applicants to pursue utility rebates and other financial incentives through Action C-4.2.3. Safety Element Policy S-9.1 also supports renewable generation and backup power at facilities used during times of emergency. These provisions incentivize solar retrofits on residential and commercial buildings. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E5-A of the CAAP.
Measure E6-A: Municipal Energy Projects Implement recommendations from the Energy Projects Assessment and Development prepared by Sage Renewables (October 2018) to reduce energy use at City Hall, the police station, Fire Station I, and other City facilities.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 requires the City to reduce energy use in municipal facilities through Policy C-4.1, and directs the continued implementation of the CAAP through Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1. Action C-4.2.2 promotes efficient lighting, building envelopes, heating and cooling systems, and renewable generation, while Safety Element Policy S-9.6 and Action S-9.6.1 support retrofits and weatherization that improve overall resilience and energy efficiency. Project sequencing and funding would occur through the City's capital and energy management programs. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E6-A of the CAAP.

Goals and Policies	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure E7-A: Wastewater Treatment Plant Energy Efficiency Reduce off-site electricity demand at the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility by 50 percent by 2030. The plant is currently undergoing an audit through the PG&E program RAPIDS Wastewater Treatment Optimization program that will identify projects that will reduce energy demand. Alternatively, possibilities to increase on-site electricity production include alternate uses of biogas to improve energy production and reduce emissions (such as replacing existing cogeneration system with a fuel cell system) or additional solar panels.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports reduced offsite electricity demand from municipal utility operations. Policy C-4.1 directs energy efficiency and emissions reduction measures among City facilities, and Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 require continued implementation of CAAP policies. Action C-4.2.2 further promotes energy-efficient systems and onsite renewable generation, while Safety Element Policy S-9.1 supports renewable energy and backup power at resilience-serving facilities. The efficiency upgrades and operational improvements described in Measure E7-A would advance the policies outlined in General Plan 2050. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E7-A of the CAAP.
California State Requirements	
California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen)	Consistent. The City adopted by reference the 2025 CALGreen code as the City's green building standards code. CALGreen outlines mandatory measures addressing site development, energy efficiency, material and resource conservation, water efficiency, and overall environmental quality. The adoption of CALGreen ensures that new development in Watsonville meets statewide baseline green building requirements and supports the City's broader sustainability and energy-efficiency objectives. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with the measures defined in CALGreen.

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4.7 Geology and Soils

This section of the EIR analyzes the potential physical environmental effects of General Plan 2050 implementation related to seismic hazards, underlying soil characteristics, slope stability, erosion, and paleontological resources. Data used to prepare this section was obtained from the existing City of Watsonville 2005 General Plan, the California Department of Conservation (DOC), the California Geological Survey, and other sources. No public scoping comments related to geology or soils were received.

4.7.1 Environmental Setting

4.7.1.1 Regulatory Framework

State

Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Zoning Act was passed in 1972 with the intent to reduce the loss of life and property associated with surface rupture caused by active fault lines. The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Zoning Act prohibits the placement of structures for human occupancy above active faults and sets minimum distances for construction away from the fault line. These fault lines are shown on Alquist-Priolo Maps, which are produced by the California Geological Survey.

Unreinforced Masonry Building Law

The State of California enacted the Unreinforced Masonry Building Law in 1986. This law was enacted more than 50 years after state law prohibited construction of new unreinforced masonry buildings. Under the 1986 law, local governments in Seismic Zone 4 (as established by the 1985 California Building Code, described further below) were required to inventory unreinforced masonry buildings, establish an unreinforced masonry loss program, and report their progress to the State by 1990. Statewide, the 1990 assessment identified approximately 25,900 unreinforced masonry buildings in the state as a whole.

Seismic Hazards Mapping Act

The 1990 Seismic Hazards Mapping Act directs the California Geological Survey to identify and map areas prone to various earthquake-related hazards, including liquefaction, landslides, and amplified ground shaking. The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act is intended to reduce the threat of seismic hazards to public health and to minimize the loss of life and property through identification and mitigation of seismic hazards. The State Geologist establishes regulatory zones (Zones of Required Investigation) and issues Seismic Hazard Zone Maps. These maps are distributed to all affected cities, counties, and state agencies for their use in planning and controlling construction and development.

California Building Code

The latest version of the California Building Code (CBC) was published on July 1, 2025 and took effect on January 1, 2026. The CBC is a compilation of three types of building criteria from three different origins:

- Building standards that have been adopted by state agencies without change from building standards contained in national model codes;

- Building standards that have been adopted and adapted from the national model code standards to meet California conditions; and
- 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.

The CBC identifies acceptable design criteria for construction that address seismic design and load-bearing capacity, including specific requirements for seismic safety, excavation, foundation and retaining wall design, site demolition and construction, and drainage and erosion control.

The 2025 CBC incorporates updated seismic design maps and structural standards, refined requirements for geotechnical investigations, clarified foundation and grading criteria, and updated provisions for interior and exterior building systems. These changes are based largely on California amendments to the 2022 model building codes, enhance consistency in application and improve the resilience of structures to seismic activity and geologic hazards.

Paleontological Resources Regulations – California Public Resources Code

Paleontological resources are the fossilized remains of organisms from prehistoric environments found in geologic strata. They range from mammoth and dinosaur bones to impressions of ancient animals and plants, trace remains, and microfossils. California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5097.5 stipulates that the unauthorized removal of a paleontological resource is a misdemeanor. Under the CEQA Guidelines, a project would have a significant impact on paleontological resources if it would disturb or destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature.

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act

The California State Legislature enacted the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975 (PRC § 2710 et seq.) in response to land use conflicts between urban growth and mineral resource extraction. The Act requires the prevention of adverse environmental effects caused by mining, the reclamation of mined lands for alternative land uses, and the elimination of public health and safety hazards from the effects of mining activities. At the same time, SMARA encourages both the conservation and production of extractive mineral resources, requiring the State Geologist to classify land according to the presence or absence of significant mineral deposits. Local governments must consider this information before land with important mineral deposits is committed to land uses incompatible with mining.

State Water Resources Control Board Construction General Permit

Construction activities that disturb one or more acres of land that could impact hydrologic resources by resulting in erosion must comply with the requirements of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Construction General Permit (GCP) (2009-0009-DWQ) as amended by 2010-0014-DWQ. Applicants must also demonstrate conformance with applicable best management practices (BMPs) and prepare a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), containing a site map that shows the construction site perimeter, existing and proposed buildings, lots, roadways, stormwater collection, and discharge points, general topography both before and after construction, and drainage patterns across the plan area. The SWPPP must list BMPs that would be implemented to prevent soil erosion. Some sites also require implementation of a Rain Event Action Plan.

Regional and Local

Santa Cruz County General Plan / Local Coastal Program (LCP)

The Santa Cruz County General Plan includes goals, policies, and implementation measures that address geology and soils through several elements, including the Built Environment, Access and Mobility, Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation, and Public Safety Elements. The Built Environment Element requires land use and development to be compatible with the physical limitations and constraints of the land and identifies the General Plan resource and constraints maps, County Code, and related development standards as tools for determining where and how development should occur. Relevant policies require new development to minimize grading, avoid or mitigate geologic hazards, conform to site topography and physical constraints, maintain natural drainage patterns, and incorporate site design measures such as permeable surfaces and bioswales to reduce stormwater runoff and improve infiltration.

The Access and Mobility Element also supports geology and soils protection by requiring transportation improvements to account for corridor constraints and minimize impacts to physical environmental conditions. Relevant policies call for context-sensitive roadway design, avoidance or minimization of impacts to environmental resources, and avoiding the placement of new roads through floodplains where feasible in order to reduce habitat impacts and limit the need for flood-control improvements. These policies are most relevant where roadway, circulation, or infrastructure improvements could affect drainage patterns, floodplain areas, erosion, or soil stability.

The Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation Element includes policies related to groundwater recharge, runoff, and water quality protection. The Santa Cruz County General Plan requires the County to maintain mapped primary groundwater recharge areas where local soil conditions and underlying geologic formations allow rainfall and runoff to infiltrate and percolate into groundwater basins. It also restricts land uses in primary groundwater recharge areas that could allow pollutants to percolate into groundwater. These policies are relevant where development could alter infiltration, increase impervious surfaces, affect stormwater quality, or interfere with groundwater recharge functions.

The Public Safety Element provides the Santa Cruz County General Plan's primary policy framework for geologic hazards. It establishes objectives and policies to reduce risks associated with seismic hazards, liquefaction, subsidence, landslides, slope instability, adverse soil conditions, erosion, and other ground-movement hazards. The element requires geologic hazard review for discretionary development in designated fault zones and requires preliminary geologic reports, engineering geology reports, soils/geotechnical reports, or other technical studies where potentially unsafe geologic conditions may be present. The Public Safety Element also requires development conditions and design specifications to incorporate recommendations from hazard assessments and technical reports, and provides that development may be denied where geologic hazards cannot be mitigated to acceptable risk levels.

Santa Cruz County Code Section 16.10 – Geologic Hazard Ordinance

Chapter 16.10 in the Santa Cruz County Code sets forth regulations and review procedures for development and construction activities including grading, septic systems installation, development permits, changes of use as specified in SCCC 16.10.040(N)(6), building permits, minor land divisions, and subdivisions throughout the County. The County Code distinguishes geologic hazards into hazards within coastal zone and hazards outside coastal zone, where different policies are applied.

Watsonville Municipal Code – Geologic Hazard Abatement District

Title 3, Chapter 12 of the Watsonville Municipal Code (WMC) authorizes the use of Chapter 2.5 of Division 17 of the Public Resources Code of the State (Sections 26568 et seq.) "Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts" for the prevention, mitigation, abatement, or control of a geologic hazard.

Watsonville Municipal Code – Geologic Reports

Title 14, Chapter 16, Part 23 of the WMC sets the requirements for preparing a geologic report prior to development in the Zayante Fault Zone and "A"/ "B" Liquefaction Zones. The code provides fault setback requirements for development in the City.

Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

The 2025 Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan is the County's countywide framework for reducing vulnerability to natural hazards and strengthening long-term resilience. The plan was developed with participation from Santa Cruz County, the Cities of Capitola, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville, and several special districts, with technical guidance from California Governor's Office of Emergency Services and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IX. The plan is intended to identify hazards, assess vulnerabilities, prioritize cost-effective mitigation actions, protect critical assets, support continuity of operations, and maintain eligibility for FEMA hazard mitigation grants and other funding programs.

The plan evaluates natural hazards that could affect Santa Cruz County communities, including wildfire, flood, earthquake, severe weather, coastal hazards, slope failure, dam failure, drought, extreme heat, and climate change. Relevant to geology and soils, the plan addresses earthquake-related hazards, including liquefaction; flood and levee failure risk; slope failure; erosion-related hazards; and climate-related conditions that may intensify flooding, severe weather, drought, and other hazard events. The plan provides hazard profiles, exposure summaries, vulnerability assessments, and jurisdiction-specific annexes to support local mitigation planning and decision-making.

For the City of Watsonville, the plan identifies flood as an extreme-priority hazard, earthquake as a high-priority hazard, including liquefaction, and slope failure and climate change as high-priority hazards. The plan also identifies wildfire, severe weather, drought, and extreme heat as medium-priority hazards for Watsonville. Coastal hazards and dam failure are not identified as priorities for Watsonville due to lack of exposure.

The plan's mitigation strategy is organized around four goals: reducing loss of life, injury, and economic damage; increasing continuity of services during and after hazard events; protecting the natural and built environment; and improving the resilience of lifeline systems and essential community functions. The plan includes mitigation actions, projects, policies, and implementation strategies intended to reduce long-term hazard risk, protect vulnerable populations, safeguard property and critical infrastructure, and improve overall community resilience.

Watsonville Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

The City of Watsonville Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), approved by FEMA in September 2021 and effective through 2026, identifies potential local natural hazards and then identifies and prioritizes vulnerable areas in the local community. The LHMP helps communities be prepared in case of natural hazards and can help protect the public and city infrastructure. Chapter B in the LHMP provides hazard identification and risk assessment within and near the City, including the description of the type,

location, and extent of natural hazards that can affect each jurisdiction. Chapter C in the LHMP provides potential mitigation strategies and action plans to reduce natural hazard risks.

Municipal Regional Stormwater National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program was established by the Clean Water Act to regulate municipal and industrial discharges to surface waters of the U.S. from their municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). This program is a key tool in addressing erosion. Although it originates in federal regulation, it is described here as a state regulation since it is administered by a state agency.

The NPDES permit programs in California are administered by the SWRCB and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs). The City of Watsonville is within the jurisdiction of the Central Coast RWQCB (Region 3) and is subject to the Waste Discharge Requirements Statewide Small MS4 General Permit (WQ Order No. 2013-0001-DWQ), which establishes requirements for municipal stormwater management programs, and NPDES Permit No. CAS000004 dated February 5, 2013. The City of Watsonville complies with the statewide Phase II MS4 General Permit overseen by the Central Coast RWQCB.

City of Watsonville Stormwater Program

Approximately 75 percent of the City of Watsonville's storm drain system drains into the Watsonville Slough system. Much of the historic urban areas and urban storm drain infrastructure does not include necessary BMPs to protect water quality. The City does however have a stormwater ordinance language which gives the City the authority to regulate polluted runoff which may impact adjacent wetland resources (WMC § 6-3.525). The City also has development standards to protect water quality (City of Watsonville Storm Water Land Development Standards). The development standards include significant water quality protection requirements for all development over an acre in size, thus meeting the Phase II Stormwater Discharge Conditions of the State and Regional Boards. While historic and small development are not addressed within these regulatory programs, the City also institutes a significant Public Education program and other municipal water quality protection efforts including an extensive street sweeping effort.

4.7.1.2 Existing Conditions

Regional Geological Setting

The plan area is in Pajaro Valley region in Santa Cruz County. The Pajaro Valley is located at the top stretch of the Central California coast, bridging south Santa Cruz County and the North Monterey County regions, just inland of the Pacific Ocean and the center of the Monterey Bay (Bird Valley Foodstuff, 2016). The plan area is approximately 15 miles to the southeast of the City of Santa Cruz and is approximately four miles inland from the Monterey Bay. The average elevation of Watsonville is around 29 feet.

The plan area is in the central portion of the Coast Ranges Physiographic Province of California (Coast Ranges Province). The Coast Ranges Province consists of a series of coastal mountain chains paralleling the pronounced northwest-southeast structural grain of central California geology. The structural grain is controlled by a complex of active faults and faults with pre-Holocene activity, that form the San Andreas Fault system.

Local Geological Setting

Soils

Local Soil Conditions

The plan area is predominantly underlain by several types of loam soils that vary in drainage characteristics, composition, and geographic distribution. These include:

- Conejo loam (approximately 85 percent Conejo series), which consists of very deep, well-drained soils formed in alluvium derived from basic igneous or sedimentary rocks, present in the southern and southeastern portions of the plan area, including the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area;
- Watsonville loam (approximately 85 percent Watsonville series), which consists of deep but poorly drained alluvial soils, present in the eastern and northeastern portions of the plan area;
- Pinto loam (approximately 85 percent Pinto series), which consists of moderately well-drained soils formed in sedimentary alluvium, present in the northwest and northern portions of the plan area such as the Buena Vista new growth area; and
- Elder sandy loam (approximately 85 percent Elder series), which consists of very deep, well-drained soils derived from mixed rock sources, present along the eastern boundary of the plan area and within the Area C new growth area.

Aside from loam soils, the plan area also contains flooded Aquents, Diablo clays, and Tierra-Watsonville complex soils near Watsonville Slough and Struve Slough (University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, n.d.). **Table 4.7-1** provides a summary of the soil types present in the plan area and their characteristics. **Figure 4.7-1** illustrates their geographical distribution across the plan area.

Table 4.7-1 Soil Types and Development Constraints

Soil Type	Permeability	Rate of Runoff	Erosion Potential	Shrink-swell Potential
Aquents (flooded)	Very slow	Very slow	None	Low
Baywood loamy sand (0-2 percent slopes)	Rapid	Slow	Slight	Low
Clear Lake clay	Very slow	Slow	Slight	High
Conejo (clay) loam	Slow	Slow	Slight	Moderate
Cropley silty clay	Slow	Slow or medium	Slight	High
Diablo clay	Very slow	Rapid	High	High
Elder sandy loam	Moderate	Slow	None or slight	Low

Soil Type	Permeability	Rate of Runoff	Erosion Potential	Shrink-swell Potential
Elkhorn sandy loam	Moderately slow	Slow or medium	Slight to moderate	Moderate
Pinto loam (2-9 percent slopes)	Slow	Slow or medium	Slight to moderate	Low (surface), High (subsurface)
Pinto loam (9-15 percent slopes)	Slow	Rapid	Moderate	Low (surface), High (subsurface)
Soquel loam	Moderately slow	Slow	None to slight	Moderate
Tierra-Watsonville loam (15-30 percent slopes)	Very slow	Rapid	High	Low (surface), High (subsurface)
Tierra-Watsonville loam (30-50 percent slopes)	Very slow	Rapid	High	Low (surface), High (subsurface)
Watsonville loam	Very slow	Slow or medium	Slight to moderate	Low (surface), High (subsurface)

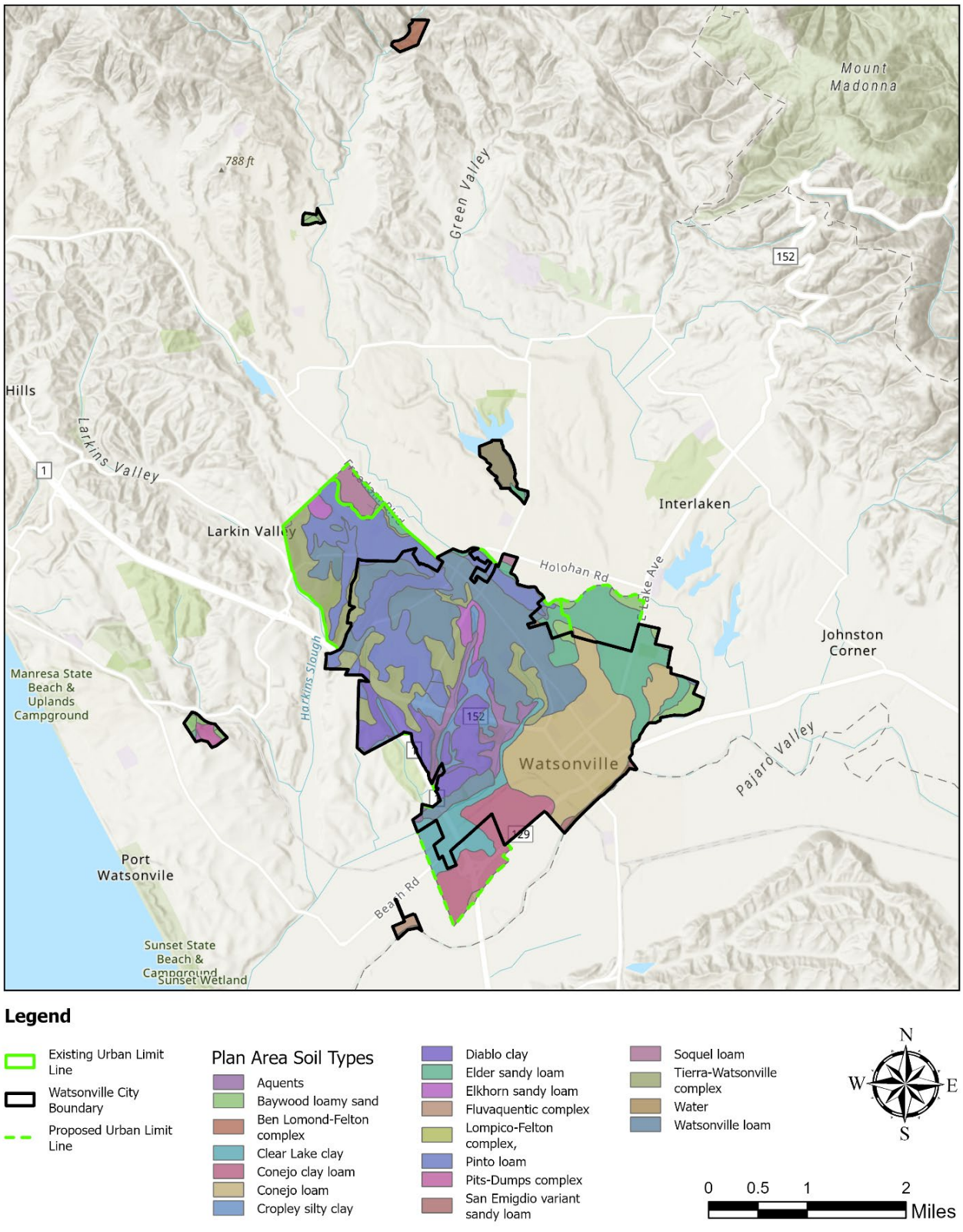
Source: U.S. Soil Conservation Service, 1980.

Expansive Soils

Expansive soil shrinks and swells because of moisture changes. This can cause heaving and cracking of slabs-on-grade, pavements, and structures founded on shallow foundations. The plan area contains scattered sections of expansive soils, where clayey soils near the rivers are anticipated to be moderately to highly expansive. Pinto loams, Watsonville loams, and Tierra-Watsonville loams found in the plan area have low expansive potential at surface and high expansive potential in the sub-surface sections, regardless of terrains/slopes. **Table 4.7-1** reflects the expansion (shrink-swell) potential of soil types found in the plan area.

Successful construction on expansive soils requires special attention during grading and foundation designs that take the expansive soils into consideration. The effect of expansive soils can be reduced by the choice of a proper foundation system (rigid grid or mat), proper moisture conditioning and compaction of subgrade soils and engineered fill, or the use of low-expansive material or chemical treatment on the subgrade soils.

Figure 4.7-1 Soil Types within the Plan Area



Source: County of Santa Cruz, 2022.

Erosive Soils

Soil erosion is a process that transports soil materials to another area by wind or water. Erosion is a natural process that can vary depending on the soil material and structure, placement, and human activity. Fine-grained silts and clays or fine-grained sands can be easily eroded, while coarser-grained sandy soils are less susceptible. Excessive soil erosion can lead to damaged building foundations and roadways. Wind erosion can occur under most topographic conditions containing exposed soil, while runoff erosion is most likely to occur on areas that contain slopes and have exposed soil.

Loam soil types, which dominate the plan area, generally have slight to moderate risk of erosion. The relatively flat topography of the plan area reduces runoff erosion hazards. However, Diablo clays and Tierra-Watsonville complex soils present near creeks and sloughs generally have a higher risk of soil erosion, especially in sloped or hilly terrain. **Table 4.7-1** reflects the erosion potential of soil types found in the plan area.

Future grading may increase the potential for wind and runoff erosion; therefore, appropriate post-construction landscaping and ground cover is important to reducing erosion potential and should be integrated as part of new developments.

Seismicity

Faults

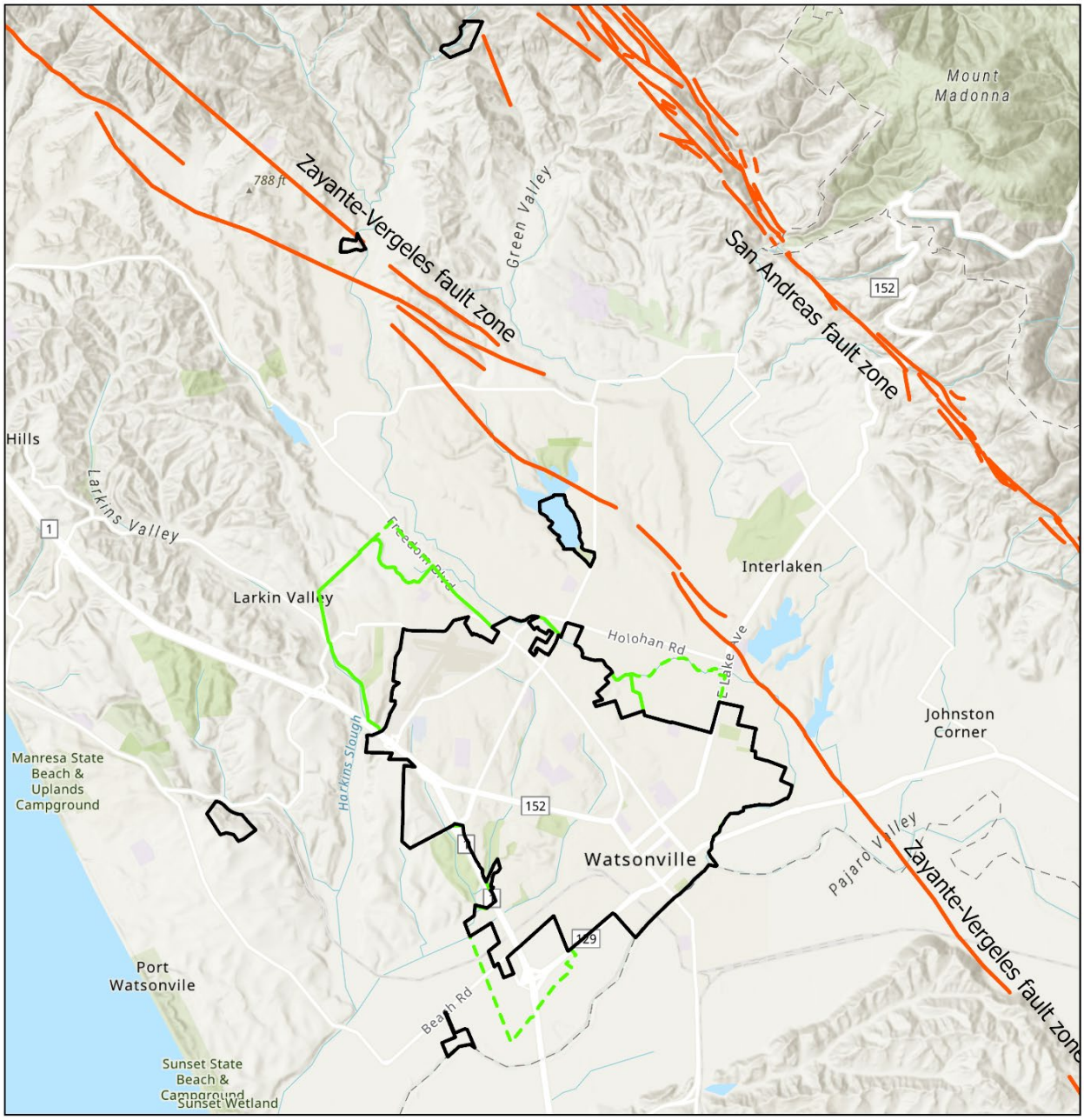
The plan area lies between the San Andreas Fault to the north and east (approximately 5 miles from the plan area). As shown on **Figure 4.7-2**, other active or potentially active fault zones that could affect the plan area include the Zayante-Vergeles Fault in Pajaro Valley, which is outside City limits but underlies a portion of the City's Sphere of Influence (DOC, 2010).

Primary Seismic Hazards

Surface Fault Rupture

Surface rupture is the surface expression of movement along a fault. Structures built over an active fault can be torn apart if the ground ruptures. The potential for surface rupture is based on the concepts of recency and recurrence. Surface rupture along faults is generally limited to a linear zone a few meters wide. The Alquist-Priolo Act (see the Regulatory Setting discussion, above) was created to prohibit the location of structures designed for human occupancy across, or within 50 feet of, an active fault, thereby reducing the loss of life and property from an earthquake. The plan area does not have Alquist-Priolo fault zones within its boundary, but the nearest fault zone exists about 0.75 to 1 mile outside of the plan area to the north of the Area C new growth area (see **Figure 4.7-2**) (DOC, n.d.).

Figure 4.7-2 Major Faults



Source: County of Santa Cruz, 2025.

Ground Shaking/ Fault Rupture

Ground shaking and fault rupture are direct results of seismicity. Ground shaking is the vibration of the earth's surface caused by the release of energy during an earthquake, while fault rupture is the displacement of the ground surface along a fault trace during an earthquake event. The intensity and duration of ground shaking depend on factors such as earthquake magnitude, distance from the fault rupture, depth, and local geologic conditions (USGS, n.d.).

Given the significant seismic activity in the plan area in the past, it is nearly certain that such activity will occur in the future. The U.S. Geological Survey models a 72 percent probability that an earthquake of magnitude 6.7 or greater will occur in the San Francisco Bay region (including Santa Cruz County and the Monterey Bay area) before 2044 (USGS, 2016).

Although the timing of the next earthquake is impossible to predict, future earthquake hazards are inevitable due to the plan area's proximity to multiple fault lines. The U.S. Geological Survey has developed an earthquake forecast model, the Uniform California Earthquake Rupture Forecast (UCERF3), which provides a 30-year outlook from 2015 to 2045. The model forecasts that the northern San Andreas Fault has a lower likelihood of an earthquake compared to the southern San Andreas Fault partly because of the relatively recent 1906 earthquake on the northern fault. The Hayward-Rodgers Creek and Calaveras Faults in the San Francisco Bay Area are more likely to rupture than the northern San Andreas Fault given the time since the last earthquake. **Table 4.7-2** shows the probabilities for future earthquakes of 6.7 or greater magnitude originating from faults near the City.

Table 4.7-2 UCERF3 Fault Rupture Probability

Fault	Probability (6.7+ Magnitude)
Monterey Bay –Tularcitos Subsection 9	0.85 percent
San Andreas (Santa Cruz Mountains)	13.99 percent
San Gregorio (South) Subsection 12	1.38 percent
Zayante-Vergeles Subsection 5	0.08 percent

Source: Savran et al., 2020.

Liquefaction and Lateral Spreading

Liquefaction is a seismic hazard in which loose, water-saturated soils lose strength during earthquake shaking, potentially causing the ground to behave as a fluid. This condition can result in ground failure, settlement, and lateral spreading. The most vulnerable areas to liquefaction are areas that were originally bays or marshlands and were filled with artificial, poorly compacted material (**Figure 4.7-3**). Some soil types in the plan area are porous and prone to liquefaction, and areas where the height of the water table is less than 30 feet from the ground surface are vulnerable to liquefaction. Land subsidence is the gradual or sudden sinking of the ground as a result of underground mining, oil and gas extraction, sinkholes, or drainage and decomposition of organic soils. Areas where there is ground subsidence could be at risk of liquefaction because sinking ground will bring the surface of the ground closer to the groundwater table.

Lateral spreading is a secondary seismic hazard associated with liquefaction and refers to the horizontal displacement of soil resulting from the loss of strength in underlying saturated materials during seismic

shaking. Lateral spreading typically occurs on gentle slopes or in areas adjacent to a free face, such as river channels, sloughs, or other low-lying drainage features. This process can result in ground cracking, extension, and differential displacement that may damage foundations, utilities, and transportation infrastructure.

The presence of liquefaction-prone soils means that future earthquakes could trigger liquefaction in the City. Earthquakes at the nearby Zayante-Vergeles and San Gregorio Faults could cause sufficient ground shaking to trigger liquefaction, although the chance of an earthquake on these faults is relatively low. Larger, more distant faults, including the San Andreas Fault, are more likely to cause significant earthquakes, although the shaking from these earthquakes may not be strong enough to trigger liquefaction.

As shown in **Figure 4.7-3**, the southern and southeastern parts of the plan area face high to very-high risk of liquefaction (County of Santa Cruz, 2021). Given the presence of shallow groundwater, potentially liquefiable soils, and historically low-lying or filled areas, these same areas may also be susceptible to lateral spreading, particularly where located near drainage features or areas of subtle topographic gradient. Accordingly, future development within these portions of the plan area may be exposed to liquefaction and lateral spreading hazards, which could result in ground displacement, differential settlement, and damage to structures and infrastructure during a seismic event.

Other Geological Hazards

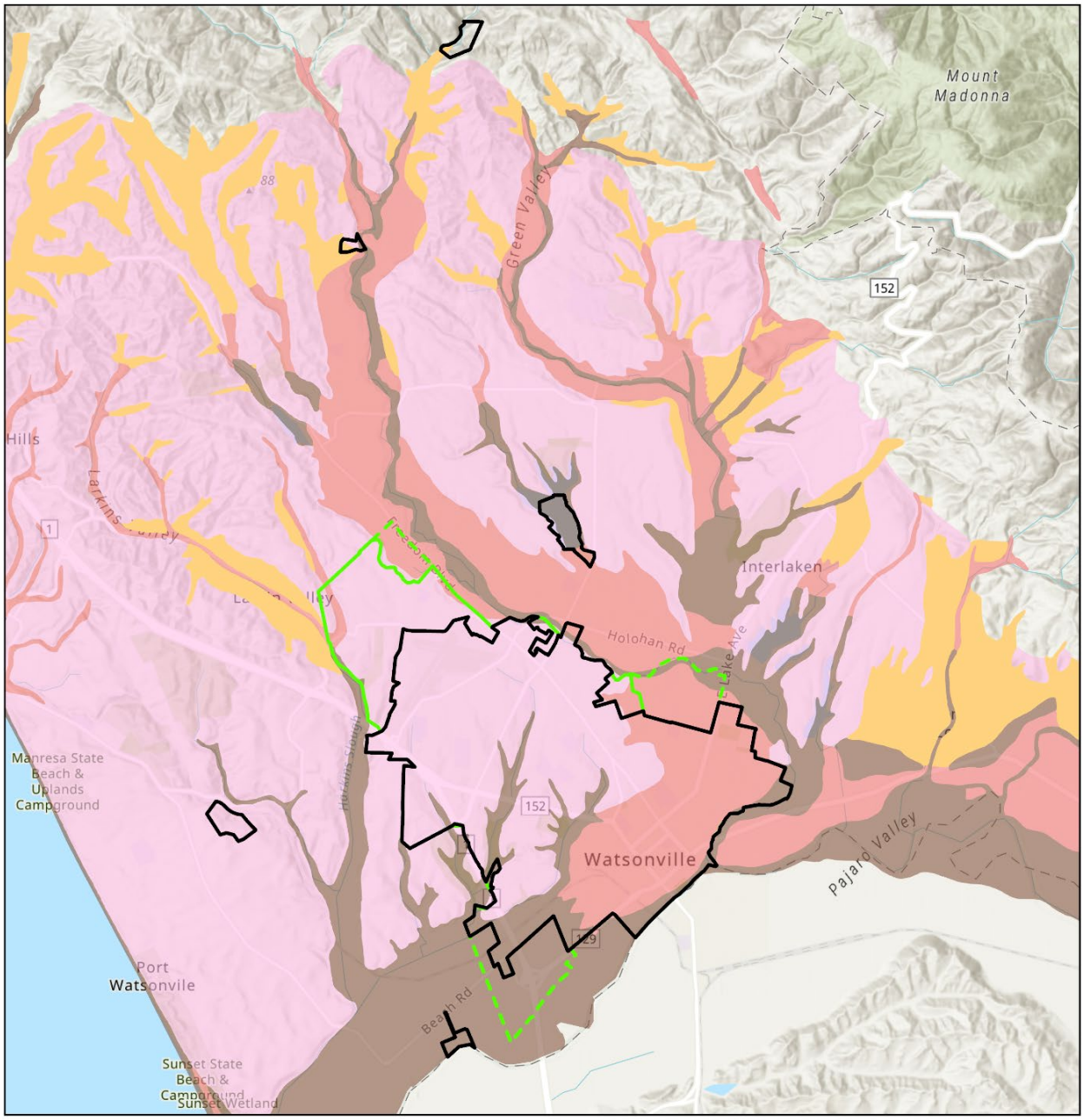
Landslides

Mass wasting refers to the collective group of processes that characterize down slope movement of rock and unconsolidated sediment overlying bedrock. These processes include landslides, slumps, rockfalls, flows, and creeps. Many factors contribute to the potential for mass wasting, including geologic conditions as well as the drainage, slope, and vegetation of the site. Landslides are more likely in areas with weak rocks and steep slopes. **Figure 4.7-4** maps the relative likelihood of deep-seated landslides based on regional estimates of rock strength and slope steepness. While the plan area is overall relatively flat, landslide susceptibility is rated medium to high in areas near waterbodies within the plan area, particularly streams and sloughs. Landslide susceptibility is rated high along the western border of the plan area, which corresponds with the upper reaches of Harkins Slough.

Paleontological Resources

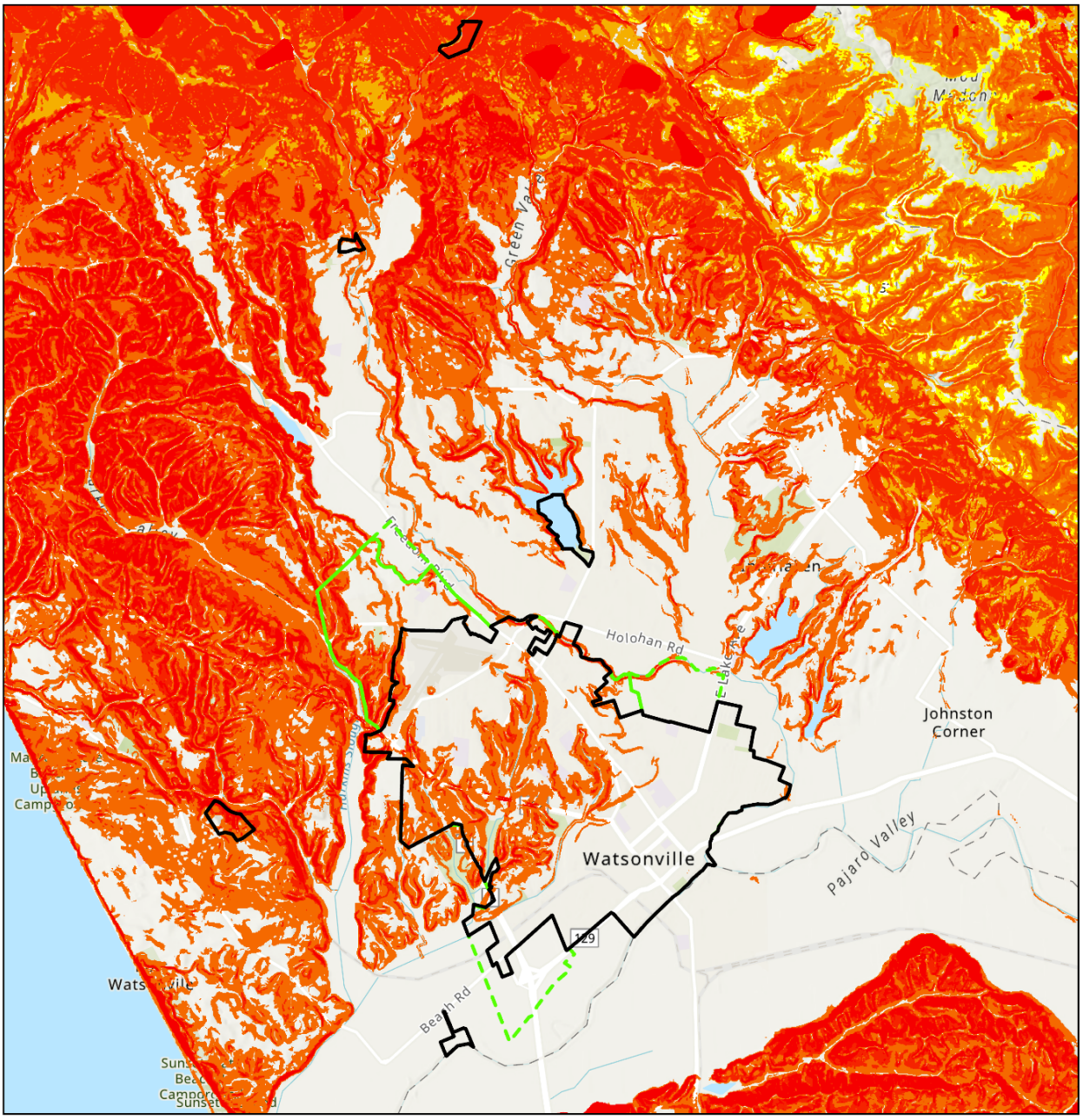
Significant nonrenewable vertebrate and invertebrate fossils and unique geologic units have been documented throughout California. The fossil yielding potential of a particular area is highly dependent on the geologic age and origin of the underlying rocks. Paleontological potential refers to the likelihood that a rock unit will yield a unique or significant paleontological resource. All sedimentary rocks, some volcanic rocks, and some low-grade metamorphic rocks have potential to yield significant paleontological resources. Depending on location, the paleontological potential of subsurface materials generally increases with depth beneath the surface, as well as with proximity to known fossiliferous deposits. According to the Santa Cruz County's Geo Paleo database shown on **Figure 4.7-5**, which was last updated in June 2024, the potential to encounter fossils in the plan area is low (County of Santa Cruz, 2024).

Figure 4.7-3 Liquefaction Risk



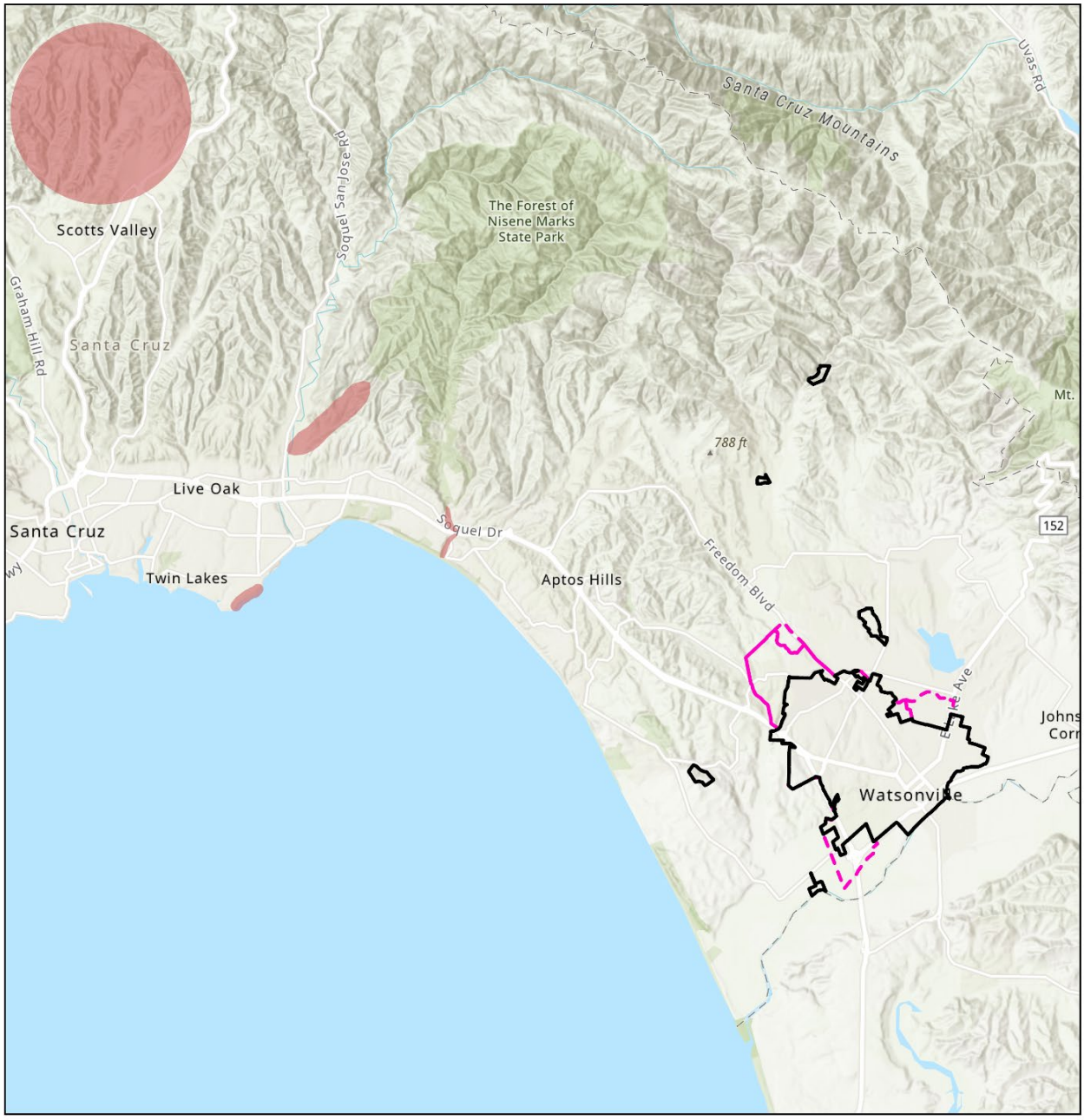
Source: County of Santa Cruz, 2022.

Figure 4.7-4 Landslide Susceptibility Areas



Source: California Department of Conservation, 2011.

Figure 4.7-5 Areas of Potential Geo Paleo Resources in Santa Cruz County



Source: County of Santa Cruz, 2024.

4.7.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.7.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to geology and soils would be considered significant if the project would:

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; or

   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; and/or

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.

4.7.2.2 Methodology

The analysis of geology, soils, and seismicity impacts was informed by a review of publicly available data from federal and state agencies, including the United States Geological Survey, the California Geological Survey, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These sources provided geologic, soils, and seismic hazard information that was used to characterize baseline conditions and assess potential risks such as seismic activity, landslides, unstable slopes, and other geologic hazards within the plan area.

4.7.2.3 Project Impacts

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.

&

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

&

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

&

iv) Landslides?

According to the Earthquake Zones of Required Investigation Map prepared by the California Department of Conservation, the City of Watsonville is not located within a designated Fault Area; however, the City's sphere of influence encompasses areas within the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones between Corralitos and Amesti (DOC, 2025). The only active fault within this area is the Zayante-Vergeles Fault in the Pajaro Valley. Additionally, the Earthquake Zones of Required Investigation Map does not identify any landslide or liquefaction zones within the plan area.

Because the plan area is subject to earthquakes, and seismic-related hazards, such as strong ground shaking, the City has adopted by reference CBC in WMC Section 8-3.01. All new development would be required to be constructed compliant to the CBC to reduce the impacts resulting from seismic hazards. The City's Municipal Code requires preparation of project-specific geotechnical investigations, and recommendations in the geotechnical investigation must be incorporated into the project design.

As shown in **Figure 4.7-3**, the plan area contains mapped liquefaction risk levels ranging from low to very high. Low liquefaction risk is mapped across much of the western and northwestern portions of the plan area, including areas within and near the existing and proposed Urban Limit Lines. High liquefaction risk is mapped through portions of central, eastern, and southeastern Watsonville, including areas near Holohan Road and the eastern side of the City boundary. Very high liquefaction risk is mapped along portions of the southern and southwestern plan area, including areas near Beach Road and the Pajaro Valley. Moderate liquefaction risk is shown in limited areas within the broader map extent, but it is not the predominant mapped risk category within the plan area.

As shown in **Figure 4.7-4,** the landslide susceptibility map identifies susceptibility classes ranging from Class 0 to Class X. The central and southeastern portions of Watsonville are predominantly mapped as Class 0, indicating limited mapped landslide susceptibility in the flatter urbanized areas. Discontinuous areas of mapped susceptibility, including Classes V through VIII, occur along portions of the western, northwestern, and northern edges of the City and near portions of the existing and proposed Urban Limit Lines. The highest susceptibility classes in the plan area, including Classes IX and X, are generally concentrated outside the Watsonville city boundary in the surrounding hillside areas to the west, north, northeast, and southeast. Portions of the city boundary and Urban Limit Lines overlap with mapped landslide susceptibility areas, but the majority of the urbanized city area is mapped as Class 0.

The following General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions would reduce potential impacts to geology and soils but impacts may still be significant depending on location.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

Goal S-1: Land Use Safety. Plan for and regulate the uses of land to provide a pattern of urban development that will minimize exposure to hazards from either natural or human-related causes.

Policy S-1.1 Soil Constraints. The City shall take all appropriate actions to ensure that current land use activities and new developments are mitigated to prevent soil failure and other soil-related dangers.

Action S-1.1.1 Risk Mitigation. The City shall identify and mitigate to an acceptable level of risk new development proposed in areas with geologic, seismic, flood, or other environmental constraints.

Action S-1.1.2 Soils Investigation. The City shall require a soils investigation report prior to new development on sites deemed to have a high potential for soil erosion, landslide, or other soil-related constraints.

Action S-1.1.3 Foundation Design. The City shall require that new development provide for appropriate foundation design to comply with City building standards and recommendations of the soils investigation.

Action S-1.1.4 Slope. The City shall strongly discourage development on slopes greater than 25 percent.

Action S-1.1.5 Final Soil Grade. The City shall require that soil grading blend with natural topography and that final cut slopes shall be no steeper than three horizontal to one vertical (33 percent).

Goal LC-4 Sustainable and Resilient Development. New development will be designed and constructed to serve the long-term needs of the community, minimize operating costs, limit environmental impacts, and avoid and adapt to natural hazards and other potential threats.

Policy LC-4.2 Natural Hazards. New development shall be sited and designed to withstand natural hazards, including wildfire, flooding, seismic activity, and drought. In hazard-prone areas (e.g., floodplains, fire hazard severity zones), new development shall be sited and designed to avoid compounding risk for adjacent properties and the surrounding area.

Goal S-4 Seismic and Other Geologic Hazards. Reduce the potential for loss of life, injury, and economic damage resulting from earthquakes and associated geologic hazards.

Policy S-4.1 Seismic Hazards. The City shall use the development review process to ensure that potential geologic hazards are evaluated and mitigated prior to construction.

Action S-4.1.1 Geologic Review. The City may require a geotechnical report prepared by a registered professional prior to the issuance of a building permit.

Action S-4.1.2 Structural Design. The City shall place structural design conditions on new development to ensure that recommendations of the geotechnical evaluation are implemented.

Action S-4.1.3 Setbacks. The City shall require that all structures be located a minimum of 50 feet from any active or potentially active fault trace.

Action S-4.1.4 Essential Facilities Integrity. The City shall evaluate the ability of essential public facilities to maintain structural integrity as defined by the state in the event of a strong earthquake. Those facilities unable to maintain structural integrity shall be modified to bring them into conformance. Emergency guidelines shall be developed in those buildings where structural modification is not feasible.

Action S-4.1.5 Seismic Safety Conditions. The City shall require the application of seismic safety use conditions for development in the Seismic Safety District (EM-SS) as described in the Zoning Code.

Action S-4.1.6 Seismic Hazard Mapping. The City shall update current seismic hazard zone maps as new information becomes available and use those maps in the development and application of an environmental constraint matrix to evaluate proposed building sites.

Action S-4.1.7 Earthquake Preparedness and Response. The City shall participate with other appropriate agencies to provide the public with information on what actions to take before, during, and after an earthquake.

As part of plan implementation, a geotechnical investigation would be prepared for development facilitated by the project pursuant to the WMC, which would identify site-specific geologic and soil conditions. The geotechnical investigation would make recommendations to avoid and minimize risks related to potential existing geologic and soil hazards within the plan area. Incorporating geotechnical recommendations would help prevent or reduce seismic damage and risks in new development, while ensuring compliance with the CBC, state regulations, WMC and advancing General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions aimed at mitigating natural hazards such as earthquakes, ground shaking, liquefaction, and landslides would ensure that the impacts associated with the aforementioned seismic hazards are minimized to the maximum extent practicable. Therefore, the project would result in a less than significant impact. (Less than Significant Impact)

b) Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would have a significant environmental impact if it would result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil. As discussed earlier in **Section 4.7.1.2, Existing Conditions,** most soils in the plan area consist of loam soil types, and their erodibility is influenced by the area's relatively flat topography. However, clearing, grading, excavation, and construction activities associated with development anticipated under buildout of the proposed General Plan could impact water quality through soil erosion and increase the amount of silt and debris carried in runoff.

The following General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions would reduce potential impacts to erosion and loss of top soil but impacts may still be significant.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

Goal S-1: Land Use Safety. Plan for and regulate the uses of land to provide a pattern of urban development that will minimize exposure to hazards from either natural or human-related causes.

Policy S-1.1 Soil Constraints. The City shall take all appropriate actions to ensure that current land use activities and new developments are mitigated to prevent soil failure and other soil-related dangers.

Action S-1.1.1 Risk Mitigation. The City shall identify and mitigate to an acceptable level of risk new development proposed in areas with geologic, seismic, flood, or other environmental constraints.

Action S-1.1.2 Soils Investigation. The City shall require a soils investigation report prior to new development on sites deemed to have a high potential for soil erosion, landslide, or other soil-related constraints.

Action S-1.1.3 Foundation Design. The City shall require that new development provide for appropriate foundation design to comply with City building standards and recommendations of the soils investigation.

Action S-1.1.4 Slope. The City shall strongly discourage development on slopes greater than 25 percent.

Action S-1.1.5 Final Soil Grade. The City shall require that soil grading blend with natural topography and that final cut slopes shall be no steeper than three horizontal to one vertical (33 percent).

In addition to these provisions of General Plan 2050, an extensive set of federal, state, and regional regulations address erosion and runoff, particularly during construction of development that would be allowed under General Plan 2050. New development that disturbs one or more acres of land within the plan area would be required to comply with the NPDES GCP as well as prepare a SWPPP that requires the incorporation of BMPs to control sedimentation, erosion, and hazardous materials contamination of runoff during construction.

Additionally, projects must comply with the City of Watsonville's Municipal Code where any non-storm water discharges to the City storm water sewer system are prohibited, unless in compliance with an NPDES permit (WMC § 6-3.525). The City of Watsonville's Post-Construction Stormwater Management Requirements would ensure the reduction of pollutant discharges to the maximum extent practicable and prevent stormwater discharges from causing or contributing to a violation of receiving water quality standards in all applicable development projects that require approvals and/or permits issued by the City (City of Watsonville, 2014). Project applicants must also implement City-approved BMPs to control stormwater runoff and minimize potential impacts to water quality. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would not have a substantial adverse effect on the potential for risk of loss, injury, or death involving substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil and the impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

Development allowed under General Plan 2050 could result in the exposure of people and structures to conditions that have the potential for adverse effects associated with ground instability or failure. Soils and geologic conditions in the plan area have the potential for landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse as discussed in **Section 4.7.1.2, Existing Conditions.**

As future development and infrastructure projects are proposed in the plan area, each project would be evaluated for consistency with the CBC, applicable General Plan 2050 policies (see listed goals, policies and actions listed under [a]), zoning regulations, and other requirements. Some projects would also be subject to detailed environmental review under the CEQA.

As per CBC and WMC requirements, all future development in the plan area would require site-specific geotechnical investigations, the recommendations of which would be incorporated into project design. In addition to these CBC safeguards, the City's grading and building permit process can provide protections where potentially serious geologic risks are known to be present. Compliance with applicable regulations, along with implementation of General Plan policies, would reduce risks associated with geologic hazards,

including landslides, lateral spreading, liquefaction, and other ground failures, to acceptable levels. Accordingly, impacts related to ground instability or failure would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

The surface and near-surface soils observed throughout the plan area consist of varying combinations of loams, clays, silts, sands, gravels, and cobbles. As shown in **Table 4.7-1**, the clayey soils are considered to have moderate to high shrink–swell potential and are therefore more susceptible to expansion. Loam soils are also identified as having low to high shrink–swell potential, which varies depending on their relative position to the ground surface. Previously developed areas within the plan area contained expansive clayey soils, and it is anticipated that there are localized areas within the plan area that contain expansive soils. Due to expansive soil conditions in Watsonville, a soils report is required for all new construction projects, pursuant to CBC Section 1803 (City of Watsonville, 2025). Preliminary soil reports may include measures that should be incorporated into project plans that would reduce potential impacts related to expansive soil or other potentially-hazardous soil conditions. Further, grading and erosion control measures are required under WMC Chapter 7-6. The implementation of the existing State regulations and requirements in the City of Watsonville Municipal Code would reduce potential expansive soil impacts to less than significant levels. (Less than Significant Impact)

e) Would the project have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

The plan area is served by the City's sanitary sewer system. The Wastewater Division of Watsonville is charged with protecting public health and safety by ensuring that wastewater is properly collected, treated, and discharged. Septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems would not be required for new development envisioned in General Plan 2050. Watsonville's wastewater treatment facility has a rated treatment capacity of 10.3 million gallons per day (MGD) average annual flow. The current flow is approximately 5.3 MGD average annual flow, meaning the facility is operating at about half of its rated capacity and has remaining available treatment capacity.

Overall, the City does not allow septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems to be installed. Therefore, the impacts related to reliance on septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems in areas with inappropriate soils would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

f) Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

As shown in **Figure 4.7-5,** which maps paleontological resources in the Santa Cruz County area, the plan area does not have potential for these resources to be discovered. However, there always exists a possibility of encountering paleontological resources when conducting subsurface earthwork activities for development facilitated by the project, such as excavation for installation of utilities.

General Plan 2050 includes the following Goal, Policies, and Actions, to protect paleontological resources:

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts

> **Goal C-8 Paleontological Resources:** To protect paleontological resources from adverse impacts of development.

> **Policy C-7.1 The City shall protect paleontological resources.** The City shall safeguard citywide protect paleontological resources by extend and encouraging private participation in the identification, preservation, and stewardship of fossil resources.
>
> **Action C-7.1.1 Ordinance:** The City shall amend its municipal code to extend protection of paleontological resources to all areas of the City, and all construction within the planning area.
>
> **Action C-7.1.2 Private Participation:** The City shall foster and encourage private efforts to preserve paleontological sites and fossils.

However, even with adherence to the General Plan Goals, Policies, and Actions listed above, impacts to paleontological resources may still occur. As such, **Mitigation Measure GEO-1** would be implemented to reduce impacts to paleontological resources.

Mitigation Measure GEO-1: Discovery of Paleontological Resources

In the event that fossils or fossil bearing deposits are discovered during ground disturbing activities, excavations within a 50-foot radius of the find shall be temporarily halted or diverted. Ground disturbance work shall cease until a City-approved qualified paleontologist determines whether the resource requires further study. The paleontologist shall document the discovery as needed in accordance with Society of Vertebrate Paleontology standards (Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, 2025), evaluate the potential resource, and assess the significance of the find under the criteria set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. The paleontologist shall notify the appropriate agencies to determine procedures that would be followed before construction activities are allowed to resume at the location of the find. If avoidance is not feasible, the paleontologist shall prepare an excavation plan for mitigating the effect of construction activities on the discovery. The excavation plan shall be submitted to the City for review and approval prior to implementation, and all construction activity shall adhere to the recommendations in the excavation plan.

Significance After Mitigation

Mitigation Measure GEO-1 requires that, in the event paleontological resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, work shall be halted in the vicinity of the find until a City-approved qualified paleontologist evaluates the resource and determines the appropriate procedures for treatment, documentation, and/or recovery. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure GEO-1** and of General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions, implementation of the plan would not result in a substantial impacts to paleontological resources. Therefore, impact impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation)

4.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This section provides analysis of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions impacts that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. The following discussion is based in part on the Air Quality Assessment prepared for the proposed project by Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc. (I&R), dated June 15, 2026 (Appendix C).

As discussed in **Section 4.3, Air Quality**, several comments related to GHG and air quality were received during the public scoping process. The Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) recommended that the EIR quantitatively evaluate potential air quality impacts associated with planned growth, particularly in disadvantaged communities and near sensitive receptors, and incorporate emission-reduction strategies such as electric vehicle infrastructure, public charging stations, walkable and bicycle-friendly design, vehicle miles traveled (VMT)-reduction measures, and electric transit investments. MBARD also recommended that the California Climate Investment Priority Population map being reviewed, as part of the General Plan 2050 area is designated as a disadvantaged community on this map. Watsonville Airport Management also provided a comment expressing concern regarding emissions associated with growth in the Buena Vista Area. These comments are addressed in **Section 4.3, Air Quality**, which evaluates potential air quality impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project. In addition, GHG-related considerations, including emissions-reduction strategies and potential impacts associated with planned growth, are further evaluated in **Section 4.8.2.2, Project Impacts**. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife also provided a comment noting that the analysis should consider permanent and temporary habitat disturbance and associated air pollution effects, which are addressed in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**, as applicable.

4.8.1 Environmental Setting

GHG emissions are various gases that are released into the atmosphere, largely as a by-product of burning fossil fuels, such as oil, natural gas and coal, or methane during the production and transport of fossil fuels. Scientists have concluded that human activities are contributing to global climate change by adding large amounts of heat-trapping GHG to the atmosphere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has identified four major GHGs—water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and ozone (O_3)—that are the likely cause of an increase in global average temperatures observed in the 20th and 21st centuries. Other GHGs identified by the IPCC that contribute to global warming to a lesser extent are nitrous oxide (N_2O), sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6), hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and chlorofluorocarbons. The major GHGs are briefly described below.

- Carbon dioxide (CO_2) enters the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, and coal), solid waste, trees and wood products, and respiration, and also as a result of other chemical reactions (e.g., manufacture of cement). Carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere (i.e., sequestered) when it is absorbed by plants as part of the biological carbon cycle.
- Methane (CH_4) is emitted during the production and transport of coal, natural gas, and oil. Methane emissions also result from livestock and other agricultural practices, and from the decay of organic waste in landfills and water treatment facilities.
- Nitrous oxide (N_2O) is emitted during agricultural and industrial activities as well as during the combustion of fossil fuels and solid waste.
- Fluorinated gases are synthetic, strong GHGs that are emitted from a variety of industrial processes. Fluorinated gases are sometimes used as substitutes for ozone-depleting substances.

These gases are typically emitted in smaller quantities, but because they are potent GHGs, they are sometimes referred to as high global-warming-potential (GWP) gases. Fluorinated gases include the following:

- Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are GHGs covered under the 1987 Montreal Protocol and used for refrigeration, air conditioning, packaging, insulation, solvents, or aerosol propellants. Since they are not destroyed in the lower atmosphere (i.e., troposphere), CFCs drift into the upper atmosphere where, given suitable conditions, they break down the ozone layer. These gases are therefore being replaced by other compounds that are GHGs covered under the Kyoto Protocol.
- Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) are a group of human-made chemicals composed of carbon and fluorine only. These chemicals (predominantly perfluoromethane [CF_4] and perfluoroethane [C_2F_6]) were introduced as alternatives, along with HFCs, to ozone-depleting substances. In addition, PFCs are emitted as by-products of industrial processes and are used in manufacturing. PFCs do not harm the stratospheric ozone layer, but they have a high GWP.
- Sulfur Hexafluoride (SF_6) is a colorless gas that is soluble in alcohol and ether and slightly soluble in water. SF_6 is a strong GHG used primarily in electrical transmission and distribution systems as an insulator.
- Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) contain hydrogen, fluorine, chlorine, and carbon atoms. Although they are ozone-depleting substances, they are less potent than CFCs. They have been introduced as temporary replacements for CFCs.
- Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) contain only hydrogen, fluorine, and carbon atoms. They were introduced as alternatives to ozone-depleting substances to serve many industrial, commercial, and personal needs. HFCs are emitted as by-products of industrial processes and are also used in manufacturing. They do not significantly deplete the stratospheric ozone layer, but they are strong GHGs.

The GWPs of GHGs are dependent on the lifetime or persistence of the gas molecule in the atmosphere. Some GHGs have a stronger greenhouse effect than others. As noted above, they are referred to as high GWP gases. The GWP is used to convert GHGs to CO_2-equivalence (CO_2e) to show the relative potential that different GHGs have to retain infrared radiation in the atmosphere and contribute to the green-house effect. For example, under IPCC's Second Assessment Report, the GWP value for CH_4 is 21; a project that generates 10 metric tons (MT) of CH_4 would be equivalent to 210 MT of CO_2.

California's GHG Emissions and Sector Contributions

The California Air Resources Board's (CARB) 2025 edition of the statewide GHG inventory provides emissions estimates for calendar years 2000 through 2023 using the 100-year global warming potential values from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report. In 2023, statewide GHG emissions totaled approximately 360.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, a decrease of approximately 3.0 percent from 2022 and the lowest level recorded during the 2000–2023 inventory period (CARB, 2025b).

Transportation remained the largest source of statewide GHG emissions in 2023, accounting for approximately 37.1 percent of the total. The industrial sector accounted for approximately 18.6 percent, electric power for 15.9 percent, commercial and residential uses for 12.0 percent, agriculture for 8.1 percent, high-global-warming-potential gases for 5.9 percent, and recycling and waste for 2.4 percent (CARB, 2025b). **Table 4.8-1** provides the $MMTCO_2e$ GHG emissions inventory by scoping plan sector.

Table 4.8-1 CARB GHG Emissions by Scoping Plan Sector ($MMTCO_2e$)

Inventory Sector	2023
Transportation	133.7
Electric Power	57.2
Industrial	66.9
Commercial and Residential	43.3
Agriculture	29.2
High Global Warming Potential	21.4
Recycling and Waste	8.6
Total	**360.4**

Source: CARB, 2025b.

Human Influence on Climate Change

For approximately 1,000 years before the Industrial Revolution, atmospheric GHG concentrations remained comparatively stable. Since industrialization, human activities, primarily fossil-fuel combustion and land-use changes, including deforestation—have substantially increased atmospheric GHG concentrations. Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations have risen by more than 51 percent since preindustrial times and increased at an average rate of approximately 2.6 parts per million per year from 2014 through 2024 (NOAA, 2025; IPCC, 2023).

GHG emissions and concentrations have typically caused global warming. Recent increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide and methane exceed natural glacial–interglacial changes over at least the past 800,000 years, and global surface temperature has increased faster since 1970 than during any other 50-year period in at least the past 2,000 years. As a result, many climate-related changes are occurring over decades and within human lifetimes (IPCC, 2023).

The magnitude and regional effects of future climate change will depend on future GHG emissions, land-use changes, technological development, and mitigation efforts. Although uncertainty varies by location and climate variables, observed and projected effects include more frequent and intense heat and heavy-precipitation events; increased drought, aridity, and wildfire risk in some regions; changes in water availability, quality, groundwater recharge, runoff, and streamflow; and continued sea-level rise, coastal flooding, erosion, and saltwater intrusion. Climate change is also projected to increase heat-related illness and mortality, food-, water-, and vector-borne disease risks, and adverse mental health outcomes. These effects may also damage ecosystems, infrastructure, livelihoods, and food and water security (IPCC, 2021; IPCC, 2022; IPCC, 2023).

4.8.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

United States Environmental Protection Agency Endangerment Finding

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) announced on December 7, 2009, that GHG emissions threaten the public health and welfare of the American people and that GHG emissions from on-road vehicles contribute to that threat. The U.S. EPA's final findings respond to the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that GHG emissions fit within the Clean Air Act definition of air pollutants. The findings did not impose any emission reduction requirements but served as the legal prerequisite for subsequent federal GHG emission standards for new motor vehicles and engines.

On February 12, 2026, U.S. EPA finalized a rule rescinding the 2009 Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Findings. The final rule determined that Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act does not authorize U.S. EPA to prescribe GHG emission standards for new motor vehicles and engines in response to global climate change concerns. As a result, U.S. EPA also repealed the subsequent federal GHG emission standards for light-, medium-, and heavy-duty on-highway vehicles and engines. The final rule applies only to GHG emissions and does not affect federal standards for traditional air pollutants.

The six GHGs addressed by the rescinded 2009 finding—CO_2, CH_4, N_2O, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and SF_6—have been the subject of scrutiny and intense analysis for decades by scientists in the United States and around the world. The first three constitute the majority of GHG emissions from land uses in the City and, per Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) guidance, are the GHG emissions that should be evaluated as part of a community GHG emissions inventory.

United States Mandatory Report Rule for GHGs (2009)

In response to the endangerment finding, the U.S. EPA issued the Mandatory Reporting of GHG Rule that requires substantial emitters of GHG emissions (e.g., large stationary sources) to report GHG emissions data. Facilities that emit 25,000 $MTCO_2e$ per year are required to submit an annual report.

Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards

The current Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards (for model years 2011 to 2016) incorporate stricter fuel economy requirements promulgated by the federal government and California into one uniform standard. Additionally, automakers are required to cut GHG emissions in new vehicles by roughly 25 percent by 2016 (resulting in a fleet average of 35.5 miles per gallon [mpg] by 2016).

Rulemaking to adopt these new standards was completed in 2010. California agreed to allow auto makers who show compliance with the national program to be considered in compliance with state requirements. The federal government issued new standards in 2012 for model years 2017 to 2025, which will require a fleet average of 54.5 mpg in 2025.

State

Current State of California guidance and goals for reductions in GHG emissions are generally embodied in Executive Order S-03-05, Executive Order B-30-15, Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), and Senate Bill 375 (SB 375).

Executive Order S-03-05

Executive Order S-3-05, signed June 1, 2005, set the following GHG reduction targets for the state:

- Reduce statewide GHG emissions to 2000 levels by 2010.
- Reduce statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.
- Reduce statewide GHG emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

Executive Order B-30-15

Executive Order B-30-15, signed April 29, 2015, sets a goal of reducing GHG emissions within the state to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. Executive Order B-30-15 also directs CARB to update the Scoping Plan to quantify the 2030 GHG reduction goal for the state and requires state agencies to implement measures to meet the interim 2030 goal of Executive Order B-30-15 as well as the long-term goal for 2050 in Executive Order S-03-5. It also requires the Natural Resources Agency to conduct triennial updates of the California adaption strategy, Safeguarding California, in order to ensure climate change is accounted for in state planning and investment decisions.

Executive Order N-79-20

Executive Order N-79-20, issued September 23, 2020, establishes statewide goals for 100 percent of new passenger cars and trucks sold in California to be zero-emission by 2035; all medium- and heavy-duty vehicles operating in the state to be zero-emission by 2045, where feasible, including drayage trucks by 2035; and all off-road vehicles and equipment to be zero-emission by 2035, where feasible. The order directs the CARB to develop regulations and strategies to achieve these goals, considering technological feasibility and cost-effectiveness. It also directs state agencies to accelerate zero-emission vehicle charging and fueling infrastructure, support clean transportation and transit investments, reduce the carbon intensity of transportation fuels, and facilitate the state's transition away from fossil fuels. The order applies to new vehicle sales and future fleet-transition goals and does not require the removal of existing gasoline-powered vehicles.

Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act

Current State of California guidance and goals for reductions in GHG emissions are generally embodied in AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act. AB 32 was passed by the California state legislature on August 31, 2006, to place the state on a course toward reducing its contribution of GHG emissions. AB 32 follows the 2020 tier of emissions reduction targets established in Executive Order S-3-05.

CARB Climate Change Scoping Plan

CARB adopted the original Climate Change Scoping Plan in 2008 to identify measures to achieve the AB 32 target of reducing statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. CARB adopted the First Update to the Scoping Plan in 2014 and the 2017 Scoping Plan Update to address the SB 32 target of reducing statewide GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

CARB adopted the 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality to provide a framework for achieving the state's long-term climate goals. The 2022 Scoping Plan identifies a path to achieve carbon neutrality no later than 2045 and to reduce anthropogenic GHG emissions by 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045. The plan includes strategies across major sectors of the economy, including transportation, energy, buildings, industry, natural and working lands, and waste. The final Scoping Plan

was adopted by CARB on December 11, 2008. AB 32 directed CARB to adopt discrete early action measures to reduce GHG emissions and outline additional reduction measures to meet the 2020 target. In order to effectively implement the emissions cap, AB 32 directed CARB to establish a mandatory reporting system to track and monitor GHG emissions levels for large stationary sources that generate more than 25,000 $MTCO_2e$ per year, prepare a plan demonstrating how the 2020 deadline can be met, and develop appropriate regulations and programs to implement the plan by 2012.

California Cap-and-Invest Program

As part of its implementation of AB 32, CARB established the Cap-and-Trade Program, with compliance obligations beginning in 2013. In 2025, AB 1207 extended the market-based compliance program through December 31, 2045, and renamed it to the California Cap-and-Invest Program.

The Cap-and-Invest Program establishes a declining limit on GHG emissions from major emission sources and fuel suppliers. CARB creates allowances equal to the total emissions permitted under the statewide cap, with each allowance representing one metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent. Covered entities must surrender sufficient allowances and other eligible compliance instruments to account for their covered emissions. The number of allowances created declines over time, providing an economic incentive to reduce emissions and invest in cleaner, more efficient technologies. The program covers sources responsible for approximately 80 percent of California's statewide GHG emissions and operates in conjunction with other sector-specific emission-reduction measures.

Senate Bill 375

In 2008, Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, was adopted to connect the GHG emissions reduction targets established in the Scoping Plan for the transportation sector to local land use decisions that affect travel behavior. Its intent is to reduce GHG emissions from light-duty trucks and automobiles by aligning regional long-range transportation plans, investments, and housing allocations with local land use planning to reduce VMT and vehicle trips. Specifically, SB 375 requires CARB to establish GHG emissions reduction targets for each of the 18 regions in California managed by a metropolitan planning organization (MPO). For the City of Watsonville, which is located in Santa Cruz County, the applicable MPO is the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). AMBAG prepares the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) for the Monterey Bay region, including Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. Pursuant to SB 375, AMBAG's MTP/SCS is intended to demonstrate how the region will meet its regional GHG reduction target through integrated land use, housing, and transportation planning.

Senate Bill 535

Senate Bill 535 (SB 535) established the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund in 2011 as a component of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. Under this bill, a minimum of 35 percent of California Climate Investments must be allocated to projects that benefit priority populations, which include disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and low-income households.

Assembly Bill 1493

California vehicle GHG emission standards were enacted under Assembly Bill 1493 (AB 1493), also known as Pavley I. Pavley I established clean-car standards intended to reduce GHG emissions from new passenger vehicles, including light-duty automobiles and medium-duty vehicles, beginning with model year 2009. California implements these standards through a waiver granted by the U.S. EPA.

In 2012, the U.S. EPA issued a Final Rulemaking establishing more stringent fuel economy and GHG emissions standards for model years 2017 through 2025 light-duty vehicles. In January 2012, CARB also approved the Advanced Clean Cars program, formerly known as Pavley II, for model years 2017 through 2025. The program combined requirements for reducing smog-forming pollutants, soot, and GHG emissions with requirements for increasing the number of zero-emission vehicles.

CARB has since adopted the Advanced Clean Cars II program, which builds upon the Advanced Clean Cars program and establishes more stringent low-emission vehicle and zero-emission vehicle requirements for model years 2026 through 2035 and subsequent model years. Together, these statewide vehicle standards are intended to reduce emissions from California's on-road light-duty vehicle fleet over time.

Executive Order S-01-07

On January 18, 2007, the state set a new low carbon fuel standard (LCFS) for transportation fuels sold in the state. Executive Order S-1-07 sets a declining standard for GHG emissions, measured in CO_2e grams per unit of fuel energy sold in California. The LCFS requires a reduction of 2.5 percent in the carbon intensity of California's transportation fuels by 2015 and a reduction of at least 10 percent by 2020.The standard applies to refiners, blenders, producers, and importers of transportation fuels, and would use market-based mechanisms to allow providers to choose how they reduce emissions during the "fuel cycle" using the most economically feasible methods.

Executive Order B-16-2012

On March 23, 2012, the state directed CARB, the California Energy Commission (CEC), the Public Utilities Commission, and other relevant agencies to work with the Plug-in Electric Vehicle Collaborative and the California Fuel Cell Partnership to establish benchmarks to accommodate zero-emissions vehicles in major metropolitan areas, including infrastructure to support them (e.g., electric vehicle charging stations). The executive order also directs the number of zero-emission vehicles in California's state vehicle fleet to increase through the normal course of fleet replacement so that at least 10 percent of fleet purchases of light-duty vehicles are zero-emission by 2015 and at least 25 percent by 2020.The executive order also establishes a target for the transportation sector of reducing GHG emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

Renewable Portfolio Standard and Senate Bill 100

California's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) requires retail sellers of electricity to increase the amount of electricity procured from eligible renewable energy resources. Earlier RPS legislation established targets of 20 percent and 33 percent renewable electricity. Senate Bill 100, adopted in 2018, accelerated and expanded California's clean electricity requirements by requiring 60 percent renewable electricity by 2030 and establishing a statewide policy that eligible renewable and zero-carbon resources supply 100 percent of California retail electricity sales and state agency electricity needs by 2045.

California Building Code: Building and Energy Efficiency Standards

Energy conservation standards for new residential and nonresidential buildings were originally adopted by the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (now the CEC) in June 1977 (California Code of Regulations [CCR],Title 24, Part 6). Title 24 requires the design of building shells and building components to conserve energy. The standards are updated about every three years to allow for consideration of new energy efficiency technologies and methods. In 2012, the CEC adopted the 2013 Building and Energy Efficiency Standards, which went into effect on July 1, 2014. Buildings that are

constructed in accordance with the 2013 Building and Energy Efficiency Standards are 25 percent (residential) to 30 percent (nonresidential) more energy efficient than the 2008 standards as a result of changes in requirements for windows, insulation, lighting, ventilation systems, and other features that reduce energy consumption in homes and businesses.

Subsequent updates to the Building Energy Efficiency Standards continued to strengthen requirements for the construction of, and additions and alterations to, residential and non-residential buildings. Most recently, the CEC adopted the 2025 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which became effective January 1, 2026, and apply to buildings for which permit applications are submitted on or after that date.

The 2025 standards expand the use of energy-efficient heat pumps in newly constructed residential buildings, establish electric-readiness requirements, strengthen ventilation and building-efficiency standards, and include strategies to shift energy use away from peak-demand periods. These requirements are intended to reduce building energy consumption and associated GHG emissions and support California's broader building-decarbonization and climate goals.

California Building Standards Code: CALGreen

On July 17, 2008, the California Building Standards Commission adopted the nation's first green building standards. The California Green Building Standards Code (Title 24 CCR, Part 11, known as "CALGreen") was adopted as part of the California Building Standards Code (Title 24 CCR). CALGreen established planning and design standards for sustainable site development, energy and water efficiency (in excess of the California Energy Code requirements), electric-vehicle charging, material conservation and waste reduction, and indoor air contaminants. The mandatory provisions of CALGreen became effective January 1, 2011, have subsequently been updated. The current 2025 CALGreen Code became effective January 1, 2026, and applies to most newly constructed residential and nonresidential buildings and certain additions and alterations. The building standards are enforced through the local building permit process.

2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations

The 2006 Appliance Efficiency Regulations (Title 20 CCR, §§ 1601–1608) were adopted by the CEC on October 11, 2006, and approved by the California Office of Administrative Law on December 14, 2006. The regulations include standards for both federally regulated appliances and non-federally regulated appliances. Though these regulations are now often viewed as "business as usual," they exceed the standards imposed by any other state, and they reduce GHG emissions by reducing energy demand.

Regional

Monterey Bay Air Resources District

The Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD), formerly known as the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, is the regional air district responsible for air quality planning, permitting, monitoring, and enforcement in the North Central Coast Air Basin (NCCAB), which includes Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. MBARD is responsible for implementing federal and state air quality requirements at the regional level and for assisting local jurisdictions and lead agencies in evaluating air quality impacts under CEQA.

The CARB has established state health-based ambient air quality standards for criteria pollutants, including ozone and particulate matter. Under the California Clean Air Act of 1988, air districts that do not meet state air quality standards are required to prepare plans to demonstrate how the region will

attain the applicable standards. For the MBARD jurisdiction, the primary criteria pollutants of concern are ozone and particulate matter, including $PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10}.

MBARD's Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) provides the regional planning framework for addressing air quality standards in the North Central Coast Air Basin. The 1991 AQMP was the first plan prepared in response to the California Clean Air Act of 1988. MBARD's 2012–2015 AQMP serves as an update to the 1991 AQMP and evaluates regional air quality trends, emissions inventories, and mobile source programs. The plan focuses primarily on continued progress toward meeting the state ozone standard, including the 8-hour ozone standard, and identifies the importance of reducing ozone precursors, including reactive organic gases (ROG) and oxides of nitrogen (NO_x).

The AQMP relies on coordination among federal, state, regional, and local agencies, including the U.S. EPA, CARB, MBARD, local governments, and the AMBAG. MBARD also provides CEQA guidance to assist lead agencies in evaluating project-level air quality impacts and recommends the use of CalEEMod to estimate project emissions.

Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments

AMBAG has developed regional emission targets in accordance with requirements of SB 375. In collaboration with Pacific Gas and Electric Company, AMBAG is also working with local governments to promote energy efficiency and climate action planning. This collaboration has included preparation of GHG emissions inventories.

SB 375 established a basis for transportation and land use regional reduction targets. As identified in the CARB Scoping Plan, the regional transportation-related GHG targets reduction measure is estimated to reduce statewide GHG emissions by 5 million metric tons. This amount is approximately 3 percent of the total statewide GHG emissions reduction identified in the strategies outlined in the Scoping Plan.

In order to achieve these reductions, SB 375 requires metropolitan transportation plans to include a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) to meet GHG reduction targets for vehicle travel set by CARB. SB 375 requires that CARB certify that the SCS will reach these targets by decreasing GHG emissions per capita from automobiles and light trucks for 2020 and 2035. Ultimately, transportation projects that are part of the SCS will have state transportation funding priority and will be eligible for streamlined CEQA processes. In September of 2010, the CARB adopted regional per capita greenhouse gas targets for each of California's eighteen metropolitan planning regions as required under SB 375.

The Monterey Bay region is subject to CARB's SB 375 targets to reduce per capita GHG emissions from automobiles and light-duty trucks by 3 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 and 6 percent below 2005 levels by 2035. On June 10, 2026, the AMBAG Board of Directors adopted Connect Monterey Bay 2050, the Final 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), and the Final 2026 Regional Growth Forecast. The Board also certified the associated EIR and determined that the SCS would achieve the GHG reduction target established by CARB. Connect Monterey Bay 2050 serves as the region's long-range transportation plan through 2050 and integrates the forecasted regional development pattern with transportation investments and strategies intended to reduce per capita GHG emissions from automobiles and light-duty trucks. The plan identifies regional transportation needs, investment priorities, and anticipated funding and provides the framework for coordinating regional land use and transportation planning to achieve the applicable 2035 GHG reduction target.

Under the Sustainable Growth Patterns scenario developed as an alternative to current growth patterns, the region's urban footprint would increase by 20,000 acres by 2035, which is less than half of the approximately 43,000 acres that are projected to otherwise be developed. Under this scenario, much of the region's forecast growth occurs within a comfortable walking distance to transit corridors and

neighborhood centers within ―Blueprint Priority Areas‖ identified in the study that are primarily higher density lands within cities in proximity to transit and walking opportunities. Consideration of policies and specific actions to see this sustainable pattern become a reality would be within the purview of individual agencies.

Local

City of Watsonville Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

The City of Watsonville prepared the Watsonville 2030 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) to establish a local framework for reducing GHG emissions, improving community resilience, and supporting long-term climate restoration. The CAAP identifies both a legal emissions-reduction target and a more ambitious aspirational goal. Specifically, the CAAP is intended to reduce communitywide GHG emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels, while also supporting the City Council's July 6, 2021 action to endorse the Climate-Safe California Campaign goal of achieving net-negative emissions by 2030. The CAAP recognizes climate change as an urgent threat and identifies local actions intended to reduce emissions and prepare the community for climate-related hazards.

The CAAP organizes the City's climate strategy around three primary initiatives: climate action, climate adaptation, and climate restoration. Climate action refers to measures that reduce GHG emissions, including transitioning to low-carbon energy sources, expanding electric vehicle infrastructure, supporting electric vehicle adoption, electrifying the City fleet, increasing active transportation, reducing vehicle trips, electrifying buildings, increasing renewable energy use, improving energy efficiency, and reducing food waste. The CAAP identifies transportation, natural gas use in buildings, electricity use, and food waste disposal as the primary sources of communitywide GHG emissions in Watsonville.

The climate adaptation component of the CAAP focuses on improving the City's ability to respond to climate-related risks, including flooding, wildfires, extreme heat, sea level rise, drought, agricultural impacts, food security, and energy reliability. The CAAP builds on the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and includes strategies such as grid improvements, backup power at critical City facilities, and a microgrid at the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant. The climate restoration component emphasizes carbon sequestration, habitat restoration, healthy ecosystems, water quality programs, regenerative agricultural practices, urban greening, green infrastructure, and green job creation.

The CAAP also identifies an implementation framework that includes interdepartmental coordination, continued public engagement, annual implementation progress reports, GHG inventory updates every two years, and CAAP updates at least every five years to reflect changes in legislation, technology, economic conditions, policy, and community behavior. As a local climate planning document, the CAAP is relevant to the PEIR's GHG analysis because it identifies City-supported strategies for reducing emissions from planned growth and improving climate resilience over time.

In 2017, the City's inventoried emissions totaled 160,622 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent ($MTCO_2e$), or 3.01 $MTCO_2e$ per capita. Per-capita emissions are calculated by dividing total emissions by the AMBAG-estimated City population for the inventory year (see **Table 4.8-2**).

Table 4.8-2 CAAP Emissions by Sector ($MTCO_2e$)

Inventory Sector	2017	2050 with CAAP
Transportation	86,044	26,010
Residential Energy	29,086	39,283
Commercial/ Industrial Energy	32,699	
Wastewater	488	566
Solid Waste	12,305	16,788
Total	**160,622**	**82,647**
Per capita	**3.00**	**1.18**

Source: City of Watsonville, 2021.
Note: The City's population in 2017 was 53,452, and the City estimates its population by 2050 will be 70,186.

Carbon Impact Fee

The City's Carbon Fund Program assesses a carbon impact fee on all applicable building projects to fund GHG-reducing projects outlined in the Climate Action and Adaption Plan. The carbon fund can only be used for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the use of funds requires City Council approval. Applicable projects generally pay the Carbon Impact Fee as part of the building-permit process. Applicants that voluntarily incorporate qualifying on-site renewable-energy generation or energy-efficiency measures beyond applicable building-code requirements may receive a partial or full refund of the fee. There is a reasonable relationship between the fee and the purpose because the fee is calculated in proportion to the development's impact on carbon emissions measured by the total building permit fees of the development.

Payment of the Carbon Impact Fee does not, by itself, establish that a project is consistent with the CAAP Consistency Checklist or demonstrate that the project would have a less-than-significant GHG impact under CEQA. The Carbon Fund Program and the CAAP Consistency Checklist serve separate functions.

The City's 2030 CAAP is a qualified GHG-reduction plan pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5. The City has prepared a CAAP Consistency Checklist to determine whether discretionary land-development projects are consistent with the growth assumptions and applicable GHG-reduction measures contained in the CAAP. A project that demonstrates consistency with the Checklist is considered not to have a cumulatively considerable GHG impact and may rely on the CAAP for purposes of its CEQA GHG analysis without preparing additional project-specific GHG analysis. A project that cannot demonstrate consistency with the Checklist must prepare a more detailed project-level GHG analysis under CEQA to determine the significance of the project's GHG emissions and identify any necessary project-specific mitigation. Although that analysis may consider the project's required participation in the Carbon Fund Program, payment of the Carbon Impact Fee does not eliminate the requirement for project-level analysis or automatically mitigate the project's GHG impacts.

City of Watsonville Green Infrastructure Plan

The City of Watsonville Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan was prepared in December 2021 to identify opportunities for implementing green infrastructure throughout the City. The plan describes green infrastructure as projects that slow, spread, and sink stormwater into the ground through nature-based features such as bioretention areas, bioswales, rain gardens, stormwater planters, permeable pavement, tree planting, and other vegetated systems. The plan identifies green infrastructure as a multi-benefit climate adaptation strategy intended to manage stormwater runoff, improve water quality, reduce urban heat island effects, increase shade, enhance habitat, improve community aesthetics, and support safer and more walkable public spaces.

The plan builds on prior City efforts, including the City's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, Urban Greening Plan, Urban Forestry Grant, and participation in the Santa Cruz Integrated Regional Water Management Plan. The plan identifies four primary drivers for expanding green infrastructure in Watsonville: water quality protection, urban heat island reduction, climate and community resiliency, and Complete Streets. These drivers are intended to guide implementation of green infrastructure projects that reduce stormwater pollutants and runoff volumes, increase tree canopy and vegetated cover, improve neighborhood conditions, and support alternative transportation and pedestrian safety.

The Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan identifies goals and objectives to maximize pollutant reduction and runoff capture, reduce heat island impacts, and prioritize community enhancement and safety. The plan also identifies priority green infrastructure projects, including projects at Ramsay Park, the Downtown Corridor, Downtown Plaza, Rolling Hills Middle School, and Watsonville High School. These priority projects include features such as permeable pavement, bioretention, green roofs, channel naturalization, protected bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and rainwater harvesting. In addition, the plan identifies implementation strategies such as community engagement, partnerships with local organizations, policy alignment, tree protection measures, funding strategies, public-private partnerships, and long-term maintenance planning.

The Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan supports local strategies that can reduce heat island effects, improve climate resilience, encourage active transportation, increase urban greening, and provide carbon sequestration benefits through tree planting and vegetation. While the plan is primarily focused on stormwater, water quality, and climate adaptation, its strategies complement the City's broader GHG reduction and sustainability goals by promoting nature-based infrastructure and integrating climate resilience into future development and public improvement projects.

4.8.1.2 Existing Conditions

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are effective at absorbing lower-frequency infrared radiation, meaning that radiation that would have escaped into space is retained in the earth's atmosphere. The entrapment of this energy results in a warming of the atmosphere, also called the greenhouse effect. Some of the most prominent GHGs contributing to atmospheric warming are carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), ozone (O_3), water vapor, nitrous oxide (N_2O), and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Human activities have contributed to increased GHG emissions, particularly in excess of natural ambient concentrations. Global temperatures are increasing due to the cumulative effect of GHG emission contributions.

Across the U.S., transportation sector is the largest emitter of GHG emissions (U.S. EPA, 2024). As of 2023, 37.1 percent of California's GHG emissions were produced by the transportation sector (CARB, 2025a). 18.6 percent of GHG emissions came from the industrial sector, and 15.9 percent resulted from in-state electricity generation.

As shown in **Figure 4.8-1**, the General Plan 2050 area encompasses some priority populations, including low-income communities and disadvantaged communities, for greenhouse gas reduction projects funded by the state (CARB, 2026).

CARB updates the statewide GHG emission inventory annually, and the latest inventory analyzes emissions from 2000 to 2023. Statewide GHG emissions dropped from 458.7 $MTCO_2e$ in 2000 to 360.4 $MTCO_2e$ in 2023, representing a 21.4 percent decrease over the past 2 decades (CARB, 2025b).

The existing plan area encompasses retail, commercial, civic, religious, industrial, and residential uses. Based on the City of Watsonville's 2017 emissions profile, transportation represented the largest share of communitywide GHG emissions at approximately 53 percent. Cars powered by gasoline or diesel primarily contribute to GHG emissions in this sector. Natural gas, typically used for heating and cooking, makes up 28 percent of the GHG emissions in the City of Watsonville. Current energy usage comes from transportation, natural gas, electricity, and solid waste sectors (City of Watsonville, 2021).

As shown in **Table 4.8-1** and **Table 4.8-2**, the City of Watsonville accounted for approximately 0.045 percent of total statewide GHG emissions. Among the directly comparable sectors, Watsonville transportation emissions represented approximately 0.064 percent of statewide transportation emissions, while the City's solid waste emissions represented approximately 0.143 percent of statewide waste emissions. There are other remaining sectors which are not directly comparable because the statewide and local inventories use different sector classifications and combine energy-related emissions differently.

4.8.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.8.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

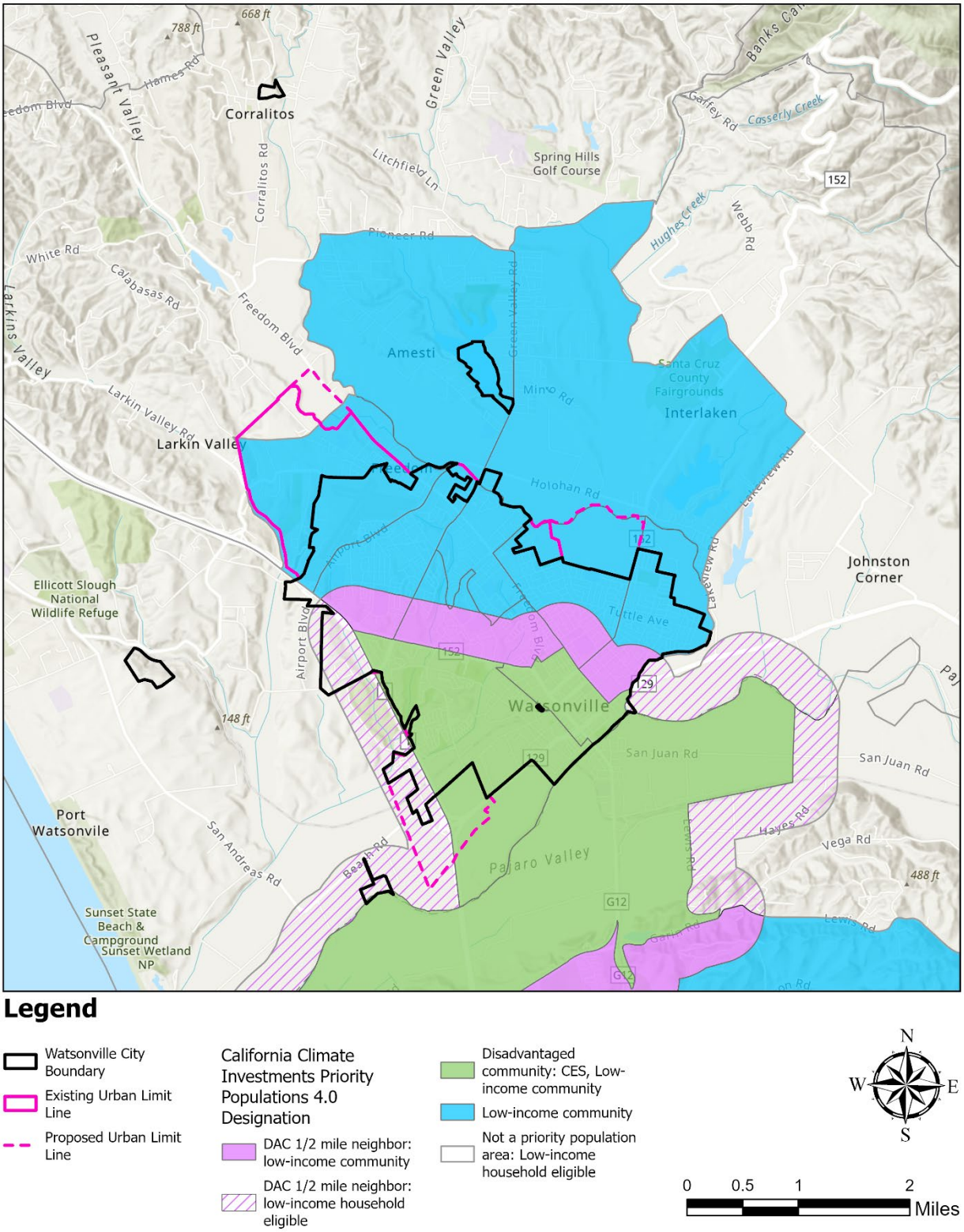
For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to greenhouse gas emissions would be considered significant if the project would:

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

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

Based on the above, implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in a significant GHG emissions impact if it would generate GHG emissions inconsistent with achievement of the City's adopted GHG reduction targets or the statewide 2030 and 2045 reduction trajectory, or if it would conflict with the City's qualified CAAP or another applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions.

Figure 4.8-1 California Climate Investments Priority Populations in the General Plan 2050 Area



Source: CARB, 2026.

4.8.2.2 Methodology

The GHG impact analysis evaluates General Plan 2050's consistency with the applicable GHG reduction measures and emissions reduction targets established in the CAAP. The analysis considers whether General Plan 2050's goals, policies, land use designations, and implementation programs would support or conflict with implementation of the CAAP's transportation and land use, energy, solid waste, and natural and working lands strategies. Because the MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines do not identify quantified plan-level thresholds for GHG emissions, the analysis relies on consistency with the City's qualified CAAP, achievement of the City's adopted emissions reduction targets, and alignment with the applicable statewide emissions reduction trajectory to evaluate significance.

For purposes of quantifying future emissions reductions, the analysis relies only on CAAP measures identified as actionable, feasible, and enforceable. These measures identify specific implementation actions, responsible City departments, and implementation timeframes and may therefore be relied upon in the EIR's emissions forecast and significance determination. The analysis does not assign quantitative emissions reductions to supporting efforts because their implementation and effectiveness cannot be predicted or enforced with sufficient certainty. Supporting efforts are considered qualitatively as additional actions that may further reduce GHG emissions.

Forecasted GHG emissions under General Plan 2050 buildout are compared with the City's applicable emissions reduction targets and the reductions anticipated from enforceable CAAP measures. The analysis also evaluates whether implementation of General Plan 2050 would interfere with the City's ability to implement the CAAP or achieve its adopted GHG reduction targets. The impact conclusion is based on General Plan 2050's consistency with the CAAP, the enforceability of applicable reduction measures, and whether a remaining emissions reduction gap would occur after accounting for quantified reductions.

4.8.2.3 Project Impacts

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

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in temporary emissions from construction activities associated with subsequent development, including demolition, site grading, asphalt paving, building construction, and architectural coating. Emissions commonly associated with construction activities include fuel combustion from mobile heavy-duty diesel- and gasoline-powered equipment, portable auxiliary equipment, and worker commute trips.

The MBARD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines do not identify quantified plan level thresholds for GHG emissions at a plan or programmatic level. However, the Guidelines do identify GHG significance thresholds for individual projects, including stationary source projects. MBARD's GHG threshold is expressed in terms of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e), which accounts for the emissions of various greenhouse gases based on their relative global warming potential.

For project-level analysis, MBARD indicates that a proposed stationary source project would not result in a significant GHG impact if operational emissions would be less than 10,000 metric tons per year of CO_2e. Alternatively, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.4(b)(3), a project may demonstrate less-than-significant GHG impacts by showing consistency with applicable regulations or requirements adopted to implement a statewide, regional, or local plan for the reduction or mitigation of GHG emissions (MBARD, 2016). Future development projects may demonstrate consistency with the City's

CAAP through completion of the CAAP Consistency Checklist. Projects that cannot demonstrate consistency with the CAAP would be required to prepare a project-specific GHG analysis.

Stationary source projects generally include equipment, processes, and operations that require an MBARD permit to operate. GHG emissions associated with such projects may include both direct and indirect emissions. Direct emissions are generated by onsite equipment and activities, as well as offsite sources directly related to the project, such as worker commute trips and haul truck trips. Indirect emissions result from project-related actions but are produced by sources not owned or directly controlled by the project applicant, such as emissions associated with electricity generation, water conveyance, and solid waste disposal.

The operational GHG emissions estimates shown in the **Table 4.8-3** provide a program-level estimate of emissions that could result from buildout under General Plan 2050 using the CalEEMod emissions estimator, discussed in **Section 4.3, Air Quality**. These emissions are used to inform whether future development would generate a cumulatively considerable contribution to GHG emissions or conflict with applicable GHG reduction plans, policies, or regulations. Because individual development projects would vary in size, land use, design, energy demand, transportation characteristics, and applicable regulatory requirements, future discretionary projects may be required to prepare project-specific GHG emissions analyses, as appropriate.

Table 4.8-3 Annual General Plan 2050 Operations GHG Emissions by Sector (MT/yr)

Sector	$MTCO_2e/yr$
Mobile	8,651.9
Area	817.4
Energy	20,014.8
Water	1,018.2
Waste	2,475.6
Refrig.	1,329.1
Total	**34,307.0**

Source: I&R, 2026.

General Plan 2050 would generate approximately 34,307 $MTCO_2e$ per year in operational GHG emissions. This amount is below the CAAP's projected 2050 communitywide emissions of 82,647 $MTCO_2e$ per year. However, because General Plan 2050 estimate represents emissions associated with anticipated development, while the CAAP forecast represents total communitywide emissions from existing and future activity, the two estimates are not directly equivalent. Nevertheless, General Plan 2050 would support implementation of the CAAP's actionable and enforceable GHG reduction measures through its goals, policies, land use designations, and implementation programs. General Plan 2050 would therefore not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the CAAP or the City's progress toward its adopted GHG reduction targets.

Additionally, construction measures would be in accordance with the applicable Goals, Policies, and Actions of General Plan 2050 to reduce potential construction emissions.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal C-4 Energy and Air Quality.** Maximize energy efficiency and protect regional air quality.
>
> **Policy C-4.1 Energy Efficiency and Emissions Reduction in Municipal Operations.** The City shall implement measures in the operation of City facilities and its vehicle fleet that reduce energy use, reduce exhaust emissions and contribute to the improvement of local, regional and global air quality.
>
> **Action C-4.1.1 Air Quality Evaluation.** As part of the review process for discretionary projects the City shall refer projects to the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) for recommendations on appropriate air quality impact mitigations
>
> **Policy C-4.2 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Implementation and Monitoring.** The City shall continue to implement and update as necessary the Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP) to ensure that City operations, actions, and land use approvals are consistent with the CAAP. The City shall monitor and report on progress toward the emissions reduction targets on a periodic basis.
>
> **Action C-4.2.1 Climate Action & Adaptation Plan.** Maintain an updated and current Climate Action & Adaptation Plan. Implement policies and actions listed in the Climate & Adaptation Action Plan.
>
> **Action C-4.2.6. Green Building Leadership and Private Development Guidance.** The City shall provide leadership and guidance to encourage the application of green building practices in private sector development. This policy is expected to yield long-term cost savings to the City's taxpayers due to substantial improvements in life-cycle performance and reduced life-cycle costs.
>
> **Action C-4.2.7 Green Building, Private Developer Projects.** The City shall develop a public education program to inform private project developers, architects, designers and engineers as to the benefits of implementing a sustainable building design program such as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or other similar Green Building standards.
>
> The City shall encourage all private project developers to follow the LEED Green Building standards by offering fee credits or other incentives.

However, even with adherence to General Plan 2050's Goals, Policies, and Actions listed above, GHG impacts may still occur. As such, **Mitigation Measures GHG-1** has been added to apply to project buildout.

Mitigation Measure GHG-1: Project-Level Greenhouse Gas Analysis and Reduction

Prior to approval of a discretionary land use development project facilitated by General Plan 2050 buildout, the applicant shall complete the City's CAAP Consistency Checklist. If the project cannot demonstrate consistency with the CAAP or may generate GHG emissions not adequately addressed in this EIR, the applicant shall prepare a project-specific GHG emissions analysis for City review. If the analysis identifies a significant impact, the project shall incorporate all feasible GHG reduction measures through project design, conditions of approval, performance standards, or another enforceable mechanism.

Significance After Mitigation

Based on the programmatic nature of General Plan 2050 and the absence of an adopted MBARD plan-level construction GHG threshold, GHG impacts are primarily evaluated in relation to consistency with applicable GHG reduction plans, policies, and regulations, consistent with Section 15064.4(b)(3). Future development under General Plan 2050 would also be subject to applicable federal, state, regional, and local requirements intended to reduce GHG emissions, including building energy efficiency standards, renewable energy requirements, transportation-related emission reduction measures, and other applicable GHG reduction strategies.

Implementation of General Plan 2050 policies and actions, together with **Mitigation Measure GHG-1**, which would require project-level GHG analysis and all feasible emissions-reduction measures for applicable future discretionary development, would reduce GHG emissions to the extent feasible. Compliance with the City's CAAP and applicable federal, State, regional, and local regulations would further reduce emissions and support progress toward the City's adopted 2030 reduction target. However, due to the magnitude of growth anticipated under General Plan 2050, it is anticipated that increase in GHG emissions would remain substantial and would not contribute to net achievement of the State's long-term climate stabilization goals. While adherence to the City of Watsonville's CAAP would also contribute to reducing GHG emissions in the plan study area and progress in meeting the AB 32 reduction target, additional federal, State, and local measures would be necessary to reduce GHG emissions to meet the long-term GHG reduction goals under Executive Order S-03-05. As identified by the California Council on Science and Technology, the State cannot meet the 2050 goal without major advancements in technology. Therefore, even with implementation of General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions, the CAAP, applicable regulations and **Mitigation Measure GHG-1**, the impact would remain significant and unavoidable. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

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

Applicable plans adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions include CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality, AMBAG's applicable MTP/SCS, MBARD's AQMP, and the City of Watsonville's CAAP. General Plan 2050 is evaluated for consistency with the applicable goals, strategies, and GHG reduction measures contained in these plans. The consistency analyses are presented below.

General Plan 2050 would be consistent with CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality. The Scoping Plan identifies statewide strategies to reduce GHG emissions and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045, including reducing VMT, expanding zero-emission transportation, improving energy efficiency, electrifying buildings, increasing renewable energy use, reducing waste, and expanding natural carbon sequestration. The implementation of General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions would support these objectives by providing opportunities for walking, bicycling, and transit, supporting electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, encouraging energy-efficient and low-carbon development, reducing solid waste, and protecting natural resources.

In particular, the GHG emissions under the proposed project shown in **Table 4.8-1** include reductions associated with statewide strategies that have been adopted since AB 32. The proposed General Plan would comply with these GHG emissions reduction measures since they are statewide strategies. In addition, future buildings constructed over the lifetime of the proposed General Plan would be subject to the future triannual updates to the Building and Energy Efficiency Standards, which will ultimately require zero net energy (ZNE) construction. However, the Scoping Plan itself is not directly applicable to the proposed General Plan. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would support, rather than obstruct, implementation of the statewide GHG reduction strategy.

The MTP/SCS coordinates regional land use and transportation planning to accommodate anticipated population and employment growth while reducing per-capita GHG emissions from passenger vehicles. The implementation of General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions would support this regional framework by directing growth to existing urbanized areas, encouraging compact and mixed-use development, improving access to transit and active transportation, and reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. The General Plan's land use and mobility framework would therefore complement the regional development pattern and transportation strategies established in the MTP/SCS (see **Table 4.8-4**).

As described in **Section 4.3, Air Quality**, General Plan 2050 would conflict with the emissions reduction objectives of MBARD's applicable AQMP. Although the AQMP primarily addresses criteria air pollutants rather than serving as a quantified GHG reduction plan, many AQMP strategies promote reduced motor vehicle emissions, energy efficiency, alternative transportation modes, and coordinated land use and transportation planning. However, General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions would support these objectives by encouraging multimodal transportation, reduction of per-capita VMT, energy-efficient development, and compact development patterns. Under General Plan 2050, citywide VMT is projected to increase approximately three percent above existing conditions, while VMT per capita would decrease from 28.1 miles per person to 22.9 miles per person, indicating improved transportation efficiency and reduced travel demand on a per-capita basis.

Notwithstanding these supportive policies, MBARD guidance identifies population growth as a consideration in evaluating consistency with regional air quality planning efforts because population-related emissions are largely associated with motor vehicle travel and building energy use. While the most recent AMBAG regional forecast projects a 2050 population of approximately 52,251 persons within Watsonville, General Plan 2050 projects a population of approximately 70,186 persons. Because the population anticipated under General Plan 2050 exceeds the growth assumptions used in the regional AQMP framework, implementation of General Plan 2050 could be considered inconsistent with the AQMP under MBARD's population-based methodology. It is noted however, that General Plan 2050 would generate approximately 34,307 $MTCO_2e$ per year in operational GHG emissions. As shown above (see **Table 4.8-3**) this amount is below the CAAP's projected 2050 communitywide emissions of 82,647 $MTCO_2e$ per year.

The CAAP includes actionable and enforceable measures addressing transportation and land use, energy, solid waste, and natural and working lands. General Plan 2050 would be consistent with the City of Watsonville CAAP, which serves as the City's primary local plan for reducing communitywide GHG emissions. The implementation of General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions would support these measures by promoting compact development, multimodal transportation, zero-emission vehicles, building electrification, renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste reduction, organics diversion, and preservation and enhancement of natural resources (see **Table 4.8-5**). General Plan 2050 would also support continued implementation, monitoring, and updating of the CAAP. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the CAAP or the City's progress toward its adopted GHG reduction targets.

Table 4.8-4 2050 MTP/SCS Compliance Analysis

Goals and Policies	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Mobility – Build and maintain a safe and robust multimodal transportation network. • Support investments that are well-maintained, coordinated, and resilient, while improving safety. • Ensure safe reliable accessible, and affordable travel options while striving to enhance equitable mobility options in the region.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports the MTP/SCS goal of building and maintaining a safe and robust multimodal transportation network. General Plan 2050's Mobility and Access Element establishes a Layered Networks Approach (Policy MA-1.1), requires application of Complete Streets principles (Policy MA-1.2), promotes multimodal access to daily needs (Policy MA-1.3), supports public transit (Policies MA-2.1 through MA-2.3), and calls for safe, connected walking and bicycling networks (Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4). The General Plan also prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle improvements and multimodal transportation investments throughout the City. The Safety Element further supports transportation system resilience by promoting adaptation to climate-related hazards and infrastructure vulnerabilities. Together, these policies support well-maintained, coordinated, resilient, safe, accessible, and affordable transportation options consistent with the Mobility goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would support and would not conflict with the Mobility goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS.
Environment – Create a sustainable and healthy region for all. • Develop communities that are resilient and sustainable. • Integrate the region's development pattern and transportation system to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. • Develop a comprehensive climate resilient transportation network to mitigate vulnerabilities and enhance adaptation. • Conserve and protect the region's natural and agricultural resources.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports the MTP/SCS Environment goal of creating a sustainable and healthy region. General Plan 2050's Policy C-4.1 requires the City to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from municipal operations, while Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 direct continued implementation of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. Policy LC-4.3 promotes energy-efficient development, renewable energy generation, battery storage, cool roofs, and sustainable building practices. Policy MA-6.1 supports reducing vehicle miles traveled through coordinated land use and transportation planning. The General Plan also includes extensive resource conservation policies, including Policy C-1.1 and associated actions protecting natural resources and open space, Policy LC-2.2 supporting urban greening and expansion of the urban forest, and Policies LC-13.1 through LC-13.3 supporting preservation and restoration of wetlands, waterways, and open-space resources. Safety Element Policies S-9.1 through S-9.5 further support climate adaptation, resilience, renewable energy, urban cooling, and nature-based solutions. Collectively, these policies support greenhouse gas reductions, sustainable development patterns, climate resilience, and conservation of natural and agricultural resources consistent with the Environment goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with the Environment goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS.
Communities – Develop, engage, connect, and sustain communities that are livable and thriving. • Reinforce vibrant, human-centered communities in urban, suburban, and rural settings to increase	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports the MTP/SCS Communities goal of developing, connecting, and sustaining livable and thriving communities. General Plan 2050's Policy MA-1.3 promotes access to daily needs through integrated land use and transportation planning, while Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4 support active transportation connections between neighborhoods, schools, employment centers, parks, and

Goals and Policies	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
mobility options. • Promote and preserve a diversity of housing types in supportive land uses to improve affordability, accessibility, and choices for all. • Foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity, and actively seek to reduce racial and economic disparities.	commercial areas. The Land Use and Community Character Element of General Plan 2050 promotes complete neighborhoods, compact development, mixed-use land use patterns, and housing opportunities that improve access to services and transportation choices. Policy LC-2.2 supports urban greening and enhancement of public spaces, and numerous Land Use policies encourage pedestrian-oriented development and community connectivity. These provisions support vibrant, human-centered communities, expanded mobility options, a diversity of housing opportunities, and improved access to community resources consistent with the Communities goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with the Communities goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS.
Economic - Support a sustainable, efficient, and productive regional economic environment that provides opportunities for all. • Advance a resilient and efficient goods movement system that supports the economic vitality of the region and quality of life for our communities. • Improve regional multimodal transportation system infrastructure and efficiency to enhance the region's economic competitiveness. • Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports the MTP/SCS Economic goal of maintaining a sustainable, efficient, and productive regional economy. General Plan 2050's Policy MA-1.1 establishes a transportation system designed to accommodate multiple travel modes, while Policies MA-2.1 through MA-2.3 support efficient transit service and regional connectivity. Policies MA-3.1 and MA-7.2 support investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that improve access to employment centers, commercial districts, and public services. Policy MA-6.1 seeks to improve multimodal accessibility while reducing transportation inefficiencies associated with vehicle dependence. The Land Use and Community Character Element further supports economic vitality through coordinated growth patterns that connect housing, employment, commercial services, industrial uses, and transportation facilities. Collectively, these policies support improved mobility for people and goods, enhanced transportation efficiency, and continued economic competitiveness consistent with the Economic goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with the Economic goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS.

Goals and Policies	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Equitable - Plan for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. • Prioritize equitable and resilient solutions in the transportation system. • Increase transportation opportunities for historically underrepresented and underserved communities.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports the MTP/SCS Equitable goal of planning for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. General Plan 2050's Policy MA-1.2 requires Complete Streets principles that improve accessibility and safety for all users, while Policies MA-2.1 through MA-2.3 support accessible transit services and facilities. Policy MA-3.1 calls for a safe, comfortable, and connected walking and bicycling network, and Policy MA-7.2 prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle improvements throughout the City. The Safety Element includes policies supporting resilience for vulnerable populations, including Policies S-9.3 through S-9.5, which address urban heat, climate adaptation, public health, and nature-based solutions. In addition, the General Plan incorporates environmental justice and equitable-access principles intended to improve access to transportation, housing, employment, services, and public facilities for underserved communities. These policies support equitable and resilient transportation solutions and expanded transportation opportunities for historically underserved populations consistent with the Equitable goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with the Equitable goals and policies of the 2050 MTP/SCS.

Source: AMBAG, 2026.

Table 4.8-5 CAAP Compliance Analysis

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure T1-A: Smart Growth Principles Based on AMBAG growth projections, the City is projected to experience an approximately 10 percent increase in jobs and housing by 2030 compared to existing conditions, which would necessarily lead to an increase in jobs and housing density in Watsonville. Increased density would reduce VMT by locating people in closer proximity to workplaces and other destinations.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 integrates land use and transportation planning in a manner that supports the smart growth and VMT-reduction objectives of Measure T1-A. The Mobility and Access Element of General Plan 2050 recognizes the critical relationship between land use and transportation and establishes a multimodal framework intended to connect residents with employment, services, and other daily destinations. Policy MA-1.3 encourages connectivity and access to a mix of land uses that meets residents' daily needs within walking distance, while Policy MA-6.1 directs the City to reduce VMT through land use planning, improved transit connections, and better active transportation access. Policies MA-2.1 through MA-2.3 support convenient public transit facilities and service, and Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4 call for connected walking, bicycling, and trail networks linking neighborhoods with local and regional destinations. Together with the General Plan's street typologies and multimodal priority zones, these policies would accommodate planned jobs and housing growth in a more compact, connected development pattern, improve proximity between housing, employment, and services, expand alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel, and thereby reduce trip lengths and per-capita VMT. General Plan 2050 would therefore implement and would not conflict with Measure T1-A.
Measure T2-A: New Pedestrian Improvements Require new development projects, residential and nonresidential, to provide pedestrian improvements along street frontages; and strongly encourage connection to the nearest existing pedestrian facilities, such as sidewalks or trails. Developments shall also include internal pedestrian connections between all uses.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports the pedestrian-access objectives of Measure T2-A. General Plan 2050's Policy MA-1.1 directs the City to prioritize travel modes context-sensitively through the Layered Networks Approach and street typologies, while Policy MA-1.2 requires complete streets principles in the design, planning, construction, maintenance, and operation of new and existing streets and facilities. Policy MA-1.3 encourages connectivity and promotes an interconnected multimodal transportation system to provide access to a mix of daily needs within walking distance. Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4 call for a safe, comfortable, convenient, and well-connected walking and bicycling network. Policy MA-7.2 prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle improvements citywide, with a network of facilities and safe routes linking neighborhoods with destinations. These policies provide a basis for requiring frontage sidewalks or equivalent pedestrian improvements and internal connections to existing sidewalks, trails, and onsite destinations as development occurs. Project-level review and applicable City standards would implement the specific improvements required by the CAAP. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T2-A.

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure T2-B: Pedestrian and Cyclist Multimodal Enhancements Improve roadway segments, intersections, and bikeways to implement multimodal enhancements for pedestrian and cyclist comfort and safety along City-maintained public roads by improving five centerline miles of roadway segments and 100 intersections by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 establishes a multimodal framework that supports pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements on City streets. General Plan 2050's Policies MA-1.1 and MA-1.2 direct the City to plan and operate streets for multiple modes, while Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4 support connected, comfortable walking and bicycling networks. The street typologies and multimodal priority zones identify locations where roadway and intersection design should emphasize pedestrian and cyclist access and safety. Although the General Plan does not itself establish the CAAP's five-centerline-mile and 100-intersection targets, its policies facilitate the capital improvements and implementation programs needed to achieve them. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T2-B.
Measure T2-C: Trails and Bicycle Master Plan New pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure may include, but not be limited to: Coastal Rail Trail Segments 17 and 18, Lee Road Trail, Pajaro Valley High School Connector Trail, Pajaro River Levee Trail, and projects identified in the AMBAG 2040 MTP/SCS. Additionally, there may be bicycle improvements for Harkins Slough Road, Green Valley Road, State Route 129, and State Route 152. Pedestrian improvements may include sidewalk infill on Harkins Slough Road and Main Street, pedestrian bridge over Highway 1 to Pajaro Valley High School, and various intersection improvements.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports implementation of planned trail and bicycle facilities through Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4, which call for connected active transportation and trail networks linking neighborhoods, schools, employment, and regional destinations. The Mobility and Access Element's multimodal network and coordination framework can accommodate the Coastal Rail Trail segments, Lee Road Trail, Pajaro Valley High School Connector Trail, Pajaro River Levee Trail, and other projects identified through regional transportation planning. Individual projects would remain subject to funding, design, environmental review, and interagency coordination. General Plan 2050 would therefore facilitate and would not conflict with Measure T2-C.
Measure T3-A: Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan Parking Strategies Implement a parking program in the Downtown Area to encourage alternative modes of transportation when visiting Downtown. Expand the Downtown Parking District and incorporate parking management strategies in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan to eliminate free parking.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports transportation demand management and reduced automobile dependence in Downtown Watsonville. General Plan 2050's Policy MA-6.1 directs the City to reduce VMT through land use planning, transit connections, and active transportation access, while Policies MA-1.3, MA-2.1 through MA-2.3, and MA-3.1 support a walkable, transit-accessible downtown. These policies along with Policies 10.1 through 10.8 in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan provide a planning basis for encouraging alternative modes of transportation in the City and would not conflict with expanding the Downtown Parking District to match the Specific Plan boundary. The policies outlined in the CAAP and the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan establish the foundation for future parking management strategies. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T3-A.

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure T4-A: Transit-Supportive Treatments Implement transit-supportive treatments on 25 percent of transit routes in Watsonville. Transit-supportive treatments will incorporate a mix of roadway infrastructure improvements and/or traffic signal modifications to prioritize transit movement over vehicle movement and to improve transit travel times and reliability to increase convenience and reduce wait times between services.	Consistent. General Plan 2050's Policies MA-2.1 through MA-2.3 support convenient, accessible, and effective public transit facilities and service, while Policy MA-6.1 identifies improved transit connections as a VMT-reduction strategy. The Mobility and Access Element also establishes multimodal street priorities that can support treatments such as transit-priority signals, enhanced stops, improved pedestrian access, and operational improvements along transit corridors. Although the General Plan does not specify the CAAP target of treating 25 percent of transit routes, it provides the policy framework for the City and transit providers to implement that target. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T4-A.
Measure T5-A: Commute Trip Reduction Programs Update the City's Green Business Program to include commute trip reduction programs. Provide incentives and education to existing and future employers to participate in the program, particularly to implement commute trip reduction programs. The City shall track participating businesses to achieve a 20 percent participation City-wide. Commute trip reduction programs may include but not be limited to ride-sharing programs, subsidized transit, vanpool/shuttles, and alternative work schedules.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 generally supports transportation demand management and expanded alternatives to driving alone, which are compatible with employer commute trip reduction programs. General Plan 2050's Policy MA-6.1 directs the City to reduce VMT through coordinated land use, transit, and active transportation strategies, and the multimodal policies in Goals MA-1 through MA-3 expand practical alternatives to driving alone. These policies are compatible with updating the Green Business Program to provide employers with incentives, education, and commute-trip-reduction tools. The CAAP implementation program would define participation, monitoring, and incentives. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T5-A.
Measure T5-B: End-of-Trip Facilities Update Watsonville Municipal Code, Section 14-17.113, to require new non-residential development to provide end-of-trip facilities for employee use in addition to bicycle parking. End-of-trip facilities will include bike parking, bike lockers, showers, and personal lockers to the extent feasible.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 promotes bicycling as a practical transportation mode through Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4, which call for connected and comfortable active transportation facilities. General Plan 2050 supports facilities such as street furniture (benches, landscaping, parklets), secure bike parking, employee showers and changing areas, and intermodal connections for easy transfers between travel modes further strengthen the network. The Municipal Code update identified in the CAAP would establish the specific development standard. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T5-B.
Measure T6-A: Car-Sharing Programs Permit and support car-sharing programs such that one shared car is available per every 2,000 residents.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports shared-mobility programs that reduce single-occupancy vehicle ownership and travel. General Plan 2050's Policy MA-1.1 calls for an interconnected multimodal system, and Policy MA-6.1 directs the City to reduce VMT by expanding transportation choices and improving access to destinations. Permitting car-sharing vehicles at residences, employment centers, transit hubs, and Downtown locations would advance these objectives. The General Plan does not establish the CAAP ratio of one shared vehicle per 2,000 residents; that

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
	target would be implemented through the CAAP and subsequent partnerships or regulations. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T6-A.
Measure T6-B: Mobility Devices Promote short-term and monthly rental or purchase of bicycles, ebikes, cargo bikes, and similar mobility devices, including 100 shared or short-term rental devices in the Downtown Area. This measure may be accomplished fully or in part through implementation of the proposed Santa Cruz County Regional Bicycle Share Program.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports bicycles, e-bikes, cargo bikes, and other small mobility devices as components of the City's multimodal transportation system. The CAAP would implement the specific target of 100 devices and address siting, operations, and partnerships. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T6-B.
Measure T6-C: Community-Based Travel Planning Implement community-based travel planning (CBTP) that targets at least 50 percent of residences by 2030. The CBTP is a residential-based outreach that will provide households with customized information about available routes and destinations, available incentives and discounted fare programs, and availability of support infrastructure such as bike or scooter sharing, to encourage the use of transportation alternatives in place of single-occupancy vehicles. The CBTP would involve teams of trained travel advisors visiting all households within a targeted geographic area, having tailored conversations about residents' travel needs, and educating residents about the various transportation options available to them.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports community-based travel planning (CBTP) by expanding awareness of and access to walking, bicycling, transit, shared mobility, and other alternatives to driving alone. General Plan 2050's Policies MA-1.1, MA-2.1 through MA-2.3, MA-3.1, and MA-6.1 collectively establish a framework for active transportation and an accessible transit network, which are transportation options central to CBTP. Public outreach and neighborhood-specific travel information would further the General Plan's goals by helping residents use those facilities and services. The General Plan does not set the CAAP target of reaching 50 percent of residences by 2030; that outreach target would be implemented through the CAAP. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T6-C.
Measure T6-D: School Ride-Sharing Program Create or facilitate a ride-sharing program for school-aged children. The program would match parents to transport students to public or private schools, particularly schools where students would find it difficult to walk or bike and would otherwise not be able to use a school bus. The City will promote and track the program to achieve 16 percent City-wide student participation by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports coordinated transportation options for school travel that reduce individual vehicle trips and improve access for students. General Plan 2050's Policies MA-1.1 and MA-6.1 promote multimodal travel and VMT reduction, while Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4 support safe pedestrian and bicycle connections. A school ride-sharing program would complement these policies by consolidating school trips where walking, bicycling, or transit is not practical. Program design, participation, and school-district coordination would occur through CAAP implementation. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T6-D.

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure T6-E: School Bus Services Promote school bus services to achieve a 10 percent increase in school bus use compared to existing use by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports expanded shared and public transportation options. General Plan 2050's Policies MA-2.1 through MA-2.3 encourage convenient and effective transit service and facilities, while Policies MA-1.1 and MA-6.1 promote multimodal travel and reduced VMT. Increased school bus use would reduce household vehicle trips and complement the General Plan's safe-routes and active transportation policies. The General Plan does not establish the CAAP target of a 10 percent increase by 2030; achieving that target would require coordination with local school districts and transportation providers. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T6-E.
Measure T6-F: Active Transportation Routes to School Continue to implement the Complete Streets to Schools Plan to improve active transportation routes to schools to increase use of active transportation for school commutes by 5 percent by 2030. Proposed improvements include but are not limited to new sidewalks, improved signage and street markers, sidewalk improvements, lighting improvements, and crosswalk improvements.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 strongly supports safe active transportation. General Plan 2050's Policies MA-3.1 and MA-3.4 call for connected, comfortable pedestrian, bicycle, and trail networks linking neighborhoods with schools and other destinations, and Policies MA-1.1 and MA-6.1 support multimodal access and reduced vehicle travel. Continued implementation of the Complete Streets to Schools Plan would directly advance these policies through targeted safety and connectivity improvements. The CAAP would retain responsibility for monitoring progress toward the five-percent school-commute target by 2030. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T6-F.
Measure T6-G: Local Shopping Provide a variety of opportunities and incentives to encourage local shopping, with the goal of reducing average household grocery trip length by 1 mile. Programs will include identifying and removing barriers to urban agriculture to encourage residents to grow food and/or raise chickens and to expand and diversify alternative food access points (e.g., community-supported agriculture, community gardens, farmers markets). The City will identify vacant City-owned land suitable for growing food, establish community gardens where suitable, and make City-owned parking lots and public gathering spaces available for farmers markets and community-supported agriculture pick-up locations.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 promotes convenient access to shops and services within complete, connected neighborhoods. General Plan 2050's Policies LC-2.1, LC-6.1 and LC-12.1 call for implementing placemaking strategies that include active ground-floor uses, convenient local shopping opportunities, and complimentary uses within walking and biking distance. In addition, Policy MA-1.3 encourages a mix of land uses that meets residents' daily needs within walking distance, and Policy MA-6.1 directs the City to reduce VMT through land use planning and improved multimodal access. The General Plan's compact development pattern and pedestrian, bicycle, and transit policies would support shorter grocery and household shopping trips and make local businesses more accessible without driving. The CAAP would establish the specific incentives and monitor the one-mile trip-length goal. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T6-G.

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure T7-A: Accelerated Vehicle Retirement Program Participate in an accelerated vehicle retirement program to replace at least 1,500 locally registered light-duty, gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles with ZEVs by 2030. Replacement vehicle eligibility would be determined by program requirements. In the event that requirements are to be established by the City, cars eligible for replacement shall be at least 10 years old at the time of program implementation.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports the transition to lower-emission transportation through its VMT-reduction and multimodal mobility policies. The specific replacement target of 1,500 locally registered light-duty vehicles is a CAAP implementation commitment rather than a land use or mobility-network standard established by the General Plan. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T7-A.
Measure T7-B: Public Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Create at least 20 EV charging facilities in public parking areas (City-owned lots and parking spaces) by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports cleaner transportation choices and the infrastructure needed to reduce transportation-related GHG emissions. Its multimodal and VMT-reduction framework, including Policy MA-6.2, is compatible with installing EV charging in City-owned parking lots and spaces and integrating charging with Downtown and other activity centers. The CAAP and subsequent capital planning would determine locations, funding, and implementation of the 20-facility target by 2030. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T7-B.
Measure T8-A: City Employee Commute Reduction Program Create a comprehensive, monitored City employee commute reduction program that will, at a minimum, include an incentivized carpool program. It shall be the goal of the City that at least 20 percent of employees for whom work from home is not an option will participate in the program.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports City leadership in reducing employee commute trips through transportation demand management. General Plan 2050's Policies MA-1.1 and MA-6.1 promote multimodal travel and reduced VMT, while Policies MA-2.1 through MA-2.3 and MA-3.1 provide transit, walking, and bicycling alternatives that can support a municipal commute program. An incentivized carpool program, monitoring, and complementary employee benefits would implement these objectives at City workplaces. The detailed program and performance monitoring would be established through CAAP implementation and City administrative policy. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T8-A.
Measure T8-B: City Employee Telecommuting Continue to allow City staff to work from home at least 1 day per week, with the goal of at least 10 percent staff participation in the program.	Consistent. General Plan 2050's objective of reducing VMT under Policy MA-6.1 is compatible with continued telecommuting for City employees because remote work eliminates commute trips on eligible workdays. Allowing staff to work from home at least one day per week would complement the General Plan's broader multimodal and transportation demand management framework. The specific telework schedule, eligibility requirements, and operational procedures would remain governed by City employment policies and the CAAP rather than the Mobility and Access Element. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T8-B.

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure T9-A: Zero-Emissions Vehicle Fleet Continue to implement the City's Green Vehicle Policy to purchase or lease low-emissions passenger vehicles and trucks and low-emissions heavy-duty vehicles as well when possible. Strengthen the policy to require ZEVs for passenger vehicles and trucks, with the goal of replacing all light-duty vehicles with ZEVs by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports reducing transportation emissions and demonstrates consistency with a transition of the municipal fleet to zero-emission vehicles. General Plan 2050's Policy MA-6.1 promotes reduced transportation-related VMT and emissions, and Policy C-4.1 directs the City to reduce energy use and exhaust emissions in municipal operations and its vehicle fleet. Continued implementation and strengthening of the Green Vehicle Policy to require zero-emission passenger vehicles and trucks would directly advance these objectives. Fleet-replacement schedules, funding, and the goal of replacing all light-duty vehicles by 2030 would be implemented through the CAAP and City procurement policies. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure T9-A.
Measure E1-A: Natural Gas Reduction in New Development Require a 50 percent reduction in natural gas consumption compared to BAU in all new development through electric-only development and installation of electric or more efficient natural gas home heating and cooling systems, appliances, or water heaters. Explore implementation of an all-electric ordinance to achieve all-electric new development by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports reduced reliance on natural gas in new development through Policy LC-4.3, which encourages energy efficiency, renewable energy, battery storage, and other sustainable building practices, and through Action C-4.2.2, which promotes energy-efficient building design and onsite renewable electricity generation. Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 further require continued implementation of the CAAP. These provisions provide a policy basis for electric-only development and an all-electric ordinance. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E1-A.
Measure E1-B: Appliance Retrofits Incentivize retrofits of gas appliances such as home heating and cooling systems, cooking appliances, dryers, and water heaters with electric equivalents by 2030, with a target natural gas use reduction of 30 percent by 2030. The City shall work with 3CE or other funding sources to accomplish this measure.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports conversion of existing gas appliances to efficient electric alternatives through Policy LC-4.3, which promotes energy-efficient and renewable-energy building practices, and Actions C-4.2.2 and C-4.2.3, which encourage high-efficiency appliances and participation in utility rebates and incentives. Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 also direct continued CAAP implementation. These policies support outreach and incentive programs for appliance electrification. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E1-B.
Measure E2-A: Existing Building Retrofits Facilitate and promote funding programs to retrofit 25 percent of existing (pre-2020) commercial spaces and residential units by 2030 to achieve 10 percent or greater energy efficiency compared to existing energy use. Example retrofits may include but are not limited to Energy Star appliance replacements or boiler replacements.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 encourages improvements to existing buildings that reduce energy use and operating costs. General Plan 2050's Policy LC-4.3 promotes energy efficiency, renewable energy, improved insulation, high-performance windows, and other sustainable practices; Actions C-4.2.2 and C-4.2.3 promote efficient building systems and utility rebates; and Safety Element Action S-9.6.1 supports retrofit and weatherization resources for homeowners and businesses. Together, these provisions support funding and outreach programs for energy retrofits. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E2-A.

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
Measure E3-A: 3CE Customer Participation Increase participation in 3CE Prime, with the goal of 50 percent of all residential and non-residential customers choosing 3CE Prime by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports increased use of renewable and zero-carbon electricity through Policy LC-4.3 and Action C-4.2.2, which promote renewable energy generation and energy-efficient development, and through Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1, which direct implementation of the CAAP. Increasing customer enrollment in 3CE Prime would advance these objectives by reducing emissions associated with building electricity use. The General Plan does not establish the CAAP participation target of 50 percent of residential and nonresidential customers by 2030; customer outreach, enrollment, and monitoring would occur through CAAP implementation and coordination with 3CE. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E3-A.
Measure E3-B: City 3CE Prime Participation Switch all City electricity accounts to 3CE Prime, including Watsonville Municipal Airport.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 directs the City to reduce energy use and emissions in municipal operations through Policy C-4.1 and to continue implementing the CAAP through Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1. Switching City electricity accounts, including the Watsonville Municipal Airport, to 3CE Prime would directly support these policies by increasing the renewable content of municipal electricity and reducing operational GHG emissions. Account conversion and procurement procedures would be carried out through CAAP implementation and City administrative action. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E3-B.
Measure E4-A: Cool Roofs for New Development Require installation of cool roof technology for new commercial, municipal, and multi-family residential projects to achieve at least 50 percent cool roofs in new development. A cool roof treatment, green space, or photovoltaic panels would qualify for compliance with this measure.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports cool-roof requirements through Policy LC-4.3, which expressly encourages cool roofing and other energy-efficient construction practices, and Action C-4.2.2, which promotes reflective roofs, shaded windows, insulation, and efficient building systems. Safety Element Policies S-9.3 and S-9.4 also support heat-mitigation and cooling strategies in the built environment. These provisions provide a policy basis for requiring cool-roof technology in new commercial, municipal, and multifamily projects. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E4-A.
Measure E5-A: Existing Building Solar Retrofits Provide incentives and/or promote available funding programs to retrofit 15 percent of existing residences and commercial space with solar panels with battery storage to provide at least 50 percent of individual building energy demand. Incentives may include removal of administrative barriers, removing fees, improving permitting process to provide online and same-day approval.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 promotes onsite renewable energy and battery storage through Policy LC-4.3 and Action C-4.2.2 and encourages applicants to pursue utility rebates and other financial incentives through Action C-4.2.3. Safety Element Policy S-9.1 also supports renewable generation and backup power at facilities used during times of emergency. These provisions support incentive and funding programs for solar-plus-storage retrofits on existing homes and commercial buildings. The CAAP would determine program eligibility, funding, and monitoring toward the 15-percent retrofit target. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
	conflict with Measure E5-A.
Measure E6-A: Municipal Energy Projects Implement recommendations from the Energy Projects Assessment and Development prepared by Sage Renewables (October 2018) to reduce energy use at City Hall, the police station, Fire Station I, and other City facilities.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 requires the City to reduce energy use and emissions in municipal facilities through Policy C-4.1 and directs continued implementation of the CAAP through Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1. Action C-4.2.2 promotes efficient lighting, building envelopes, heating and cooling systems, and renewable generation, while Safety Element Policy S-9.6 and Action S-9.6.1 support retrofits and weatherization that improve facility resilience. Implementing the Energy Projects Assessment and Development recommendations at City Hall, the police station, Fire Station I, and other City facilities would directly advance these policies. Project sequencing and funding would occur through the City's capital and energy-management programs. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E6-A.
Measure E7-A: Wastewater Treatment Plant Energy Efficiency Reduce off-site electricity demand at the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility by 50 percent by 2030. The plant is currently undergoing an audit through the PG&E program RAPIDS Wastewater Treatment Optimization program that will identify projects that will reduce energy demand. Alternatively, possibilities to increase on-site electricity production include alternate uses of biogas to improve energy production and reduce emissions (such as replacing existing cogeneration system with a fuel cell system) or additional solar panels.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports reduced offsite electricity demand and lower emissions from municipal utility operations. Policy C-4.1 directs energy-efficiency and emissions-reduction measures in City facilities, and Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 require continued CAAP implementation. Action C-4.2.2 further promotes energy-efficient systems and onsite renewable generation, while Safety Element Policy S-9.1 supports renewable energy and backup power at resilience-serving facilities. Efficiency upgrades, onsite generation, storage, and operational improvements at the Wastewater Treatment Facility would advance these objectives. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure E7-A.
Measure SW1-A: Organic Waste Diversion Continue to expand and promote local composting and food waste diversion programs in accordance with SB 1383 to achieve 75 percent diversion of all organic waste by 2030. An example program to achieve this measure would be creation of a residential and commercial organics recycling program.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports waste reduction and resource-conservation education through Policy C-6.1 and Action C-6.1.1, which call for expanded public education promoting reuse, recycling, and composting. Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 also require ongoing implementation of CAAP measures. Continued expansion of organics collection, composting, food-waste prevention, and public outreach in accordance with SB 1383 would directly advance these policies. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure SW1-A.
Measure NW1-A: Green Space Preserve or restore an additional 5 acres of green space within City limits by 2030. The goal will, in part, be accomplished by implementing	Consistent. General Plan 2050 strongly supports preservation and restoration of green space. Policy LC-1.7 and Goal LC-13 conserve wetlands, sloughs, creeks, the Pajaro River, and associated open space; Policies LC-13.1 through LC-13.3 support restoration, stewardship, and compatible public access; and Conservation Element Policy C-1.1 and Actions C-1.1.1, C-1.1.2, and C-1.1.6

Measure	Proposed General Plan 2050 Compliance
a 100-foot development buffer around all sloughs within City limits and implementing watershed improvements and habitat enhancements for sloughs, storm culverts, and open channels.	protect natural open space and support rewilding of sensitive areas. Safety Element Policy S-9.5 and Action S-9.5.1 further encourage nature-based solutions and ecosystem conservation. These provisions support acquisition, restoration, or rewilding sufficient to implement the measure. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure NW1-A.
Measure NW1-B: Tree Planting Continue to implement the Watsonville Urban Greening Plan, with the goal of planting 300 trees per year.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 expressly supports expansion of Watsonville's urban forest. Policy LC-2.2 directs continued implementation of the Urban Greening Plan and expansion and maintenance of the urban forest, while Goal C-5, Policy C-5.1, and Actions C-5.1.1 through C-5.1.3 call for tree protection, citywide planting guidelines, and preservation and expansion of the tree canopy. Safety Element Policy S-9.3 and Action S-9.3.1 also support increased shade along sidewalks, parking lots, plazas, transit stops, and open space. These provisions directly support annual tree planting. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure NW1-B.
Measure NW2-A: Local Carbon Offset and Sequestration Program Develop a local carbon offset and sequestration program to meet the City's GHG reductions toward meeting the goal of net-negative emissions by 2030.	Consistent. General Plan 2050 supports local carbon sequestration and offset-generating activities through its natural-resource, urban-greening, and climate-action policies. Policy C-4.2 and Action C-4.2.1 require continued CAAP implementation; Actions C-1.1.2 and C-1.1.6 support rewilding and habitat restoration; Policy LC-2.2 and Goal C-5 promotes tree planting and canopy expansion; and Policy S-9.5 and Action S-9.5.1 encourage ecosystem conservation and nature-based solutions. These policies provide a foundation for developing locally verifiable sequestration projects. General Plan 2050 would therefore support and would not conflict with Measure NW2-A.

Source: City of Watsonville, 2021.

Additionally, buildout of General Plan 2050 would not conflict with the City's local climate and sustainability planning documents, including the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan. General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions discussed in project impact would facilitate implementation of these strategies by supporting compact and infill development, multimodal transportation improvements, reduced VMT, energy-efficient and low-carbon development, expanded active transportation facilities, green infrastructure, and climate adaptation measures. Therefore, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not conflict with the City's local climate and sustainability plans and programs, and no impact would occur. (No Impact)

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4.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The following section analyzes impacts associated with exposure to hazards and hazardous materials that may result from implementation of General Plan 2050. It addresses potential impacts relating to hazardous materials use, transportation, and development on contaminated sites.

During the public scoping process, one commenter requested that the environmental impact report (EIR) evaluate the potential for site contamination resulting from the area's historical agricultural uses. Additional comments were received regarding concerns about disaster response related to the proposed removal of the airport runway.

4.9.1 Environmental Setting

Terminology

Hazardous Waste

The United States (U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a "hazardous waste" as a substance that: 1) may cause or significantly contribute to an increase in mortality or an increase in serious, irreversible, or incapacitating reversible illness, and 2) poses a substantial present or potential future hazard to human health or the environment when it is improperly treated, stored, transported, disposed of, or otherwise managed (40 Federal Code of Regulations [CFR] 261.10).

Hazardous waste is also defined as ignitable, corrosive, explosive, or reactive and is identified by the U.S. EPA by its form: solids, semi-solids, liquids, and gases. Producers of hazardous waste include private businesses and federal, State, and local government agencies. A material may also be classified as hazardous if it contains defined amounts of toxic chemicals. U.S. EPA regulates the production and distribution of commercial and industrial chemicals to protect human health and the environment. U.S. EPA also prepares and distributes information to inform the public about these chemicals and their effects, and provides guidance to manufacturers in pollution prevention measures, such as more efficient manufacturing processes and recycling used materials.

Hazard versus Risk

Public health is potentially at risk whenever hazardous materials have been used or where there could be exposure to such materials. Ecological communities, such as avian and terrestrial habitats and the aquatic environment, may be at risk, depending on the type of population and location relative to potential exposure sources. Important to the setting and analyses presented in this section are the concepts of the "hazard" of these materials and the "risk" they pose to human health and the environment.

Exposure to some chemical substances may harm internal organs or systems in the human body, ranging from temporary effects to permanent disability or death. Aquatic, terrestrial, or avian species may be similarly adversely affected. Hazardous materials that result in adverse effects are generally considered toxic. However, chemical materials may be corrosive or react with other substances to form other hazardous materials, but they are not considered toxic because organs or systems are not affected. Because toxic materials can result in adverse health effects, they are considered hazardous materials, but not all hazardous materials are necessarily toxic. For example, some hazardous materials are flammable but not necessarily toxic to human health. For purposes of the information and analyses presented in this section, the terms hazardous substances and hazardous materials are used interchangeably and include materials that are considered toxic.

The risk to human health and the ecological environment is determined by the probability of exposure to hazardous materials and the severity of harm such exposure poses. The likelihood and means of exposure, along with the inherent toxicity of a material, are used to determine the degree of risk to human health or the ecosystem. For example, a high probability of exposure to a low toxicity chemical would not necessarily pose an unacceptable human health or ecological risk, whereas a low probability of exposure to a very high toxicity chemical could. Various regulatory agencies, such as U.S. EPA, California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and Federal and State Occupational Safety and Health Administrations (OSHA) are responsible for developing and/or enforcing risk-based standards to protect the public and the environment.

4.9.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

U.S. Department of Transportation

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulates the transportation of hazardous materials by truck and rail through the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, enacted in 1975 (49 USC Chapter 51). The DOT establishes criteria for safe handling procedures of hazardous materials, including the types of containers, labeling, and other restrictions to be used in the movement of such material on interstate highways. The federal government delegates enforcement authority to the states.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), adopted 1976, governs and regulates the disposal of solid and hazardous waste, and the management of underground storage tanks to protect human health and the environment from potential hazardous materials. Agricultural producers disposing of pesticide waste are exempt if they follow practice procedures in accordance with RCRA.

Environmental Protection Agency

The U.S. EPA is responsible for enforcement and implementation of federal laws and regulations pertaining to hazardous materials, including evaluation and remediation of contamination and hazardous wastes. Legislation enforced by the U.S. EPA includes the RCRA of 1976 (42 USC §6901 et seq.), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980 (commonly known as Superfund), and the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986. RCRA gives U.S. EPA the authority to regulate the generation, transportation, treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste, including procedures and requirements for handling hazardous wastes or soil or groundwater contaminated with hazardous wastes. CERCLA establishes prohibitions and requirements concerning closed and abandoned hazardous waste sites, liability of persons responsible for releases of hazardous waste at these sites, and a trust fund to provide for cleanup when no responsible party can be identified. The U.S. EPA provides oversight and supervision for site investigations and remediation projects and has developed land disposal restrictions and treatment standards for the disposal of certain hazardous wastes.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Established under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) in 1970, the OSHA is charged with ensuring safe and healthy working conditions in the United States (29 USC Chapter 15). Its main goal is to

ensure that employers provide employees with an environment free from recognized hazards, such as exposure to toxic chemicals, excessive noise levels, mechanical dangers, heat or cold stress, or unsanitary conditions. Approximately 2,100 OSHA inspectors, along with other experts and support staff, establish and enforce protective standards in the workplace. California, under an agreement with OSHA, operates an occupational safety and health program in accordance with Section 18 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. The program applies to all public and private sector places of employment in the State, with the exception of federal employees, the U.S. Postal Service, private sector employers on Native American lands, maritime activities on the navigable waterways of the United States, private contractors working on land designated as exclusive Federal jurisdiction, and employers that require Federal security clearances.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act

The CERCLA, commonly known as Superfund, was enacted by Congress in 1980 and is administered by the U.S. EPA. This law created a tax on the chemical and petroleum industries and provided broad Federal authority to respond directly to releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances that may endanger public health or the environment. CERCLA established prohibitions and requirements concerning closed and abandoned hazardous waste sites, provided for liability of persons responsible for releases of hazardous waste at these sites; and established a trust fund to provide for cleanup when no responsible party could be identified.

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act, adopted 1972, governs the control of water pollution in the United States. This Act is implemented through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program, which requires that permits be obtained for point discharges of wastewater. This Act also requires that stormwater discharges be permitted, monitored, and controlled for various entities.

Lead-Based Paint Elimination Final Rule 24 Code of Federal Regulations

Regulations for lead-based paint are contained in the Lead-Based Paint Elimination Final Rule 24 CFR 33, governed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which requires sellers and lessors to disclose known lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards to perspective purchasers and lessees. Additionally, all lead-based paint abatement activities must comply with California and Federal OSHAs and with the State of California Department of Health Services requirements. Only personnel trained and certified in lead-based paint abatement are allowed to perform abatement activities. All lead-based paint removed from structures must be hauled and disposed of by a transportation company licensed to move this type of material to a landfill or receiving facility licensed to accept the waste.

Toxic Substances Control Act

Toxic Substances Control Act, adopted 1976, provides the USEPA with authority to require reporting, testing, restrictions on chemical substances, and to regulate commercial chemicals when they pose an unreasonable health or environmental risk.

Hazardous Materials Management Plan

Businesses that store hazardous materials in excess of specified quantities must report their chemical inventories to Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division (SCCEHD) by preparing a Hazardous Materials Management Plan (HMMP), also known as a Business Plan. This information informs the community on chemical use, storage, handling, and disposal practices. It is also intended to provide essential information to fire fighters, health officials, planners, elected officials, workers, and their representatives so that they can plan for and respond to potential exposures to hazardous materials.

Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act

The Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), passed in 1986, bolstered the original Comprehensive Environmental Response, CERCLA, commonly known as Superfund, by providing critical updates and enhancements. One of the key elements of SARA was the increase in funding, which allowed the U.S. EPA to address a greater number of hazardous waste sites more effectively. This additional funding was crucial in expanding the scope and efficiency of cleanup efforts.

SARA also prioritized permanent solutions over temporary fixes, ensuring long-term environmental safety through sustainable remediation practices. At the same time, it encouraged greater community involvement, giving local residents a stronger voice in cleanup efforts. By enhancing liability provisions, SARA ensured that responsible parties were held accountable for environmental damage, strengthening the overall effectiveness of the Superfund program.

Emergency Planning Community Right to Know Act

The Emergency Planning Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA), established in 1986, enhances public safety by requiring facilities that store or use hazardous chemicals to report their chemical inventories to local and state governments. This reporting allows local governments and emergency responders to develop effective emergency response plans for chemical accidents and releases. Additionally, EPCRA ensures that the public has access to information on chemical hazards in their communities, empowering residents to be informed about potential risks and enabling greater transparency. This law plays a critical role in protecting both the environment and public health by fostering preparedness and communication at the local level.

Federal Disaster Mitigation Act

The Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 emphasizes the importance of pre-disaster planning and proactive hazard mitigation efforts. It requires state and local governments to develop hazard mitigation plans that assess risks and outline strategies to reduce the impact of potential disasters. These plans are crucial for enabling governments to qualify for federal funding, specifically through programs administered by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), aimed at minimizing the risk of future disasters. By focusing on preparedness and long-term mitigation, the Act strengthens the nation's ability to protect communities from natural and man-made hazards.

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 14, Part 77

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 14, Part 77 regulates the safe use of airspace by establishing standards to identify and evaluate potential obstructions to aviation. It requires individuals and organizations to notify the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of any construction or alterations that may affect air navigation, such as tall buildings, antennas, or other structures. The FAA assesses whether these

structures pose a hazard to air navigation based on their height, location, and proximity to airports and flight paths. This regulation helps ensure that new developments do not compromise the safety of airspace by providing guidance for managing potential obstructions.

State

Department of Toxic Substances Control

As a department of the CalEPA, the DTSC is the primary agency in California that regulates hazardous waste, assumes authority for clean-up of the most serious existing contamination sites, and looks for ways to reduce the hazardous waste produced in California. DTSC regulates hazardous waste in California primarily under the authority of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the California Health and Safety Code.

DTSC also administers the California Hazardous Waste Control Law to regulate hazardous waste. While the Hazardous Waste Control Law is generally more stringent than the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, both State and Federal laws apply in California. The Hazardous Waste Control Law lists 791 chemicals and approximately 300 common materials that may be hazardous; establishes criteria for identifying, packaging, and labeling hazardous wastes; prescribes management controls; establishes permit requirements for treatment, storage, disposal, and transportation; and identifies some wastes that cannot be disposed of in landfills.

Government Code Section 65962.5 requires DTSC, the State Department of Health Services, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), and the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery to compile an annual update of the list of hazardous waste sites, and land designated as hazardous waste sites throughout the State. The Secretary for Environmental Protection consolidates the information submitted by these agencies and distributes it to each city and county where sites on the lists are located. Before the lead agency accepts an application for any development project as complete, the applicant must consult these lists to determine if the site at issue is included.

If soil is excavated from a site containing hazardous materials, it is considered a hazardous waste if it exceeds specific criteria in Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR). Remediation of hazardous wastes found at a site may be required if excavation of these materials is performed, or if certain other soil disturbing activities would occur. Even if soil or groundwater at a contaminated site does not have the characteristics required to be defined as hazardous waste, remediation of the site may be required by regulatory agencies subject to jurisdictional authority, such as the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) or the County of Santa Cruz Environmental Health Division. Cleanup requirements are determined on a case-by-case basis by the agency taking jurisdiction.

Brownfields Programs

As cities age and patterns of development change, former industrial properties, gasoline stations, and other parcels with land uses associated with hazardous materials are often abandoned. These properties, where soils and groundwater are known or suspected to be contaminated, are often referred to as “brownfields.” The threat of contamination and potential liability for cleanup costs tends to drive prospective developers away from brownfields.

A variety of state and federal programs have been established to encourage the safe reuse of brownfields properties. Grants, loans, and environmental insurance products for brownfields redevelopment projects

are available from the U.S. EPA, CalEPA, and other agencies. State legislation, such as SB 1248, and other initiatives (i.e., the Polanco Redevelopment Act and the California Land Reuse and Revitalization Act) have made changes to regulatory oversight programs to make the process of remediation of brownfield sites more uniform and efficient.

DTSC and the RWQCB have also developed a number of remedial programs specifically designed to speed the investigation and remediation of low-risk brownfields properties. These include the Voluntary Cleanup Program, Expedited Remedial Action Program, Prospective Purchasers Agreement, and the Spills, Leaks, Investigation, and Cleanup Program.

Certified Uniform Program Agency Program

A myriad of laws and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels regulate the management of hazardous materials. In California, the EPA has granted most enforcement authority over federal hazardous materials regulations to the Cal/EPA. In turn, a local agency, the SCCEHD has been granted responsibility for implementation and enforcement of many hazardous materials regulations in the County under the Certified Uniform Program Agency (CUPA) Program.

The CUPA program was established under California Senate Bill 1082 to reduce the cost and improve the efficiency of hazardous materials regulations. The CUPA program encompasses several hazardous materials programs, including HMMP program, California Accidental Release Prevention (CalARP) program, underground storage tank (UST) programs, aboveground storage tank (AST) programs, and hazardous waste generation and disposal.

The Hazardous Waste Control Act

The hazardous waste management program enforced by DTSC was created by the Hazardous Waste Control Act (California Health and Safety Code Section 25100 et seq.), which is implemented by regulations described in CCR Title 26. The State program is like the Federal program under RCRA, but more stringent. This regulation lists materials that may be hazardous and establishes criteria for their identification, packaging, and disposal. Environmental health standards for management of hazardous waste are contained in CCR Title 22, Division 4.5. As required by California Government Code Section 65962.5, DTSC maintains a Hazardous Waste and Substances Site List for the state called the Cortese List.

Hazardous Materials Management Plan

In California, businesses that store hazardous materials above specific thresholds are required to prepare a HMMP, commonly referred to as a Business Plan, as mandated by state regulations. This plan must detail the types and quantities of hazardous materials stored, as well as information on their safe handling and disposal. The purpose of the HMMP is to inform local communities, emergency responders, and government officials about the presence of hazardous substances at these facilities.

By reporting chemical inventories, businesses help emergency personnel plan for and respond to potential hazardous materials incidents, such as spills, fires, or leaks. The plan is designed to enhance public safety and environmental protection by providing crucial information on how to manage hazardous materials safely. These regulations are enforced by local agencies, often as part of the CUPA, which coordinate inspections, compliance, and emergency response.

The HMMP must be regularly updated and submitted to the local authority, ensuring that the community and relevant agencies remain informed and prepared to handle any hazardous materials risks.

California Accidental Release Prevention Program

Under the CalARP Program, businesses that use large quantities of acutely hazardous materials must prepare a detailed engineering analysis of the potential accident factors present at a business and the mitigation measures that can be implemented to reduce this accident potential.

UST Programs

Due to fire hazards, flammable liquids, such as gasoline, have historically been stored in USTs, which can leak over time, posing risks to the general public and the environment. Current regulations require that USTs be installed, monitored, operated, and maintained in a manner that protects public health and the environment. Tanks must be constructed with primary and secondary levels of containment and be designed to protect public health and the environment for the lifetime of the installation. The USTs must be monitored for leaks and built such that a leak from the primary container into the secondary container will be detected. When a UST is proposed to be removed, a detailed permit application must be submitted to SCCEHD, which oversees removal activities to identify evidence of leakage.

AST Programs

Inspections and permits are required for facilities storing hazardous materials in ASTs by SCCEHD. In addition, any facility operating ASTs with an aggregate tank capacity of 1,320 gallons or more must: 1) complete a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure plan to provide a detailed engineering analysis of the potential for release from ASTs present at a facility and the measures, such as secondary containment and emergency response, that can be implemented to reduce the release potential and 2) file a storage statement, as required by the SWRCB.

Hazardous Waste Generation and Disposal

Once hazardous materials have been used or processed, the remaining materials may be considered hazardous waste. Common items such as paints, thinners, cleaning products, and motor oil are frequently classified as hazardous waste once they are ready for disposal. In Santa Cruz County, both residential and business establishments are expected to generate some hazardous waste, including household hazardous waste. The management and enforcement of hazardous waste generation and disposal regulations in the county fall under the jurisdiction of the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Services.

Businesses generating more than 100 kilograms of hazardous waste per month, or more than one kilogram of acutely hazardous waste, must be registered with the RCRA and adhere to stringent regulations concerning the storage and disposal of such materials. For smaller businesses that generate hazardous waste below the RCRA thresholds, Santa Cruz County provides a Very Small Quantity Generator program, which offers safe and cost-effective hazardous waste disposal options.

Additionally, Santa Cruz County regularly conducts Household Hazardous Waste collection events to help residents dispose of items like batteries, motor oil, paints, and other household hazardous materials. These events are typically held at various designated collection sites around the county, making safe disposal more accessible to the general public.

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

The mission of the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment is to protect and enhance public health and the environment by objective scientific evaluation of risks posed by hazardous substances.

SWRCB

The SWRCB, through its regional boards, regulates discharge of potentially hazardous materials to waterways and aquifers and administers basin plans for groundwater resources in various regions of the State. The SWRCB provides oversight of sites at which the quality of groundwater or surface waters is threatened, and has the authority to require investigations and remedial actions. The Central Coast RWQCB has jurisdiction over Watsonville.

State Education Code and Public Resources Code

Section 17210 et seq. of the State Education Code, Section 21151.2, Section 21151.4, and Section 21151.8 of the Public Resources Code require that prospective school sites be reviewed to determine that such sites are not a current or former hazardous waste disposal site, a hazardous substance release site, or the site of hazardous substance pipelines. These laws also require consultation with local hazardous materials agencies and air quality districts to ensure that no sites within 0.25 mile of a school that handle or emit hazardous substances would potentially endanger future students or workers at the prospective school site.

Unified Program

CalEPA as established a unified hazardous waste and hazardous materials management regulatory program, as required by Senate Bill 1082 (1993). This program consolidates, coordinates, and makes consistent the administrative requirements, permits, inspections, and enforcement activities for the following environmental programs under CalEPA, the SWRCB and the RWQCB in each region of the State, State Office of Emergency Services, and the State Fire Marshal:

- Underground Storage Tank program;
- Hazardous materials release response plans and inventories;
- California Accidental Release Prevention Program;
- Above ground Petroleum Storage Act requirements for spill prevention, control, and countermeasure plans; and
- California Uniform Fire Code hazardous material management plans and inventories.

RWQCB

The Central Coast RWQCB is authorized by the Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act of 1969 to protect the waters of the State. The RWQCB provides oversight for sites where the quality of groundwater or surface waters is threatened. Extraction and disposal of contaminated groundwater due to investigation/remediation activities or due to dewatering during construction would require a permit from the RWQCB if the water were discharged to storm drains, surface water, or land.

California Department of Pesticide Regulations, Department of Food and Agriculture, and Department of Public Health

The California Department of Pesticide Regulations (DPR), a division of CalEPA, in coordination with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, a division of Measurement Standards, and

the California Department of Public Health have the primary responsibility to regulate pesticide use, vector control, food, and drinking water safety. CCR Title 3 requires the coordinated response between the County Agricultural Commissioner and County of Santa Cruz Environmental Health Division to address the use of pesticides used in vector control for animal and human health on a local level. The California DPR registers pesticides, and the County tracks pesticide use. Title 22 is also used to regulate small, district systems and larger, statewide water systems.

California Department of Transportation

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) manages more than 50,000 miles of California's highway and freeway lanes, provides inter-city rail services, permits more than 400 public-use airports and special-use hospital heliports, and works with local agencies. Caltrans is also the first responder for hazardous material spills and releases that occur on those highway and freeway lanes and inter-city rail services.

California Building Code Chapter 7A

Most recently updated in 2025, the California Building Standards Code (CBC) (California Code of Regulations, Title 24) provides minimum standards for the design and construction of buildings and structures in California. Minimum standards are organized under Part 1 to 12 and include code standards for buildings, mechanical, plumbing, energy, historical buildings, fire safety, and green building standards. State law mandates that local government enforce these regulations, or local ordinances, with qualified reasonably necessary and generally more restrictive building standards than provided in the CBC. Title 24 is applicable to all occupancies, or structures, throughout California, whether or not the local government takes an affirmative action to adopt Title 24. Chapter 7A in the Building Code establishes minimum standards for the protection of life and property by increasing the ability of a building located in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone within State Responsibility Areas or any Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area to resist the intrusion of flames or burning embers projected by a vegetation fire and contributes to a systematic reduction in conflagration losses.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection - Fire Hazard Safety Zones

In accordance with California Public Resource Code Sections 4201-4204 and Government Code Sections 51175-51189, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has mapped areas of significant fire hazards based on fuels, terrain, weather, and other relevant factors. These zones, known as Fire Hazard Safety Zones (FHSZ), represent the risks associated with wildland fires. CAL FIRE has designated some areas within and bordering the City of Watsonville as high FHSZs due to the City's location near wildland-urban interfaces, making it prone to wildfire risks. Specific details on the exact zones can be referenced through CAL FIRE’s official FHSZ maps.

California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of OSHA

The California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA), assumes primary responsibility for developing and enforcing workplace safety regulations within the State. Cal/OSHA standards are more stringent than Federal OSHA regulations and are presented in CCR Title 8. Standards for workers dealing with hazardous materials include practices for all industries (General Industry Safety Orders); specific practices are described for construction, hazardous waste operations, and emergency response. Cal/OSHA conducts on site

evaluations and issues notices of violation to enforce necessary improvements to health and safety practices.

Cortese List: Section 65692.5(a)

California Code of Regulations Section 65962.5(a) requires that the DTSC compile and update an annual list, known as the Cortese List, of all hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action, pursuant to Section 25187.5 of the Health and Safety Code. Facilities are added to the Cortese List are those that have failed to comply with a posted date for taking corrective action for an existing hazard or because DTSC determined that immediate corrective action is necessary to abate an imminent or substantial endangerment.

California Air Toxic "Hot Spots" (Assembly Bill [AB] 2588) Program

The Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Information and Assessment Act (AB 2588, Connelly, 1987: chaptered in the California Health and Safety Code Section 44300, et. al.) established a formal regulatory program for site-specific air toxics emissions inventory and health risk quantification that is managed by California air districts. Under this program, a wide variety of industrial, commercial, and public facilities are required to report the types and quantities of toxic substances their facilities routinely release into the air. The goals of the Air Toxics Hot Spots program are to collect emissions data, to identify facilities with potential for localized health impacts, to ascertain health risks, to notify nearby residents of risks that are determined to warrant such notification, and to reduce significant risks.

Construction Site Well Review Program

The Construction Site Well Review Program ensures that wells located near or on construction sites are properly evaluated and managed to protect groundwater resources. The program requires construction activities to comply with local and state safety regulations to prevent contamination during building or excavation work. This involves assessing the location, condition, and potential vulnerability of wells, especially in areas where construction could impact the quality or supply of groundwater. The program's goal is to maintain public health and environmental standards by safeguarding water resources from contamination due to nearby construction.

Emergency Response to Hazardous Materials Incidents

The Emergency Response to Hazardous Materials Incidents regulation ensures that coordinated efforts between local, state, and federal agencies are in place to manage hazardous substance releases. These agencies work together to contain, assess, and mitigate any potential harm from such incidents, following established protocols that prioritize public safety and environmental protection. Rapid response teams are deployed to manage spills, leaks, or other hazardous material threats, ensuring a swift and organized response to prevent contamination and protect affected communities. These efforts are guided by comprehensive emergency plans that include communication, assessment, containment, and cleanup procedures.

Senate Bill 1241

Senate Bill (SB) 1241 enacted on September 13, 2012 required cities and counties to address fire risk in state responsibility areas (SRA) and very high fire hazard severity zones in the safety element of their general plans upon the next revision of the housing element. This bill also requires cities and counties to make certain findings regarding available fire protection and suppression services before approving a

tentative map or parcel map. SB 1241 amends existing state-level requirements to require cities and counties to review and update their safety elements as necessary to address fire risks in SRAs and Very High FHSZ. The City of Watsonville has reflected SRA and Very High FHSZ regions in its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Regional

Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division

The Santa Cruz County (County) Environmental Health Division is designated as the CUPA within the County. Its jurisdiction includes four cities, including the City of Watsonville. As the CUPA, the Environmental Health Division is responsible for enforcing state-level statutes and local ordinances related to the storage, use, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste. The Environmental Health Division is also responsible for routinely inspecting all regulated facilities that handle or store hazardous materials, and it must investigate citizen-based complaints or inquiries regarding improper handling or disposal of hazardous materials.

Santa Cruz County Operational Area: Emergency Operations Plan

The Santa Cruz County Operational Area: Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is designed to coordinate disaster response efforts across local agencies, organizations, and mutual aid partners. It establishes guidelines for communication, command, and resource management during emergencies, following the Standardized Emergency Management System and National Incident Management System. The plan prioritizes multi-agency collaboration, efficient use of the Emergency Operations Center, and ensuring community preparedness, particularly for vulnerable populations. The EOP is regularly updated to align with current local, state, and federal regulations, ensuring readiness for various types of emergencies.

Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

In 2025, FEMA approved the County's Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) to identify risks from natural hazards, such as fire, flooding, and earthquakes. Individual cities, including Watsonville, Scotts Valley, and Capitola, prepared their own Hazard Mitigation Plans to incorporate into the MJHMP. The MJHMP ensures that the included local jurisdictions remain eligible for federal mitigation funding and outline strategies for reducing and mitigating potentially adverse impacts.

Santa Cruz County General Plan – Airport Land Use Compatibility

The Santa Cruz County General Plan includes Airport Land Use Compatibility Requirements related to the Watsonville Municipal Airport. Certain land uses, facilities, and structures near airports are considered hazardous or may pose a threat to aircraft operations. The County's Airport Land Use Compatibility Requirements guide development within the unincorporated portions of the Airport Influence Area to ensure that adverse impacts to new development or airport operations are minimized.

Local

City of Watsonville Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan

The City of Watsonville has prepared a draft ALUCP to be adopted with and included in General Plan 2050 (see Element 8 and Appendix B). The ALUCP is intended to promote compatibility between the Watsonville Municipal Airport and surrounding land uses. The ALUCP includes compatibility policies and maps defining the Airport Influence Area based on airport noise, overflight, safety and airspace

protection considerations. The ALUCP is developed to adhere to the standards contained in the California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook published by Caltrans Division of Aeronautics.

City of Watsonville Municipal Code - Fire Code

The City of Watsonville addresses hazards and hazardous materials through its municipal codes, particularly under Chapter 11 of Title 8 of the Watsonville Municipal Code (WMC), which adopts the California Fire Code by reference (WMC § 8-11.01). This chapter contains regulations on the safe handling, storage, and use of hazardous substances, aimed at preventing fire hazards. The Fire Prevention Division within the Watsonville Fire Department is responsible for enforcing these provisions. Their duties include conducting regular inspections, issuing permits, and ensuring compliance with safety protocols. Businesses that handle hazardous materials are required to adhere to these guidelines, obtain the necessary permits, and maintain proper safety measures to ensure both storage safety and emergency access.

City of Watsonville Municipal Code - Wildland-Urban Interface Code

The City of Watsonville has adopted the California Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code, Part 7 of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations (WMC § 8-9.01). The WUI Code establishes minimum construction and site-planning standards intended to reduce wildfire ignition potential and enhance fire-resistant design within areas where development interfaces with wildland vegetation. These requirements address building materials, ignition-resistant construction, and defensible-space provisions. The Watsonville Fire Department is responsible for enforcing the WUI Code through plan review and inspections for new development within designated WUI areas.

City of Watsonville Agricultural Buffer Policy

The City of Watsonville's Agricultural Buffer Policy establishes standards for new development adjacent to agricultural lands to minimize land use conflicts and protect public health and safety. The policy generally requires a minimum 200-foot agricultural buffer between urban development and adjacent commercial agricultural operations. Buffer areas may incorporate setbacks, landscaping, fencing, and other design features intended to reduce potential exposure to agricultural activities, including pesticide application, dust, noise, and odors. By providing physical separation between urban uses and active farmland, the policy helps reduce hazards associated with agricultural operations while supporting the continued viability of agriculture in and around the City.

City of Watsonville Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

The City of Watsonville's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) is a regulatory tool designed to identify local hazards and develop strategies for mitigating potential disaster risks. The LHMP ensures compliance with federal and state regulations, such as the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, by assessing risks like floods, earthquakes, and wildfires. Prepared in 2020 and approved by FEMA in 2021, the LHMP outlines both short-term and long-term mitigation strategies aimed at reducing the impact of these hazards on the community. By having an LHMP in place, Watsonville is eligible for state and federal disaster recovery grants, including those from FEMA, which help fund mitigation efforts and strengthen the City's resilience to future disasters. The City, through its Public Works Department, coordinated with the County of Santa Cruz on the development of the Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was adopted in April 2026 as the five-year update to the 2020 LHMP.

An Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis was prepared as a supplement to the 2020 LHMP. The analysis determined that every type of road, including connectors, bridges, and arterial roads, have a role in acting as an evacuation network. Every residential parcel has access to at least two evacuation routes. Under earthquake scenarios, Freedom Boulevard acts as the most viable evacuation route. In the case of flooding, Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, and East Lake Avenue headed north serve as viable outbound evacuation routes. Viable outbound evacuation routes in response to fires are dependent on the location of fires:

- Northern fire scenarios: East Lake Avenue, Riverside Road, Salinas Road
- Eastern fire scenarios: Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, Salinas Road
- Southern fire scenarios: Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, East Lake Avenue

All but one outbound evacuation route depends on a bridge, so inspection protocols for bridges have been established in this analysis.

Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan Update

The Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan Update, adopted by the Watsonville City Council in October 2023, addresses changes in the aviation industry, updates to FAA regulations and standards, and the Airport's current and future needs. The Airport Master Plan places strong emphasis on ensuring safety and minimizing hazards for both aviation users and the surrounding community. A central component of the plan is revising the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) drawing set to reflect current and future FAA design standards, including the evaluation of runway configurations, safety areas, and approach protection. Through facility improvements and planning for future infrastructure upgrades, the Airport Master Plan seeks to reduce operational risks, enhance safety, and maintain compliance with FAA requirements.

The Airport Master Plan also evaluates safety and airspace protection issues in and around the airport to reduce potential hazards to airport operations, preserve safe operating conditions, enhance compatibility with surrounding land uses, and ensure that future growth of the airport does not compromise public safety. Key planning considerations included runway configuration alternatives for Runway 9/27 to address the airport's nonstandard Runway Visibility Zone, measures to mitigation airspace obstructions, strategies to reduce wildlife attractants, and options for minimizing incompatible land uses within the Runway Protection Zones. In short, the Airport Master Plan acts as both a roadmap for orderly growth of the airport and a framework for maintaining safety, prioritizing hazard mitigation while accommodating the Airport's operational needs for the next two decades.

The Airport Master Plan also formed the basis of the City's draft ALUCP, included as Appendix B of General Plan 2050.

4.9.1.2 Existing Conditions

Hazardous Materials

The plan area is currently developed with a range of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, including facilities that may use hazardous materials or generate hazardous wastes such as dry cleaners, gas stations, automotive repair/service facilities, machine shops, and industrial/construction supply businesses such as a farm equipment supplier and cold storage facility. Examples of hazardous materials that could be used or stored at these types of facilities or business include motor oil, diesel fuel, hydraulic fluid, pesticides and herbicides, and perchloroethylene (dry cleaner substance).

Asbestos

Asbestos is a highly crumbly material often found in buildings constructed prior to 1979, typically used as insulation in walls or ceilings. It was formerly popular as an insulating material; however, it can pose a health risk when very small particles become airborne. Watsonville was incorporated in 1968, and some buildings in the plan area date to at least 1979. Due to their age, buildings dating back to 1979 or earlier in the plan area could contain asbestos. Pursuant to guidance issued by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, lead agencies are encouraged to analyze potential impacts related to naturally occurring asbestos. Naturally occurring asbestos can be released from serpentine and ultramafic rocks when the rock is broken or crushed. At the point of release, the asbestos fibers may become airborne, causing air quality and human health hazards. According to U.S. Geological Survey (2011), the plan area is not identified as having naturally occurring asbestos.[1] However, there is potential for asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) to be present in downtown buildings.

Lead

Prior to the federal regulations enacted in the late 1970s, lead-based paint was commonly used in residential construction, presenting significant health risks due to the toxic nature of lead. Lead can cause a range of health problems, including behavioral issues, learning disabilities, seizures, and, in severe cases, death. The primary risk of exposure in homes comes from deteriorating lead-based paint, which can release toxic dust when dry scraped, sanded, or heated, or when painted surfaces rub together. Lead-based paint in good condition is typically not hazardous; however, due to the age of some buildings in the plan area, lead-based paint is assumed to be present.

In 1978, the federal government required that the lead content in house paint be reduced to less than 0.06 percent (600 parts per million), significantly lowering the risk of exposure in newer buildings. However, homes and structures built before 1978 in Santa Cruz County may still contain lead-based paint, and the county requires that proper precautions be taken during renovations or repairs to prevent lead contamination. Specifically, under 40 CFR 745, Subpart E, there are regulations governing lead-safe practices for housing renovations, particularly for homes built before 1978. These regulations require contractors to follow lead-safe work practices to minimize lead dust exposure during remodeling or repairs.

In Santa Cruz County, property owners of homes built before 1978 must comply with local and federal guidelines to manage lead-based paint hazards, especially during renovations, to protect occupants and workers from potential lead exposure.

Hazardous Waste

Hazardous waste is any hazardous material that is to be discarded, abandoned, or recycled. The criteria that define a material as hazardous also define a waste as hazardous. Specifically, materials and waste may be considered hazardous if they are poisonous (toxic); can be ignited by open flame (ignitable); corrode other materials (corrosive); or react violently, explode, or generate vapors when mixed with water (reactive). Soil or groundwater contaminated with hazardous materials above specified regulatory state or federal thresholds is considered hazardous waste if it is removed from a site for disposal. If handled, disposed, or otherwise handled improperly, hazardous materials and hazardous waste can

[1] U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). 2011. *Reported Historic Asbestos Mines, Historic Asbestos Prospects, and Other Natural Occurrences of Asbestos in California*. Accessed October 2024. Available at: https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2011/1188/.

result in public health hazards if released into the soil or groundwater or through airborne releases in vapors, fumes, or dust. Soil and groundwater having concentrations of hazardous constituents higher than specific regulatory levels must be handled and disposed of as hazardous waste when excavated or pumped from an aquifer. The California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Sections 66261.20-24 contains technical descriptions of toxic characteristics that could cause soil or groundwater to be classified as hazardous waste.

Household Hazardous Waste

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) is defined by the U.S. EPA as leftover household products that contain corrosive, toxic, ignitable, or reactive ingredients. These can include everyday items such as paints, cleaners, oils, batteries, and pesticides. When improperly disposed of, HHW can create environmental and health risks, as these materials can contaminate water supplies, harm wildlife, or cause physical harm if they come into contact with people.

In Santa Cruz County, residents can safely dispose of household hazardous waste through specialized S.A.F.E. (Solvents, Automotive, Flammables, and Electronics) Centers. These centers are designed to accept unwanted household chemicals and hazardous materials, ensuring that they are handled and disposed of in an environmentally safe manner. The county provides multiple drop-off locations and collection events for items such as batteries, motor oil, paints, and cleaning supplies, making it easier for residents to dispose of these materials properly.

Radon Gas

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that forms from the decay of uranium in soil, rock, and water. It can seep into buildings through cracks in foundations and accumulate to dangerous levels. Radon is odorless, colorless, and tasteless, making it difficult to detect without specialized testing. Long-term exposure to elevated radon levels is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking, according to the U.S. EPA.

The U.S. EPA Map of Radon Zones identifies areas across the U.S. with varying potential for elevated indoor radon levels. Zones range from Zone 1 (highest potential for radon) to Zone 3 (lowest potential). Santa Cruz County falls within Zone 2, which indicates a moderate potential for radon levels between 2.0 and 4.0 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) (U.S. EPA, 2022).

The U.S. EPA recommends considering remedial actions when radon levels in homes exceed 4.0 pCi/L. In Santa Cruz County, data shows that approximately 16 percent of homes tested have radon levels above this threshold, necessitating radon mitigation efforts in those residences to reduce health risks. Overall, according to the Indoor Radon Potential map, the plan area is within a low category (CGS, 2010).

Residents are encouraged to conduct radon testing in their homes and take remedial action if necessary to ensure safe indoor air quality. Local resources and guidance are available through Santa Cruz County's environmental health services.

Existing Hazardous Materials Sites

DTSC

The EnviroStor database, managed by the DTSC, identifies hazardous materials sites, including cleanup sites and hazardous waste facilities. A search of the EnviroStor database for the Watsonville area reveals 109 cleanup sites and 31 active or closed hazardous waste facilities within the plan area (**Figure 4.9-1**) (DTSC, 2026). These sites may include locations where contamination from industrial or commercial activities is present, requiring oversight or remediation. It is important for any project in the plan area to

review these sites to assess any potential risks. Information regarding the UST releases and facilities has been compiled into an appendix at the end of this section (Appendix J).

Leaking Underground Storage Tanks

According to the Geotracker system, the plan area has 115 leaking underground storage tank (LUST) sites, including all open and closed cases (California State Water Resources Control Board, 2024). Of the LUST sites, four sites are still open which include Falcon trading, Hecker Pass Market, Roy Wilson Maintenance Yard, and Shikuma Bros Farms Inc. The remaining LUST sites are closed. The LUST sites, which typically involve petroleum contamination from underground fuel storage tanks, can pose risks to soil and groundwater quality. The SWRCB and local agencies work to clean up and remediate these sites, but their presence in the plan area highlights the need for careful review of historical land use and potential environmental risks associated with new development.

CERCLA and Compensation, and Liability Information System

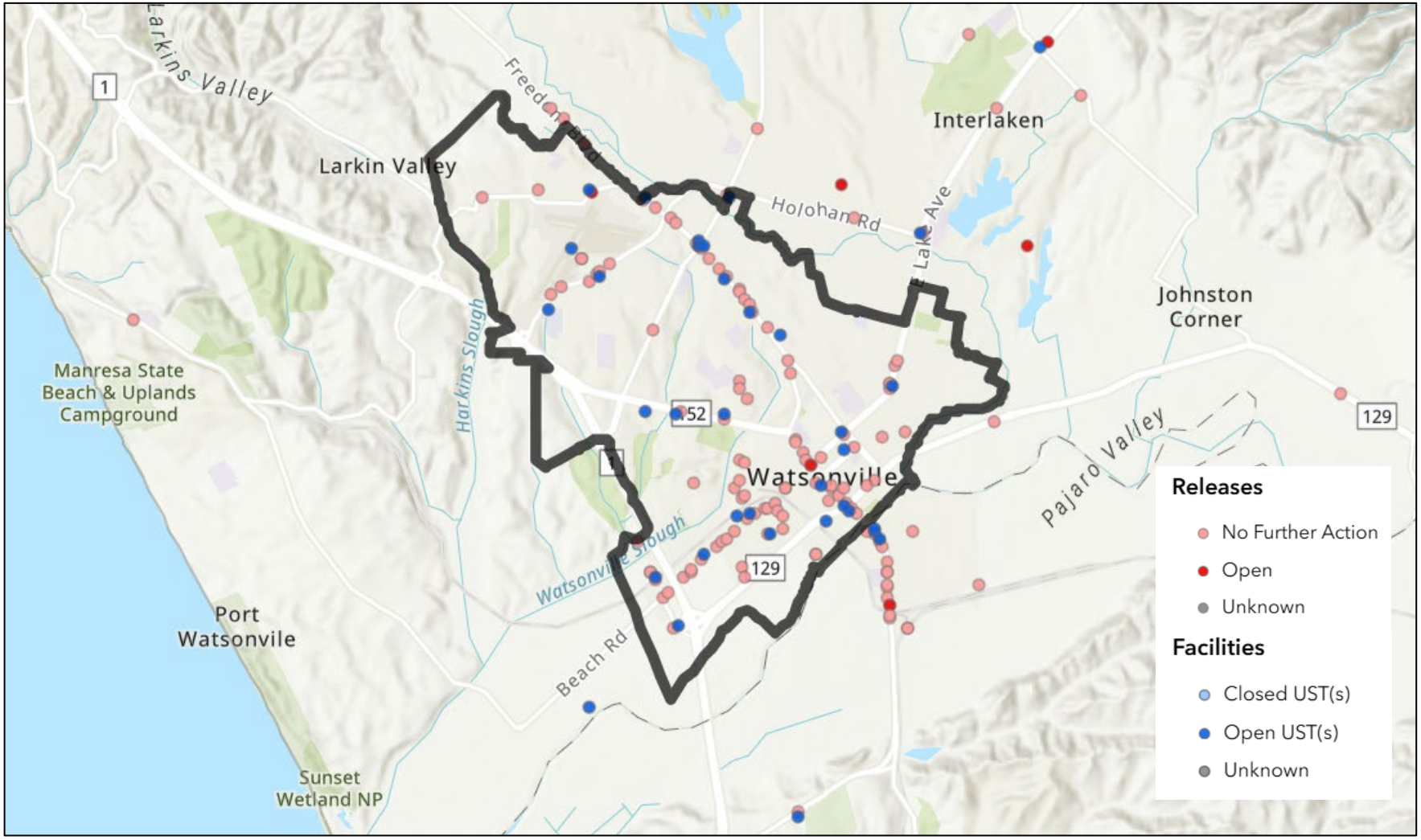
CERCLA, also known as the Superfund, governs the cleanup of sites contaminated by hazardous materials. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System tracks these sites. Based on available data, there are no CERCLA-designated Superfund sites within the plan area, although ongoing monitoring of surrounding regions is recommended to ensure compliance with federal regulations.

Plugged, Abandoned, and Unrecorded Wells

Plugged and abandoned wells refer to oil, gas, or water wells that are no longer in use and have been sealed to prevent environmental hazards. These wells can sometimes pose risks if not properly managed, as they can act as pathways for contaminants to enter groundwater. However, based on a review of the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) Well Finder tool, there are no known oil or gas wells located within the plan area.

While no wells have been identified in the plan area, it is important to remain vigilant about the possibility of unrecorded wells, which may not be documented in state or federal databases. For developments or construction activities in the region, it is recommended to consult local land use records and conduct site-specific investigations to ensure no unrecorded wells pose a potential risk to groundwater or soil quality.

Figure 4.9-1 UST Releases and Facilities in the Contiguous Plan Area



Source: EPA, 2026.

Hazardous Waste Generators

In Watsonville, various businesses, including auto repair shops, dry cleaners, hospitals, and manufacturing facilities, generate hazardous waste as part of their daily operations. Hazardous waste consists of materials that are corrosive, toxic, ignitable, or reactive, and improper handling of these materials can pose significant risks to both human health and the environment. Businesses generating hazardous waste must follow strict regulations to ensure the safe handling, storage, and disposal of these materials.

The U.S. EPA classifies hazardous waste generators based on the quantity of waste produced. Large Quantity Generators are businesses that produce more than 1,000 kilograms (2,200 pounds) of hazardous waste or more than 1 kilogram (2.2 pounds) of acutely hazardous waste per month. These businesses must comply with stringent regulations regarding record-keeping, reporting, and waste disposal. Small Quantity Generators, on the other hand, produce between 100 and 1,000 kilograms (220 to 2,200 pounds) of hazardous waste per month and are subject to fewer regulations but still must meet specific standards for safe waste management.

These regulations are governed by the RCRA of 1976, which established the legal framework for managing hazardous waste in the United States. Under RCRA, businesses are responsible for managing hazardous waste from their generation through its final disposal, known as the cradle-to-grave approach. The RCRA also empowers the U.S. EPA to oversee and enforce compliance with hazardous waste regulations to protect public health and the environment. In Watsonville, businesses must also comply with state regulations overseen by the DTSC to ensure safe and environmentally responsible waste management practices.

Urban Fires

Urban fires are fires that occur in densely populated areas and can spread quickly due to the proximity of buildings and infrastructure. In Watsonville, urban fire risks are present, particularly in areas with older buildings and those near wildland-urban interface zones. The City's proximity to SRAs, which are managed for fire protection by state agencies, increases the risk of fire spreading from nearby open spaces to urban areas (**Figure 4.20-1** in **Section 4.20, Wildfire**). While a majority of the City is urbanized and not considered a high fire hazard severity zone, the region has experienced fires in the past, though large-scale urban fires have been relatively rare.

The Watsonville Fire Department provides emergency response services to the City, with two stations located within the City limits. Response times are typically efficient due to the department’s central location and coverage area. The department is equipped to handle various fire emergencies, including urban fires, with a focus on quick response times to minimize fire spread in densely populated areas. Additionally, Watsonville is part of a broader mutual aid system, meaning that in case of large-scale incidents, surrounding fire departments and state agencies can provide support.

Local building codes in Watsonville adhere to California’s Building Standards Code, which includes specific regulations for fire safety. These codes require the use of fire-resistant materials in new construction and renovations, as well as the installation of fire suppression systems, such as sprinklers, in certain types of buildings. Older structures may not meet modern fire safety standards, making them more vulnerable to fire risks, though efforts are ongoing to upgrade and retrofit older buildings to comply with current codes. Overall, building materials and design play a crucial role in mitigating urban fire risks in Watsonville.

The City's fire prevention strategies, building codes, and emergency response infrastructure collectively work to reduce the risk and impact of urban fires, though the proximity to fire hazard zones remains a concern for long-term urban planning.

Wildland Fires

Watsonville and the surrounding areas are vulnerable to wildland fires due to the nearby wildland-urban interface and proximity to fire-prone regions. While the City of Watsonville is considered a Local Responsibility Area (LRA), Santa Cruz County is responsible for identifying wildfire risks surrounding Watsonville. Per the latest FHSZ designation in Santa Cruz County, a portion of the plan area is designated as a Moderate, High and/or Very High FHSZ. This area is largely along the western boundary of the City including portions of the Watsonville Municipal Airport and along Highway 1 in the vicinity of Pajaro Valley High School and Struve Slough. Beyond city limits in the northwest portion of the plan area, existing rural settings of the Buena Vista new growth area contain Moderate to High FHSZs. While no portion of this new growth area is designated as a Very High FHSZ, a small portion of unincorporated land nearby, partially within the South Manfre Road Area and to the south of Highway 1 near Harkins Slough, is designated as a Very High FHSZ (CAL FIRE, 2025). According to CalFire's mapping, the designated FHSZs in the plan area are within an LRA (**Figure 4.20-1** in **Section 4.20, Wildfire**). Historically, the region has experienced occasional wildfires, especially during California's dry and windy seasons. Factors that contributed to wildfire risks surrounding the City include dry vegetation during the summer and fall seasons, heat waves, and occasional offshore winds. These factors contribute to increased fire intensity and spread. As shown in **Figure 4.20-2** in **Section 4.20, Wildfire**, historic fires near General Plan 2050 plan area include several smaller fires in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The plan area represents a diverse land use setting, which is comprised of a mixed-use downtown core surrounded by medium-to-high density residential use, general commercial use along major corridors, industrial use on the southern and southwestern part, agricultural use with scattered low density residential in outskirts to the north and east, and a mix of environmental management, utility and agricultural use along its western boundary. The local vegetation types around Watsonville include grasslands, brush, and forested areas, all of which vary in flammability. Grasslands and brush in particular are highly flammable and can act as fuel for fires, allowing them to spread quickly. Forested areas nearby may also increase fire risk, especially in dry conditions, where tree canopies and dense underbrush can contribute to the intensity and severity of wildfires.

Watsonville is served by the Watsonville Fire Department, ensuring that fire suppression resources are within reasonable proximity. The Santa Cruz County Fire Department and CalFire also provide additional resources in case of large-scale wildland fires. Access to water for fire suppression is generally sufficient within the City due to its municipal water system, but water availability can be a concern in more remote or rural areas. Evacuation routes are planned and monitored by local agencies, with well-established procedures in place to ensure the safety of residents in the event of wildfire.

The combination of vegetation type, fire hazard zones, and available fire suppression infrastructure suggests that while Watsonville itself faces moderate wildland fire risks, its proximity to higher-risk areas necessitates ongoing vigilance and preparedness.

Emergency Medical and Other Services

Watsonville is served by several key emergency medical services, ensuring that the community has access to critical healthcare and emergency response. Watsonville Community Hospital, located centrally within the City, is the primary healthcare facility offering a range of medical services, including a full-service emergency department with the capacity to handle urgent and life-threatening conditions. The hospital is supported by nearby urgent care centers, which provide non-emergency medical treatment for minor injuries and illnesses. Ambulance response times in Watsonville are generally efficient due to the proximity of emergency medical service facilities, with most urban areas within the City being reached quickly by emergency medical personnel. Specifically, 90 percent of all emergency calls in the urban/suburban areas, where the population density exceeds 51 persons per square mile, are responded to within 12 minutes or less each month (Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, 2002).

In addition to medical services, Watsonville has robust emergency response infrastructure for fire and police services. The Watsonville Fire Department operates two stations within city limits, strategically positioned to respond to emergencies with minimal delay. Both stations are fully equipped and staffed to manage fire suppression, medical emergencies, and hazardous materials incidents. The department also partners with nearby Santa Cruz County Fire and CalFire to address larger-scale emergencies, such as wildfires or natural disasters, that could strain local resources.

The Watsonville Police Department is the primary law enforcement agency for the City, offering public safety and law enforcement services. With an average response time of approximately 4 minutes and 6 seconds for Priority 1 calls, the department's central location and strategic deployment ensure rapid responses to incidents throughout the City (Watsonville Police Department, 2024). Additionally, Watsonville's emergency services include well-coordinated search-and-rescue teams, particularly useful in responding to emergencies in more rural or challenging terrain near the City.

The City of Watsonville has determined that every residential parcel has access to at least two evacuation routes, as evacuation routes are any outbound roads accessible to residents. Key evacuation routes that provide access out of the City during times of emergency include Highway 1, Freedom Boulevard, Riverside Drive, East Lake Avenue, Green Valley Road, and Main Street/Porter Drive. Emergency responders are assumed to be flexible during emergency situations and are expected to use the route most accessible to them, as every roadway within the plan area is assumed to be a potential evacuation route.

Overall, Watsonville's fire, police, and medical emergency services are well-positioned to respond quickly to emergencies, with efficient response times and adequate capacity to meet the current demand. However, as the population grows or in cases of large-scale emergencies, coordination with regional agencies and continued investment in local resources will be essential to maintaining this high level of service.

Airports

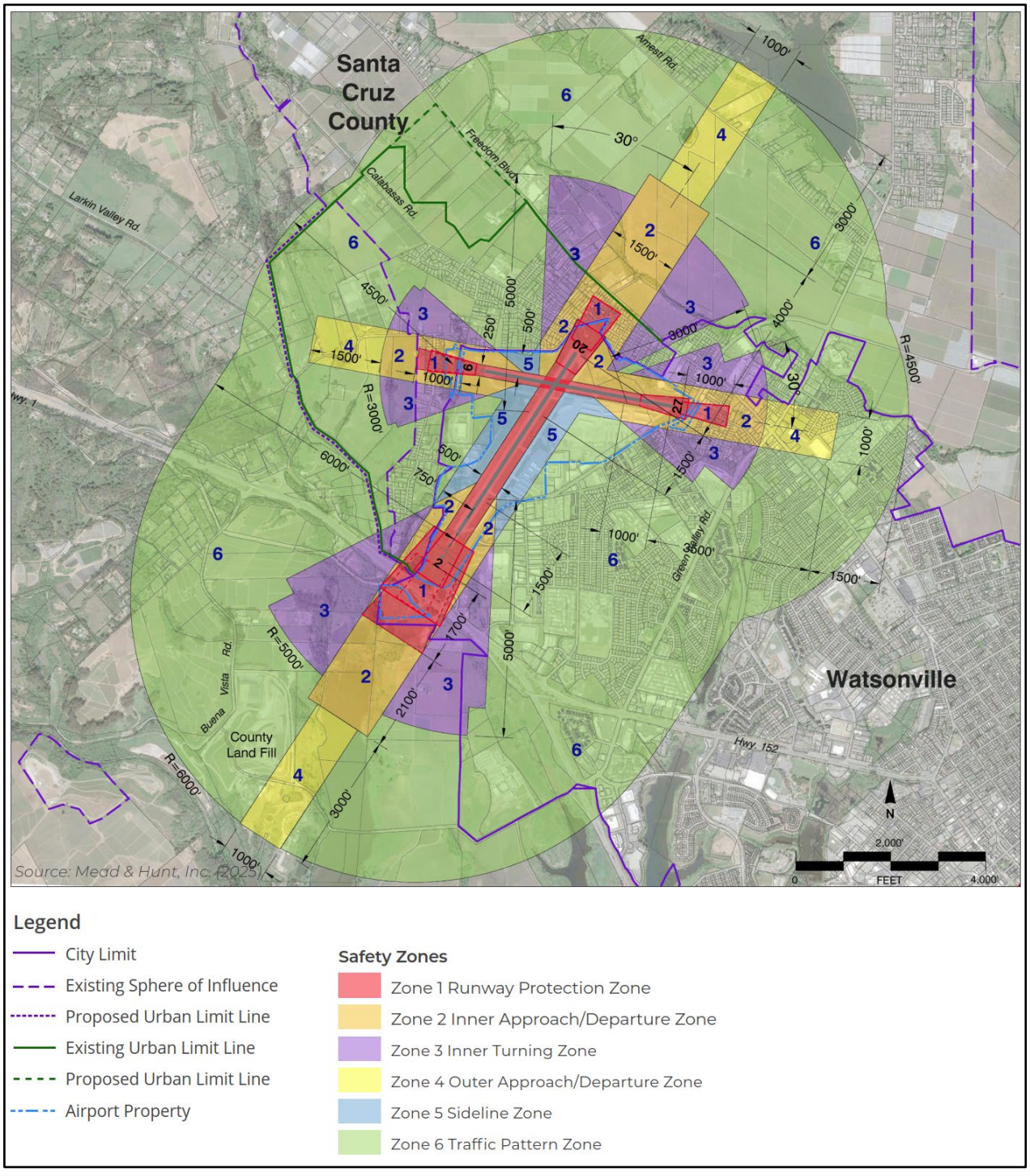
Watsonville Municipal Airport is a public-use, general aviation facility owned and operated by the City of Watsonville. The Airport encompasses approximately 343 acres on the northwest corner of the City and is the only public-use airport in Santa Cruz County. It has two intersecting runways. The primary runway, numbered 2/20 and oriented northeast/southwest, is 4,501 feet long. The crosswind runway, numbered 9/27, is oriented roughly east/west and is 3,998 feet in length. Runway 20 is the preferred calm wind runway (aircraft land from the northeast and takeoff toward the southwest). During poor weather and low-visibility conditions, arrivals utilize Runway 2 (toward the northeast). Runway 2/20 is oriented in the prevailing wind direction and provides acceptable crosswind coverage over 98 percent of the time no matter the weather conditions, in accordance with FAA recommendations (City of Watsonville, 2023).

Most of the airport buildings are located southeast of the runways. Hangar and tie-down spaces are available for approximately 360 aircraft. The Airport does not have an aircraft control tower but does provide instrument approach capabilities. A localizer and non-directional beacon support instrument approach procedures that enable aircraft operations during periods of reduced visibility and inclement weather, while precision approach path indicators provide visual glide-path guidance and enhance approach safety during visual operations (City of Watsonville, 2023).

The Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan, most recently updated in 2023, provides a long-term framework for facility improvements with a strong emphasis on safety and hazard reduction. The Airport Master Plan primary goal is "to identify the current and future needs of the Airport, while also factoring in the perspective of the City of Watsonville, Airport users and tenants, residents within the service area, and other stakeholders, ultimately resulting in a proposed development plan that reflects a balanced approach" (City of Watsonville, 2023). The plan updates the ALP drawing set, evaluates runway and taxiway safety standards, and recommends measures to reduce operational risks and maintain compliance with FAA requirements. The Airport Master Plan and ALP also serve as the primary basis for the ALUCP and defining land use compatibility criteria within the Airport Influence Area. As shown in **Figure 4.9-2**, safety zones extend around the Airport over developed and undeveloped land with a range of existing land uses, including residential neighborhoods, commercial development, schools, parks, and agricultural fields.

The Airport operates under FAA regulations and is subject to safety standards, including those associated with runway protection zones and approach surfaces. Existing hazards associated with Airport operations include routine aircraft activity, the storage and handling of aviation fuel, and potential risks related to wildlife attractants in the area. Emergency response services are coordinated with the City of Watsonville Fire Department and local mutual aid agencies.

Figure 4.9-2 ALUCP Compatibility Policy Map: Existing, Future, and Ultimate Zones



Note: Composite safety zones reflect existing, future and ultimate configurations.

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

Flooding and Sea Level Rise

The City of Watsonville faces various risks related to flooding and sea level rise due to its proximity to rivers, wetlands, and tidally influenced water bodies. According to the FEMA flood maps, several areas within Watsonville are classified as 100-year floodplains (Zone AE), where there is a 1 percent annual chance of flooding (**Figure 4.9-3**) (FEMA, 2024). Historically, Watsonville has experienced significant flooding events, particularly in 1995, when the Pajaro River overflowed, leading to severe damage to homes and agricultural lands. More recent events, in 2023, involved overtopping the banks of Corralitos Creek that flooded agricultural fields in the County and overwhelmed drainage facilities, resulting in flooding in the City's Senior Villages area. This history of flooding underscores the ongoing vulnerability of the area to seasonal and extreme weather-related flood events.

Sea level rise is another major concern for Watsonville. According to projections from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Sea Level Rise Viewer and local climate models, the City is expected to experience a rise in sea levels between 0.5 to 2.0 feet by 2050, which will exacerbate flooding risks, especially in low-lying areas such as the Watsonville Sloughs and nearby wetlands (NOAA, 2024). Rising sea levels may lead to more frequent and severe storm surges, which, in combination with the City's existing floodplain, could pose long-term risks to infrastructure, natural habitats, and residential areas.

Watsonville's stormwater infrastructure and flood control systems, managed by the Santa Cruz County Flood Control District, play a key role in mitigating these risks. The City relies on levees along the Pajaro River and its tributaries (i.e., Corralitos and Salsipuedes Creeks), drainage systems, and stormwater basins to control runoff and reduce flood damage. However, there are concerns about the capacity of this infrastructure to handle future floodwaters, particularly as climate change increases the intensity and frequency of storm events. Aging infrastructure may require significant upgrades to continue to protect the City's residents and properties effectively.

Moreover, the proximity of the plan area to rivers, streams, and wetlands requires careful evaluation of potential impacts on natural drainage patterns. Development in these flood-prone areas could alter the natural flood absorption capacity of wetlands and increase runoff, thus exacerbating flood risks in the surrounding environment. The Pajaro River, which has a history of flooding, could face more frequent overflows due to sea level rise and extreme weather events, further increasing the area's vulnerability to flooding.

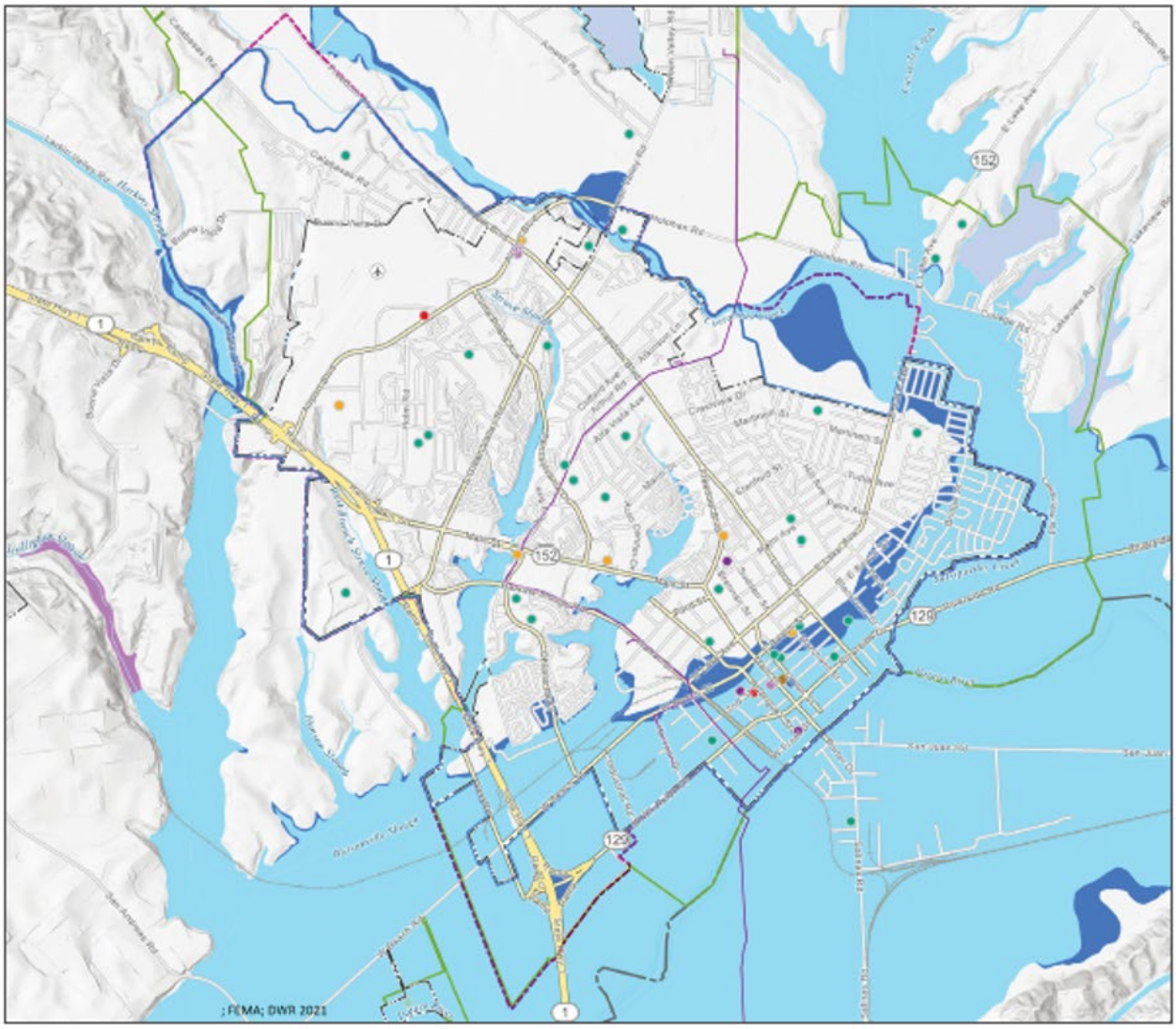
Tsunamis and Seiches

Tsunamis

According to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Tsunami Inundation Map, Watsonville is not located directly within a designated Tsunami Hazard Zone (CalOES, 2024). However, its proximity to the Pacific Ocean and the Monterey Bay region suggests that areas closer to the coast may be at risk during a significant tsunami event. While historical records show that tsunamis have occurred along the California coastline, such as after the 1964 Alaska earthquake, the City itself has not been severely impacted by these events. Nonetheless, coastal regions and low-lying areas near the Pajaro River could face potential inundation under extreme conditions.

In the event of a tsunami, the NOAA National Tsunami Warning Center provides an extensive warning system that includes both digital alerts and public sirens to warn coastal communities. Watsonville is part of the broader regional emergency response network that would be activated in case of a tsunami, and evacuation routes and safety procedures are in place for areas at risk of inundation.

Figure 4.9-3 FEMA 100- and 500-Year Flood Zones in General Plan 2050 Area



Source: Harris & Associates, 2019; Placeworks, 2025

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

Seiches

A seiche is a standing wave in an enclosed or partially enclosed body of water, typically caused by seismic activity or atmospheric conditions. Nearby water bodies such as the Pajaro River and Watsonville Slough could experience seiches under certain conditions. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, while the likelihood of a significant seiche in these water bodies remains low, a strong earthquake could trigger such an event, which might temporarily raise water levels and cause localized flooding (USGS, 2024). This would pose a potential hazard to a plan area, particularly if it is near these water bodies.

4.9.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.9.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

General Plan 2050 is a planning document to guide development; it does not include specific development projects or proposals. Therefore, the following analysis provides program-level review of the potential to hazards and hazardous material impacts that could result from implementation of General Plan 2050.

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, General Plan 2050 would result in potentially significant environmental effects related to hazards and hazardous materials if it would:

1) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials;

2) 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;

3) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25-mile of an existing or proposed school;

4) Be located on a site which is included in a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create significant hazard to the public or the environment;

5) 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, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area;

6) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan; or

7) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires.

4.9.2.2 Methodology

The analysis in this section is informed by a combination of publicly accessible databases and historic records related to emergency access, natural disaster risks and occurrences, and hazardous material leaks. Flood hazard information was gathered from FEMA maps, and wildfire risks and FHSZs were designated via CAL FIRE criteria. Data regarding evacuation routes in the plan-area was gathered from a

prior Evacuation Route Analysis conducted by the City. LUST and Recognized Environmental Condition site information was collected from the DTSC EnviroStor database.

4.9.2.3 Project Impacts

a) Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

&

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?

Hazardous materials are routinely used, transported, and handled throughout the plan area. Companies located in the Industrial, Industrial Light and General Commercial land use designations of General Plan 2050 could use, store, or generate hazardous materials for research, manufacturing, cleaning, or other commercial uses. While General Plan 2050 plans for the conversion of agricultural land within new growth areas of the plan area, agricultural activities would continue in the wider Pajaro Valley and may continue to use or transport hazardous materials such as pesticides. Any new development for residential, institutional, visitor serving, and active park use in the plan area, however, must be at least 200 feet away from commercial agriculture zoned lands to provide a buffer between agricultural operations and urban uses, in accordance with the City's Agricultural Buffer Policy.[2]

Land uses and activities involving hazardous materials are subject to applicable federal, state, and local laws, policies, and regulations, as described in **Section 4.9.1.1**, **Regulatory Framework**, of this chapter. In particular, future development under General Plan 2050 involving the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be subject to regulatory programs such as those overseen by RWQCB and DTSC.

Construction

Future construction of projects within the plan area would include the temporary transport, storage, use, or disposal of potentially hazardous materials including fuels, lubricating fluids, cleaners, or solvents. If spilled, these substances could pose a risk to the environment and to human health. However, the transport, storage, use, or disposal of hazardous materials is subject to various federal, state, and local regulations designed to reduce risks associated with hazardous materials, including potential risks associated with upset or accident conditions. Hazardous materials must be transported under U.S. DOT regulations (U.S. DOT Hazardous Materials Transport Act, 49 Code of Federal Regulations), which stipulate the types of containers, labeling, and other restrictions to be used in the movement of such material on interstate highways. The City does not have any specially designated routes for the transport of hazardous materials or waste through the City. However, the use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials are regulated through the RCRA. The DTSC is responsible for implementing the RCRA program, as well as California's own hazardous waste laws. DTSC regulates hazardous waste, cleans up existing contamination, and looks for ways to control and reduce the hazardous waste produced in California. DTSC does this primarily under the authority of RCRA and in accordance with the California Hazardous Waste Control Law (California H&SC Division 20, Chapter 6.5) and the Hazardous Waste Control Regulations (Title 22, California Code of Regulations, Divisions 4 and 4.5). DTSC also oversees permitting,

[2] City of Watsonville. *Agricultural Buffer Policy*, adopted October 26, 2004, by Resolution No. 274-04 (CM).

inspection, compliance, and corrective action programs to ensure that hazardous waste managers follow federal and state requirements and other laws that affect hazardous waste specific to handling, storage, transportation, disposal, treatment, reduction, cleanup, and emergency planning. Compliance with existing regulations would reduce the risk of potential release of hazardous materials from spills and transport during construction.

If future development facilitated by General Plan 2050 would disturb more than one acre of land, the applicant would be required to obtain coverage under the General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water Associated with Construction Activity (Construction General Permit Order 2009-0009-DWQ) to comply with Clean Water Act NPDES requirements. Compliance with these requirements would include preparation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), which would specify BMPs for rapid containment and cleanup of accidental hazardous materials spills or leaks, such as minor spills when refueling equipment on-site. Compliance with NPDES requirements, where applicable, and other relevant hazardous materials regulations would ensure that construction impacts are less than significant.

Operation

Development facilitated by General Plan 2050 may involve the use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste. However, not all the uses under General Plan 2050 would typically involve the routine use, storage, disposal, or transportation of hazardous materials in substantial quantities. They may involve use and storage of some materials considered hazardous, though these materials would be primarily limited to solvents, paints, chemicals used for cleaning and building maintenance, and landscaping supplies. These materials would not be different from household chemicals and solvents already in wide use throughout the plan area. Residents and workers are anticipated to use limited quantities of products routinely for periodic cleaning, repair, and maintenance or for landscape maintenance/pest control that could contain hazardous materials. Those using such products would be required to comply with all applicable regulations regarding the disposal of household waste.

During project operation, potential industrial uses would be determined by those allowed in the Zoning Code. The transport, use, and storage of hazardous materials during operation of industrial projects would be conducted pursuant to all applicable local, State, and federal laws, including but not limited to Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations implemented by Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations, which describes strict regulations for the safe transportation of hazardous materials, and in cooperation with the County's Department of Environmental Health. The City does not have any designated routes for the transport of hazardous materials or waste. As required by California Health and Safety Code Section 25507, any potential industrial businesses shall establish and implement a Hazardous Materials Business Emergency Plan for emergency response to a release or threatened release of hazardous materials. As required, the hazardous materials would be stored in locations according to compatibility and in storage enclosures (i.e., flammable material storage cabinets and biological safety cabinets) or in areas or rooms specially designed, protected, and contained for such storage, in accordance with applicable regulations. The provisions of CUPA programs, including HMMP, CalARP, UST, and AST, would continue to apply to hazardous materials storage and management. Furthermore, under the California Hazard Communication Regulation, chemical manufacturers, distributors, or importers must provide Safety Data Sheets (formerly Material Safety Data Sheets) for each hazardous chemical to downstream users to communicate information on these hazards. Future industrial uses of more than ten employees would be required to comply when employees may be exposed to hazardous substances found in the workplace under normal conditions of use as well as in reasonably foreseeable emergency conditions (i.e., a spill or release of a flammable chemical). Accordingly, a Safety Data Sheet would be stored on-site, either within the proposed buildings operating within the plan area for chemical and chemical products used or stored on the plan area, such as cleaning products for ongoing maintenance of the proposed building interior. In

the event a future applicant proposes to use or store hazardous materials on-site due to a unique or specific industrial process, the applicant would be required to comply with applicable state and federal regulations and prepare a Safety Data Sheet for hazardous materials used onsite, and that project would be subject to the City's strict ordinances and regulations for the use, storage, transport and disposal of hazardous materials.

Hazardous materials and waste within the plan area would be managed, handled, and disposed of in accordance with the following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal S-6 Hazardous Materials.** Reduce the potential danger related to the use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials to an acceptable level of risk for City residents.
>
> **Policy S-6.1 Hazardous Materials Control.** The City shall strictly enforce ordinances and regulations for the use, storage, transport and disposal of hazardous materials.
>
> **Action S-6.1.1 Inspections.** The City shall conduct periodic safety inspections of industrial and commercial facilities that use and store hazardous materials and dangerous chemicals.
>
> **Action S-6.1.2 Training.** The City shall conduct periodic training exercises for the identification, containment, decontamination, and disposal of hazardous materials.
>
> **Action S-6.1.3 Coordination.** The City shall coordinate with County agencies for responding to and controlling hazardous materials emergencies.
>
> **Action S-6.1.4 Education.** The City shall conduct public education programs on the safe use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials.
>
> **Action S-6.1.5 Collection and Disposal.** The City shall follow state and federal regulations to ensure that hazardous waste is collected, and disposed of, in a manner that prevents contamination of air, soil, or water. Special effort shall be made to develop a Hazardous Waste Disposal Program for low-level users (i.e., households, small businesses).
>
> **Action S-6.1.6 Identification of Potentially Hazardous New Businesses.** The City shall use the development processing and business license process to identify potential hazardous uses and to require preventative programs including, but not limited to, the development of neighborhood and area evacuation plans, and hazardous material handling and disposal plans.

General Plan 2050 is anticipated to accommodate growth and development in the City through 2050, and future development within the plan area could result in the use, storage, or disposal of hazardous materials. However, future development pursuant to General Plan 2050 would not involve the routine use, storage, transportation, or disposal of substantial quantities of hazardous materials, nor would it involve activities that could result in the release of such materials into the environment. However, future development would be subject to the goals, policies, and implementation measures of General Plan 2050, in addition to applicable federal, state and local regulations, which would reduce potential impacts associated with hazardous materials and hazardous waste. Therefore, impacts from project operation would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

There are multiple schools in Watsonville within the plan area, including: Watsonville High School, Pajaro Valley High School, E.A. Hall Middle School, Cesar Chavez Middle School, Rolling Hills Middle School, Freedom Elementary School, Calabasas Elementary School, H.A. Hyde Elementary School, Mintie White

Elementary School, Starlight Elementary School, Landmark Elementary School, MacQuiddy Elementary School, Ann Soldo Elementary School, Radcliff Elementary School, Linscott Charter School, Ceiba Charter School, Pacific Coast Charter School, and Diamond Tech. Implementation of the proposed General Plan 2050 could allow land uses and construction activities that could be reasonably expected to handle hazardous materials or generate hazardous emissions. It is possible that such uses and activities could occur near existing or proposed schools. However, any new uses or construction activity occurring in the vicinity of existing or future schools would be required to adhere to the existing federal and State regulations, including the DTSC's Hazardous Waste Management Program and the California Accidental Release Prevention Program enforced by Santa Cruz County. Though potentially hazardous materials such as fuels, lubricants, solvents, and oils could be used during construction and operation of future projects under General Plan 2050, the transport, use and storage of hazardous materials would be conducted in accordance with applicable State and federal laws, such as the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the California Hazardous Material Management Act, and the CCR, Title 22.

Furthermore, future development projects that involve the use of hazardous materials would be subject to project-level CEQA review, which would involve an analysis, disclosure and mitigation of any impacts to nearby schools due to hazardous emissions or hazardous materials handling.

Additionally, hazardous materials and waste within the plan area would be handled in accordance with the following Goals, Policies, and Implementation Measures in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Mitigate Potential Impacts:

> **Goal S-6 Hazardous Materials.** Reduce the potential danger related to the use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials to an acceptable level of risk for City residents.
>
> **Policy S-6.1 Hazardous Materials Control.** The City shall strictly enforce ordinances and regulations for the use, storage, transport and disposal of hazardous materials.
>
> **Action S-6.1.1 Inspections.** The City shall conduct periodic safety inspections of industrial and commercial facilities that use and store hazardous materials and dangerous chemicals.
>
> **Action S-6.1.2 Training.** The City shall conduct periodic training exercises for the identification, containment, decontamination, and disposal of hazardous materials.
>
> **Action S-6.1.3 Coordination.** The City shall coordinate with County agencies for responding to and controlling hazardous materials emergencies.
>
> **Action S-6.1.4 Education.** The City shall conduct public education programs on the safe use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials
>
> **Action S-6.1.5 Collection and Disposal.** The City shall follow state and federal regulations to ensure that hazardous waste is collected, and disposed of, in a manner that prevents contamination of air, soil, or water. Special effort shall be made to develop a Hazardous Waste Disposal Program for low-level users (i.e., households, small businesses).
>
> **Action S-6.1.6 Identification of Potentially Hazardous New Businesses.** The City shall use the development processing and business license process to identify potential hazardous uses and to require preventative programs including, but not limited to, the development of neighborhood and area evacuation plans, and hazardous material handling and disposal plans.

Compliance with applicable laws and regulations as well as implementation of General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions would ensure that impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

As described above in **Section 4.9.1.2, Existing Conditions**, the plan area contains multiple sites included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. Development allowed under the proposed General Plan 2050 could create a hazard to the public or the environment if the development occurs on contaminated sites.

General Plan 2050 envisions growth and development throughout the plan area, which may involve excavation for foundations and utilities, as well as demolition of existing structures. These activities could disturb contaminated soil or groundwater and generate airborne dust, potentially exposing construction workers and nearby receptors to hazardous materials. In addition, demolition of older structures, particularly those constructed prior to the 1970s, may release hazardous building materials such as lead-based paint and asbestos-containing materials. Dust generated during demolition could expose workers and the public through inhalation, and contaminated dust may also be mobilized by stormwater runoff during construction, potentially resulting in off-site transport and discharge to surface waters. In some cases, the presence of lead-based paint or asbestos-containing materials may not be identified prior to construction, increasing the potential for inadvertent exposure.

Site-specific assessment of future development proposals, and where necessary, remediation would be required prior to redevelopment. The California Department of Public Health and California Division of Occupational Safety and Health regulate the identification, handling, and abatement of these materials, including compliance with California Code of Regulations Sections 1532.1 (Lead) and 1529 (Asbestos), which require testing, monitoring, containment, and proper disposal, as well as worker protection measures. Because these activities could result in exposure to hazardous materials, impacts would be potentially significant and mitigation would be required.

The control of asbestos during demolition or renovation of buildings is also regulated under the federal Clean Air Act. The federal Clean Air Act requires a thorough inspection for asbestos where demolition will occur and specifies work practices to control emissions, such as removing all asbestos-containing materials, adequately wetting all regulated asbestos-containing materials, sealing the material in leak tight containers, and disposing of the asbestos-containing waste material as expediently as practicable.[3] Compliance with the mandatory requirements of CCR and the federal Clean Air Act would reduce the potential hazards and risks associated with release of asbestos.

Future development under General Plan 2050 would be required to comply with State and local laws regarding ACMs and/or lead-based paint (LBP) sampling prior to the demolition of onsite building(s) and provide documentation to the City prior to the commencement of demolition activities. Future development would be required to comply with the National Emission Standards for Air Pollution guidelines prior to demolition or renovation activities that may disturb ACMs. All demolition activities would be in accordance with Cal/OSHA standards contained in Title 8, CCR, Section 1529, to protect workers from asbestos exposure. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

[3] United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2025. Learn About Asbestos. Available at: https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/learn-about-asbestos#effects Accessed on August 22, 2025.

- Prior to commencement of demolition activities, a building survey, including sampling and testing, would be completed to identify and quantify building materials containing lead-based paint.
- During demolition activities, all building materials containing lead-based paint would be removed in accordance with Cal/OSHA Lead in Construction Standard, Title 8, CCR, Section 1532.1, including employee training, employee air monitoring and dust control.
- Any debris or soil containing lead-based paint or coatings would be disposed of at landfills that meet acceptance criteria for the type of waste being disposed.

Furthermore, a registered asbestos abatement contractor would be retained to remove and dispose of ACMs identified in the asbestos survey performed for the site in accordance with the standards stated in **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1,** below.

It is also possible that USTs in use prior to permitting and record keeping requirements may be present in the plan area. If an unidentified UST were uncovered or disturbed during construction activities, it would be removed; if such removal would potentially undermine the structural stability of existing structures, foundations, or impact existing utilities, the tank could be closed in place without removal. Tank removal activities could pose both health and safety risks, such as the exposure of workers, tank handling personnel, and the public to hazardous contents or vapors. Potential risks posed by USTs would be minimized by managing the tank according to existing standards contained in Division 20, Chapters 6.7 and 6.75 (Underground Storage Tank Program) of the California Health and Safety Code as enforced and monitored by the County of Santa Cruz Environmental Health Division.

The extent to which groundwater may be affected by an underground tank, if at all, depends on the type of contaminant, the amount released, the duration of the release, and depth to groundwater. If groundwater contamination is present during construction, and construction reaches groundwater, there would be potential for construction workers to be exposed to contaminants.

Additionally, if dewatering is required, improper discharge of the groundwater could release contamination into surface waters. Implementation of General Plan 2050 could accommodate development on or near Hazardous materials sites pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. This would be a potentially significant impact, and implementation of mitigation would be required.

Hazardous materials sites within the plan area would be managed, investigated, remediated, and developed in accordance with the applicable Goals, Policies, and Actions of General Plan 2050 to reduce potential hazards to the public and the environment.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal S-6 Hazardous Materials.** Reduce the potential danger related to the use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials to an acceptable level of risk for City residents.
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>
> **Action S-6.1.3 Coordination.** The City shall coordinate with County agencies for responding to and controlling hazardous materials emergencies.

Action S-6.1.4 Education. The City shall conduct public education programs on the safe use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials

Action S-6.1.5 Collection and Disposal. The City shall follow state and federal regulations to ensure that hazardous waste is collected, and disposed of, in a manner that prevents contamination of air, soil, or water. Special effort shall be made to develop a Hazardous Waste Disposal Program for low-level users (i.e., households, small businesses).

Action S-6.1.6 Identification of Potentially Hazardous New Businesses. The City shall use the development processing and business license process to identify potential hazardous uses and to require preventative programs including, but not limited to, the development of neighborhood and area evacuation plans, and hazardous material handling and disposal plans.

However, even with adherence to the General Plan Goals, Policies, and Actions listed above, impacts to groundwater may still occur. As such, **Mitigation Measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2** have been derived from the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan EIR and would apply to the entire plan area.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1: Property Assessment – Phase I and II ESAs

Prior to the start of construction (demolition or grading) on a known hazardous site within the plan area, project applicants shall retain a qualified environmental professional (EP), as defined by ASTM E-1527, to complete one of the following.

If the plan area is not listed in DTSC (GeoTracker) or SWRCB (EnviroStor) resources or other database comprising Government Code Section 65962.5, and requires more than five feet of excavation, then the proponent shall retain a qualified environmental consultant, California Professional Geologist (PG) or California Professional Engineer (PE), to prepare a Phase I ESA. If the Phase I ESA identifies recognized environmental conditions or potential concern areas, a Phase II ESA shall be prepared.

If the plan area is currently listed, previously listed, or un-listed with a regulatory closure or no further action letter in DTSC (GeoTracker) or SWRCB (EnviroStor) resources or other database comprising Government Code Section 65962.5, then the project proponent shall retain a qualified environmental consultant, California Professional Geologist (PG) or California Professional Engineer (PE), to prepare a Phase II ESA to project proponent shall test to confirm that there are no existing hazardous materials posing a risk to human health. The Phase II ESA shall determine whether the soil, groundwater, and/or soil vapor has been impacted at concentrations exceeding regulatory screening levels for commercial/industrial land uses. All recommended actions included in the Phase II ESA shall be followed. This may include the preparation of a Soil Management Plan for Impacted Soils (see below) prior to project construction and/or completion of remediation at the proposed project prior to onsite construction.

The completed ESAs shall be submitted to the City for review and approval prior to issuance of building or grading permits.

Soil Management Plan Requirements: The Soil Management Plan, or equivalent document, shall be prepared by a qualified environmental professional to address onsite handling and management of impacted soils or other impacted wastes, and reduce hazards to construction workers and offsite receptors during construction. The plan shall be submitted to the lead agency and must establish remedial measures and/or soil management practices to ensure construction worker safety, the health of future workers and visitors, and the off-site migration of contaminants from the site. These measures and practices may include, but are not limited to:

- Stockpile management including stormwater pollution prevention and the installation of BMPs

- Proper disposal procedures of contaminated materials
- Monitoring and reporting
- A health and safety plan for contractors working at the site that addresses the safety and health hazards of each phase of site construction activities with the requirements and procedures for employee protection
- The health and safety plan shall also outline proper soil handling procedures and health and safety requirements to minimize worker and public exposure to hazardous materials during construction.
- The lead agency shall review and approve the development site Soil Management Plan for Impacted Soils prior to demolition and grading (construction).

Soil Remediation Requirements: If soil present within the construction envelope at the development site contains chemicals at concentrations exceeding hazardous waste screening thresholds for contaminants in soil (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 22, Section 66261.24), the project proponent shall retain a qualified environmental consultant (PG or PE), to conduct additional analytical testing and recommend soil disposal recommendations, or consider other remedial engineering controls, as necessary.

The qualified environmental consultant shall utilize the development site analytical results for waste characterization purposes prior to offsite transportation or disposal of potentially impacted soils or other impacted wastes. The qualified environmental consultant shall provide disposal recommendations and arrange for proper disposal of the waste soils or other impacted waste (as necessary), and/or provide recommendations for remedial engineering controls, if appropriate.

Remediation of impacted soils and/or implementation of remedial engineering controls may require additional delineation of impacts; additional analytical testing per landfill or recycling facility requirements; soil excavation; and offsite disposal or recycling.

The City shall review and approve the development site disposal recommendations prior to transportation of waste soils offsite and review and approve remedial engineering controls, prior to construction.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2: Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessment

If groundwater is encountered during construction on properties included on a list compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 or through a Phase I or Phase II ESA pursuant to **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1**, an Environmental Professional shall be called to the site to determine safe handling procedures. The groundwater shall be pumped into appropriate containers and samples shall be obtained for chemical analysis of the Contaminants of Potential Concern in accordance with the requirements of the waste disposal facility to which the material would be sent. If water sample analytical results indicate the water is free of all detectable concentrations of Contaminants of Potential Concern, such water can be re-used at the site if deemed appropriate by the RWQCB. If water sample analytical results indicate the water contains concentrations of Contaminants of Potential Concern above appropriate RWQCB screening levels, such water shall not be re-used at the site. The contractor and the Environmental Professional shall elect to: (a) treat the groundwater onsite to render it free of detectable concentrations of Contaminants of Potential Concern (e.g., by activated carbon filtration); or (b) transport the groundwater to a local treatment or disposal facility for appropriate handling.

Significance After Mitigation

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 requires that any development that involves more than five feet of excavation would require a Phase I ESA, and a Phase II ESA if environmental concerns are discovered through the Phase I ESA process. Additionally, these measures ensure that any potential development site listed on DTSC, SWRCB or other database compiled pursuant Government Code Section 65962.5 conducts a Phase II ESA for soil sampling and environmental professional recommendations for remediation, as needed. Mitigation Measures HAZ-2 would reduce impacts related to reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Implementation of Mitigation Measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 and implementation of General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions included in the project would reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. (Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation)

e) For a project located 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?

As described above in **Section 4.9.1.2, Existing Conditions**, the plan area encompasses the Watsonville Municipal Airport area, which is a public use airport.

The City's draft ALUCP, provided in Appendix B of General Plan 2050, establishes compatibility policies and criteria consistent with the California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook (Handbook). The ALUCP is based on the planned development and activity forecast in the Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan (City of Watsonville, 2023).

The ALUCP is based upon the Airport Master Plan's aviation activity forecasts and the runway configuration under existing, future, and ultimate conditions, as summarized below:

- **Existing**: Runway 2/20 (4,501' × 149'), Runway 9/27 (3,999' × 98'), and two helipads. The base year (2020) activity level is 50,500 annual aircraft operations.
- **Future (20-year):** Maintain Runway 2/20 length while removing the displaced threshold; relocate the Runway 27 threshold 870 feet west, reducing Runway 9/27 to 3,129 feet. The 20-year forecast projects 89,900 annual aircraft operations.
- **Ultimate (beyond 20-year):** Extend Runway 2/20 by 680 feet (to 5,181 feet) and Runway 9/27 by 255 feet (to 3,384 feet). The 20-year forecast of 89,900 annual aircraft operations is also applied to the ultimate runway configuration.
- **Alternative Scenario:** Closure of Runway 9/27 was evaluated in the Airport Review Master Plan but not advanced in the FAA-approved 2023 ALP. As a result, aviation activity forecasts were not developed or adjusted for this runway closure scenario. Accordingly, this scenario was not incorporated into the draft ALUCP and is not analyzed in the EIR.

The ALUCP utilizes the aviation activity forecasts to develop airport noise contours and establish noise compatibility policies that account for airport operations under all planned runway configurations. As such, the Compatibility Policy Maps of the ALUCP reflect the existing, future, and ultimate runway configurations identified in the adopted 2023 Airport Master Plan and FAA-approved ALP, thereby proactively preserving long-term land use compatibility under the full range of planned airport development conditions.

As discussed in **Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis**, although the Airport Master Plan discusses the potential closure of the crosswind runway, its potential deactivation was not identified in the airport's recommended development plan in 2023. Therefore, it is not depicted on the FAA-approved ALP. Consequently, as the ALUCP must be based on an Airport Master Plan or ALP, this runway's possible future closure is not reflected in the compatibility criteria or maps of the ALUCP being proposed with the 2050 General Plan (Appendix B). Any future changes to the airport configuration, which are not considered within the ALUCP, would result in changes to the airport safety zones outlined in Appendix B and subsequent environmental review. The 2023 Airport Master Plan is currently undergoing an amendment process to consider the potential deactivation of the crosswind runway.

The geographic scope of the ALUCP is called the "Airport Influence Area." It represents locations where aircraft operations could negatively affect nearby land uses or certain features of land uses could adversely impact aircraft operations. The four compatibility factors addressed in the ALUCP include noise, safety, airspace protection, and overflight, which are summarized below:

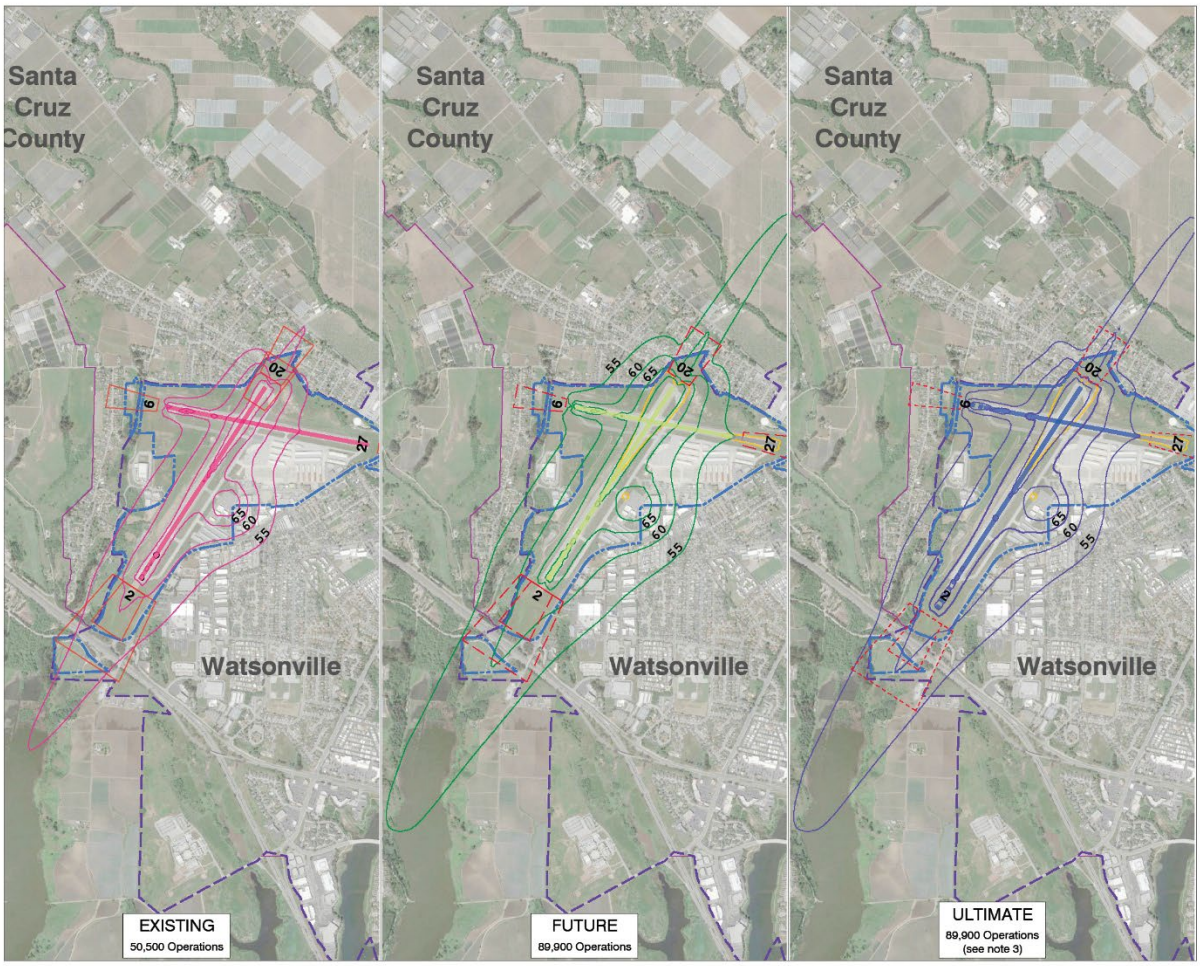
- **Noise**: Locations exposed to potentially disruptive levels of aircraft noise (see **Section 4.13, Noise** for a discussion of noise impacts related to aircraft operations and the Airport Influence Area).
- **Safety**: Areas where the risk of an aircraft accident poses heightened safety concerns for people and property on the ground.
- **Airspace Protection**: Places where height and certain other land use characteristics (e.g., glare, bird attractants) need to be restricted in order to protect the airspace required for the safe operation of aircraft to and from an airport.
- **Overflight**: Locations where aircraft overflights can be intrusive and annoying to many people.

The objective of noise compatibility policies in the ALUCP is to avoid establishment of noise-sensitive land uses in the portions of the Airport Influence Area that are exposed to significant levels of aircraft noise. Noise impacts are measured in terms of Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL), a composite measure that considers the loudness of individual noise events, how often they occur, and the time of day they occur.

The ALUCP utilizes the noise contours from the 2023 Airport Master Plan, which are based on a composite of forecast operations under the future and ultimate runway lengths. The forecasts anticipate that 89,900 aircraft operations will occur at the Airport in the 20-year planning horizon. As shown in **Figure 4.9-4**, with minor exceptions, projected noise levels above CNEL 60 dBA are contained on Airport property.

The ALUCP establishes different noise standards based on the noise sensitivity of different land uses. The ALUCP sets the maximum CNEL considered normally acceptable for new noise-sensitive uses, including residences, schools, and outdoor theaters, in the vicinity of the Watsonville Municipal Airport at 60 dBA (see Policy 2.1.2 and Table 2-1 in the ALUCP). Most other nonresidential uses are normally allowed in the CNEL 60-65 dBA range and conditionally allowed at higher noise exposures. Limits are also set on maximum interior noise levels (see Policy 2.1.3 in the ALUCP). For habitable rooms of residences as well as for noise-sensitive nonresidential uses such as schools, lodging, and places of worship, the interior noise level limit is CNEL 45 dBA. Office spaces must meet a CNEL 50 dBA criterion. With these established policies in the ALUCP, implementation of General Plan 2050 would maintain noise levels that do not impact people residing or working in the plan area.

Figure 4.9-4 Airport Noise Contours for Existing, Future, and Ultimate Configurations



Source: Mead & Hunt, Inc.

Legend

Boundary Lines
- Airport Property
- City Limits
- City Sphere of Influence
- Existing Runway Protection Zone[1]
- Future Runway Protection Zone[1]
- Ultimate Runway Protection Zone[1]

Noise Contours[2]
- CNEL - Existing
- CNEL - Future
- CNEL - Ultimate[3]

Notes

[1] Runway Data Source: Existing, future, and ultimate runway lengths and runway protected zones based on the Watsonville Municipal Airport Layout Plan (Adopted October 2023).

[2] Noise Contour Source: Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) contours for the existing and future runway configuration obtained from the Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan (Adopted October 2023).

[3] Ultimate Noise Contours provided by Airport Management (October 2022). Noise contours reflect future operations on the ultimate runway configuration.

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

Safety is the most significant determinant of allowable land use development within the Airport Influence Area. The intent of land use safety compatibility policies is to minimize the risks associated with an off-airport aircraft accident or emergency landing. The policies focus on reducing the potential consequences of such events should they occur. Risks both to people and property in the vicinity of the Airport and to people on board aircraft are considered.

The ALUCP evaluates the risks that potential aircraft accidents pose to land and people around the Airport in terms of two parameters: the location where aircraft accidents are most likely to occur near the Airport and the potential consequences if an accident occurs in one of those locations.

> **Location.** The accident likelihood is measured in terms of the geographic distribution of where accidents have historically occurred around other airports having similar types of activity to Watsonville Municipal Airport. Because aircraft accidents are infrequent occurrences, the pattern of accidents at any one airport cannot be used to predict where future accidents are most likely to happen around that airport in the future. Reliance must be placed on data about aircraft accident locations at comparable airports nationwide, refined with respect to information about the characteristics of aircraft use at the individual airport.
>
> **Consequences.** The consequences component of risk considers the number of people in harm's way and their ability to escape harm. Although aircraft accidents occur infrequently, it is the potential for high consequences when an accident occurs away from airport runways that drives the compatibility criteria. For most nonresidential development, potential consequences are measured in terms of the usage intensity—the number of people per acre on the site. For residential development, density—the number of dwelling units per acre—is substituted for intensity. Additional criteria are applicable to specific types of uses.

In setting ALUCP's safety compatibility criteria, the City used the Handbook. The Handbook provides ranges of residential density and nonresidential intensity criteria deemed suitable for urban, suburban, and rural environments. However, the statutory language under which compatibility planning is done around Watsonville Municipal Airport says that the County and City must "incorporate" the Handbook compatibility criteria. Since the City has airport land use compatibility planning responsibilities for areas within city limits, the City will utilize the ALUCP when reviewing individual development proposals and evaluating airport land use compatibility. In accordance with Public Utilities Code Section 21670.1(d)(2), the ALUCP adheres to the criteria in the Handbook (see Policy 1.1.1(b) in the ALUCP).

Another safety compatibility consideration discussed in the Handbook is that more stringent criteria are appropriate for rural areas than for suburban and urban areas.

For the purposes of setting compatibility criteria, it is the character of existing land use that is relevant. On this basis, the City's ALUCP considers lands within the current city limits to be suburban and most of the unincorporated territory within the Airport Influence Area to be rural and the associated Handbook criteria are applied accordingly. The most restrictive criteria apply to locations closest to the Airport runways, specifically Airport Safety Zones 1 through 5 (**Figure 4.9-2**). The restrictions in Airport Safety Zone 6 primarily concern high-intensity uses, such as outdoor stadiums, and uses involving the manufacturing, processing or bulk storage of highly hazardous materials. Residential uses are allowed in Airport Safety Zone 6, provided they address noise and overflight considerations.

In addition to limiting future development based on density and intensity criteria, the ALUCP also addresses uses that are especially risk sensitive (see ALUCP Policy 2.2.8). Many of these uses are ones in which the majority of occupants are children, elderly, and/or handicapped people who have reduced effective mobility or may be unable to respond to emergency situations. Others include hazardous materials storage where bulk quantities are manufactured or stored for use elsewhere and critical

community infrastructure such as emergency services facilities, emergency communications facilities and critical utilities.[4]

With the new growth areas proposed by General Plan 2050, there is the potential of safety and noise impacts on the people residing or working in them. **Figure 4.9-4** shows that the noise associated with the Watsonville Municipal Airport's primary runway would continue to extend away from the airport and into a portion of the existing Freedom Area neighborhood in unincorporated Santa Cruz County. Furthermore, mixed-use infill development corridors are planned along Freedom Boulevard within city limits, presenting new land uses that may be subject to adverse noise and vibration impacts from the airport. Although noise impacts are not anticipated to extend into the Buena Vista new growth area, continued airport operations nearby would necessitate compatibility with the Airport Safety Zones and ALUCP guidelines. New development under the proposed General Plan 2050, both the infill development and development in the growth areas, would be required to be consistent with the ALUCP, including the compatibility criteria for Airport Safety Zones. In adherence with the residential density standards and prohibited uses of certain Airport Safety Zones, no new housing development would be built off the crosswind runway within Safety Zones 1 through 5.

General Plan 2050 includes an Airport Element and ALUCP as an appendix that addresses public safety and land use compatibility in and around the airport and would also implement the following Goals and Policies to avoid and reduce impacts from airport related hazards.

General Plan 2050 Goals and Policies that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal A-1: Maintain a Safe, Efficient, and Sustainable General Aviation Airport.** Maintain Watsonville Municipal Airport as a safe, resilient, and FAA-compliant general aviation facility serving local and regional aviation needs, while retaining flexibility to adapt to evolving operational requirements and aviation technologies.
>
> **Policy A-1.1 Safety, Compliance, and Operational Integrity:** Maintain the Airport in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, state standards, and existing and future services as outlined in adopted airport plans to ensure safe, reliable, and efficient aviation operations for all users, including emergency and public-service aviation.
>
> **Policy A-1.3 Balance Airport and Community Development:** Guide airport development in a manner that considers surrounding land uses, environmental constraints, and community values, while ensuring that incompatible development does not encroach upon the airport or compromise the safety, functionality, or long-term viability of airport operations that support tenants and aviation users.
>
> **Goal A-2 Protect Public Health and Safety Around the Airport.** Minimize the community's exposure to excessive noise and aviation-related safety hazards affecting people and property on the ground, as well as aviation users, by guiding land use development in the Airport Influence Area using established noise, overflight, safety, and airspace protection compatibility criteria.
>
> **Policy A-2.1 Promote Compatible Land Use Patterns in the Airport Influence Area.** Guide future development within the Airport Influence Area to ensure compatibility with existing and planned airport operations, while recognizing established land uses and applicable development rights.

[4] Complete details regarding all of these restrictions on future development within safety zones are provided in Section 2.2 and Tables 2-2 through 2-8 of the ALUCP.

Policy A-2.2 Ensure Consistency Between Airport and Land Use Planning. Maintain consistency between the Airport Master Plan, Airport Layout Plan, and the City's General Plan by requiring coordinated updates when airport land use compatibility planning assumptions change and by encouraging coordination among the City, Santa Cruz County, and other affected agencies to address airport compatibility issues that extend beyond city boundaries.

Action A-2.1.1 Airport Land Use Compatibility Zoning Overlay. Adopt, maintain, and enforce a zoning overlay district to implement the noise, safety, overflight, and airspace protection criteria established in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and guide future land use development within the Airport Influence Area (AIA) consistent with that Plan.

Action A-2.1.2 ALUCP Review Cycle. Review the ALUCP when an update to the Airport Master Plan or Airport Layout Plan is proposed to identify whether modifications to the ALUCP may be necessary upon adoption of those airport plans. Revise the ALUCP as needed to reflect changes to compatibility zones, criteria, or other provisions resulting from a newly adopted Airport Master Plan or Airport Layout Plan. ALUCP updates must adhere to all applicable criteria established in the *California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook*.

Action A-2.1.3 Consistency Across Plans. Coordinate planning updates to maintain consistency between the General Plan, the Airport Master Plan, the Airport Layout Plan, and the ALUCP when airport planning or compatibility assumptions change.

Action A-2.1.4 Cooperative Planning in the Airport Influence Area. Coordinate airport-related planning and land use decisions among relevant City departments and affected local/regional agencies, including Santa Cruz County. Provide timely notification of planning initiatives that may affect airport operations or compatibility assumptions. Plan the orderly intensification of existing development and potential expansion within the Sphere of Influence to meet growth expectations while maintaining airport compatibility and quality-of-life objectives.

With the implementation of goals and policies identified above in General Plan 2050 and adherence to the compatibility criteria in the ALUCP (Appendix B of General Plan 2050), the potential airport hazard impacts associated with buildout of General Plan 2050 would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

f) Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

The project would not interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or evacuation plan such as the Santa Cruz Operational Area EOP which coordinates disaster response efforts across local agencies, organizations, and mutual aid partners. The City does not have designated emergency evacuation routes, but, per the City's Evacuation Route Analysis, every roadway within the City is considered integral to emergency access. It is not anticipated that future construction pursuant to General Plan 2050 would require lane closures of major roadways including State Route (SR) 152 (Main Street and East Lake Avenue), SR 129 (Riverside Drive), Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, or Airport Boulevard; however, should a lane closure become necessary during construction, the closure would be intermittent and temporary. Further, a lane or partial road closure during construction would require a road closure plan in accordance with City requirements, which would indicate how traffic would navigate the area while the roadway is closed. Planned roadway closures would be coordinated with the City's Public Works and Utilities Department, and an encroachment permit must be issued for construction work within the City's public right-of-way (WMC § 7.2-04). Local agencies, including emergency responders, and residents of the plan area would be notified of planned road closures before they occur. The City

would ensure that roadways remain accessible to emergency responders regardless of potential road closures.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce impacts to emergency evacuation plan.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal S-2: Emergency Preparedness. Anticipate the potential for disasters, maintain continuity of life-support functions during an emergency, and maximize efforts for post-emergency recovery.

Policy S-2.2 Rescue Services. The City shall strive to maintain emergency rescue services consistent with population growth in the City.

Action S-2.2.1 Light Rescue. The Fire Department shall maintain adequate equipment and hand tools for the extraction of victims from vehicles, aircraft, buildings, and for other emergency rescue circumstances.

Action S-2.2.2 Heavy Rescue Management. The Fire Department shall manage heavy duty rescue situations in which special equipment and methods are required. Special equipment in these circumstances may be obtained from other city departments or the private sector.

Policy S-2.3 Emergency Preparedness. The City shall be prepared to maintain critical public services during emergencies.

Action S-2.3.1 Training. All City departments shall conduct the appropriate level of training activities to ensure preparedness before an emergency, continuity of services during an emergency, and recovery operations after the event.

Action S-2.3.2 Critical Facilities. The City shall evaluate the ability to survive and continue to operate during emergency conditions and identify alternate facilities and operating plans for post-emergency recovery.

Action S-2.3.3 Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning. The City shall draft and periodically update its emergency preparedness and response procedures and coordinate emergency planning efforts with the local community, the Santa Cruz County Office of Emergency Services, and regional and State partners.

Action S-2.3.4 Evacuation Routes. The City shall designate evacuation routes for the Planning Area, consistent with AB 747 and SB 99 requirements. Evacuation route planning shall be guided by the Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis adopted by the City and shall be updated periodically in coordination with Santa Cruz County and other regional emergency response partners.

Action S-2.3.5 Hazard Mitigation Plan Implementation. The City of Watsonville shall actively pursue the implementation of the recommendations included in the Watsonville Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and any subsequent updates adopted by the City.

Policy S-2.4 Equitable Emergency Access, Communication, and Outreach. The City shall ensure that communication, education and information materials, assistance in preparedness activities, and evacuation and short-term recovery activities are available to all residents. Educational and informational materials shall be available in multiple languages and in formats appropriate for people with access and functional needs, such as low-income households, persons with disabilities, and seniors. The City shall also provide educational programs to promote measures that residents and businesses should take prior to, during, and after an emergency, including

public awareness of City emergency response plans, resources, risk reduction measures, and preparation of emergency kits.

Action S-2.4.1 Alert Notification System Registration. Promote registration with Santa Cruz County's Cruz Aware alert notification system, including considering opportunities for automatic enrollment and encouraging community members to sign up.

Action S-2.4.2 Neighborhood Coordination. The City shall encourage coordination between neighborhoods to share information and support emergency preparations.

Policy S-2.5 Incorporation of FEMA-Approved Hazard Mitigation Plan. Upon update and certification by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the City shall incorporate the most recently adopted and FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan into this Safety Element by reference, as permitted by California Government Code Section 65302.6.

Action S-2.5.1 Review and Update LHMP. The City shall review and update the LHMP every five years, per the requirements of the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.

Policy S-2.6 Emergency Response and Evacuation Routes. The City shall ensure that emergency response and evacuation routes are accessible throughout the City.

Action S-2.6.1 Review of Designated Evacuation Routes. The City shall periodically review designated evacuation routes identified in the Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis (Appendix B) to evaluate their condition and identify improvements to ensure the safety, capacity, and viability of these routes.

Action S-2.6.2 Signage for Evacuation Routes. The City shall install and maintain clear, reflective signage marking evacuation routes throughout the City.

Action S-2.6.3 Funding and Resource Allocation. The City shall allocate an annual budget for maintenance and improvement of emergency routes and funding for enhancing emergency response infrastructure.

Accordingly, with build out and implementation of General Plan 2050 policies and actions impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

g) Would the project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

As discussed in **Section 4.9.1.2**, **Existing Conditions**, only a limited portion of the plan area—specifically the rural lands within the Buena Vista New Growth Area west of the Watsonville Municipal Airport and South Manfre Road Area—is within an LRA that contains land designated as Moderate and High FHSZ. In addition, a small portion of unincorporated land nearby, partially within the South of Manfre Road Area and to the south of Highway 1 near Harkins Slough, is designated as a Very High FHSZ. These high-hazard designations occur along the western edge of the plan area, where the setting transitions to more rural conditions. In contrast, the vast majority of the City is urbanized and categorized as "no threat" or moderate fire hazard due to its build-out environment, paved surfaces, and limited flammable vegetation.

While the Buena Vista new growth area contains land with a Moderate and High FHSZ designation, no portion of this area is identified for future housing is located within Very High FHSZ designated lands. In addition, the housing proposed within the High FHSZ portion of the area would be developed at very low densities, to allow for providing defensible space and reduce wildfire risk. Further, the City has adopted the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code (California WUI Code, Part 7, 2025 Edition), which establishes minimum performance and prescriptive requirements for construction and development to

reduce the likelihood of life and property loss due to wildfire (WMC § 8-9.01). Compliance with the WUI Code would provide an additional layer of fire-resistant design and construction standards for new development. As a result, the areas planned for housing under General Plan 2050 would not be exposed to substantial wildfire hazard conditions.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following Policies to avoid and reduce impacts involving wildland fires.

General Plan 2050 Policies that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Policy S-5.7 Review Development in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Require review by the Community Development Department and Watsonville Fire Department of proposed construction projects and conceptual landscaping plans in the High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones identified by CAL FIRE prior to the issuance of development permits (see Figure 7.10: Fire Hazard Severity Zones). Plans for proposed development in such areas shall include, at a minimum:

- Site plan, planting plan, planting palette, and irrigation plan to reduce the risk of fire hazards and with consideration to site conditions, including slope, structures, and adjacencies.
- Development and maintenance of defensible space.
- More than one point of ingress and egress to improve evacuation, emergency response, and fire equipment access and adequate water infrastructure for water supply and fire flow that meets or exceeds the standards in the California State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations (commencing with Section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations); and Subchapter 3, Article 3, commencing with Section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations).
- Class A roofing assemblies for new and replacement roofs.
- Location and source of anticipated water supply.

Policy S-5.8 Fire-Resistant Landscaping and Defensible Space Requirements. All new development in the High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone must comply with fire-resistant landscaping and defensible space requirements. These standards shall meet or exceed Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations. This specifically includes Division 1.5, Chapter 7, Subchapter 2, Articles 1 to 5 (commencing with section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations), and Division 1.5, Chapter 7, Subchapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations). New development shall also comply with the Public Resource Code Section 4291 (State Defensible Space Requirements), which requires the following:

- Create a defensible space of at least 100 feet around the structure.
- Remove all dead plants, grass, weeds, and other flammable vegetation from the defensible space.
- Remove tree limbs that are within 10 feet of the chimney or stovepipe of the structure.
- Trim tree limbs that are within 6 feet of the ground or within 10 feet of the structure.

- Remove all dead branches, leaves, and other debris from roofs and rain gutters.
- Create horizontal and vertical spacing between trees and shrubs to prevent the spread of fire.
- Space trees at least 10 feet apart from each other.
- Maintain the defensible space throughout the year, not just during fire season.
- Obtain any necessary permits from local fire agencies before conducting any vegetation management activities.
- Provide and maintain access to the property for emergency vehicles.

Policy S-5.9 Ensure Adequate Emergency Access. Require new development in the High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones to provide adequate access for fire and emergency vehicles and equipment that meets or exceeds State standards in two parts of the California Fire Safe Regulations (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 1.5, Chapter 7): Subchapter 2, Articles 1–5 (commencing with section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations), and Subchapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations).

Policy S-5.10 Locate Development Outside Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. To the greatest extent possible, locate new residential development, and public and critical facilities such as police stations, schools, and community centers, outside of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Policy S-5.11 Development Within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Where no feasible alternative location exists, require new development within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones to demonstrate compliance with applicable state and local building and fire code regulations and incorporate appropriate mitigation measures and design considerations, including disaster response and evacuation plans, defensible space, fire-resistant materials, fire-resistant landscaping, adequate emergency access, and adequate water infrastructure, as applicable.

Policy S-5.12 Fire Protection Plans for New Development. Require fire protection plans for all new development projects in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, including plans for long-term, comprehensive, fuel reduction and management. The main components of a fire protection plan shall be consistent with California Fire Code, Chapter 49, and include:

1. Risk Analysis
2. Fire Response Capabilities
3. Fire Safety Requirements – Defensible Space, Infrastructure, and Building Ignition Resistance
4. Mitigation Measures and Design Considerations for Non-Conforming Fuel Modification
5. Wildfire Education Maintenance and Limitations

Policy S-5.13 Repair and Maintain Roads for Fire Safety. Prepare and implement plans to repair and maintain City-owned roadways as needed to meet current standards and encourage private property owners to do the same, to the extent feasible and given the absence of other site constraints. These standards include road standards for evacuation and emergency vehicle

access, vegetation clearance, and other requirements of the California Fire Safe Regulations, Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Division 1.5, Chapter 7): specifically, Subchapter 2, Articles 1-5 (commencing with Section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations); and Subchapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with Section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations).

Policy S-5.14 Plan for Post-Fire Recovery and Resilience. Develop and update programs as needed that ensure recovery and redevelopment after a large fire and that reduce future vulnerabilities to fire hazard risks through site preparation, redevelopment layout design, fire-resistant landscape planning, and home hardening building design and materials.

Policy S-5.15 Adequate Fire Service Capacity. Coordinate with the Watsonville Fire Department to ensure that fire and emergency services—including personnel, equipment, infrastructure, and response times—have sufficient capacity citywide by:

- Locating new development only where adequate fire protection exists.
- Advocating for adequate fire protection services through the City's participation in the Joint Powers Authority.

Policy S-5.16 Secure Water Supply for Fire Suppression. Coordinate with the City of Watsonville Water Division and regional partners, including the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency and the Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management group, to ensure an adequate, long-term water supply is maintained for fire suppression needs throughout the community.

Although portions of the Buena Vista New Growth Area west of the Watsonville Municipal Airport extend into areas designated as Moderate and High FHSZs, the areas proposed for housing are not located within the Very High FHSZ, and housing within the High FHSZ is planned at very low densities to allow for adequate defensible space and reduce wildfire risk. Given that the vast majority of the City is urbanized and characterized as “no-threat” or moderate fire hazard area, and implementation of applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including the wildfire-related policies of General Plan 2050, potential impacts from wildland fire hazards would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

4.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

This section discusses the potential impacts on hydrology and water quality that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. The following analysis and discussion incorporate the Water Supply Assessment (WSA) prepared on behalf of the Public Works and Utilities Department for General Plan 2050 by Harris and Associates in February 2026 (Appendix H).

Additionally, during the public scoping period, four commenters raised concerns regarding hydrology and water quality. Specifically, commenters requested that the EIR consider the following topics:

- Potential for excavation to affect groundwater
- Flooding risks
- Effects of proposed well on hydrology of Coyote Creek
- Coordination with CDFW regarding a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement

The first three topics listed above are discussed below in **Section 4.10.2.2, Project Impacts**. Because the plan would not result in any ground disturbance or development within Coyote Creek, a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement is not triggered by General Plan 2050 but could be required for future individual development projects.

4.10.1 Environmental Setting

4.10.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes regulations for the discharge of pollutants into the waters of the United States (WOUS). It aims to restore and maintain the integrity of the US waters by placing restrictions on pollution discharges.

Section 303(d)

Section 303(d) of the CWA requires that States review, make changes to, and submit the 303(d) list of waters that do not meet water quality standards (WQS) in a project area. Water bodies and pollutants that exceed protective WQS are listed on the State's 303(d) list. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency must approve the 303(d) list before it is considered final. For each body of water and pollutant on the 303(d) list, a water quality improvement plan, specifically a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), must be developed. An established TMDL ensures that waters in the plan area meet WQS; TMDLs also enforce the monitoring of polluted waters until WQS are met.

Section 401

Section 401 of the CWA requires a water quality certification from the State Board, Regional Board, or authorized tribe when a project requires a federal license and will result in a discharge to Waters of the US. Certifying authorities will consider whether the federally licensed or permitted activity will comply with applicable water quality requirements, including WQS, toxic pollutant restrictions, effluent limitations, and requirements of relevant state or tribal law.

Section 402

Section 402 of the CWA requires that pollutant discharges from a point source to surface waters of the US must be regulated by a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The NPDES permit program is authorized to perform several permitting, administrative, and enforcement aspects of the program.

Section 404

Section 404 of the CWA establishes regulations for the discharge of pollutants into Waters of the US. The discharge of excavated or fill material without a permit, issued by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), is strictly prohibited under Section 404.

Safe Drinking Water Act

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in 1974. The SDWA sets protective drinking water standards for over 90 contaminants to protect communities from pollutants in their water supplies. Individual states are also able to set and enforce their own drinking water standards so long as they meet the minimum criteria outlined by the SDWA.

National Flood Insurance Program

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides flood insurance to property owners, renters, and businesses in 23,000 participating communities to reduce the socio-economic impact of floods. The NFIP aims to help communities recover more quickly following floods. For communities requiring the adoption and enforcement of floodplain management regulations, the NFIP works with the communities to mitigate flooding impacts.

State

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act

The Porter-Cologne Act delegates authority to the SWRCB to establish Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs). The San Francisco Bay Area RWQCB has authority to use planning, permitting, and enforcement to protect beneficial uses of water resources in the project region. Under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code Sections 13000-14290), the RWQCB is authorized to regulate the discharge of waste that could affect the quality of the state's waters, including projects that do not require a federal permit through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. To meet RWQCB 401 Certification standards, all hydrologic issues related to a project must be addressed, including the following:

- Wetlands
- Watershed hydrograph modification
- Proposed creek or riverine related modifications
- Long-term post-construction water quality

Any construction or demolition activity that results in land disturbance equal to or greater than one acre must comply with the Construction General Permit (CGP), administered by the SWRCB. The CGP requires the installation and maintenance of BMPs to protect water quality until the project area is stabilized.

State Water Resources Control Board

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is responsible for establishing the water quality standards required by the CWA as well as the regulations for discharge into California waters. The SWRCB also identifies waters failing to meet standards for specific pollutants. The SWRCB and RWQCBs also administer water rights, set water pollution controls, and oversee water quality functions throughout the state.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System - Statewide Construction General Permit

The SWRCB has implemented an NPDES CGP for the State of California. For projects disturbing one acre or more, a NOI and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) must be prepared by a qualified professional prior to commencement of construction. The CGP includes requirements for training, inspection, record keeping, and for projects of certain risk levels, monitoring. The general purpose of the requirements is to minimize the discharge of pollutants and to protect beneficial uses and receiving water from the adverse effects of construction-related storm water discharges. The project would require CGP coverage based on area of land disturbed, which exceeds one acre.

Municipal Storm Water Program

The Municipal Storm Water Program regulates discharges from municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) through California. MS4s include any conveyance or system of conveyances owned or operated by a state. Stormwater permits, also called MS4 permits, are split into Phase I permits and Phase II permits. Phase I permits are required for municipalities that serve more than 100,000 people, and Phase II permits serve municipalities less than 100,000 people.

Disaster Preparedness and Flood Prevention Bond Act

The Disaster Preparedness and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2006 allocated general obligation bonds used to rebuild and repair the most vulnerable flood control structures in California. This Act aims to strengthen flood control measures and prevent loss of life from flash floods, flood-related disasters, mudslides, and levee failures.

Cobey-Alquist Floodplain Management Act

The Cobey-Alquist Floodplain Management Act establishes local regulatory framework for areas categorized as “designated floodways” by the Department of Water Resources or the State Reclamation Board. Within areas classified as designated floodways, the appropriate public agency will determine necessary flood plain regulations following the completion of water projects. The Department of Water Resources and the State Reclamation Board, within their respective jurisdictions, will establish general policies, rules, and regulations as necessary to mitigate flood risks.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014 is a California law aimed at ensuring the sustainable management of groundwater resources to prevent overuse, depletion, and long-term environmental damage. Under SGMA, local agencies are required to establish Groundwater Sustainability Agencies for managing and regulating groundwater basins that are critically over drafted or at risk. These agencies must develop and implement Groundwater Sustainability Plans that outline measures to bring basins into long-term sustainability, typically over a 20-year planning horizon. SGMA’s goal is to preserve

groundwater as a reliable water source for agricultural, urban, and environmental uses, helping to secure California's water resources for future generations.

Statewide Construction General Permit

In 2022, the California State Water Resources Control Board established the Statewide Construction General Permit. This is a permit that regulates stormwater discharges from construction and demolition sites.

Regional

Santa Cruz County General Plan

The Santa Cruz County (County) General Plan includes a Parks, Recreation, and Public Facilities Element that describes utilities and infrastructure in unincorporated areas of the County. The policies in this element aim to ensure that development throughout the County does not exceed the County's available water supplies. Furthermore, the element aims to protect the quality and abundance of water resources in the County. These policies also outline means of conserving and reusing water such that it can support potential increases in demand over time.

This element also includes an implementation strategy to upgrade sewer lines and treatment facilities throughout the County. These upgrades will be planned and conducted in coordination with several public works and sanitation districts within the County, including the City of Watsonville Public Works Departments.

Corralitos-Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin Revised Basin Management Plan Update 2014

In 2014, the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency revised the Basin Management Plan. The plan update accounts for improvements to the region's water treatment, storage, and distribution systems. Improvements to the water storage and distribution pump station are the first component of the recycled water facility's improvements. The second piece is improvements to the filtration and disinfection processes. Two additional treated-water storage tanks (No. 2 and No. 3) with the capacity of 1.0 million gallons will be constructed for these improvements, as well as the installation of 600 new ultra-violet lamps and associated equipment within the disinfection structure in the existing distribution pump station structure.

Local

City of Watsonville Post-Construction Stormwater Requirements

The City requires new development and redevelopment projects to comply with its Post-Construction Stormwater Requirements (PCRs). The PCRs are intended to minimize pollutant discharges and stormwater runoff to the extent feasible, preventing adverse impacts to or violations of the City's water quality standards (WMC § 6-3.535). The City's PCRs outline four tiers of projects based on the net increase in impervious surface area resulting from new or replaced impervious surfaces. The tiers for projects introducing greater increases in impervious surface area include more stringent standards related to stormwater management and treatment performance.

City of Watsonville 2020 Urban Water Management Plan

The City's UWMP outlines projected water usage in connection with planned population growth and water management programs. Population growth, water demand, and potential drought events are projected over a 25-year planning period, and reliability of existing water supplies are evaluated with these parameters in mind. The UWMP introduces policies and management practices to promote water conservation and to ensure that the water supply is resilient to future demand pressures.

Watsonville City Council Resolution – Water Shortage Contingency Plan

On April 21, 2021, California Governor Newsom announced several measures intended to promote drought preparedness following a dry winter. The City declared a Water Supply Shortage and enacted Stage Level One water restrictions of the City's 2020 Water Shortage Contingency Plan, as is described in the City's UWMP. The contingency plan expands efforts for water conservation, allocates additional funds to water conservation programs, increased enforcement of the MWELO, and reduced potable water supplement to reused water.

City of Watsonville Municipal Code

Watsonville Municipal Code - Floodplain Management

Chapter 2 of Title 9 of the Watsonville Municipal Code (WMC) aims to minimize the harms of flooding through the preservation of natural floodplains, management of filling and grading around floodplains, and limitation of erosion hazards. This chapter also outlines specific flood prevention standards for construction, utilities, equipment storage, manufactured homes, and recreational vehicles. The protection of floodplains promotes fewer losses to flood events and encourages resilience to natural disasters.

Watsonville Municipal Code - Coastal Zone Implementation Plan

The Coastal Zone Implementation Plan, codified under Chapter 5 of Title 9 of the WMC, governs lands that are located within designated Coastal Zones. This Chapter provides guidelines for the implementation of the Coastal Land Use Plan and related policies. New development is promoted near existing developments so that energy consumption is minimized and so that there is a lower risk of agricultural land being converted to non-agricultural uses. Lastly, this Chapter ensures that the coastal visual resources are protected and that public access to shorelines is protected and enhanced.

4.10.1.2 Existing Conditions

Water System

According to the WSA, the plan area is located along the Monterey Bay between the Cities of Santa Cruz and Monterey in Santa Cruz County. The City lies in the heart of the Pajaro Valley, surrounded by prime agricultural land and wetlands. Water is an integral component throughout the region's environs. Five small lakes are near the City's northern and eastern boundaries.

The City is generally bounded by Corralitos Creek to the north, Salsipuedes Creek to the east, and the Pajaro River to the south. The Pajaro River forms the boundary between Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. Several small creeks and sloughs meander through the City and extend south and west of Highway 1, forming what is referred to as the Watsonville Slough System.

The City owns and operates a regional public water supply system that includes nine hydraulic pressure zones, 14 wells, eight reservoirs and water storage facilities, nine booster stations, over 190 miles of pipelines, and a slow sand filtration plant (Corralitos Filter Plant [CFP]). The system provides water to a service area that is larger than the City limits, extending into the unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County (**Figure 4.10-1**). In 2020, this regional water system served an estimated population of 65,231 customers.

The City owns and operates a wastewater treatment facility. In addition, the City collaborated with the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA) to develop and build an associated recycled water treatment facility, which provides recycled water for crop irrigation in the coastal areas of South Santa Cruz and North Monterey Counties. The recycled water treatment facility protects groundwater supplies by providing an alternative to well extraction.

Watershed and Surface Water

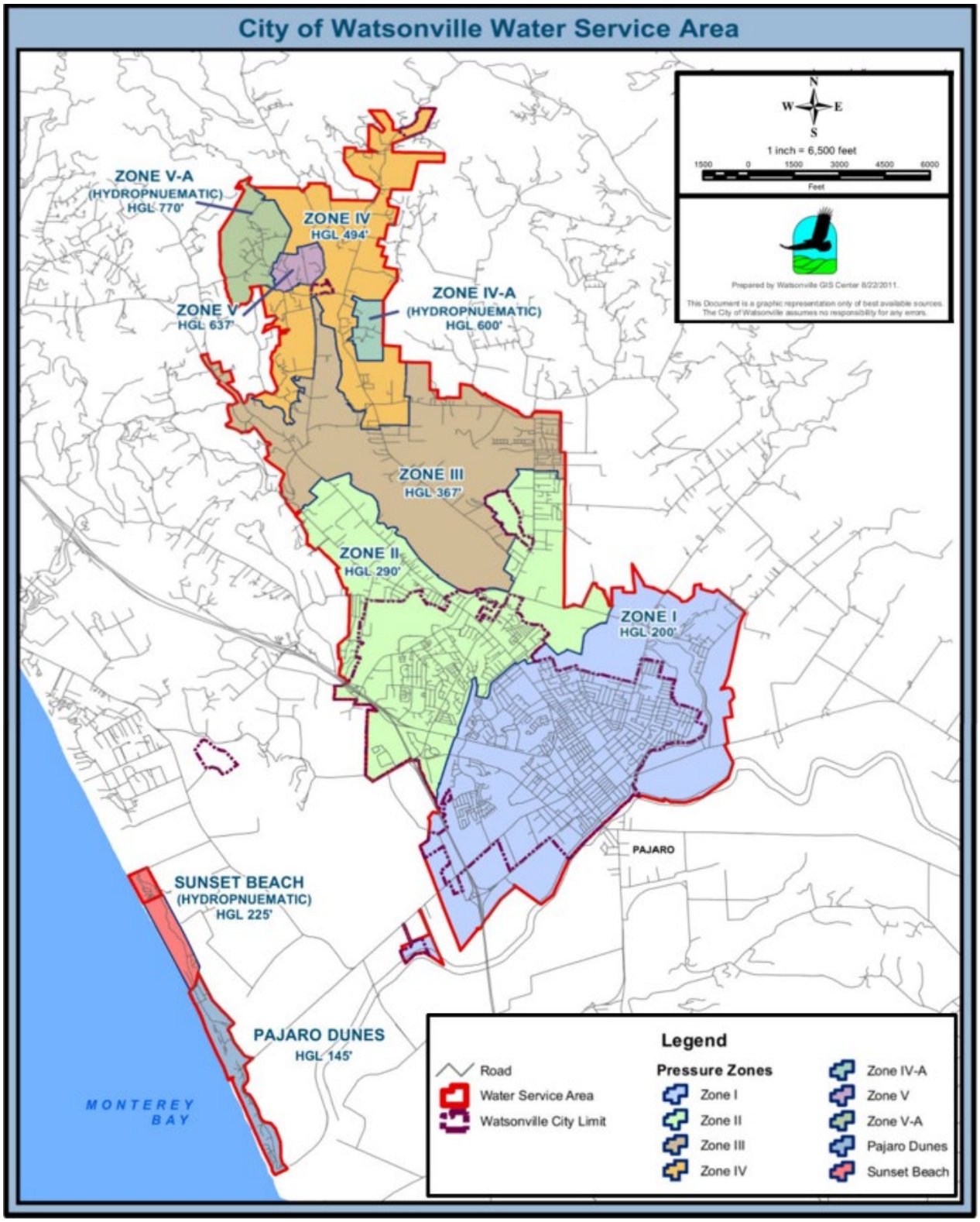
The plan area is located within Pajaro River Watershed. This watershed encompasses parts of the Santa Cruz Mid-County, Corralitos, Gilroy-Hollister Valley, Santa Ana Valley, Upper Santa Ana Valley, Quien Sabe Valley, San Benito River Valley, Dry Lake Valley, Bitter Water Valley, and Hernandez Valley basins (**Figure 4.10-2**)(PVWMA, 2022). Major tributaries throughout the watershed are shown in **Figure 4.10-3**.The Pajaro River runs along the southern edge of the plan area. The Pajaro River flows east to west and empties into Monterey Bay. Salsipuedes Creek is to the northwest of the plan area and is a tributary of the Pajaro River. Pinto Lake is located to the northeast of the plan area and is a site for recreational activities like boating and fishing (**Figure 4.10-4**). Harkins Slough and Gallighan Slough are located to the west of the plan area and connect with the Watsonville Slough to the west of the plan area. Hanson Slough, West Branch Struve Slough, Struve Slough, and Watsonville Slough all connect in the southwestern quadrant of the plan area (**Figure 4.10-4**). Lake Tynan is located to the northeast of the City, and College Lake is to the north of the City. Water bodies listed under the Clean Water Act Section 303(d), also called impaired waters, are detailed in **Table 4.10-1**.

According to the WSA, the City enjoys pre-1914 water rights on the Corralitos and Browns Creeks, which are north of the City limits. The surface water diversions flow to the CFP and are treated via slow sand filtration and disinfection. The CFP operates seasonally, typically starting in late spring and continuing through fall. During the rainy season, the CFP is taken out of service due to the high turbidity of the creek at the intake(s). High turbidity is not conducive to the efficiency of a slow sand filtration plant. When operational, the CFP treats up to 900 AFY and has a maximum design capacity of 2 million gallons per day.

Topography

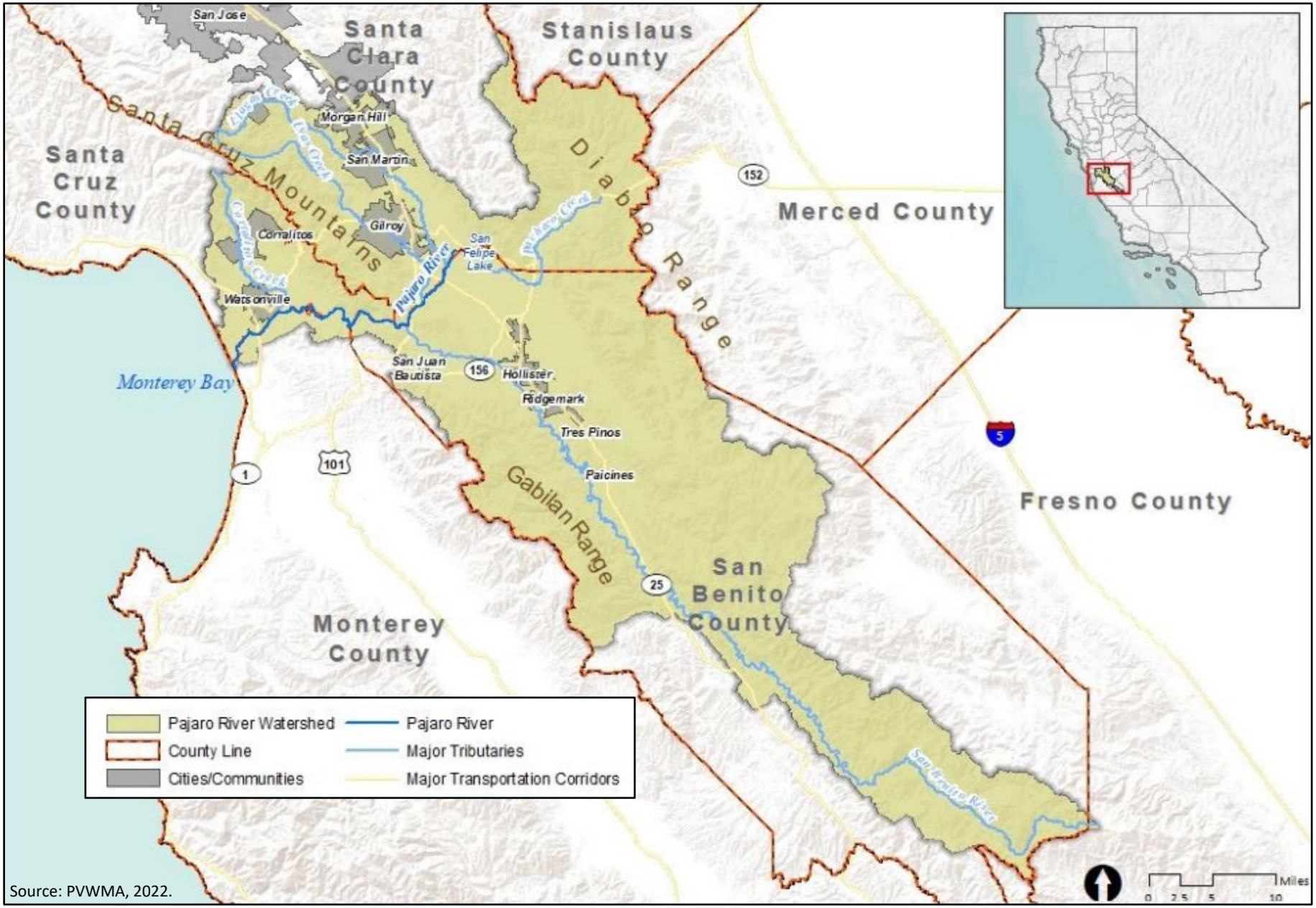
The City has an average elevation of 56 feet above sea level. The elevation is relatively uniform, and there are no mountains or valleys within the plan area. Atherton Peak and Mount Pajaro lie to the east of the City. As most of the land within the plan area is approximately level with sea level, flood risks may be elevated. The sloughs located within and around the plan area – including Harkins Slough, Gallighan Slough, Hanson Slough, Watsonville Slough, West Branch Struve Slough, and Struve Slough – present potential flooding risks. The Pajaro River, which runs along the southern border of the plan area, presents another potential flood risk.

Figure 4.10-1 Watsonville Water Service Area



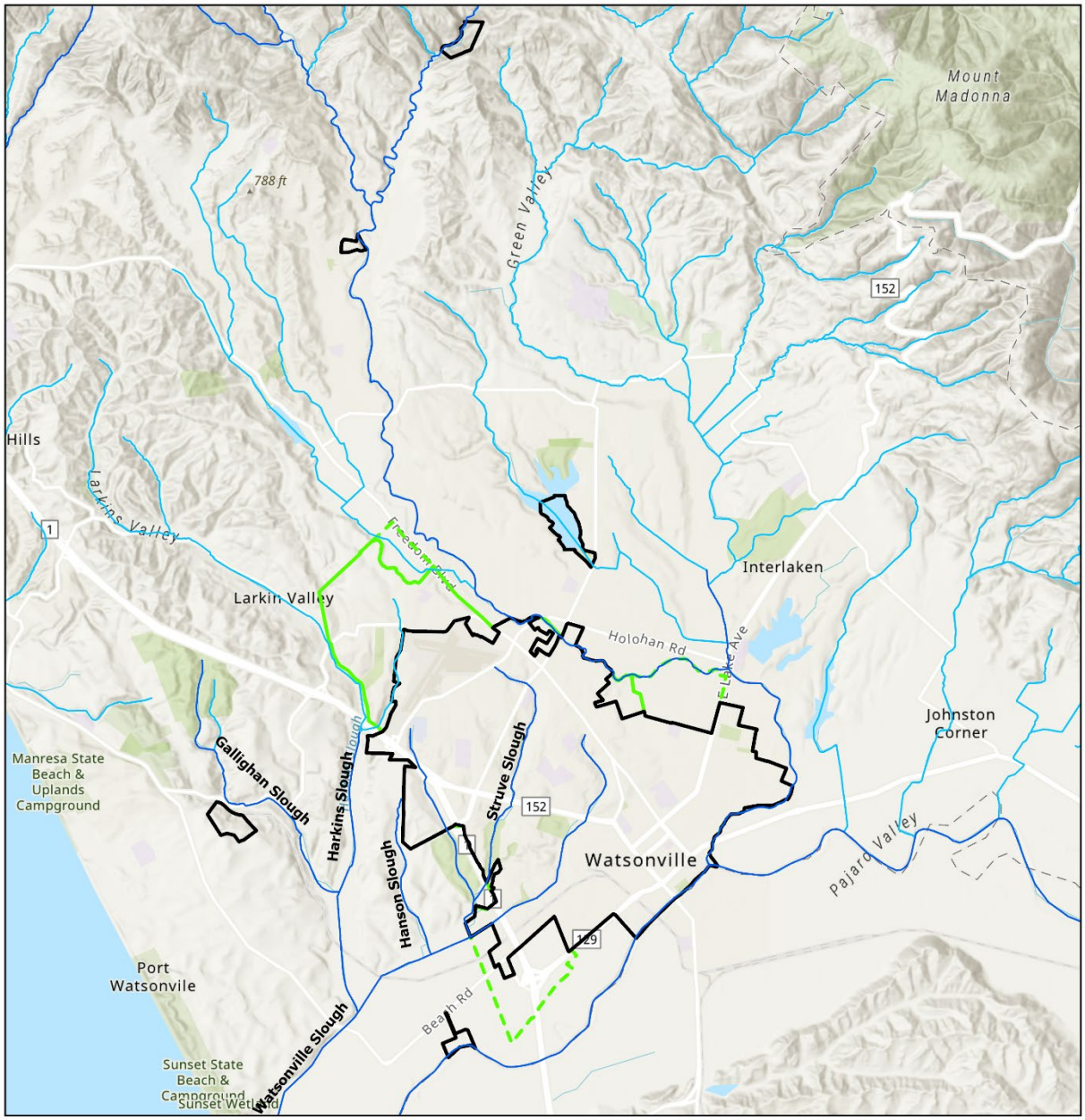
Source: City of Watsonville, 2025.

Figure 4.10-2 Pajaro River Watershed and Major Tributaries



Source: PVWMA, 2022.

Figure 4.10-3 Streams and Sloughs in General Plan 2050 Area



Legend

- Existing Urban Limit Line
- Watsonville City Boundary
- Proposed Urban Limit Line

Streams

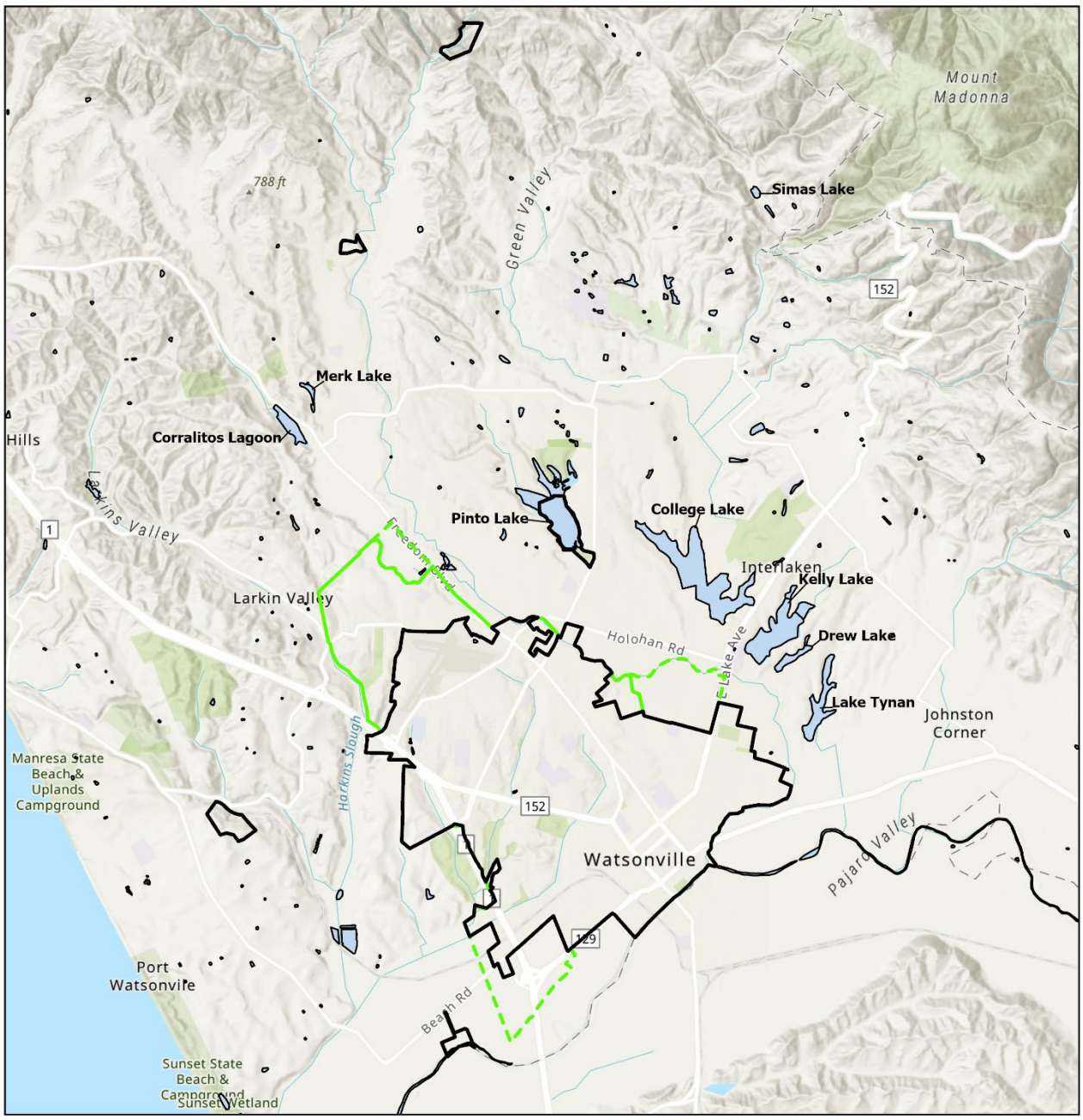
- Intermittent
- Perennial

N W E S

0 0.35 0.7 1.4 2.1 Miles

Source: County of Santa Cruz, 2026

Figure 4.10-4 Bodies of Water in General Plan 2050 Area



Source: County of Santa Cruz, 2026.

Table 4.10-1 Impaired Water Bodies in the Pajaro River Watershed

Water Body Name (Length/Area Impaired)	Pollutants/Stressors
Beach Road Ditch (3.4 miles)	Dissolved oxygen, turbidity, nitrate, pH
Carnadero Creek (3.2 miles)	Fecal coliform, dissolved oxygen, E. coli, turbidity, nitrate
Chesbro Reservoir (235.2 acres)	Mercury
Corralitos Creek (13.6 miles)	Fecal coliform, E. coli, turbidity, pH
Furtong Creek (8.5 miles)	E. coli, fecal coliform, nitrate, turbidity
Gallighan Slough (3.0 miles)	Indicator bacteria
Hanson Slough	Indicator bacteria
Harkins Slough	Low dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll-a, indicator bacteria
Hernandez Reservoir (623.4 acres)	Mercury
Llagas Creek above Chesbro Reservoir (9.4 miles)	Temperature, pH
Llagas Creek below Chesbro Reservoir (16.4 miles)	Chloride, chlorpyrifos, electrical conductivity, E. coli, fecal coliform, low dissolved oxygen, nutrients, sedimentation/siltation, sodium, TDS, turbidity
McGowan Ditch (2.5 miles)	Nitrate, DDD, DDE, toxicity, malathion
Millers Canal (2.1 miles)	Chlorophyll-a, toxicity, E. coli, fecal coliform, low dissolved oxygen, temperature, turbidity, pH
Pacheco Creek (25.9 miles)	Fecal coliform, low dissolved oxygen, turbidity
Pajaro River (31.9 miles)	Boron, chlordane, chloride, chlorpyrifos, chromium, DDD, DDE, DDT, diazinon, dieldrin, E. coli, fecal coliform, low dissolved oxygen, nitrate, PCBs, sedimentation/siltation, sodium, turbidity, toxicity, pH
Pajaro River Estuary	Diazinon, low dissolved oxygen, pH, water temperature, toxicity, malathion, DDE
Pinto Lake (104.5 acres)	Chlorophyll-a, cyanobacteria hepatotoxic microcystins, low dissolved oxygen, unnatural scum/foam, ammonia, DDT, pH
Rider Creek (1.8 miles)	Sedimentation/siltation
Salsipuedes Creek, Santa Cruz County (2.6 miles)	E. coli, fecal coliform, low dissolved oxygen, turbidity, toxicity, nitrate, pH
San Benito River (86.8 miles)	Boron, electrical conductivity, E. coli, fecal coliform, sedimentation/siltation, pH
San Juan Creek (7.3 miles)	Fecal coliform, low dissolved oxygen, E. coli, turbidity, toxicity
Struve Slough (2.8 miles)	Low dissolved oxygen, pH, toxicity, chlorophyll-a, turbidity, E. coli, fecal coliform
Tequisquita Slough (7.3 miles)	Fecal coliform, low dissolved oxygen, turbidity, toxicity, ammonia, pH
Tres Pinos Creek (30.5 miles)	E. coli, fecal coliform, pH
Uvas Creek above Uvas Reservoir (8.2 miles)	pH, water temperature
Uvas Creek below Uvas Reservoir (14.1 miles)	Turbidity, low dissolved oxygen,
Uvas Reservoir (271.9 acres)	Mercury
Watsonville Slough (6.2 miles)	Low dissolved oxygen, DDE, nitrate, malathion, fecal coliform, E. coli, toxicity, turbidity

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026a.

TDS: total dissolved solids, DDD: dichlorodiphenyldichloroethane, DDT: dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, DDE: dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylene. DDT is a pesticide that was used to control insects in agricultural areas. DDT can break down into DDD and DDE.

Groundwater

Watsonville's primary source of water for drinking and irrigation is the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin, which is partially impacted by intrusion of seawater due to long-term agricultural pumping of water beyond the sustainable yield. This basin spans approximately 76,800 acres between Santa Cruz County, Monterey County, and San Benito County. This is a High-priority basin, that provides water to approximately 90,000 people. As a High-priority basin, it is highly reliant on groundwater due to the presence of a large population, the large number of wells, and an expanded area of irrigation. The sub-basins in the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin are shown in **Figure 4.10-5**.

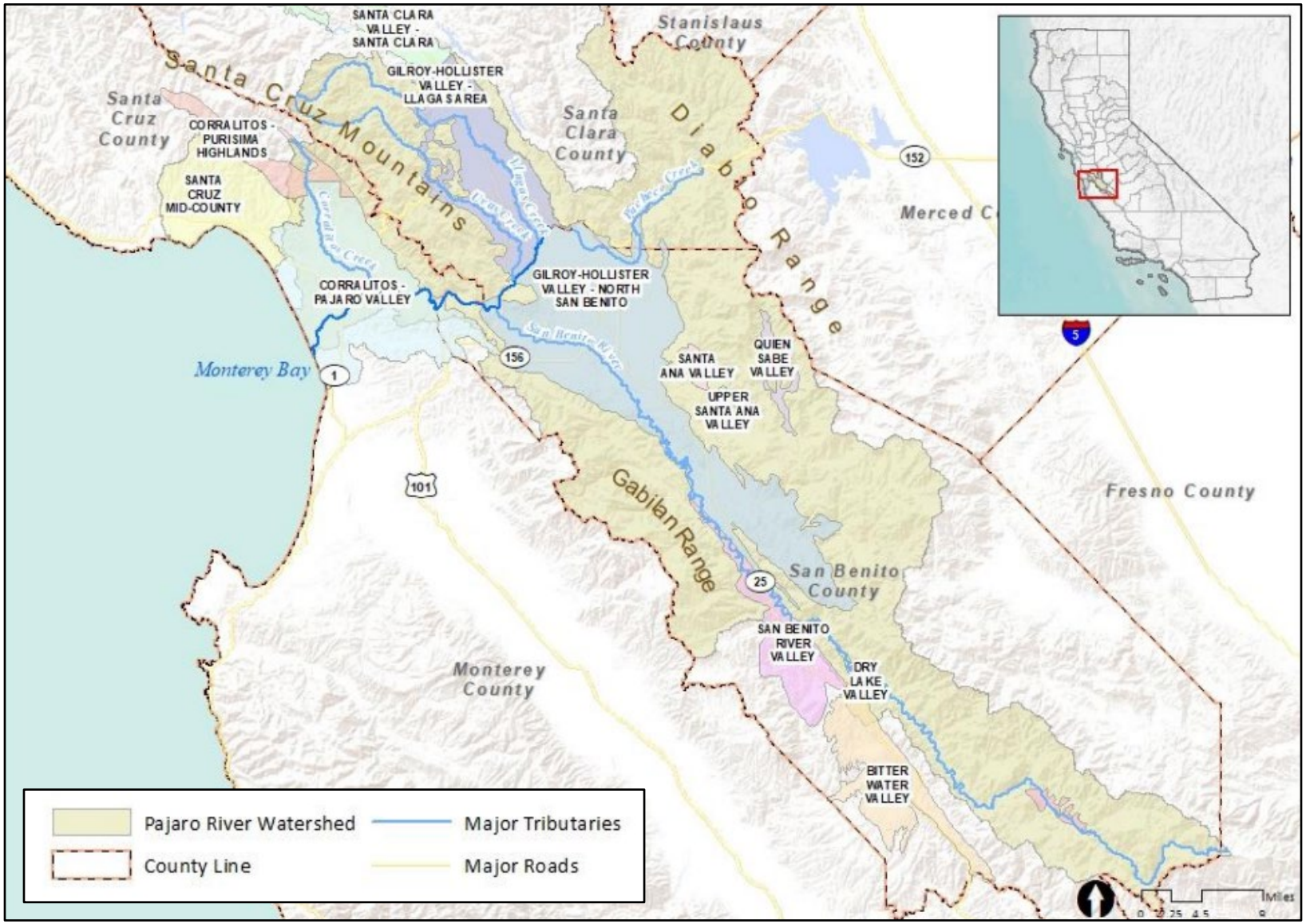
PVWMA is the Groundwater Sustainability Agency recognized by the State Water Board as the lead entity charged with developing and maintaining the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the basin with a goal of achieving sustainability by the year 2040. The most recent update to the Basin Management Plan was completed in 2022 Groundwater Sustainability Update. The DWR has determined that the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin is a high priority, critically overdrafted basin, meaning the annual amount of groundwater extraction exceeds the basin's long-term annual supply (PVWMA, 2026). Due to overdraft conditions, the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin has faced a chronic lowering of groundwater levels (PVWMA, 2024). Overdraft conditions have also contributed to seawater intrusion into basin, which has the potential to adversely impact water quality in the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin (PVWMA, 2024).

In 2009, the City constructed a water recycling facility adjacent to the City's wastewater treatment plant, which created the operational capacity of providing PVWMA with 4,000 acre feet per year of recycled water for irrigating agricultural crops and thereby reduce groundwater pumping near the coast. The City continues collaboration with PVWMA on projects that will enhance the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin sustainability.

According to the WSA, the City pumps groundwater from 14 active wells, which can provide up to 21,000 AFY of water. The wells pump from Pajaro Valley Groundwater Sub-Basin 3-002.01 (Pajaro Valley Sub-Basin). The Aromas Red Sands Formation is considered the primary water-bearing geologic unit of the Pajaro Valley Sub-Basin. Other layers with water deposits include the Purisima Formation, Terrace and Pleistocene Eolian deposits, Quaternary alluvium, and dune deposits. The basal gravel unit also has good hydraulic continuity with the underlying Aromas Red Sands Formation and is a major source of water for shallow wells in the Pajaro River floodplain.

The City's water supply consists predominantly of groundwater, supplemented with periodic augmentation by surface water diversions. As shown in **Table 4.10-2**, the City holds groundwater rights of 21,000 AFY and operates the City's CFP, which can treat up to 900 AFY and has produced an average of 202 AFY over the last decade. Depending on availability each year, the City may use a combination of groundwater and surface water sources, or the City relies entirely on groundwater supply. The City's groundwater quality is considered very good, and all wells achieve primary and secondary drinking water standards (City of Watsonville, 2023). Over the past 10 years, approximately 97.1 percent of the City's supply has come from groundwater and 2.9 percent from surface water (**Figure 4.10-6** and **Table 4.10-3**).

Figure 4.10-5 Pajaro River Watershed Groundwater Basins



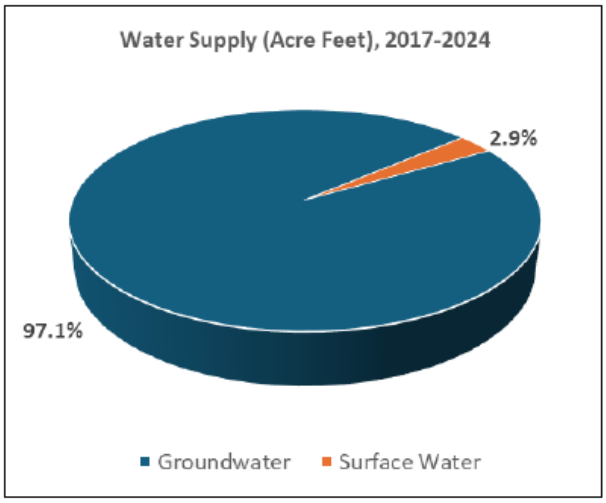
Source: PVWMA, 2022.

Table 4.10-2 City of Watsonville Water Rights by Source

Water Source	Water Rights
Groundwater	21,000
Surface Water	900
Total Water Demand	**21,900**

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026a.

Figure 4.10-6 City of Watsonville Water Supply Source



Source: City of Watsonville, 2026a.

Table 4.10-3 Groundwater and Surface Water Extractions

Water Source	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Groundwater	6,870	6,461	6,316	6,688	6,586	7,101	7,027	6,768	6,456	6,381	6,665
Surface Water	0	186	684	397	473	0	0	0	37	243	202
Total	6,870	6,647	7,000	7,085	7,059	7,101	7,027	6,768	6,493	6,624	6,867

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026a.

Flood Hazards

The majority of the plan area is classified as FEMA-designated Zone AE land, indicating that these areas are base floodplain land with a 1 percent annual risk of flooding (FEMA, 2012). Areas of the City that border bodies of water – specifically the Pajaro River – are at an elevated flood risk. On the southern edge of the plan area, areas bordering the Pajaro River are in a FEMA-designated Zone AO (Depth 1), which represents river or stream flood hazard areas with a 1 percent annual risk of shallow flooding. Slightly inland from these zones, a portion of the plan area is considered Zone AH, indicating a 1 percent annual chance of shallow flooding.

Struve Slough, which is approximately in the center of the plan area, is a FEMA-designated regulatory floodway. This area is also classified as Zone AE. Hanson Slough, located to the west of the plan area, is designated as a Zone A region, indicating there is a 1percent annual chance of flooding and a 26 percent chance of flooding over the duration of a 30-year mortgage. **Figure 4.10-7** shows the flood zones for the plan area.

Sea Level Rise

The plan area is unlikely to be significantly impacted by sea level rise of up to 6 feet. Gallighan Slough, to the west of the plan area is anticipated to gain depth at a sea level rise of approximately 3 feet (NOAA OCM, 2024). With approximately 6 feet of sea level rise, the Watsonville Slough, Hanson Slough, West Branch Struve Slough, and Struve Slough will begin to gain depth. The risk of these sloughs flooding is elevated with 7 feet of sea level rise.

The plan area is classified as a Medium socioeconomic vulnerability area for flooding. This indicates that the communities in Watsonville are likely to be adversely impacted by sea level rise.

FEMA 100 Year Flood Hazard

There are no dams within the plan area. Thus, there are no dams at risk of inundation (DWR, 2024). There are levees in the project vicinity that were constructed to provide flood protection from the lower Pajaro River and its tributaries. These levees were constructed in 1949 by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and they currently only provide an 8-year level of flood protection. New levee projects began construction in October 2024 and will provide 100-year flood risk reduction to the City of Watsonville and surrounding areas (Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, 2024).

Water Quality

PVWMA conducts regular surface water quality checks throughout the Corralitos-Pajaro Valley groundwater basin. Drainage basins are also assessed for mineral concentrations and potential pollutants under PVWMA's management (DWR, 2006). In 2014, PVWMA released an update to the Corralitos-Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin Management Plan (PVWMA, 2014). The plan update describes improvements to the region's water treatment, storage, and distribution systems. PVWMA also established the Sustainable Groundwater Act (SGMA) in 2014 (PVWMA, 2024). This Act promotes sustainable groundwater management through the efficient use and management of the basin's water resources.

The primary sources of pollution to surface and groundwater resources include the following:

- Stormwater runoff from paved areas, which can contain hydrocarbons, sediments, pesticides, herbicides, toxic metals, and coliform bacteria

- Improperly placed septic tank leach fields, and properly placed septic tanks that do not have proper residence time or are not properly maintained or have improperly disposed of household cleaners and other materials
- Illegal waste dumping as well as stormwater runoff that can introduce contaminants such as gasoline, pesticides, herbicides, and other harmful chemicals

The quality and safety of potable water is managed by the Watsonville Water Division. The Water Division oversees several comprehensive water quality monitoring programs and releases annual water quality reports (City of Watsonville, 2024). The City's water system includes 190 miles of pipelines, 14 wells, and 8 reservoirs to deliver water. The Corralitos Filtration Plant treatment plant ensures the quality and safety of drinking water delivered to city residents. Based on current conditions and knowledge, water quality is not anticipated to affect water supply reliability. The City uses less than 10 percent of the groundwater pumped in the Pajaro Valley, and their focus on water conservation and recycling allows for clean, potable water without threatening the reliability of the water supply (City of Watsonville, 2023). The City's groundwater quality is considered very good, and the groundwater and surface water supplies meet primary and secondary drinking water standards (City of Watsonville, 2023).

The plan area is not within a tsunami area (DOC, 2026). The City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan does not identify any seiche hazard areas in the City or within the County (City of Watsonville, 2026b).

4.10.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.10.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, a plan impact to hydrology would be considered significant if the project would:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

b) Substantially deplete 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, in a manner which would:

   i. result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or offsite;

   ii. substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;

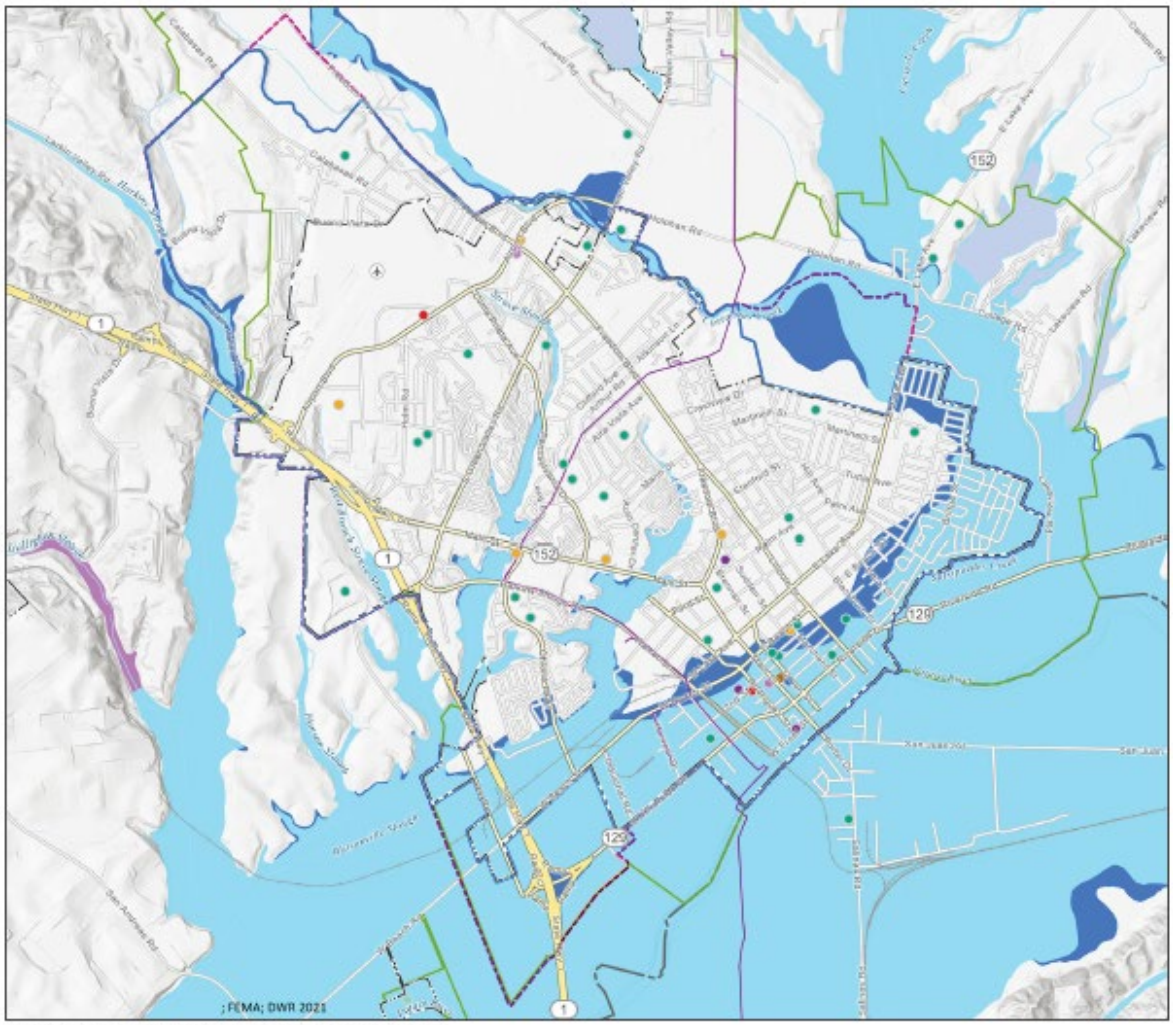
   iii. create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or

   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?

Figure 4.10-7 FEMA 100- and 500-Year Flood Zones for the Plan Area



Source: Harris & Associates, 2019; Placeworks, 2025

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

4.10.2.2 Methodology

The analysis in this section is based on the Water Supply Assessment (WSA) prepared for the Public Works and Utilities Department by Harris & Associates in February 2026 (City of Watsonville, 2026a).

4.10.2.3 Project Impacts

a) Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

Groundwater quality is evaluated based on approved water quality sustainability management criteria for chloride, nitrates, and total dissolved solids. These criteria have been established for an inland and a coastal zone, with a heavy emphasis on the coastal zone. The urban limit line falls entirely in the inland zone; however, the two zones are in the same groundwater sub-basin and closely linked.

The plan guides planned future development which may impact hydrology and water quality of both surface water and groundwater. As General Plan 2050 has set forth guidelines for responsible development and expansion, adherence to General Plan 2050 would not result in significant impacts to hydrology. Additionally, compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations would further ensure that impacts related to hydrology would be less than significant.

Future private development and public infrastructure projects that would be allowed under General Plan 2050 Update would likely involve clearing of any existing vegetation, site grading and similar activities that could temporarily increase runoff, erosion, and sedimentation into local creeks and nearby bodies of water. Future development may include construction activities that contribute to increased wind erosion and, consequently, soil deposition in nearby bodies of water. Construction vehicles and pesticide activities may also introduce pollutants (including pesticides and fertilizers) to local bodies of water.

The Federal CWA and state water regulations require development projects of 1 acre or more to prepare a SWPPP and submit it for approval. The SWPPP includes BMPs to reduce impacts related to wind and water erosion. Typical construction BMPs related to erosion and hydrology include silt fences, desilting basins, and hay bales. SWPPPs are not currently required for development projects disturbing less than one acre of land.

The City is subject to a Municipal Phase MS4 Permit (2013-0001-DWQ) under the NPDES, as it is a jurisdiction with a population under 100,000 people (City of Watsonville, n.d.). Furthermore, the Municipal Regional Stormwater NPDES Permit requires the installation of post-construction controls to minimize water quality impacts following project buildout. Post-construction BMPs often include bioretention ponds to filter runoff, infiltration basins, and water harvesting and reuse systems. The City imposes the SWPPP for development projects though standard conditions of approval. PCRs are imposed through the City of Watsonville Resolution no. 4-14, which codified the PCRs as a component of the City's Public Improvement Standards under the Central Coast RWQCB.

According to the WSA, the City has water rights to 21,000 acre-feet per year (AFY) of groundwater. However, modeling indicates that it cannot withdraw this level of water without a possible negative

influence on groundwater quality and quantity.[1] The groundwater basin is stable, and demand is not anticipated to exceed the City's existing supply (City of Watsonville, 2026a). Groundwater quality is unlikely to be adversely impacted through its usage.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce impacts to water quality.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal C-2 Water Conservation & Quality: Conserve scarce water resources and preserve water quality for the variety of local uses.

Policy C-2.1 Promotion of Water Conservation. The City shall promote the conservation of water and provide for the protection of water quality to assure its use for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological needs.

Action C-2.1.3 Point and Non-Point Pollutants. The City shall continue to control pollutants from point and non-point sources through a comprehensive NPDES Storm water program.

Action C-2.1.4 Aquifer Protection & Saltwater Intrusion. The City shall continue to cooperate with the PVWMA to analyze and implement solutions that reduce or eliminate additional saltwater intrusion into area aquifers.

Action C-2.1.5 Water Quality. The City shall continue to source, treat and deliver high quality potable water that meets current and future State and Federal Drinking Water standards and work with the Groundwater Basin Manager, PVWMA, to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Pajaro Valley groundwater basin.

Goal C-3 Storm Water Management. Ensure that stormwater runoff is effectively managed to minimize pollutants and debris, protect natural drainage systems and water bodies, and promote the use of sustainable, site-integrated practices that enhance environmental quality and community character.

Policy C-3.1 Stormwater runoff free from urban pollutants and refuse. The City shall minimize pollutants and debris in stormwater runoff through appropriate regulations, maintenance practices, and public education.

Action C-3.1.1 The City shall require all projects to reduce the use of impervious surfaces to the maximum extent practicable. Wherever possible, natural BMPs (such as grassy swales, ponds and biofilters) shall be used. These BMPs should be incorporated into site landscaping design, for recreational and aesthetic enhancement. Engineered BMPs (such as vaults and interceptors) shall only be used when no natural BMP can be incorporated into the site design, or when a critical natural resource requires protection beyond that attainable by natural BMPs alone.

Action C-3.1.2 Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs). The City shall require all construction sites to implement erosion and sediment control BMPs to the maximum extent

[1] The USGS developed a conceptual groundwater model to reproduce the most important natural and human components of the hydrologic system and related climatic factors. The Pajaro Valley Hydrologic Model was most recently updated in 2020. Results are presented in GSU22.

practicable. Construction sites shall comply with City Erosion Control Standards, and an Erosion Control Plan shall be required for project approval.

Goal C-6 Environmental Education. Foster an increase in knowledge and understanding of the local environment and actions residents can take to help maintain and conserve local water quality.

Policy C-6.1 Public Education for Resource Conservation and Waste Reduction. The City shall continue to expand its education efforts to promote water conservation and efficiency, reduce water pollution, and reduce solid waste disposal.

Action C-6.1.2 Storm Water Pollution Prevention. The City shall continue to expand its residential storm water pollution prevention program that includes placement of storm drain warning markers on all drainage inlets, provision of educational materials and tools door-to-door, continued collection of used motor oil at the curb and at convenient drop-off locations, continued regularly scheduled street sweeping, and continued general education and enforcement in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors regarding storm water pollution prevention. The City shall continue public education programs on water quality issues, including Best Management Practices, for residents, businesses, contractors and City employees.

Action C-6.1.3 Wetlands Protection. The City shall increase awareness among residents of the delicate nature of the local wetlands and how individuals can protect them. The City shall continue to expand its education programs based at the Wetlands Nature Center, the Wetland Educational Resource Center located at Pajaro Valley High School, in the local schools, and in the community.

Adherence to the applicable federal, state, and local policies, along with General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions, would reduce potential impacts to water quality standards, waste discharge requirements or surface or groundwater quality to a less-than-significant level. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

The City acquires and treats its own potable water. The Watsonville Water Division system includes 190 miles of pipelines, 14 wells, and 8 reservoirs. Water is treated at the Corralitos Filtration Plant, and the City uses less than ten percent of the groundwater pumped into the Pajaro Valley. While the plan includes projections for future population growth, potential increases for water demand are also accounted for. Additionally, the plan would not directly result in population growth or associated demand increases. Adherence to the guidelines outlined in General Plan 2050 would ensure that increases in water demand would not exceed the available supply of water, and groundwater supplies would not be depleted or adversely impacted.

To review the potential impact of General Plan 2050 on groundwater quality and quantity, the WSA compares demand to the Groundwater Sustainability Update 2022 (GSU22) water modeling. Full buildout based on General Plan 2050 would increase demand by 346 AFY, for a total of 7,134 AFY. A portion of the demand will be met through surface water rather than groundwater, as shown in **Table 4.10-4**. The impact on groundwater is projected to be 7,134 AFY, which is significantly below the GSU22-modeled levels of 7,220 AFY through the year 2039 and 7,850 AFY for 2040–2069 (City of Watsonville, 2026a). With the implementation of the sustainability and groundwater management strategies outlined in GSU22, average groundwater levels are expected to remain somewhat stable. The average annual

volume of groundwater through 2069 is expected to meet demand, and groundwater storage volumes are expected to remain consistent or slightly increase over time (PVWMA, 2021).

Table 4.10-4 Groundwater Versus Surface Water Supply in an Average Year

Water Source	Total Water Demand at Full Buildout (AFY)*
Groundwater	6,932
Surface Water	202
Total	**7,134**

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026a.
Note: AFY = acre-feet per year

Table 4.10-5 presents water reliability in normal, single, and multiple dry-years. Water supply is based on municipal demand modeled in GSU22 plus 202 AFY for surface water. While **Table 4.10-5** indicates negative numbers in some years, these are offset by positive impacts. Wet and very wet-years will further provide positive impacts on supply. Therefore, the projected groundwater supply will meet projected water demand.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce impacts to groundwater.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal C-2 Water Conservation & Quality.** Conserve scarce water resources and preserve water quality for the variety of local uses.
>
> **Policy C-2.1 Promotion of Water Conservation.** The City shall promote the conservation of water and provide for the protection of water quality to assure its use for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological needs.
>
> **Action C-2.1.4 Aquifer Protection & Saltwater Intrusion.** The City shall continue to cooperate with the PVWMA to analyze and implement solutions that reduce or eliminate additional saltwater intrusion into area aquifers.
>
> **Action C-2.1.5 Water Quality.** The City shall continue to source, treat and deliver high quality potable water that meets current and future State and Federal Drinking Water standards and work with the Groundwater Basin Manager, PVWMA, to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Pajaro Valley groundwater basin.

Table 4.10-5 Water Reliability in Normal, Single, and Multiple Dry-Years (AFY)

Year Type	Supply and Demand	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Normal Year	Supply Total	7,832	7,832	7,832	7,832	7,832
	Demand Total	6,788	7,134	7,134	7,134	7,134
	Difference	1,044	698	698	698	698
Single Dry-Year	Supply Total	7,982	7,982	7,982	7,982	7,982
	Demand Total	7,359	7,734	7,734	7,734	7,734
	Difference	623	248	248	248	248
Second Dry-Year	Supply Total	7,982	7,982	7,982	7,982	7,982
	Demand Total	8,318	8,742	8,742	8,742	8,742
	Difference	-336	-760	-760	-760	-760
Third Dry-Year	Supply Total	8,122	8,122	8,122	8,122	8,122
	Demand Total	7,865	8,266	8,266	8,266	8,266
	Difference	257	-144	-144	-144	-144
Fourth Dry-Year	Supply Total	8,122	8,122	8,122	8,122	8,122
	Demand Total	7,128	7,491	7,491	7,491	7,491
	Difference	994	631	631	631	631

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026a.
Note: AFY = acre-feet per year

As much of the plan area is currently developed and covered with impervious surface, it does not provide significant groundwater recharge. However, the guidelines of General Plan 2050 encourage the preservation of existing open space and other areas where groundwater recharge currently occurs. Additionally, the installation of features like infiltration basins would provide additional opportunities for groundwater recharge. Further, the previous and ongoing water supply planning efforts in the region, including those efforts that are supported by proposed General Plan 2050 policies and actions, combined with overall water conservation and efficiency requirements directed in the proposed General Plan 2050, future development allowed under the proposed General Plan 2050 would avoid substantially impacting on groundwater supplies. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would not have significant impacts to groundwater recharge activities. (Less than Significant Impact)

c) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the plan area 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?

Implementation of the plan would not significantly alter the existing drainage pattern of the plan area that would result in substantial erosion or siltation. Much of the plan area within the City limits is already developed, and General Plan 2050 sets guidelines for future development and expansion to promote infill development and prevent encroachment into undeveloped areas. However, in new growth areas, including the Buena Vista, Highway 1, and Area C new growth areas, development allowed under the proposed General Plan 2050 could convert existing undeveloped agricultural or open space lands to residential, commercial, industrial, public, and park land uses. This land use conversion would increase the impervious surfaces and would alter the existing drainage pattern, which could cause an increase in the peak flows and volumes discharged from the developed land during storm events. Increased flows could result in substantial erosion or siltation downstream if they discharged directly to downstream receiving waters.

Some development in the existing urbanized area could require construction of expanded storm drains. Development outside the existing urbanized area would be required to build new drainage facilities such as storm drains and pump stations.

However, as discussed above under **Impact Analysis a)**, future development projects would be required to implement multiple BMPs that minimize impervious areas and retain, reuse, and/or infiltrate stormwater.

General Plan 2050 would also implement the following Actions to avoid and reduce impacts resulting in erosion or siltation.

General Plan 2050 Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Action S-1.1.2 Soils Investigation.** The City shall require a soils investigation report prior to new development on sites deemed to have a high potential for soil erosion, landslide or other soil-related constraints.
>
> **Action C-1.1.5 Invasive Plants.** The City shall make every effort to remove invasive plants from City property that threaten to disrupt natural habitat areas. Any vegetation along waterways that is removed should be replaced with native species. This not only prevents erosion and stabilizes banks, it also improves wildlife habitat. Projects adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas shall be conditioned to install native plants adjacent to the sensitive area. The City shall require private developers to install low-water native planting whenever feasible.
>
> **Action C-3.1.2 Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs).** The City shall require all construction sites to implement erosion and sediment control BMPs to the maximum extent practicable. Construction sites shall comply with City Erosion Control Standards, and an Erosion Control Plan shall be required for project approval.

With adherence to applicable federal, state, and local policies, as well as General Plan 2050 actions regulating drainage, stormwater runoff, erosion control, and construction best management practices, the plan would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the plan area or surrounding area in a manner that would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would not significantly alter the existing drainage pattern of the plan area such that it would substantially increase surface runoff and result in flooding. The development accounted for in General Plan 2050 would occur primarily as infill development in the City's downtown and commercial corridors (approximately 75 percent of new development), with additional development in the new growth areas. Infill development would occur in already urbanized areas and involve construction on largely existing impervious surfaces and not significantly increase the rate or amount of surface runoff. While development in the new growth areas on land currently used for farming would involve converting pervious surfaces to impervious, new development in these areas would be required to provide for onsite retention for managing stormwater runoff in accordance with the City's PCR requirements, and any sites over one acre would be required to ensure the amount and rate of runoff does not exceed existing conditions through preparation of SWPPPs and BMPs In addition, as shown in **Figure 4.10-7**, the Buena Vista growth area is not located in a flood hazard zone. While approximately 41 percent of the Area C new growth area lies within the FEMA-designated 100-year floodplain, planned housing development would avoid flood-prone areas and a new regional park with athletic fields would be located within the 100-year floodplain and designed to function as a stormwater detention basin to serve the dual purpose of minimizing flood risks from stormwater.

Any future growth and development—particularly in the new growth areas involving the conversion of agricultural land—may increase impervious surface area. While increased impervious surface area would have the potential to increase runoff volumes, new development would also be required to comply with the City's PCRs and the SWPPPs and BMP requirements. Adherence to the SWPPPS, BMPS, and PCRs would minimize impacts related to runoff and on- and offsite flood risks. In addition. Compliance with the City's Floodplain Management standards (WMC Title 9, Chapter 2) would further reduce the potential for adverse effects to floodplains and would minimize flood hazards related to approved new development or redevelopment projects.

As discussed above in Section(a) and (c)(i), future development projects would be required to implement multiple BMPs that minimize impervious areas and retain, reuse, and that conserve natural areas and reduce impervious areas.

Further, General Plan 2050 would implement the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce impacts to flooding.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal S-3 Flood Hazard Reduction. Reduce the potential for loss of life and property damage in flood prone areas.

Policy S-3.1 Flood Hazard Reduction. The City shall pursue the protection of new and existing development from the impacts of flooding up to the 100-year event.

Action S-3.1.1 Flood Protection. The City shall require new development to conform to the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance and the guidelines of the National Flood Insurance Program.

Action S-3.1.2 Storm Water Retention. The City shall condition new development to provide for onsite retention and percolation of storm water run-off, provided surface basins are:

- Accommodated within an active or passive park or open space that can be closed during flood events, or
- Are located to not be visible from a street or public open space.

Action S-3.1.3 Storm Drains. New development shall be required to pay for or extend all necessary storm drains to serve the plan area.

Action S-3.1.4 Storm Water Collection. The City shall require street design to include curbs and gutters that collect and direct storm water run-off to drainage facilities.

Action S-3.1.5 Flood Mitigation. The City shall pursue planning and financial support for the improvement of flood conditions along Corralitos and Salsipuedes Creeks, the Pajaro River, and other areas of the drainage basin impacting Watsonville in coordination with Santa Cruz Water Conservation District Zone 7. The City shall support the efforts of local and regional groups working to solve flooding issues in the Pajaro River Watershed, including regional initiatives such as the Pajaro River at Watsonville Project.

With implementation of General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions, buildout and future development, the plan would not result in a substantial impacts to the rate or amount of surface runoff in the plan area in a manner which would result in flooding. Therefore, impacts related to surface runoff and flooding would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

The future development projects proposed under the framework of General Plan 2050 could result in increase in the amount of stormwater runoff in the project, but General Plan 2050 would also provide a framework for future development to reduce potential impacts related to stormwater. The City has existing stormwater infrastructure, and the storm drain systems are managed by the City. The infrastructure is designed to handle stormwater flows resultant from existing development, and the guidelines outlined in the project ensure that the stormwater system may also accommodate population increases. Stormwater runoff flows into storm drains, which then drain into waterways like wetlands, creeks, and the Pajaro River.

While future development has the potential to increase the amount of impervious surfaces, and, consequently, the rates of stormwater runoff; any sites over one acre would be required to ensure the amount and rate of runoff does not exceed existing conditions through preparation of SWPPPs and BMPs. Therefore, the City's storm drain system would remain operational and would be able to accommodate potential increases in stormwater runoff.

Some development in the existing urbanized area could require construction of expanded storm drains. Development outside the existing urbanized area would be required to build new drainage facilities such as storm drains and pump stations. This additional stormwater infrastructure would further reduce potential impacts related to stormwater.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce impacts due to runoff water.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal C-2 Water Conservation and Quality. Conserve scarce water resources and preserve water quality for the variety of local uses.

Policy C-2.1 Promotion of Water Conservation. The City shall promote the conservation of water and provide for the protection of water quality to assure its use for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological needs.

Action C-2.1.3 Point and Non-Point Pollutants. The City shall continue to control pollutants from point and non-point sources through a comprehensive NPDES Storm water program.

Goal C-3 Storm Water Management. Ensure that stormwater runoff is effectively managed to minimize pollutants and debris, protect natural drainage systems and water bodies, and promote the use of sustainable, site-integrated practices that enhance environmental quality and community character.

Policy C-3.1 Stormwater runoff free from urban pollutants and refuse. The City shall minimize pollutants and debris in stormwater runoff through appropriate regulations, maintenance practices, and public education.

Action C-3.1.1 The City shall require all projects to reduce the use of impervious surfaces to the maximum extent practicable. Wherever possible, natural BMPs (such as grassy swales, ponds and biofilters) shall be used. These BMPs should be incorporated into site landscaping design, for recreational and aesthetic enhancement. Engineered BMPs (such as vaults and interceptors) shall only be used when no natural BMP can be incorporated into the site design, or when a critical natural resource requires protection beyond that attainable by natural BMPs alone.

Action C-3.1.2 Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs). The City shall require all construction sites to implement erosion and sediment control BMPs to the maximum extent practicable. Construction sites shall comply with City Erosion Control Standards, and an Erosion Control Plan shall be required for project approval.

Goal C-6 Environmental Education. Foster an increase in knowledge and understanding of the local environment and actions residents can take to help maintain and conserve local water quality.

Policy C-6.1 Public Education for Resource Conservation and Waste Reduction. The City shall continue to expand its education efforts to promote water conservation and efficiency, reduce water pollution, and reduce solid waste disposal.

Action C-6.1.1 Water Conservation. The City shall continue the water conservation program which encourages existing rebates and provision of water conserving devices. Public education methods include the use of local print and electronic English and Spanish language media, including social media, as well as articles in the City's own newsletter and inserts in the City utility bills. The City shall expand its educational efforts to promote low or no-water use plantings as well as a more efficient use of landscape water on lawns, and to promote reuse, recycling, and composting of discarded materials. The City shall use multiple methods of communication in English, Spanish, and any other significant language group identified.

The plan is not expected to increase stormwater runoff that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or result in substantial increases in polluted runoff. With adherence to applicable federal, state, and local policies, as well as General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions protecting surface water quality, this impact would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

The majority of the plan area is considered an area of minimal flood hazard, but portions of the plan area are near bodies of water are categorized as Zone AE floodplain (one percent annual risk of flooding). These areas are at an increased risk of flooding during times of heavy precipitation, but the maintenance of stormwater infrastructure and flood control measures reduces the risk of flooding. Development in areas of elevated flood risk is discouraged by federal and state laws, including the California Building

Code, and the development proposed in the plan area would mostly be infill development and would not encroach on areas of elevated flood risk. The City's Floodplain Management policies (WMC Title 9, Chapter 2) outline construction standards and permits for development in floodplains. Compliance with the City's standards for development in or near floodplains would minimize the potential impacts to flood flows related to General Plan 2050's planned growth.

Adherence to the City's Floodplain Management standards (WMC Title 9, Chapter 2) would further reduce the potential for adverse effects to floodplains and would minimize flood hazards related to new development or redevelopment projects.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce impacts to flood flows.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal S-3 Flood Hazard Reduction.** Reduce the potential for loss of life and property damage in flood prone areas.
>
> **Policy S-3.1 Flood Hazard Reduction.** The City shall pursue the protection of new and existing development from the impacts of flooding up to the 100-year event.
>
> **Actions S-3.1.1 Flood Protection.** The City shall require new development to conform to the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance and the guidelines of the National Flood Insurance Program.
>
> **Action S-3.1.2 Storm Water Retention.** The City shall condition new development to provide for onsite retention and percolation of storm water run-off, provided surface basins are:
>
> - Accommodated within an active or passive park or open space that can be closed during flood events, or
> - Are located to not be visible from a street or public open space.
>
> **Action S-3.1.3 Storm Drains.** New development shall be required to pay for or extend all necessary storm drains to serve the plan area.
>
> **Action S-3.1.4 Storm Water Collection.** The City shall require street design to include curbs and gutters that collect and direct storm water run-off to drainage facilities.
>
> **Action S-3.1.5 Flood Mitigation.** The City shall pursue planning and financial support for the improvement of flood conditions along Corralitos and Salsipuedes Creeks, the Pajaro River, and other areas of the drainage basin impacting Watsonville in coordination with Santa Cruz Water Conservation District Zone 7. The City shall support the efforts of local and regional groups working to solve flooding issues in the Pajaro River Watershed, including regional initiatives such as the Pajaro River at Watsonville Project.

With adherence to applicable federal, state, and local policies, as well as General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions regulating drainage, stormwater runoff, flood control, and floodplain management, the project would not substantially alter existing drainage patterns in a manner that would substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff or impede or redirect flood flows. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

d) Would the project in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

The plan area is not subject to significant seiche or tsunami risk (DOC, 2026). The City is not in proximity of any dams with inundation, meaning dams or reservoirs at risk of flooding following complete failure of

the dam (DWR, 2024). The risk associated with flooding, inundation, and the potential release of pollutants would be reduced through compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations, including the National Flood Insurance Program, Clean Water Act, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, Cobey-Alquist Floodplain Management Act, the Statewide Construction General Permit, and local floodplain management requirements contained in the Watsonville Code of Ordinances. These regulations and programs reduce potential hazards by regulating development within flood hazard areas, establishing floodplain management standards, requiring stormwater and erosion control measures, minimizing pollutant discharges to waterways during construction and operation, and ensuring that new development accounts for flood and inundation risks. In addition, local hazard mitigation and emergency planning efforts would help reduce risks to people, property, and the environment associated with flood, tsunami, seiche, and inundation hazards.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce the risk of pollutant release and inundation impacts associated with flood hazards, tsunami zones, or seiche zones.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal C-3 Storm Water Management. Ensure that stormwater runoff is effectively managed to minimize pollutants and debris, protect natural drainage systems and water bodies, and promote the use of sustainable, site-integrated practices that enhance environmental quality and community character.

Policy C-3.1 Stormwater runoff free from urban pollutants and refuse. The City shall minimize pollutants and debris in stormwater runoff through appropriate regulations, maintenance practices, and public education.

Action C-3.1.1 The City shall require all projects to reduce the use of impervious surfaces to the maximum extent practicable. Wherever possible, natural BMPs (such as grassy swales, ponds and biofilters) shall be used. These BMPs should be incorporated into site landscaping design, for recreational and aesthetic enhancement. Engineered BMPs (such as vaults and interceptors) shall only be used when no natural BMP can be incorporated into the site design, or when a critical natural resource requires protection beyond that attainable by natural BMPs alone.

Action C-3.1.2 Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs). The City shall require all construction sites to implement erosion and sediment control BMPs to the maximum extent practicable. Construction sites shall comply with City Erosion Control Standards, and an Erosion Control Plan shall be required for project approval.

Goal C-6 Environmental Education: Foster an increase in knowledge and understanding of the local environment and actions residents can take to help maintain and conserve local water quality.

Policy C-6.1 Public Education for Resource Conservation and Waste Reduction. The City shall continue to expand its education efforts to promote water conservation and efficiency, reduce water pollution, and reduce solid waste disposal.

Goal S-3 Flood Hazard Reduction. Reduce the potential for loss of life and property damage in flood prone areas.

Policy S-3.1 Flood Hazard Reduction. The City shall pursue the protection of new and existing development from the impacts of flooding up to the 100-year event.

Action S-3.1.1 Flood Protection. The City shall require new development to conform to the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance and the guidelines of the National Flood Insurance Program.

Action S-3.1.2 Storm Water Retention. The City shall condition new development to provide for onsite retention and percolation of storm water run-off, provided surface basins are:

- Accommodated within an active or passive park or open space that can be closed during flood events, or
- Are located to not be visible from a street or public open space.

Action S-3.1.3 Storm Drains. New development shall be required to pay for or extend all necessary storm drains to serve the plan area.

Action S-3.1.4 Storm Water Collection. The City shall require street design to include curbs and gutters that collect and direct storm water run-off to drainage facilities.

Action S-3.1.5 Flood Mitigation. The City shall pursue planning and financial support for the improvement of flood conditions along Corralitos and Salsipuedes Creeks, the Pajaro River, and other areas of the drainage basin impacting Watsonville in coordination with Santa Cruz Water Conservation District Zone 7. The City shall support the efforts of local and regional groups working to solve flooding issues in the Pajaro River Watershed, including regional initiatives such as the Pajaro River at Watsonville Project.

With adherence to applicable federal, state, and local policies, as well as General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions related to flood hazards and stormwater, implementation of the project would not increase the risk of flooding, tsunamis, seiches, or the release of pollutants due to project-related inundation in the plan area. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

e) Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

As described above in the discussion for (a), construction and operation of development allowed by the proposed General Plan 2050 could degrade water quality. However, as described above, construction activities that disturb 1 acre or more would be required to prepare SWPPPs, which include BMPs that would be to minimize pollution of stormwater. Similarly, during project operation phase, the projects would be required to comply with BMPs and install post-construction controls to minimize water quality impacts following project buildout pursuant to the Municipal Regional Stormwater NPDES Permit.

The plan would be subject to the City's water quality-monitoring program. The plan area is within the Corralitos-Pajaro Valley groundwater basin, a High-priority basin that is managed by the PVWMA. PVWMA adopted a 2022 update to the Pajaro Valley Basin Management Plan (PVBMP), which describes best practices for sustainable groundwater management. The Pajaro Valley Basin has been identified as vulnerable to critical overdraft by 2070, and groundwater sustainability must be reached by 2040. General Plan 2050 provides for accommodating future population growth and development in an orderly fashion, and it would establish guidelines for sustainable development and groundwater usage.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following goals, policies, and actions to avoid and reduce impacts related to applicable water quality control plans and sustainable groundwater management plans.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal C-2 Water Conservation & Quality.** Conserve scarce water resources and preserve water quality for the variety of local uses.
>
> **Policy C-2.1 Promotion of Water Conservation.** The City shall promote the conservation of water and provide for the protection of water quality to assure its use for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological needs.
>
> **Action C-2.1.4 Aquifer Protection & Saltwater Intrusion.** The City shall continue to cooperate with the PVWMA to analyze and implement solutions that reduce or eliminate additional saltwater intrusion into area aquifers.
>
> **Action C-2.1.5 Water Quality.** The City shall continue to source, treat and deliver high quality potable water that meets current and future State and Federal Drinking Water standards and work with the Groundwater Basin Manager, PVWMA, to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Pajaro Valley groundwater basin.

The plan would comply with the standards set forth in the City's water quality-monitoring program and the PVBMP. In addition, the project would adhere to applicable General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions that support water quality protection, groundwater management, stormwater control, and sustainable water resource planning. Therefore, the project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of an applicable water quality control plan or groundwater management plan, and this impact would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

4.11 Land Use and Planning

This section discusses impacts related to land use and planning that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. Two (2) comment letters regarding land use or planning were received during the NOP scoping period on this topic. The comment letter from Santa Cruz County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) notifies potential siting of plan areas outside of the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI), and requests analysis of LAFCO policy conformity, confirmation of urban service boundary consistency, and inclusion of Extraterritorial Service Agreements in the analysis.

4.11.1 Environmental Setting

4.11.1.1 Regulatory Framework

State

California Housing Element Law

The California Housing Element Law (California Government Code Section 65580), adopted in 1969, has established detailed legal requirements for the general plan housing element. The law requires each city and county to prepare and maintain a current housing element as part of the community's general plan in order to attain a statewide goal of providing decent housing and a suitable living environment.

California Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)

The California Regional Housing Needs Allocation (California Government Code Section 65584) establishes that city and county regional housing needs must include the housing needs of persons at all income levels within the area significantly affected by a general plan of the city or County.

California Planning and Zoning Law

The California Planning and Zoning Law (California Government Code Section 65860) establishes requirements for local zoning regulations, and rules that local zoning provisions must be consistent with the general plan.

California State Density Bonus Law

The California State Density Bonus Law (California Government Code Section 65915) was adopted in 1979 in recognition of California's acute and growing affordable housing needs. The State Density Bonus Law has been amended multiple times since adoption, in response to evolving housing conditions, to provide clarification on the legislation, to respond to legal and implementation challenges, and to incorporate new or expanded provisions.

Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 establishes procedures for local government changes of organization, including city incorporations, annexations to a city or special district, and city and special district consolidations. Local agency formation commissions (LAFCOs) have numerous powers under the Act, but those of primary concern are the power to act on local agency boundary changes and to adopt spheres of influence for local agencies.

Regional

Santa Cruz County LAFCO

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 states that among the purposes of a Local Agency Formation Commission are discouraging urban sprawl, preserving open-space and prime agricultural lands, efficiently providing governmental services, and encouraging the orderly formation and development of local agencies based upon local conditions and circumstances. LAFCO is required to review and approve or disapprove, with or without amendments, wholly, partially, or conditionally, governmental boundary change proposals. Types of boundary change proposals under LAFCO review include incorporation of cities, annexation of territory to cities, extending water or sewer service, and district reorganizations. The Local Agency Formation Commission of Santa Cruz County determines the most logical provider of public services and has jurisdiction over the four cities, 22 independent special districts, and 54 county service areas.

AMBAG Regional Housing Need Allocation Plan

In August 2021, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) issued a Regional Housing Need Determination to the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) region for the 6th Cycle planning period of June 30, 2023, to December 15, 2031, and determined that the region must zone to accommodate a minimum of 33,274 housing units during this period. California housing law requires AMBAG, acting in the capacity of Council of Governments (COG), to develop a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Plan to allocate existing and projected housing needs to local jurisdictions within Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties. Based on the final RHNA Plan, each city and county must update its housing element to demonstrate how the jurisdiction will meet the expected growth in housing needs over this time period.

According to the latest RHNA plan, the City of Watsonville, which incorporates the plan area, is allocated 2,053 housing units, with 283 units for very low, 186 for low, 521 for moderate, and 1,063 for above moderate-income groups.

AMBAG Metropolitan Transportation Plan & the Sustainable Communities Strategy

AMBAG is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Monterey Bay Region. As the MPO, AMBAG is responsible for preparing certain documents that maintain the region's eligibility for federal transportation funding. These documents include the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), a long-range plan that identifies policies, strategies, and investments needed to meet the region’s mobility and transportation needs. AMBAG develops the MTP in coordination with the three Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (San Benito County Council of Governments, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, and Transportation Agency for Monterey County), transit providers (San Benito County Local Transit Authority, Monterey-Salinas Transit, and Santa Cruz METRO), the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD), state and federal governments, and organizations having interest in or responsibility for transportation planning and programming. AMBAG also coordinates transportation planning and programming activities with the three counties and 18 local jurisdictions within the tri-county Monterey Bay Region.

The MTP includes a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), as required under Senate Bill 375. The MTP/SCS is built on a set of integrated policies, strategies, and investments to maintain and improve the transportation system to meet the diverse needs of the region through the planning horizon (e.g., 2050).

Santa Cruz County General Plan

The purpose of the Santa Cruz County General Plan/Local Coastal Program is to guide and regulate land use and development in unincorporated Santa Cruz County. Guiding principles in the general plan include focused development, transportation choices, open space/resource preservation, unique community character, economic vitality, housing options, equity and inclusive decision-making, governmental coordination, and fiscal sustainability. The plan designates land uses including lands within the urban services line but outside of the current Watsonville city boundary. In addition, the new growth areas proposed to be annexed for future development as part of General Plan 2050 are currently located in County unincorporated areas and regulated by the County of Santa Cruz General Plan land use designations and zoning regulations.

SCCRTC Regional Transportation Plan

The Santa Cruz Count Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) serves as the County's regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) and is a state designated agency responsible for the planning and financial programming of transportation projects. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a state-mandated, long range planning document that serves as a guide for future transportation funding decisions. The RTP outlines transportation challenges and establishes investment priorities for all of Santa Cruz County. The plan includes lists of transit, highway, local road, bike, and pedestrian needs in the region and estimates the amount of local, state, and federal dollars that may be available for these projects over the next 20 to 25 years. The plan is updated every four years to reflect the latest funding estimates and project needs.

The current 2050 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan was approved by the SCCRTC on June 11, 2026. The RTP is incorporated into the AMBAG MTP/SCS plans mentioned above.

Regional Conservation Investment Strategy

Together with the SCCRTC, the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) leads the development of the County's Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) through a collaborative planning process from 2020-2022. The RCIS leverages the wealth of local knowledge and conservation planning into a comprehensive regional strategy to protect Santa Cruz County's unique biodiversity and the ecological communities that support it and promote resilience to foreseeable pressures and stressors. Administered by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the RCIS Program is established to encourage voluntary, non-regulatory regional planning specifically to direct mitigation funds to the highest, best conservation actions. The RCIS Program uses a science-based approach to identify conservation and enhancement opportunities that, if implemented, will help California's declining and vulnerable species by protecting, creating, restoring, and reconnecting habitat and may contribute to species recovery and adaptation to climate change and resiliency. The focus of the RCIS is on conservation of biodiversity while added benefits of the RCIS are conservation of ecosystem services such as recreation, wildfire risk reduction, or flood risk reduction.

Santa Cruz County Zoning Ordinance

Chapter 13.10 of the Santa Cruz County Code details the use charts and site standards for each zoning district. The ordinance regulates zoning of lands within the urban service line but outside of the Watsonville city boundary. The purposes of this chapter of the Zoning Ordinance are to:

- Implement the General Plan and Local Coastal Program, and any applicable town, village, or area plan, by providing specific regulations as to the allowable uses of land and structures;

- Promote and protect the public health, safety, peace, morals, comfort, convenience, and general welfare;
- Protect the character, stability, and satisfactory interrelationships of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, and open space areas of the County; and
- Protect the natural environment in compliance with CEQA.

As previously stated, the new growth areas proposed to be annexed for future development as part of General Plan 2050 are currently located in County unincorporated areas and regulated by the County of Santa Cruz General Plan land use zones.

Santa Cruz County Urban Services Line

Chapter 17.02 of the Santa Cruz County Code establishes an urban services line and a rural services line in 1979 in the County of Santa Cruz consistent with the General Plan. It states where urban services may be provided and establishes minimum standards for those services for new development projects within the urban services line and the rural services line. Provisions are also made for amendment and interpretation of the urban services line. Developments within the urban services line shall be supported by public services including water, sanitation, fire protection, and transportation (roads).

Local

City of Watsonville Zoning Ordinance

Title 14 Zoning Ordinance of the Watsonville Municipal Code details zoning designation and standards in the City. The zoning plan consists of the establishment of certain designated zoning districts and the adoption of a set of regulations controlling the uses of land, population density, uses and locations of structures, height and bulk of structures, open spaces about structures, the function of certain uses in structures, the areas and dimensions of building sites, requirements for off-street parking, and attendant regulations within such established districts.

City of Watsonville Extraterritorial Service Agreements

Per California Government Code Section 56133, a city or district may provide new or extended services by contract or agreement outside its jurisdictional boundaries with authorization and/or approval from LAFCO. The City has entered into 17 active Extraterritorial Service Agreements concerning the provision of water and/or sewer services to unincorporated areas of the County. These agreements approved by LAFCO allowed the City to extend municipal water and sewer service to parcels located outside the City's limits but within its Sphere of Influence. Extraterritorial Service Agreements do not confer land use authority; however, those located within the Urban Limit Line (ULL) are anticipated to be incorporated into the City over time and would be subject to future annexation actions.

Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan Update

The Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan, updated in 2023, serves as the City's long-range planning document guiding airport development over the next 20 years (City of Watsonville, 2023b). Its purpose is to identify the current and future needs of the airport and establish alternatives to meet the needs of the airport, nearby residents, the City, and other stakeholders. A central component of the plan is revising the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) Drawing Set to address current and future safety standards, including the evaluation of runway configurations, safety areas, and approaches. By updating facility designs and

planning for potential infrastructure upgrades, the plan seeks to reduce operational risks and maintain compliance with FAA safety requirements, allowing the airport to remain eligible for federal funding.

As discussed in **Section 4.9, Hazards of this EIR**, while the 2023 Airport Master Plan is not a regulatory or land use compatibility document, it evaluates safety and airspace protection issues in and around the airport to mitigate flight hazards and enhance public safety. Key considerations include potential wildlife attractants, incompatible land uses within the Runway Protection Zone, airspace obstructions within the approach and departure paths, and runway configuration alternatives for Runway 9/27 related to the airport's nonstandard Runway Visibility Zone. The resulting Master Plan recommendations are intended to support safe and efficient airport operations, accommodate future airport development and growth, and maintain public safety. The Airport Master Plan provides foundational information regarding the airport's existing and proposed facilities, operational characteristics, and airspace configuration, which form the foundation for the land use compatibility criteria included in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP). Developed in accordance with the California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook, these criteria are intended to protect airport operations, preserve navigable airspace, and limit incompatible development within the Airport Influence Area. The ALUCP, included as Appendix B of General Plan 2050, reflects the existing, future, and ultimate airport configurations documented in the Airport Master Plan. The ALUCP also provides a framework for evaluating land use compatibility should airport operational conditions change in the future. While explored in the Airport Master Plan, both the ALUCP and General Plan 2050 do not assume the potential deactivation or closure of Runway 9/27, because that is separately being studied and has not received formal approval from either the City or FAA. The EIR's analysis of airport-related impacts is based on the Airport's existing, future, and ultimate development scenarios as depicted in the 2023 Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and reflected in the ALUCP's Airport Safety Zone Compatibility Map, Airspace Protection Compatibility Map, and associated land use compatibility criteria.

Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan

The Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP), adopted in October 2023, set forth the framework to diversify and revitalize downtown Watsonville. The specific plan sets forth specific land use and zoning regulations within the downtown area. The plan strives to facilitate housing production and preservation, increase retail-entertainment activity, encourage higher-density mixed-use residential projects, add visitor-oriented uses, support a greater range of civic and cultural activities, improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians, enhance bicycle infrastructure and connections, and target uses and activities that appeal to a wide range of Watsonville's residents and employees. General Plan 2050 plan area encompasses the DWSP area.

4.11.1.2 Existing Conditions

Zoning

The City's zoning regulations are defined by the Watsonville Municipal Code. The City's zoning framework accommodates a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, coastal, and public uses, with overlay districts providing additional development controls. This framework guides the type, intensity, and location of land uses across the City and establishes the basis for evaluating potential land use impacts (see **Figure 4.11-1**).

As depicted below in **Figure 4.11-1** by the City's existing zoning map, residential zones make up much of the City, ranging from low-density single-family neighborhoods (R-1 and R-1P) to medium- and high-density multi-family areas (RM-2 and RM-3). Commercial zones include Neighborhood Commercial, Neighborhood Shopping Center, Visitor Commercial, Office, and Thoroughfare Commercial Districts (CN, CNS, CV, CO, CT), concentrated along major corridors and near Highway 1. Industrial zones (IG and IP) are

generally located near Highway 1 and other transportation corridors to accommodate manufacturing, warehousing, and employment-generating uses. Land within the DWSP area has mixed-use zoning designations of Downtown Core, Downtown Neighborhood, and Downtown Industrial zones. In addition, the DWSP established the Main Street, Gateway, and Neighborhood Transition Overlays to concentrate urban activity and intensity in the center of downtown Watsonville and allow development to transition to existing lower-intensity neighborhood fabric at the periphery of DWSP area (see **Figure 4.11-2**).

Coastal overlay zones (CZ-A through CZ-D) and the landfill zone (CZ-E) protect environmentally sensitive areas in the Coastal Zone, while Public Facilities (PF) and Institutional zones (N) support schools, government buildings, and other civic uses. The Environmental Management-Open Space (EM-OS) zone, and overlay districts, such as Planned Development areas, Residential Mobile Home Parks, and Utility Prohibition zones, impose additional restrictions to guide responsible development and preserve sensitive areas.

Land Use Designation

The City's existing land use designations are established under the Watsonville 2005 General Plan and reflect the long-term vision for development and conservation within the City (City of Watsonville, 1994). As shown in **Figure 2-5** of this EIR, which depicts the existing land use designations, the land use framework for the City accommodates a variety of residential, commercial, industrial, public, and open space uses, along with coastal and agricultural areas, and guides the pattern, type, and intensity of development across the City.

Commercial and industrial designations include general commercial areas and industrial zones, which provide locations for retail, services, and employment-generating uses. Downtown mixed-use and downtown central core designations promote a concentration of commercial and residential uses in the City's urban center, supporting pedestrian activity and transit accessibility. DWSP further develops land use regulations for the downtown area by establishing detailed standards for allowed uses, development intensity, building placement, building design, open space, and streetscape improvements. DWSP builds on the City's General Plan by providing a regulatory framework for both public and private development, guiding adaptive reuse of historic buildings, encouraging mixed-use development, and promoting walkability (City of Watsonville, 2023a).

Residential and Mixed Uses

Per 2005 General Plan Land Use Diagram, approximately 40 percent (1,665.9 acres) of the City is designated for residential uses. As described in **Section 2, Project Description** and detailed in **Table 2-1**, 872.5 acres of this residential land use is designated as low density (20 percent), 515.5 acres as medium density (12 percent), and 277.9 acres as high density (8 percent). In addition, the Downtown Central Core (61.2 acres) and Downtown Mixed-Use (47.3 acres) designations allow for higher density residential development and, per the DWSP, are envisioned to accommodate 3,886 infill housing units.

General Plan 2050 maintains these residential designations. In addition to the current mixed-use Downtown Central Core and Downtown Mixed-Use designations, General Plan 2050 adds the Corridor Mixed-Use and Corridor Mixed-Use Center land use designations to correspond with major corridors such as Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue. Land outside city limits in the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, and Area C new growth areas include areas designated as Very Low to High Density Residential. For areas that are subject to Airport Safety Zones that limit residential and non-residential development, General Plan 2050 maintains existing land use designations, such as General Commercial along the Freedom Boulevard corridor and Agriculture in the Buena Vista new growth area. General Plan 2050 introduces five overlays—the Corridor Mixed-Use Center Overlay, the Corridor Mixed-Use Overlay, the Residential

Low Density Overlay, and the Residential Very Low Density Overlay to areas subject to Watsonville Municipal Airport's Airport Safety Zones—to allow development per the designation associated with the overlay in the event that the Safety Zone boundaries are adjusted or removed at a future date.

Commercial and Industrial Uses

General Commercial and Industrial uses are two of the most common non-residential uses in the City. As shown in **Table 2-1**, approximately 8 percent (343.4 acres) and 12 percent (494.7 acres) of the City's land area is designated for commercial and industrial use in the 2005 General Plan, respectively. General commercial use exists along the Freedom Blvd, Lake Avenue, Green Valley Road, and Main Street corridors, and extends from the downtown core to the city limits. Most industrial lands are located south of Walker Street towards Highway 1, with some additional industrial lands near the Airport.

General Plan 2050 maintains these non-residential designations. However, the new Corridor Mixed-Use and Corridor Mixed-Use Center would replace 269 acres of land currently designated as General Commercial along Freedom Boulevard, East Lake Avenue, and other major corridors (**Figure 2-8**). The Highway 1 Gateway new growth area also includes 227.3 acres of land designated as Industrial Light and 175.6 acres as Gateway Commercial.

Public/Quasi-Public

There are currently Public/Quasi-public land use designated areas distributed throughout the City. This land use designation accounts for approximately 7 percent (307.6 acres) of the City's land area, and includes schools, parks, libraries, churches, and cemeteries. General Plan 2050 would replace the Public/Quasi-Public designation that contain parks with the new Parks designation and that contain existing schools, libraries, churches, and cemeteries with the new Community Facilities designation.

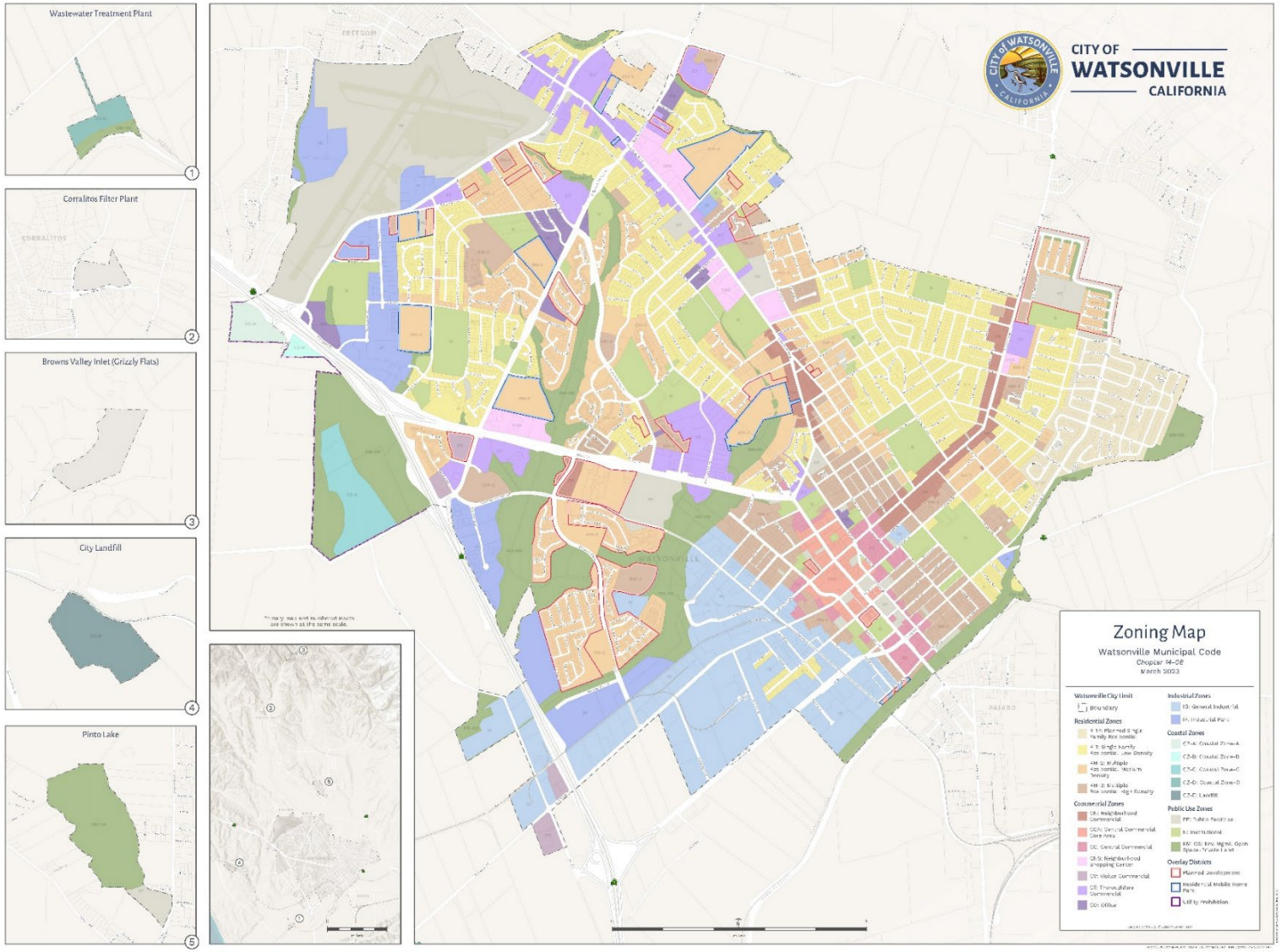
Agriculture

There is no land currently designated as Agriculture in the City. As described in **Section 4.2, Agricultural Resources** and the **Farmland Conversion Memo (Appendix I)**, approximately 870 acres of farmland are planned for non-agricultural uses within the Buena Vista (Area A), Atkinson Lane (Area B), Area C and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas of General Plan 2050. However, as shown on **Figure 2-8 in Section 2, Project Description**, the portion of the Buena Vista new growth area that is presently within an Airport Safety Zone that limits residential development would maintain its current designation as Agriculture. As previously noted, this area has an overlay for allowing residential development per the designation associated with the overlay in the event that the Safety Zone boundaries are adjusted or removed at a future date.

Natural Open Space

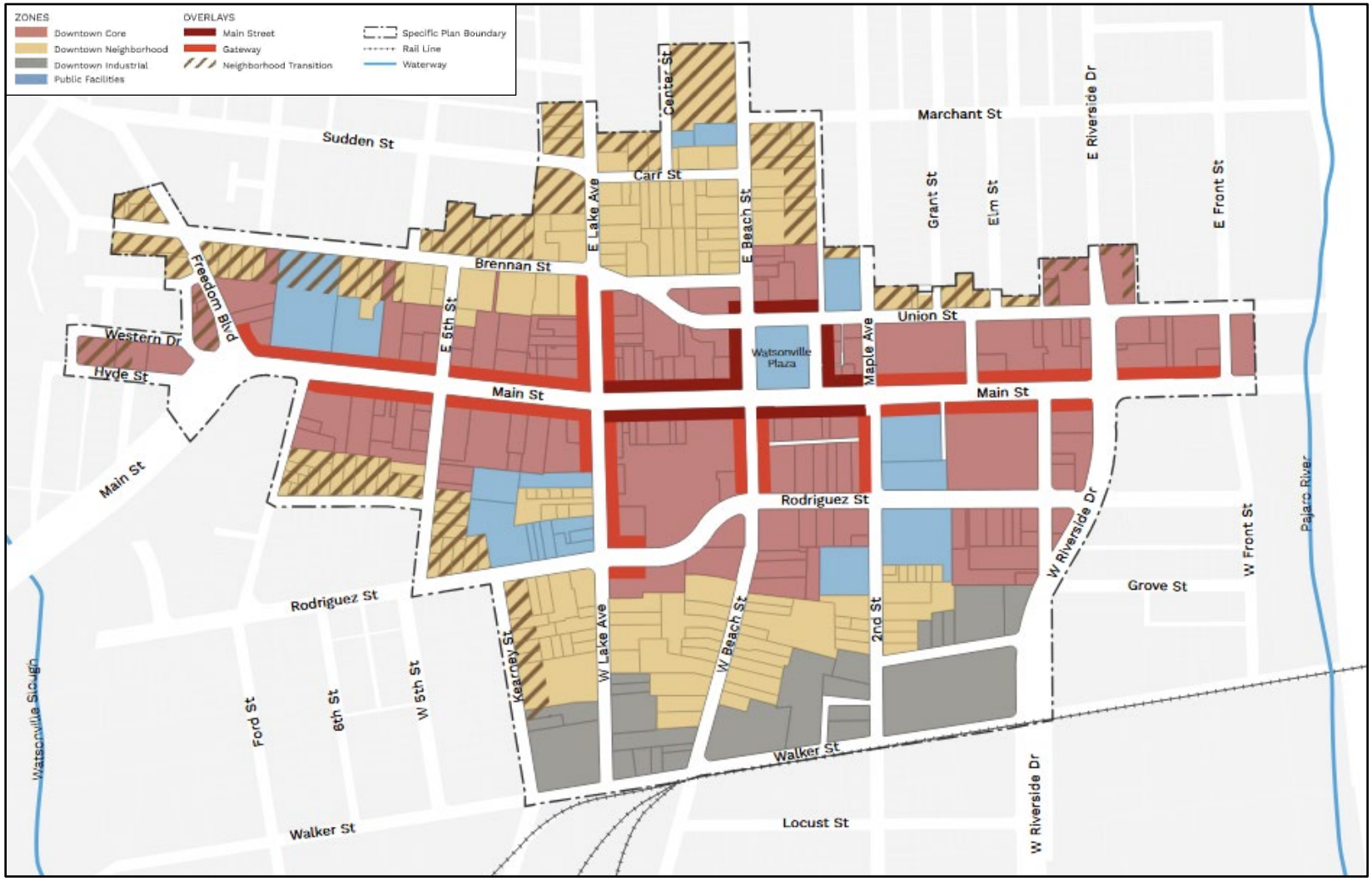
The City contains a significant amount of open space that is home to diverse and unique habitats and wildlife species. Approximately 9 percent (386.7 acres) of the City is designated currently as Environmental Management. General Plan 2050 would replace this land use designation with the new Natural Open Space designation. This new designation will also be applied to existing natural open space lands outside city limits in the new growth areas.

Figure 4.11-1 City of Watsonville Zoning Map (2026)



Source: City of Watsonville, 2025.

Figure 4.11-2 Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan Zoning Map



City of Watsonville, 2023.

Growth Areas within Unincorporated Santa Cruz County

The new growth areas within unincorporated Santa Cruz County are presently subject to land use designations in the Santa Cruz County General Plan. The Buena Vista new growth area, in the northwest portion of the plan area, is designated for Agriculture and is bordered by existing residential neighborhoods in the Freedom and South of Manfre Road Areas that are designated for Urban Very Low Density Residential, Urban Low Density Residential and Urban Open Space uses (SCCGIS, 2026). The Atkinson Lane (Area B) new growth area is designated for Urban Low Density Residential, Urban High Density Residential, Urban Open Space, and Agriculture uses; however, much the land designated for Urban High Density Residential is already built out with the recent Cienega Heights development and the remaining undeveloped portion of this property is limited by a 200-foot agricultural buffer (SCCGIS, 2026; City of Watsonville, 2021). The Area C new growth area to the east of Atkinson Lane (Area B) is designated entirely for agricultural use (SCCGIS, 2026). The Highway 1 Gateway new growth area, the westernmost portion of the plan area, is also designated for agricultural use (SCCGIS, 2026).

4.11.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.11.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the proposed project would result in potentially significant environmental effects on land use if it would:

a) Physically divide an established community;

b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

4.11.2.2 Methodology

The evaluation of land use and zoning designations for the plan area was conducted in accordance with CEQA and applicable state and federal laws. The analysis included a review of existing data, collected from City and County-level databases and planning documents, to assess existing land uses and whether General Plan 2050 growth and development would align with these designations. The following were consulted to gather land use and zoning information for General Plan 2050:

- City of Watsonville 2005 General Plan
- Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan
- Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan
- Santa Cruz County GISWeb Mapping Tool
- SCCRTC Zero Emissions Passenger Rail & Trail Project

4.11.2.3 Project Impacts

a) Would the project physically divide an established community?

General Plan 2050 would result in a significant impact if it would lead to new development or physical features that would divide existing neighborhoods. An example of a physical feature that would divide an

existing community is a roadway or railroad track. Implementation of General Plan 2050 does not include any proposal for new major roadways or other physical features that go through existing neighborhoods that would create new barriers in the Plan Area.

The SCCRTC has begun preliminary plans for reactivating passenger rail service as part of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail (ZEPRT) Project, which, if implemented, would provide passenger rail service between Santa Cruz and Pajaro through Watsonville (SCCRTC, 2025). A potential station in Downtown Watsonville would create a new regional transit connection. Future phases of the ZEPRT project will require environmental review prior to funding approval.

Under General Plan 2050 the properties along the rail line and around the potential station are currently designated industrial. If a Downtown station is confirmed in the future, the General Plan calls for considering transit-oriented development in this area, including housing, office, and neighborhood-serving retail, subject to an approved master plan or updated zoning regulations. Rather than dividing an established community, the reactivated rail service would provide an opportunity to introduce transit-oriented development and mixed use infill development, which would strengthen connections between Downtown Watsonville and a future station. In addition, General Plan 2050 does not include actions, changes to land use designations, or amendments to the DWSP that would divide the already established community in downtown Watsonville which is centered around its historic town square, local arts and long-standing cultural traditions.

The land uses and place types proposed in General Plan 2050 are largely consistent with existing development patterns (**Figure 2-8** in **Section 2, Project Description**). The most significant changes under General Plan 2050 would be the place type designations within the new growth areas of General Plan 2050. These areas do not currently contain large amounts of contiguous residential development (SCCGIS, 2026). Therefore, new development in the new growth areas would not result in the division of an existing neighborhood or community. Existing residential neighborhoods are not included in the proposed place type designations and, therefore, would remain under their current land use designations and are not expected to change under the project buildout. General Plan 2050 establishes two new mixed-use place type designations – Corridor Mixed-Use and Corridor Mixed-Use Center – which would accommodate mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood centers and revitalized corridors (**Figure 2-8** in **Section 2, Project Description**).

Future development under the plan would retain the existing roadway patterns, and the plan does not include proposals for any new major roadways or other physical features would bifurcate existing residential neighborhoods or other communities that would create new barriers in the plan area. Future residential development in new growth areas may include the addition of local streets which would connect with existing major roadways. Newly constructed roadways would not divide existing communities but would enhance accessibility and connectivity between existing and new development areas. Additionally, most of the planned housing would be infill development in the City's downtown core and along major corridors, and these areas are already served by adequate roadway systems. Portions of the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area would be assigned to the new Industrial Light and Gateway Commercial place type designations, which plans to accommodate a range of light industrial, office, regional retail, hotel, restaurant, entertainment, and parks and recreational development with access from Highway 1 and SR 129 (**Figure 2-8** in **Section 2, Project Description**). Therefore, new development in existing urban areas would not include the addition of major roadways. As a result, while several of these residential neighborhoods are located in proximity to the areas with proposed place type designations, these changes would not divide existing neighborhoods.

Furthermore, future development under the project would be required to be consistent with the following General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions that promote cohesive and compatible

neighborhoods and prevent new development from potentially dividing existing uses where different land uses are in proximity to one another.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal LC-1 A Well-Planned City of Places. A well-planned City that: supports a wide range of complementary land uses developed and operated at intensities that accommodate anticipated growth; achieves the vision of a beautiful, diverse, and well-connected community; features unique places that respect Watsonville's agricultural and architectural heritage; and remains rooted in its unique climate, topography, history, and cultural traditions.

Policy LC-1.6 Connectivity and Mobility. Preserve and enhance Watsonville's existing street and trail network to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists of all abilities and improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between existing neighborhoods; retail and services along corridors; parks, schools, recreation and natural open spaces; bus transit and the planned passenger rail station; and Downtown Watsonville and Pajaro. [Mobility for All; Diversity & Equity]

Action LC-1.1.3 Street and Trail Network Improvements. Plan and implement targeted improvements to the quality and number of pedestrian and bicycle routes within the street and trail network, prioritizing connections to schools, parks, neighborhood activity centers, and downtown. [Mobility for All; Diversity & Equity]

Goal LC-2 A Human-Scaled City. A City planned and designed for people, fostering social and economic interaction, an active and vital public realm, and high levels of public safety and comfort.

Action LC-2.1.1 Objective Design Standards. Revise the Zoning Code and/or adopt development standards to enable the human-scale environments envisioned by this General Plan. [Small Town Character; Focused Infill]

Action LC-2.1.2 Subdivision Ordinance. Amend the City's Subdivision Ordinance to establish or revise maximum block length and perimeter standards consistent with General Plan goals for walkability, connectivity, and complete neighborhoods. The updated standards shall promote a more connected street network that supports multiple modes of transportation, reduces travel distances, and improves access to public spaces, services, and amenities. [Small Town Character]

Goal LC-6 Active, Pedestrian-Friendly, Mixed-Use Neighborhood Centers. Mixed-use neighborhood centers will accommodate urban, pedestrian-oriented, multi-story buildings on an interconnected street and block network.

Policy LC-6.2 Interconnected Street Network. Require projects on parcels 5 acres in area or larger to be developed with a pedestrian environment by:

- Introducing an interconnected street and block network that links to adjacent neighborhoods;
- Designing internal streets to provide sidewalks, street trees, and on-street parking; and
- Requiring buildings to face and provide pedestrian access directly from the sidewalk. [Small Town Character; Focused Infill]

Action LC-6.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise the Zoning Code and/or adopt development standards to guide the design of pedestrian-oriented residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings within Watsonville's neighborhood centers.

Goal LC-7 Active, Pedestrian-Friendly, Revitalized Corridors. Revitalized, multi-modal corridors will provide multi-family housing, neighborhood-serving retail, and convenient access to bus transit, while continuing to accommodate automobile traffic.

Policy LC-7.8 Connected Development. Ensure new development is well-connected to adjoining neighborhoods, neighborhood centers, and bus stops via high-quality walking and biking routes. [Small Town Character; Focused Infill]

Policy LC-7.9 Connections Between Development Projects. Require pedestrian and, as practical, vehicular connections between adjacent development projects and associated parking lots. [Focused Infill]

Goal LC-10 Complete, New Neighborhoods. Unique and diverse neighborhoods will provide a range of housing types and choices and access to community facilities that support active and healthy lifestyles.

Policy LC-10.3 Connected Neighborhoods. Require each new increment of residential development to provide street and trail connections to existing adjoining residential or commercial areas and provide for future connections into any adjoining parcels. [Small Town Character; Mobility for All; Streetscape & Public Realm]

Action LC-10.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise zoning provisions, and other policies to:

- Maintain the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods by ensuring that any new multi-family residential development adjacent to single-family neighborhoods is house-form in scale and character.
- Ensure the creation of new neighborhoods within the new growth areas are consistent with the human-scaled provisions of this General Plan 2050. In particular, include objective design standards consistent with the General Plan that include the following design features:
    - An interconnected street and block network with a high level of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connectivity;
    - Tree-lined streets with sidewalks and on-street parking;
    - Integration of one or more community facilities, such as parks, schools, trails, or civic buildings;
    - A variety of housing types and styles appropriate to the existing neighborhood context; and
    - Street-facing building entries and windows with driveways and garages generally deemphasized in the streetscape composition. [Small Town Character]

Policy LC-12.2 Connectivity to Natural Open Space. Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections to existing slough trails, planned trails along the Pajaro River levees, and the beach along Beach Street. [Small Town Character; Open Space & Conservation]

Goal MA-1 Complete Streets. Provide a safe, convenient and sustainable network of streets prioritizing the movement of people in all modes of transportation and as opportunities to create places that people enjoy and thrive in.

> **Policy MA-1. 3 Connectivity.** Encourage connectivity and accessibility to a mix of land uses that meets residents' daily needs within walking distance. Typically, this means creating walkable neighborhoods with block lengths between 300’ and 500’ in length.
>
> **Action MA-1.1.2 Transportation Study Checklist.** Update the City’s transportation study guidelines by adopting transportation performance measures focused on access and quality of service for all travel modes, including level of traffic stress, transit capacity and activity connectedness, as described in this chapter.
>
> **Goal MA-3 Active Transportation.** Plan and implement a first-class safe active transportation network that embraces walking and bicycling as priority travel modes.
>
> **Policy MA-3.1 Active Transportation Network.** Establish a safe, comfortable, convenient and well-connected network of walking and bicycling routes that connect all parts of the City.
>
> **Policy MA-3.4 Trail Network**. Develop a robust and integrated off-street trail system that maximizes connectivity to local and regional destinations, including the sloughs, creeks, and Pajaro River, and along the rail corridor to other parts of Santa Cruz County.
>
> **Action MA-3.1.1 Active Transportation Plan Updates.** Plan for and seek funding to update the City’s Active Transportation Plan every five years to incorporate active transportation best practices and regularly monitor progress toward a connected active transportation network.

General Plan 2050’s guiding principles, developed with the community, emphasize the importance of ensuring that growth and development foster residential connectivity throughout the plan area. These principles include: mobility for all, which aims to integrate land uses and transportation by introducing higher-density and mixed-use development along bus transit routes and in areas surrounding the planned Watsonville passenger rail station; focused infill, taking advantage of bus transit and planned passenger rail and provides retail and services for new residents and residents of surrounding neighborhoods; and diversity and equity, improving access to transit, parks, and recreational facilitates, guiding the distribution of land uses. Therefore, implementation of General Plan 2050’s goals, policies, and actions would have a less than significant impact associated with the physical division of an established community. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

General Plan 2050 is intended to update land use designations established in the 2005 General Plan and has been prepared in conformance with State laws and regulations associated with the preparation of general plans, including requirements for environmental protection and public safety. Discussion and analysis of General Plan 2050’s consistency with State regulations, plans, and policies associated with specific environmental issues (e.g., air quality, traffic, water quality, etc.) are provided in the relevant chapters of this EIR. The State would continue to have authority over any State-owned lands in the vicinity of the City, and General Plan 2050 would not conflict with continued application of State land use laws, plans, policies, and regulations adopted to avoid or mitigate environmental effects.

As set forth by State law, a general plan serves as the primary planning document for a city and subordinate documents and plans are required to be updated to be consistent with the general plan. Similar to the existing 2005 General Plan, General Plan 2050 focuses on development while ensuring that the City’s quality of life is maintained, the small-town character is preserved, that increased opportunities for local job growth and economic development are provided, and that agricultural as well as conservation uses are maintained to the extent feasible. As discussed in **Section 4.2, Agriculture and**

Forestry Resources, General Plan 2050 projects the conversion of approximately 780 acres of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. However, the plan would guide future growth and conversion of land to minimize encroachment into agricultural lands and to promote uses consistent with General Plan 2050 land use designations and accompanying zoning regulation. General Plan 2050 carries forward and enhances policies and measures from the City's existing 2005 General Plan that were intended for environmental protection and would not remove or conflict with City plans, policies, or regulations adopted, including the DWSP and ALUCP discussed above in **Section 4.11.1.1, Regulatory Framework** of this EIR.

The DWSP was adopted in October 2023 and serves as the planning document for the downtown core of Watsonville. General Plan 2050 would not conflict with the DWSP and would complement the policies in the DWSP by advancing the City's vision for an active and safe downtown with mixed-use development, infill housing, and streets that comfortably accommodate all travel modes. Furthermore, General Plan 2050 incorporates and builds upon some of the growth strategies outlined in DWSP, including those guiding infill development in the City's downtown and along major corridors, such as Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue. DWSP would continue to be a valid and relevant planning document for the DWSP area, and a tool for implementing General Plan 2050.

The ALUCP (included as Appendix B to General Plan 2050) would establish land use compatibility criteria for those portions of General Plan2050 plan area within the Airport Influence Area, in accordance with PUC Section 21670.1.(d)(2). Projects involving a change in land use within the Airport Influence Area would need to demonstrate consistency with the compatibility criteria established in the ALUCP as part of the City's standard review process for discretionary or ministerial approval, to determine whether any land use changes would create or worsen a nonconformity (ALUCP, Policy 1.5.1(a)). Certain proposals, due to their size or complexity, have a heightened potential to present land use compatibility conflicts and may necessitate greater scrutiny. The ALUCP lists these "Major Land Use Actions" under Policy 1.5.1(b). The ALUCP would provide a framework for evaluating the land use compatibility of new development, as well as current and future airport operational conditions. ALUCP policies do not apply to existing land uses; however, no physical or functional changes may be made that would cause an existing land use to become nonconforming (ALUCP Policy 3.1.1). Compliance with the ALUCP considers aircraft operations and includes policies to guide development in proximity to the Airport to minimize the public's exposure to excessive noise and safety hazards within the Airport Influence Area. Noise impacts related to aircraft operations and the Airport Influence Area are discussed in more detail in **Section 4.13, Noise**. The ALUCP criteria shall take precedence over General Plan 2050 land use designations; however, designations as currently shown in **Figure 2-8** are designed for consistency between ALUCP and General Plan 2050, thus there is no potential displacement associated with the ALUCP criteria. In the unusual event where conflicts between the two documents' designations or land use intensities occur, the most stringent criteria between the two shall apply.

General Plan 2050 would also be consistent with the programs and policies outlined in existing regional plans, such as the AMBAG MTP/SCS and the SCCRTC RTP. The MTP/SCS identifies several land use opportunities and implementation strategies, such as a focus on infill development and new housing located in walkable, transit-supportive communities (AMBAG, 2026s). General Plan 2050 prioritizes infill development, especially within the City's downtown core, which also includes employment hubs, commercial centers, and pedestrian facilities. The MTP/SCS aims to reduce impacts of new development on open space and farmland, which aligns with General Plan 2050's goal of preserving open space and natural lands throughout the plan area while supporting new growth. Additionally, both the MTP/SCS and General Plan 2050 aim to improve and expand active transit facilities, such as bicycle and pedestrian crossings, and improve the conditions of existing public transportation services. General Plan 2050 and its policies would be consistent with the implementation strategies outlined in the MTP/SCS, and both

planning documents aim to promote sustainable growth and development focused on infill housing and transit improvements

Similarly, the SCCRTC RTP has a focus on reducing VMT (Goal 1) and promoting public transportation and active transit (Goal 3) where feasible (SCCRTC, 2026). The RTP envisions a greener, more accessible transportation system by providing accessible, reliable public transportation services, especially in communities far from existing transit services or that are car-dependent (Goal 5) (SCCRTC, 2026). General Plan 2050 would focus most of the new residential development in the City's downtown core, which provides residents with a walkable community, access to transit services, and proximity to existing amenities. Additionally, the bicycle/pedestrian improvements proposed under General Plan 2050 align with the RTP's goal of reducing VMT and greenhouse gas emissions. The policies of General Plan 2050 are consistent with those outlined in the SCCRTC RTP, and General Plan 2050 would support the land use and transportation improvements envisioned in the RTP.

Development in new growth areas currently located within unincorporated Santa Cruz County would convert County-designated commercial agricultural land into non-agricultural uses, which is inconsistent with the County's General Plan's existing land use policies. However, these growth areas are within the City's ULL and are planned to be annexed following the implementation of General Plan 2050. As only one set of land use policies may apply at a given time, these areas would be subject to the City's land use policies following their annexation, and County-level land use policies would no longer be applicable. As a result, there would not be a conflict between the County General Plan and General Plan 2050 upon plan adoption. Furthermore, LAFCO approval would be coordinated with the County prior to future annexations of new growth areas, which would ensure that the growth and development envisioned in General Plan 2050 would be consistent with land use patterns and growth projections surrounding the plan area. Therefore, adoption and implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in a conflict with County-level regional plans.

Individual projects would align with the standards outlined in City and regional programs and would be consistent with their designated land uses under General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Action LC-5.1.1 Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan.** Implement, and keep current, the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan.
>
> **Action LC-6.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations.** Revise the Zoning Code and/or adopt development standards to guide the design of pedestrian-oriented residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings within Watsonville's neighborhood centers.
>
> **Action LC-7.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations.** Revise the Zoning Code or adopt development standards to guide the design of new commercial, and mixed-use development projects to enhance pedestrian activity by:
>
> - Orienting buildings towards the street with street-facing entries and windows and siting parking behind buildings;
> - Requiring tall retail ground floors;
> - Requiring ground floors to occupy the majority of the lot's frontage, with exceptions for vehicular access where necessary;

- Requiring the majority of the linear ground floor retail frontage (where such occurs) be visually and physically "open" to the street, incorporating windows and other design treatments to create an engaging street front;
- Minimizing the number of curb cuts and vehicle movements across the sidewalk; and
- Allowing for and encourage the development of outdoor plazas and dining areas.

Action LC-9.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Review and revise as necessary existing adopted residential design standards and guidelines, including the City of Watsonville Residential Development Standards for Multi-Family Condominium & Townhouse Projects, and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines to guide the design of new neighborhood-adjacent house-form, multi-family buildings to be consistent with the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods.

Action LC-10.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise zoning provisions, and other policies to:

- Maintain the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods by ensuring that any new multi-family residential development adjacent to single-family neighborhoods is house-form in scale and character.
- Ensure the creation of new neighborhoods within the new growth areas that are consistent with the human-scaled provisions of this General Plan 2050. In particular, include objective design standards consistent with the General Plan that include the following design features:
    - An interconnected street and block network with a high level of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connectivity;
    - Tree-lined streets with sidewalks and on-street parking;
    - Integration of one or more community facilities, such as parks, schools, trails, or civic buildings;
    - A variety of housing types and styles appropriate to the existing neighborhood context; and
    - Street-facing building entries and windows with driveways and garages generally deemphasized in the streetscape composition.

Action LC-10.1.2 Annexation of new neighborhood growth areas located within the Urban Limit Line. With the support of the property owners of each prospective new neighborhood growth area located within the ULL (Buena Vista and Atkinson Lane), work with the City of Watsonville, the County of Santa Cruz, and LAFCO to:

- Prepare a phased master plan(s) and associated tract maps that incorporate the human-scale provisions of this General Plan 2050 and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines.
- Work with LAFCO to conduct the annexation process.

Policy LC. 11.2 Downtown Passenger Station Focus Area. Once a new passenger rail station is confirmed for Downtown Watsonville, enable properties surrounding the planned Downtown passenger rail station to develop with transit-oriented uses, including housing, office, and neighborhood-serving retail, subject to an approved master plan or updated zoning regulations.

Policy LC-11.4 Reclaimed Water. In accordance with the City's Recycled Water Master Plan, extend reclaimed water service to industrial areas.

Action LC-11.1.1 Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise zoning standards and other regulatory documents to:

- Provide provisions to support the Downtown Watsonville passenger rail station, including introducing a land use overlay on properties surrounding the station that enables transit-oriented uses (residential, office);
- Update design standards to ensure building frontages along Riverside Avenue and Beach Street provide street-facing windows and entries and locate parking behind and next to—and not in front of—buildings; and
- Ensure that industrial buildings are compliant with State law in terms of building design and location, parking, truck loading bays, landscaping buffers, entry gates, and signage.

Action LC-12.1.2 Coastal Zone Consistency. Work with the Coastal Commission to amend the Local Coastal Plan to apply the appropriate Coastal Zones to the parcels located with the Highway 1 Gateway that are subject to the Local Coastal Plan.

Action LC-13.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise zoning provisions, and/or adopt development standards to ensure new development faces natural features, trails, and parks.

Policy MA-3.2 Active Transportation Plan. Regularly update the City's Active Transportation Plan to respond to City needs and to capitalize on active transportation funding opportunities.

Action MA-3.1.1 Active Transportation Plan Updates. Plan for and seek funding to update the City's Active Transportation Plan every five years to incorporate active transportation best practices and regularly monitor progress toward a connected active transportation network.

Action MA-3.1.3 Electric Micromobility Guidelines. Support Santa Cruz County planning efforts to develop electric micromobility guidelines within the county.

Goal MA-4 Aviation Facilities. Maintain and improve the facilities and services of the Watsonville Municipal Airport as part of the regional transportation network and in conformance with Federal and State requirements and standards.

Policy MA-4.1 Aviation Facilities. The City shall support the ongoing maintenance and modernization of airport facilities and infrastructure consistent with adopted airport plans to ensure safe, reliable, and efficient aviation operations that support local and regional aviation needs

Policy MA-4 2 Airport Operations. Continue to emphasize the importance of airport operations to the Watsonville Planning Area and to the regional transportation system.

Goal A-2 Protect Public Health and Safety Around the Airport. Minimize the community's exposure to excessive noise and aviation-related safety hazards affecting people and property on

the ground, as well as aviation users, by guiding land use development in the Airport Influence Area using established noise, overflight, safety, and airspace protection compatibility criteria.

Policy A-2.1 Promote Compatible Land Use Patterns in the Airport Influence Area. Guide future development within the Airport Influence Area to ensure compatibility with existing and planned airport operations, while recognizing established land uses and applicable development rights.

Policy A-2.2 Ensure Consistency Between Airport and Land Use Planning. Maintain consistency between the Airport Master Plan, Airport Layout Plan, and the City's General Plan by requiring coordinated updates when airport land use compatibility planning assumptions change and by encouraging coordination among the City, Santa Cruz County, and other affected agencies to address airport compatibility issues that extend beyond city boundaries.

Action A-2.1.1 Airport Land Use Compatibility Zoning Overlay. Adopt, maintain, and enforce a zoning overlay district to implement the noise, safety, overflight, and airspace protection criteria established in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and guide future land use development within the Airport Influence Area (AIA) consistent with that Plan.

Action A-2.1.2 ALUCP Review Cycle. Review the ALUCP when an update to the Airport Master Plan or Airport Layout Plan is proposed to identify whether modifications to the ALUCP may be necessary upon adoption of those airport plans. Revise the ALUCP as needed to reflect changes to compatibility zones, criteria, or other provisions resulting from a newly adopted Airport Master Plan or Airport Layout Plan. ALUCP updates must adhere to all applicable criteria established in the California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook.

Action A-2.1.3 Consistency Across Plans. Coordinate planning updates to maintain consistency between the General Plan, the Airport Master Plan, the Airport Layout Plan, and the ALUCP when airport planning or compatibility assumptions change.

Action A-2.1.4 Cooperative Planning in the Airport Influence Area. Coordinate airport-related planning and land use decisions among relevant city departments and affected local/regional agencies, including Santa Cruz County. Provide timely notification of planning initiatives that may affect airport operations or compatibility assumptions. Plan the orderly intensification of existing development and potential expansion within the Sphere of Influence to meet growth expectations while maintaining airport compatibility and quality-of-life objectives.

General Plan 2050's proposed place type designations would provide more detailed guidance on the built form and character of future development than is typically found in a traditional general plan. To implement these place types and ensure consistency with General Plan 2050, the City's zoning ordinance would be updated, as necessary, to conform to the proposed General Plan, as directed by the various General Plan policies. These updates would not remove or adversely modify portions of the Watsonville Municipal Code that were adopted to mitigate environmental effects.

Overall, subsequent development projects would be required to be consistent with all applicable policies, standards, and regulations, including those land use plans, policies, and regulations adopted to mitigate environmental effects by the City as well as those adopted by agencies with jurisdiction over components of future development projects. With continued implementation of General Plan 2050's Goals, Policies, and Actions, implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in land use consistency with state and local policies. As a result, land use and planning Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required. (Less than Significant Impact)

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4.12 Mineral Resources

This section discusses the impacts to mineral resources that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. No public scoping comments regarding mineral resources were received.

4.12.1 Environmental Setting

4.12.1.1 Regulatory Framework

State

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act

Under the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975, no areas within Watsonville, have been designated by the State Mining and Geology Board as containing mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance. The State Geologist and the State Mining and Geology Board have not classified any part of Watsonville for containing mineral resources requiring further evaluation. Therefore, Watsonville does not have any mineral deposits subject to SMARA regulations.

California Geological Survey

As mandated by SMARA, the California Geologic Survey has classified lands into Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) based on the California State Mining and Geology Board guidelines. Areas with an MRZ-1 designation have sufficient information available indicating that there is little to no likelihood of significant mineral deposits. MRZ-2 are areas where adequate information indicates that significant deposits are present. Areas classified as MRZ-3 contain mineral deposits, but their significance cannot be evaluated from available data. Areas are classified as MRZ-4 where available information is inadequate for assignment to any other MRZ category.

Regional

Santa Cruz County General Plan

The Santa Cruz County (County) General Plan includes an Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Conservation element that includes the discussion of mineral resources. The following goals and resources related to mineral resources are included in the County General Plan. Objective ARC-7.2, Mineral Resources, its policies (ARC-7.2.1 through ARC-7.2.13), and its implementation strategies (ARC-7.2a through ARC-7.2d) guide the orderly and managed economic extraction of minerals in a way that reduces potentially adverse impacts to environmental and scenic resources and complies with state law. The County identifies mining and mineral resource areas as outlined by the State Mining and Geology Board, assesses compatible and incompatible land uses, and designates quarry lands where applicable. These policies also protect sensitive natural habitats, coastal zones, and other land uses from potentially adverse impacts related to mining practices.

Local

The City of Watsonville Municipal Code does not include any policies pertaining to mineral resources or mining practices.

4.12.1.2 Existing Conditions

According to the California Geological Survey, the plan area is classified as both MRZ-1 and MRZ-3 (CGS, 2021). MRZ-1 indicates that there is little to no likelihood of significant mineral deposits within the area. In contrast, MRZ-3 areas contain known mineral deposits; however, the significance of these deposits cannot be evaluated due to insufficient data. Neither the State Geologist nor the State Mining and Geology Board has classified any part of Watsonville as containing mineral deposits of statewide significance that would be subject to further evaluation under the SMARA.

The 2005 Watsonville General Plan did not indicate any substantial mineral resources within the plan area. A review of the 2005 General Plan and related maps shows no designated California Department of Conservation Mineral Resource Zones (MRZ-2), which are typically areas of known significant mineral deposits. Therefore, no mineral extraction sites or locations of statewide significance are identified in or near the plan area, indicating that the potential impact of mineral resources on development is minimal.

4.12.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.12.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

A significant impact on mineral resources would occur if implementation of regional growth and land use change or transportation network improvements and programs would result in the loss of availability of known aggregate supply sites and mineral resources that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state.

To assess the potential for mineral resources within the plan area, existing data from the CGS and relevant regulatory bodies were reviewed. The plan area was evaluated against regional mineral resource classifications established under the SMARA and mapped MRZ designations.

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to mineral resources would be considered significant if General Plan 2050 would:

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; or

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.

4.12.2.2 Methodology

Impacts to mineral resources were assessed based on the potential for General Plan 2050, and its associated growth, to generate increased demand for mineral resources in a way that would contribute to increased demand for mineral resources or have an adverse physical effect on the environment. Information regarding mineral resource zones and quarries was compiled from the Santa Cruz County General Plan, SMARA data, and relevant published literature and maps. Mineral resource impacts that could result from General Plan 2050 were evaluated based on existing site conditions, the growth anticipated within the plan area, and projected usage of these resources over time.

4.12.2.3 Project Impacts

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?

Or

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?

The plan area is within a surveyed zone that shows little or no existence of mineral materials. The nearest MRZ-2 zone is located approximately 5.5 miles east of the plan area in Monterey County at the A.R. Wilson Quarry, an open-pit operation primarily producing sand and gravel. Therefore, General Plan 2050 will not result in any impacts from the loss of availability of a known mineral resource. (No Impact)

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4.13 Noise

This section describes the existing or ambient noise sources and levels in the area and regulations and policies pertaining to noise. This section also evaluates the potential impacts of General Plan 2050 to local noise conditions.

During the public scoping process, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife requested that the EIR address potential impacts related to ground disturbance and noise. Airport Management also recommended that the EIR evaluate noise impacts within the Airport Influence Area. **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**, of the EIR addresses potential biological resources impacts associated with implementation of General Plan 2050. Potential airport noise impacts are discussed in **Section 4.13.2.2, Project Impacts**. A Noise and Vibration Assessment was prepared for the project by Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc. in July 2026 (see Appendix C of this EIR).

4.13.1 Environmental Setting

Noise may be defined as unwanted sound. Noise is usually objectionable because it is disturbing or annoying. The objectionable nature of sound could be caused by its pitch or its loudness. Pitch is the height or depth of a tone or sound, depending on the relative rapidity (frequency) of the vibrations by which it is produced. Higher-pitched signals sound louder to humans than sounds with a lower pitch. Loudness is the intensity of sound waves combined with the reception characteristics of the ear. Intensity may be compared with the height of an ocean wave in that it is a measure of the amplitude of the sound wave.

In addition to the concepts of pitch and loudness, there are several noise measurement scales that are used to describe noise in a particular location. A decibel (dB) is a unit of measurement that indicates the relative amplitude of a sound. The zero on the decibel scale is based on the lowest sound level that the healthy, unimpaired human ear can detect. Sound levels in decibels are calculated on a logarithmic basis. An increase of 10 decibels represents a tenfold increase in acoustic energy, while 20 decibels is 100 times more intense, 30 decibels is 1,000 times more intense, etc. There is a relationship between the subjective noisiness or loudness of a sound and its intensity. Each 10 decibel increase in sound level is perceived as approximately a doubling of loudness over a fairly wide range of intensities. Technical terms are defined in **Table 4.13-1**.

Table 4.13-1 Definition of Acoustical Terms Used in this Report

Term	Definition
Decibel, dB	A unit describing the amplitude of sound, equal to 20 times the logarithm to the base 10 of the ratio of the pressure of the sound measured to the reference pressure. The reference pressure for air is 20 micro Pascals.
Sound Pressure Level	Sound pressure is the sound force per unit area, usually expressed in micro Pascals (or 20 micro Newtons per square meter), where 1 Pascal is the pressure resulting from a force of 1 Newton exerted over an area of 1 square meter. The sound pressure level is expressed in decibels as 20 times the logarithm to the base 10 of the ratio between the pressures exerted by the sound and a reference sound pressure (e.g., 20 micro Pascals). Sound pressure level is the quantity that is directly measured by a sound level meter.

Term	Definition
Frequency, Hz	The number of complete pressure fluctuations per second above and below atmospheric pressure. Normal human hearing is between 20 Hz and 20,000 Hz. Infrasonic sounds are below 20 Hz, and Ultrasonic sounds are above 20,000 Hz.
A-Weighted Sound Level, dBA	The sound pressure level in decibels as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting filter network. The A-weighting filter de-emphasizes the very low and very high frequency components of the sound in a manner similar to the frequency response of the human ear and correlates well with subjective reactions to noise.
Equivalent Noise Level, L_{eq}	The average A-weighted noise level during the measurement period.
L_{max}, L_{min}	The maximum and minimum A-weighted noise level during the measurement period.
L_{01}, L_{10}, L_{50}, L_{90}	The A-weighted noise levels that are exceeded 1 percent, 10 percent, 50 percent, and 90 percent of the time during the measurement period.
Day/Night Noise Level, L_{dn}	The average A-weighted noise level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of 10 decibels to levels measured in the night between 10:00 pm and 7:00 am.
Community Noise Equivalent Level, CNEL	The average A-weighted noise level during a 24-hour day, obtained after the addition of 5 decibels in the evening from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm and after the addition of 10 decibels to sound levels measured in the night between 10:00 pm and 7:00 am.
Ambient Noise Level	The composite of noise from all sources near and far. The normal or existing level of environmental noise at a given location.
Intrusive	That noise which intrudes over and above the existing ambient noise at a given location. The relative intrusiveness of a sound depends upon its amplitude, duration, frequency, and time of occurrence, and tonal or informational content, as well as the prevailing ambient noise level.

Source: I&R, 2026.

There are several methods of characterizing sound. The most common in California is the A-weighted sound level (dBA). This scale gives greater weight to the frequencies of sound to which the human ear is most sensitive. Representative outdoor and indoor noise levels in units of dBA are shown in **Table 4.13-2**. Because sound levels can vary markedly over a short period, a method for describing either the average character of the sound or the statistical behavior of the variations must be utilized. Most commonly, environmental sounds are described in terms of an average level that has the same acoustical energy as the summation of all the time-varying events. This energy-equivalent sound/noise descriptor is called L_{eq}. The most common averaging period is hourly, but L_{eq} can describe any series of noise events of arbitrary duration.

Table 4.13-2 Typical Noise Levels in the Environment

Common Outdoor Activities	Noise Level (dBA)	Common Indoor Activities
	110 dBA	Rock band
Jet fly-over (at 1,000 feet)		
Ambulance siren (at 100 feet)	100 dBA	
Gas lawnmower (at 3 feet)		
	90 dBA	Noise cocktail bar
Diesel truck, 50 mph (at 50 feet)		Food blender (at 3 feet)
Automobile, 65 mph (at 50 feet)	80 dBA	Garbage disposal (at 3 feet)
Noisy urban area, daytime		Noisy restaurant
Gas lawn mower (at 100 feet)	70 dBA	Vacuum cleaner (at 10 feet)
Automobile, 30 mph (at 50 feet)		Large business office
Heavy traffic (at 300 feet)	60 dBA	Normal speech (at 3 feet)
		Quite office
Quiet urban area, daytime	50 dBA	Dishwasher (in next room)
Quiet urban, nighttime	40 dBA	Large conference room (background)
Quiet suburban, nighttime		Quite library
Quiet rural, nighttime	30 dBA	
		Bedroom at night, concert hall (background)
	20 dBA	
Leaves rustling		Recording studio
	10 dBA	
	0 dBA	

Source: I&R 2026; California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook, Figure D1 Typical Decibel Level of Common Sounds, October 2011; California Department of Transportation, Technical Noise Supplement to the Traffic Analysis Protocol, September 2013.

The scientific instrument used to measure noise is the sound level meter. Sound level meters can accurately measure environmental noise levels to within plus or minus 1 dBA. Various computer models are used to predict environmental noise levels from sources, such as roadways and airports. The accuracy of the predicted models depends on the distance the receptor is from the noise source. Close to the noise source, the models are accurate to within about plus or minus 1 to 2 dBA.

Since the sensitivity to noise increases during the evening and at night – because excessive noise interferes with the ability to sleep – 24-hour descriptors have been developed that incorporate artificial

noise penalties added to quiet-time noise events. The CNEL is a measure of the cumulative noise exposure in a community, with a 5 dB penalty added to evening (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.) and a 10 dB penalty added to nocturnal (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) noise levels. The L_{dn} is essentially the same as CNEL, with the exception that the evening time period is dropped and all occurrences during this three-hour period are grouped into the daytime period.

4.13.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) environmental criteria and standards are presented in Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 51 (24 CFR Part 51). New residential construction qualifying for HUD financing proposed in high noise areas (exceeding 65 A-weighted sound level (dBA) day–night average sound level/community noise equivalent Level (L_{dn}/CNEL)) must incorporate noise attenuation features to maintain acceptable interior noise levels. A goal of 45 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL is set forth for interior noise levels and attenuation requirements are geared toward achieving that goal. It is assumed that with standard construction any building will provide sufficient attenuation to achieve an interior level of 45 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL or less if the exterior level is 65 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL or less. Approvals in a "normally unacceptable noise zone" (exceeding 65 decibels but not exceeding 75 decibels) require a minimum of 5 decibels additional noise attenuation for buildings if the day-night average is greater than 65 decibels but does not exceed 70 decibels, or minimum of 10 decibels of additional noise attenuation if the day-night average is greater than 70 decibels but does not exceed 75 decibels.

Federal Aviation Administration

The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) primary federal regulation guiding and controlling planning for aviation noise compatibility on and around airports is Title 14 CFR, Part 150, Airport Noise Compatibility Planning (Part 150). FAA Advisory Circular 150/5020-1, Noise Control and Compatibility Planning for Airports provides guidance to airport sponsors preparing airport noise exposure maps and airport noise compatibility programs for Part 150 submissions. The purpose of the Part 150 study is to mitigate the noise impacts of airports upon their neighbors while protecting or increasing airport access and capacity, as well as maintaining the efficiency of the national aviation system. Although the regulations contained in the Part 150 study are voluntary, the approved Part 150 noise compatibility program is the primary vehicle for gaining approval of applications for federal grants for noise abatement projects and provides the required analyses for evaluating the impacts of any proposed constraints upon an airport's operations. The Part 150 study also identifies those land uses that are normally compatible with various levels of exposure to noise by individuals.

Federal Highway Administration

Proposed federal or federal-aid highway construction projects at a new location, or the physical alteration of an existing highway that significantly changes either the horizontal or vertical alignment, or increases the number of through-traffic lanes, requires an assessment of noise and consideration of noise abatement per 23 CFR Part 772, "Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise." The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has adopted noise abatement criteria (NAC) for sensitive receivers such as picnic areas, recreation areas, playgrounds, active sport areas, parks, residences, motels, hotels, schools, churches, libraries, and hospitals when "worst-hour" noise levels approach or exceed 67 dBA equivalent continuous sound level (L_{eq}). California Department of

Transportation (Caltrans) has further defined approaching the NAC to be 1 dBA below the NAC for noise sensitive receivers identified as Category B activity areas (e.g., 66 dBA L_{eq} is considered approaching the NAC).

Federal Transit Administration

Construction Noise

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has identified construction noise thresholds in the Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual, which limits daytime construction noise to 80 dBA L_{eq} at residential land uses, 85 dBA L_{eq} at commercial and office land uses, and to 90 dBA L_{eq} at industrial land uses.

Construction Vibration

FTA also provides damage criteria during construction vibration exposure. The criteria is summarized in **Table 4.13-3**.

Table 4.13-3 FTA Construction Vibration Damage Criteria

Building/Structural Category	PPV, in /sec	Approximate L_V[a]
Reinforced-concrete, steel or timber (no plaster)	0.5	102
Engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster)	0.3	98
Non-engineered timber and masonry buildings	0.2	94
Buildings extremely susceptible to vibration damage	0.12	90

Source: I&R, 2026.

Train Vibration

The City has not identified quantifiable vibration limits that can be used to evaluate the compatibility of land uses with vibration levels experienced at a plan area. Although there are no local standards that control the allowable vibration in a new residential development, the United States Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) has developed vibration impact assessment criteria for evaluating vibration impacts associated with transit projects. The FTA has proposed vibration impact criteria, based on maximum overall levels for a single event. The impact criteria for groundborne vibration are shown in **Table 4.13-4**. Note that there are criteria for frequent events (more than 70 events of the same source per day), occasional events (30 to 70 vibration events of the same source per day), and infrequent events (less than 30 vibration events of the same source per day).

Table 4.13-4 FTA Groundborne Vibration Impact Criteria

Land Use Category	Impact Levels (VdB re 1 Micro-inch/sec)		
	Frequent Events[1]	Occasional Events[2]	Infrequent Events[3]
Category 1: Buildings where vibration would interfere with interior operations	65 VdB[4]	65 VdB4	65 VdB[4]
Category 2: Residences and buildings where people normally sleep.	72 VdB	75 VdB	80 VdB
Category 3: Institutional land uses with primarily daytime use.	75 VdB	78 VdB	83 VdB

Source: I&R, 2026.
Notes: "Frequent Events" is defined as more than 70 vibration events per day. Most rapid transit projects fall into this category.
"Occasional Events" is defined as between 30 and 70 vibration events of the same source per day. Most commuter trunk lines have this many operations.
"Infrequent Events" is defined as fewer than 30 vibration events per day. This category includes most commuter rail systems. This limit is based on levels that are acceptable for most moderately sensitive equipment such as optical microscopes.

State

California Administrative Code Section 65302(f)

California Government Code Section 65302(f) requires that all General Plans include a Noise Element to address noise problems in the community. The Noise Element shall recognize the guidelines established by the Office of Noise Control in the State Department of Health Services and shall analyze and quantify, to the extent practicable, as determined by the legislative body, current and projected noise levels for all of the following sources:

- Highways and freeways.
- Primary arterials and major local streets.
- Passenger and freight on-line railroad operations and ground rapid transit systems.
- Commercial, general aviation, heliport, and military airport operations, aircraft flyovers, jet engine tests stands, and all other ground facilities and maintenance functions related to airport operation.
- Local industrial plants, including, but not limited to, railroad classification yards.
- Other stationary ground noise sources identified by local agencies as contributing to the community noise environment.

Noise contours shall be shown for all of these sources and stated in terms of CNEL or L_{dn}. The noise contours shall be prepared on the basis of noise monitoring or following generally accepted noise modeling techniques for the various sources identified above.

The noise contours shall be used as a guide for establishing a pattern of land uses in the land use element that minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise. The noise element shall include implementation measures and possible solutions that address existing and foreseeable noise problems, if any. The adopted noise element shall serve as a guideline for compliance with the state's noise insulation standards.

California Building Code

California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 24, Building Standards Administrative Code, Part 2 and the California Building Code codify the State noise insulation standards. These noise standards apply to new construction in California to control interior noise levels as they are affected by exterior noise sources. The regulations specify that acoustical studies must be prepared when noise-sensitive structures, such as residential buildings, schools, or hospitals, are developed near major transportation noise sources, and where such sources create an exterior noise level of CNEL 60 dBA or higher. Acoustical studies that accompany building plans for noise-sensitive land uses must demonstrate that the structure has been designed to limit interior noise in habitable rooms to an acceptable level of 45 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL.

California Green Building Code

The State of California established exterior sound transmission control standards for new nonresidential buildings as set forth in the 2025 California Green Building Standards Code (Section 5.507.4.1 and 5.507.4.2). The sections that pertain to this project are as follows:

> **5.507.4.1 Exterior noise transmission, prescriptive method.** Wall and roof-ceiling assemblies exposed to the noise source making up the building or addition envelope or altered envelope shall meet a composite STC rating of at least 50 or a composite OITC rating of no less than 40, with exterior windows of a minimum STC of 40 or OITC of 30 when the building falls within the 65 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL noise contour of an airport or within the 65 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL noise contour of a freeway or expressway, railroad, industrial source or fixed-guideway source, as determined by the Noise Element of the General Plan.
>
> **5.507.4.1.1 Noise exposure where noise contours are not readily available.** Buildings exposed to a noise level of 65 dBA L_{eq}(1-hr) during any hour of operation shall have building, addition or alteration exterior wall and roof-ceiling assemblies exposed to the noise source meeting a composite STC rating of at least 45 (or OITC 35), with exterior windows of a minimum STC of 40 (or OITC 30).
>
> **5.507.4.2 Performance method.** For buildings located, as defined by Section 5.507.4.1 or 5.507.4.1.1, wall and roof-ceiling assemblies exposed to the noise source making up the building or addition envelope or altered envelope shall be constructed to provide an interior noise environment attributable to exterior sources that does not exceed an hourly equivalent noise level (Leq (1-hr)) of 50 dBA in occupied areas during any hour of operation

The performance method, which establishes the acceptable interior noise level, is the method typically used when applying these standards.

California Code of Regulations Title 21, Division 2.5 - Division of Aeronautics (Department of Transportation)

Chapter 6, Section 5012 of the 2025 California Code of Regulations Title 21, Division 2.5, includes acceptable noise levels for airports. The standard for the acceptable level of aircraft noise for persons

living in the vicinity of airports is hereby established to be a community noise equivalent level of 65 decibels. Section 5014 further identifies the following incompatible land uses within the noise impact boundary: residences (including, but not limited to, detached single-family dwellings, multi-family dwellings, high-rise apartments or condominiums, and mobile homes) unless interior noise is CNEL 45 dBA or less; public and private schools of standard construction; hospitals and convalescent homes where interior noise exceeds CNEL 45 dBA; or churches, synagogues, temples, and other places of worship where interior levels exceed CNEL 45 dBA.

Local

City of Watsonville Municipal Code

Title 5, Chapter 8 of the City of Watsonville Municipal Code (WMC) addresses noise and currently includes the following sections:

> **5-8.01 Offensive noise prohibited.** It shall be unlawful for any person on residential property or a public way to make or continue, or cause to be made or continued, any offensive, excessive, unnecessary, or unusually loud noise or any noise which either annoys, disturbs, injures, or endangers the comfort, repose, health, peace, or safety of others on residential property or public ways within the City. (§ 1, Ord. 776-88 C-M, eff. May 12, 1988)
>
> **5-8.02 Offensive noise standards.** The following acts, among others, are declared to be offensive, loud, disturbing, and unnecessary noises originating from residential properties or on public ways in violation of this chapter, but such enumeration shall not be deemed to be exclusive:
>
> a) The using, operating, or permitting to be played, used, or operated of any radio receiving set, musical instrument, phonograph, stereo, television, or other machine or device for producing or reproducing sound in such a manner as to disturb the peace, quiet, and comfort of neighboring residential inhabitants at any time with volume louder than is necessary for convenient hearing for the persons who are in the room, vehicle, or chamber in which such machine or device is operating and who are voluntary listeners thereto. The operation of any such set, instrument, phonograph, stereo, machine, or device between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. in such a manner as to be plainly audible at a distance of fifty (50') feet from the residential building, structure, or vehicle in which it is located shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of this chapter;
>
> b) The using, operating, or permitting to be played, used, or operated of any radio receiving set, stereo, tape recorder, sound amplifier, or other machine or device for producing or reproducing sound from any motor vehicle on any public street at any time with volume louder than is necessary for convenient hearing for the persons who are in the motor vehicle in which such sound machine or device is operating and who are voluntary listeners thereto. The operation of any such sound machine or device in such a manner as to be plainly audible at any time at a distance of ten (10') feet from the motor vehicle in which it is located shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of this chapter; and
>
> c) Yelling, shouting, hooting, whistling, or singing originating from any residential property or upon any public way at any time so as to annoy or disturb the quiet comfort or repose of persons in the vicinity. (§ 1, Ord. 776-88 C-M, eff. May 12, 1988)

> **5-8.03 Violations: Subsequent offenses within 48 hours.** Any person who shall violate, or refuse to abide by, any provision of this chapter shall be subject to the penalties set forth in Chapter 2 of Title 1 of this Code; provided, further, any person who violates any section of this chapter and is cited for such violation and who, within forty-eight (48) hours after receiving such a citation, again violates the same section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. A person is cited for a violation when such person is issued and signs an infraction or misdemeanor citation, or when such person is arrested and booked, or when a complaint is filed, and the person is notified of the filing of such complaint. (§ 1, Ord. 776-88 C-M, eff. May 12, 1988)
>
> **5-8.04 Exceptions.** The provisions of this chapter shall not apply to any noise which is subject to the regulations concerning noise set forth in Title 14 of this Code or for which a permit has been issued pursuant to Chapter 34 of this title. (§ l, Ord. 776-88 C-M, eff. May 12, 1988)

WMC Title 13, Chapter 9 includes a section on sound transmission of condominium conversions:

> **13-9.10 Specific physical standards.** The Community Development Director shall require conformance with the standards of this section in reviewing the proposed condominium conversion.
>
> d) Sound Transmission.
>
> 1) Shock Mounting of Mechanical Equipment. All permanent mechanical equipment such as motors, compressors, pumps, and compactors which is determined by the Building Official to be a source of structural vibration or structure-borne noise shall be shock mounted with inertia blocks or bases and/or vibration isolators in a manner approved by the Building Official;
>
> 2) Noise Standards.
>
> i) The structure shall conform to all interior sound-transmission standards of Chapter 35 (Appendix) of the Uniform Building Code in a manner approved by the Building Official;
>
> ii) The subdivision shall conform to all exterior noise standards of the general plan;
>
> iii) In such cases where present standards cannot reasonably be met by conditions of subdivision approval, the applicant shall be required to notify potential buyers of the noise deficiency currently existing within these units.

WMC Title 14, Chapter 35 includes a section regulating testing of emergency generators:

> **14-35.050 Telecommunications sites.** The following standards apply to all telecommunications sites as defined in Chapter 18 of this title:
>
> e) Noise. Backup generators may only be operated during power outages and for testing and maintenance purposes. Testing and maintenance shall only take place on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.
>
> 2) Backup generators may not exceed the normally acceptable decibel level as established by the City of Watsonville General Plan, Watsonville Municipal Code and performance standards.

4.13.1.2 Existing Conditions

Effects of Noise

Hearing Loss

While physical damage to the ear from an intense noise impulse is rare, a degradation of auditory acuity can occur even within a community noise environment. Hearing loss occurs mainly due to chronic exposure to excessive noise, but it may also be due to a single event such as an explosion. Natural hearing loss associated with aging may also be accelerated by chronic exposure to loud noise.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has established a noise exposure standard, which is set at the noise threshold where hearing loss may occur from long-term exposures. The maximum allowable level is 85 dBA averaged over eight hours. If the noise is above 85 dBA, the allowable exposure time is correspondingly shorter.

Sleep and Speech Interference

The thresholds for speech interference indoors are about 45 dBA if the noise is steady and above 55 dBA if the noise is fluctuating. Outdoors, the thresholds are about 15 dBA higher. Steady noises of sufficient intensity (above 35 dBA) and fluctuating noise levels above about 45 dBA have been shown to affect sleep. Interior residential standards for multi-family dwellings are set by the State of California at 45 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL. Typically, the highest steady traffic noise level during the daytime is about equal to the L_{dn}/CNEL, and nighttime levels are 10 dBA lower (Kryter, 1985). The standard is designed for sleep and speech protection, and most jurisdictions apply the same criterion for all residential uses. Typical structural attenuation is 12 to 17 dBA with open windows. With closed windows in good condition, the noise attenuation factor is around 20 dBA for an older structure and 25 dBA for a newer dwelling.[1] Sleep and speech interference are therefore possible when exterior noise levels are about 57 to 62 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL with open windows and 65 to 70 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL if the windows are closed. Levels of 55 to 60 dBA are common along collector streets and secondary arterials, while 65 to 70 dBA is a typical value for a primary/major arterial. Levels of 75 to 80 dBA are normal noise levels at the first row of development outside a freeway right-of-way. In order to achieve an acceptable interior noise environment, bedrooms facing secondary roadways need to be able to have their windows closed; those facing major roadways and freeways typically need special glass windows.

Annoyance

Attitude surveys are used for measuring the annoyance felt in a community from noises intruding into homes or affecting outdoor activity areas. In these surveys, it was determined that the causes for annoyance include interference with speech, radio, and television, house vibrations, and interference with sleep and rest. The L_{dn}/CNEL, as a measure of noise, has been found to provide a valid correlation between noise level and the percentage of people who are annoyed. People have been asked to judge the annoyance caused by aircraft noise and ground transportation noise. There continues to be disagreement about the relative annoyance of these different sources. When measuring the percentage of the population highly annoyed, the threshold for ground vehicle noise is about 50 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL. At a

[1] Based on the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration document "Highway Traffic Noise: Analysis and Abatement Guidance" (2010) and data from Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc. noise monitoring projects.

L_{dn}/CNEL of about 60 dBA, approximately 12 percent of the population is highly annoyed. When measuring the percentage of the population highly annoyed, the threshold for ground vehicle noise is about 50 dBA L_{dn}/CNEL. At a L_{dn}/CNEL of about 60 dBA, approximately 12 percent of the population is highly annoyed. When the L_{dn}/CNEL increases to 70 dBA, the percentage of the population highly annoyed increases to about 25 to 30 percent of the population. There is, therefore, an increase of about two percent per dBA between a L_{dn}/CNEL of 60 and 70 dBA. Between a L_{dn}/CNEL of 70 to 80 dBA, each additional decibel increases the percentage of the population highly annoyed by about three percent. People appear to respond more adversely to aircraft noise. When the L_{dn}/CNEL is 60 dBA, approximately 30 to 35 percent of the population is believed to be highly annoyed. Each decibel increase to 70 dBA adds about three percentage points to the number of people highly annoyed. Above 70 dBA, each decibel increase results in about a four percent increase in the percentage of the population highly annoyed (Kryter, 1985).

Fundamentals of Groundborne Vibration

Ground vibration consists of rapidly fluctuating motions or waves with an average motion of zero. Several different methods are typically used to quantify vibration amplitude. One is the Peak Particle Velocity (PPV), and another is the Root Mean Square (RMS) velocity. The PPV is defined as the maximum instantaneous positive or negative peak of the vibration wave. The RMS velocity is defined as the average of the squared amplitude of the signal. The PPV and RMS vibration velocity amplitudes are used to evaluate human response to vibration. In this report, a PPV descriptor with units of millimeter/second (mm/sec) or inch/second (in/sec) is used to evaluate construction generated vibration for building damage and human complaints. **Table 4.13-5** presents damage criteria based on structure type that may be at risk of damage at various velocity levels.

Low-level vibrations frequently cause irritating secondary vibrations, such as a slight rattling of windows, doors, or stacked dishes. The rattling sound can give rise to exaggerated vibration complaints, even though there is very little risk of actual structural damage. In high noise environments, which are more prevalent where groundborne vibration approaches perceptible levels, this rattling phenomenon may also be produced by loud airborne environmental noise, causing vibration in exterior doors and windows.

Table 4.13-5 Velocity Level and Potential Building Effects (Table 12.3 of General Plan 2050)

Velocity Level, PPV, in/sec	Building/Structural Category	Potential Buildings Effects
0.12	IV Buildings extremely susceptible to vibration damage	Threshold at which there is a risk of damage to fragile buildings with no risk of damage to most buildings
0.2	III Non-engineered timber and masonry buildings	Threshold at which there is a risk of damage to historic and some old buildings
0.3	II Engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster)	Threshold at which there is a risk of damage to older residential structures
0.5	I Reinforced-concrete, steel or timber (no plaster)	Threshold at which there is a risk of damage to new residential and modern commercial/industrial structures

Source: FTA, 2018; City of Watsonville, 2026b.

Typical background vibration levels in residential areas are usually 50 Vibration Decibels (VdB) or lower, well below the threshold of perception for most humans (60 to 70 VdB). Perceptible vibration levels inside residences are attributed to the operation of heating and air conditioning systems, door slams, and foot traffic. **Table 4.13-6** illustrates some common sources of vibration and their association with human perception or the potential for structural damage. Construction activities, train operations, and heavy truck and bus traffic are some of the most common external sources of vibration that can be perceptible inside residences.

Table 4.13-6 Typical Levels of Groundborne Vibration

Human/Structural Response	Velocity Level, VdB	Typical Events (50-foot setback)
Threshold, minor cosmetic damage	100	Blasting, pile driving, vibratory compaction equipment
		Heavy tracked vehicles (Bulldozers, cranes, drill rigs)
Difficulty with tasks such as reading a video or computer screen	90	
		Commuter rail, upper range
Residential annoyance, infrequent events	80	Rapid transit, upper range
Residential annoyance, occasional events		Commuter rail, typical Bus or truck over bump or on rough roads
Residential annoyance, frequent events	70	Rapid transit, typical
Approximate human threshold of perception to vibration		Buses, trucks and heavy street traffic
	60	
		Background vibration in residential settings in the absence of activity
Lower limit for equipment ultra-sensitive to vibration	50	

Source: I&R, 2026.

Construction Vibration

Construction activities can cause vibration that varies in intensity depending on several factors. The use of pile driving and vibratory compaction equipment typically generates the highest construction related groundborne vibration levels. Because of the impulsive nature of such activities, the use of the PPV descriptor has been routinely used to measure and assess groundborne vibration and almost exclusively to assess the potential of vibration to induce structural damage and the degree of annoyance for humans.

The two primary concerns with construction-induced vibration, the potential to damage a structure and the potential to interfere with the enjoyment of life, are evaluated against different vibration limits. Studies have shown that the threshold of perception for average persons is in the range of 0.008 to 0.012 in/sec PPV (Caltrans, 2020). Human perception of vibration varies with the individual and is a function of physical setting and the type of vibration. Persons exposed to elevated ambient vibration levels, such as people in an urban environment, may tolerate a higher vibration level.

Structural damage can be classified as cosmetic only, such as minor cracking of building elements, or it may threaten the integrity of the building. Safe vibration limits that can be applied to assess the potential for damaging a structure vary by researcher, and there is no general consensus as to what amount of vibration may pose a threat to structural damage to the building. Construction-induced vibration that can be detrimental to the building is very rare and has only been observed in instances where the structure is at a high state of disrepair and the construction activity occurs immediately adjacent to the structure.

Rail Vibration

Railroad operations are potential sources of substantial ground vibration depending on distance, the type and the speed of trains, and the type of railroad track. People's response to ground vibration has been correlated best with the RMS velocity level of the ground. The velocity of the ground is expressed on the decibel scale. Although not a universally accepted notation, the abbreviation "VdB" is used in this document for vibration levels in decibels to reduce the potential for confusion with airborne sound levels in decibels.

One of the problems with developing suitable criteria for groundborne vibration is the limited research into human response to vibration and, more importantly, human annoyance inside buildings. The U.S. DOT FTA has developed rational vibration limits that can be used to evaluate human annoyance to groundborne vibration. These limits are summarized in **Table 4.13-4**. These criteria are primarily based on experience with passenger train operations, such as rapid transit and commuter rail systems. The main difference between passenger and freight operations is the time duration of individual events; a passenger train lasts a few seconds, whereas a long freight train may last several minutes, depending on speed and length.

Vibration from Heavy Trucks and Buses

Groundborne vibration levels from heavy trucks and buses are not normally perceptible, especially if roadway surfaces are smooth. Buses and trucks typically generate groundborne vibration levels of about 63 VdB at a distance of 25 feet when traveling at a speed of 30 miles per hour (mph). Higher vibration levels can occur when buses or trucks travel at higher rates of speed or when the pavement is in poor condition. Vibration levels below 65 VdB are not normally perceptible.

Noise Sources in Watsonville

Roadways

Highways and major roadways are the primary sources of ambient noise in Watsonville. As transportation noise is concentrated along roadways with the greatest volumes and highest speeds, California State Route 1 (SR 1), exhibits the largest noise source. SR 1 runs generally north and south along the western boundary of the City, and a large portion of the City is shielded from SR 1 noise by natural terrain in the area. However, where direct line-of-sight to SR 1 is possible, the CNEL 65 dBA noise contour reaches out over 1,000 feet from the highway. Another roadway with significant noise is SR 129, which generally runs east and west along the southern boundary of the City. The traffic noise contour

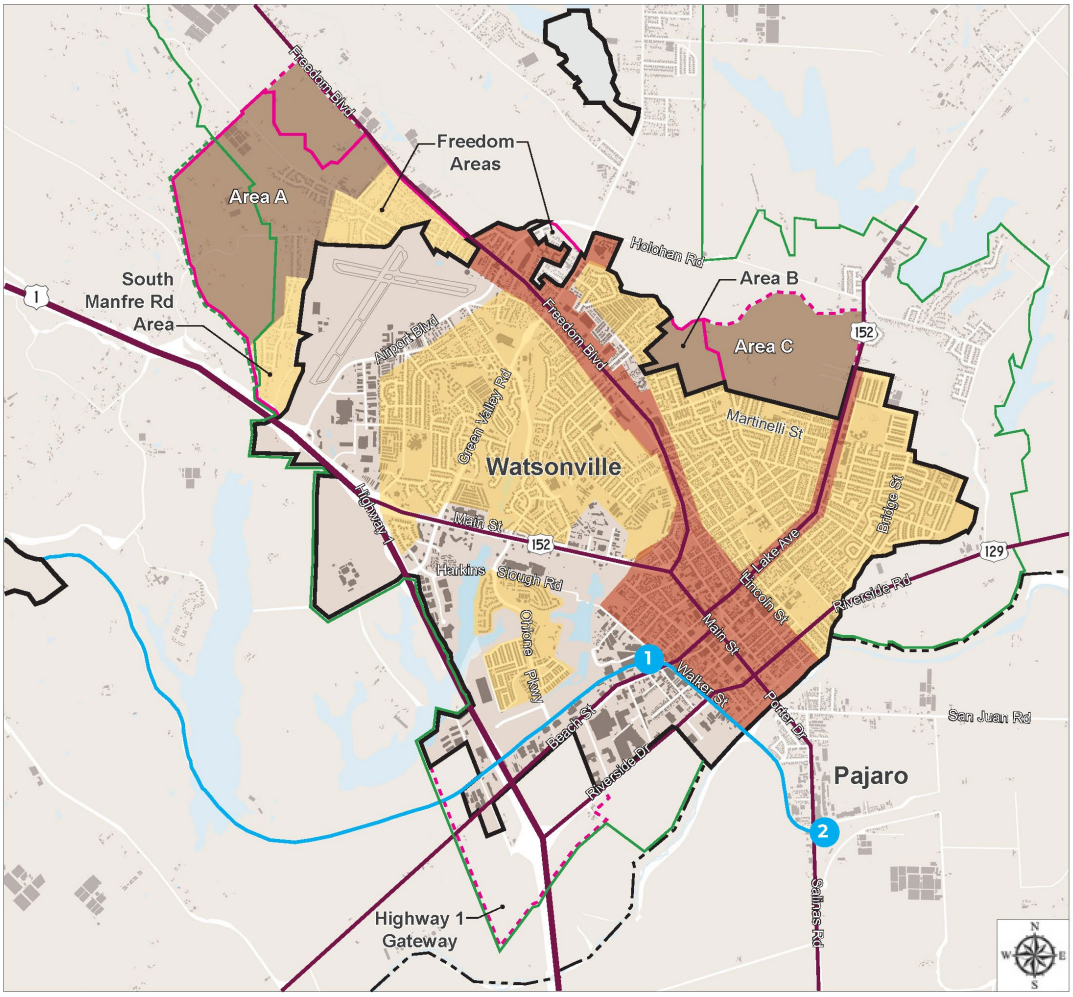
along SR 129 is nearly 600 feet wide on both sides of the highway because of the high speed of the facility and flat terrain. SR 152 generally runs east and west and transects the City, however, does not have the same traffic volumes and high speeds and therefore exhibits lower roadway noise. Primary major local roadways include Main Street, Freedom Boulevard, Riverside Drive, Lake Avenue, and Beach Street. Airport Boulevard, Green Valley Road, Ohlone Parkway, Harkins Slough Road/Walker Street, Lincoln Street, Holohan Road, and Martinelli Street are amongst secondary major roadways in the City and would also contribute to noise exposure.

Railroads

Rail operations along the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) rights-of-way are located south of the City. Additionally, an existing UPRR rail line runs parallel to Beach Street and merges with Walker Street, running between the two travel lanes south of the City and ultimately connecting the UPRR tracks south of the City. Currently, four trains pass along these rail lines in a week. The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) has begun preliminary plans for reactivating passenger rail service as part of the Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail (ZEPRT) Project, which, if implemented, would provide passenger rail service between Santa Cruz and Pajaro through Watsonville. A potential Downtown Watsonville Passenger Rail Station, which might be located at or near the Historic Southern Pacific Railroad Depot or possibly along Walker Street between West Beach Street and Second Street, would create a new regional transit connection. Future phases of the ZEPRT project would require separate environmental review and funding. The existing UPRR rail line and the proposed passenger rail line are shown in blue in **Figure 4.13-1**, and the location of the proposed station is also identified.

Community noise equivalent levels commonly range from CNEL 65 to 75 dBA at land uses adjoining a railroad right-of-way (FTA, 2018). When railroad trains approach a passenger station or “at-grade” crossing, they are required to sound their warning whistle. When giving a warning to people and/or animals, they are required to produce a succession of sounds with the whistle. Trains are required to sound a long signal followed by a short signal when approaching stations, curves, or other points where view may be obscured, and when approaching passenger or freight trains. When passing a standing train, the moving train is required to sound two long signals followed by a short signal, followed by a long signal, the same requirement when signaling for at-grade crossings. Train warning whistles typically generate maximum noise levels of approximately 105 dBA at 100 feet. The community noise equivalent level at locations immediately adjacent to “at-grade” crossings and exposed to multiple train pass-by events during a day can exceed CNEL 85 dBA (FRA, 2006).

Figure 4.13-1 Primary Areas of Housing Growth, Identifying Rail Line and Proposed Station



Legend

- City Limit
- County Boundary
- Existing Sphere of Influence
- Proposed Sphere of Influence
- Existing Urban Limit Line
- Proposed Urban Limit Line
- Primarily Multi-family Infill
- Mixed Housing Infill
- Single Family New Growth
- 1 Potential Downtown Watsonville Passenger Rail Station
- 2 Planned Pajaro/ Watsonville Multimodal Transportation Station

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

Airport

The Watsonville Municipal Airport (WVI or Airport) is located in the northwestern portion of the City. Residential areas are adjacent to the Airport to the north and northwest and about 800 feet to the east. Additionally, the Airport is a regional general aviation airport serving the business aviation requirements and recreational facilities of the City, County of Santa Cruz, and the Monterey Bay Area. The Airport includes two runways serving single and twin-engine aircraft and helicopters, as well as turboprops and turbine-powered business jets. Under the ultimate conditions of the adopted 2023 Airport Master Plan, the CNEL 65 and 70 dBA noise contours are largely confined to airport property, with only minor extensions into the adjacent industrial area along Aviation Way. The CNEL 60 to 65 dBA contours also remain largely within airport property but to a limited extent these contours extend off-airport into the industrial area south of Airport Boulevard and into a residential area to the north along Buena Vista Drive (see **Figure 4.13-2**).

The airport noise contours included in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) are based upon the Airport Master Plan's aviation activity forecasts and the runway configuration under existing, future, and ultimate scenarios, as summarized below (City of Watsonville, 2026a).

- **Existing**: Runway 2/20 (4,501' × 149'), Runway 9/27 (3,999' × 98'), and two helipads. The base year (2020) activity level is 50,500 annual aircraft operations.
- **Future (20-year):** Maintain Runway 2/20 length while removing the displaced threshold; relocate the Runway 27 threshold 870 feet west, reducing Runway 9/27 to 3,129 feet. The 20-year forecast projects 89,900 annual aircraft operations.
- **Ultimate (beyond 20-year):** Extend Runway 2/20 by 680 feet (to 5,181 feet) and Runway 9/27 by 255 feet (to 3,384 feet). The 20-year forecast of 89,900 annual aircraft operations is also applied to the ultimate runway configuration.

Industry and Commercial

Industrial operations are the primary stationary noise sources that make a significant local contribution to community noise levels. In general, these stationary noise sources (e.g., fabrication, large mechanical equipment, and loading areas) are often located in primarily commercial and industrial areas and are isolated from noise-sensitive land uses. However, sensitive development adjoining these areas could expose sensitive receptors to stationary noise sources and would result in some land use conflicts.

Noise sources that affect sensitive receptors within the community would also include commercial land uses or those normally associated with and/or secondary to residential development. These include nightclubs, outdoor dining areas, gas stations, car washes, fire stations, drive-throughs, air conditioning units, swimming pool pumps, school playgrounds, athletic and music events, and public parks.

Construction

Construction is a temporary source of noise for residences and businesses located near construction sites. Construction noise can be significant for short periods of time at any particular location as a result of public improvement projects, private development projects, remodeling, etc. The highest construction noise levels are normally generated during grading and excavation, with lower noise levels occurring during building construction. Large pieces of earth-moving equipment, such as graders, scrapers, and bulldozers, generate maximum noise levels of 85 to 90 dBA at a distance of 50 feet. Typical hourly average construction-generated noise levels are about 80 to 85 dBA measured at a distance of 50 feet from the site

during busy construction periods. Some construction techniques, such as impact pile driving, can generate very high levels of noise (105 dBA L_{max} at 50 feet) that are difficult to control. Construction activities can elevate noise levels at adjacent businesses and residences by 15 to 20 dBA or more (FHWA, 2017).

Groundborne Vibration Sources in Watsonville

Railroads

Groundborne vibration occurs in areas adjacent to fixed rail lines when railroad trains pass through Watsonville. Ground vibration levels along the railroad corridor (shown by the blue line in **Figure 4.13-1**) are proportional to the speed and weight of the trains, as well as the condition of the tracks and train engine and car wheels. Vibration levels resulting from railroad trains vary by site but are generally perceptible within 100 feet of the tracks.

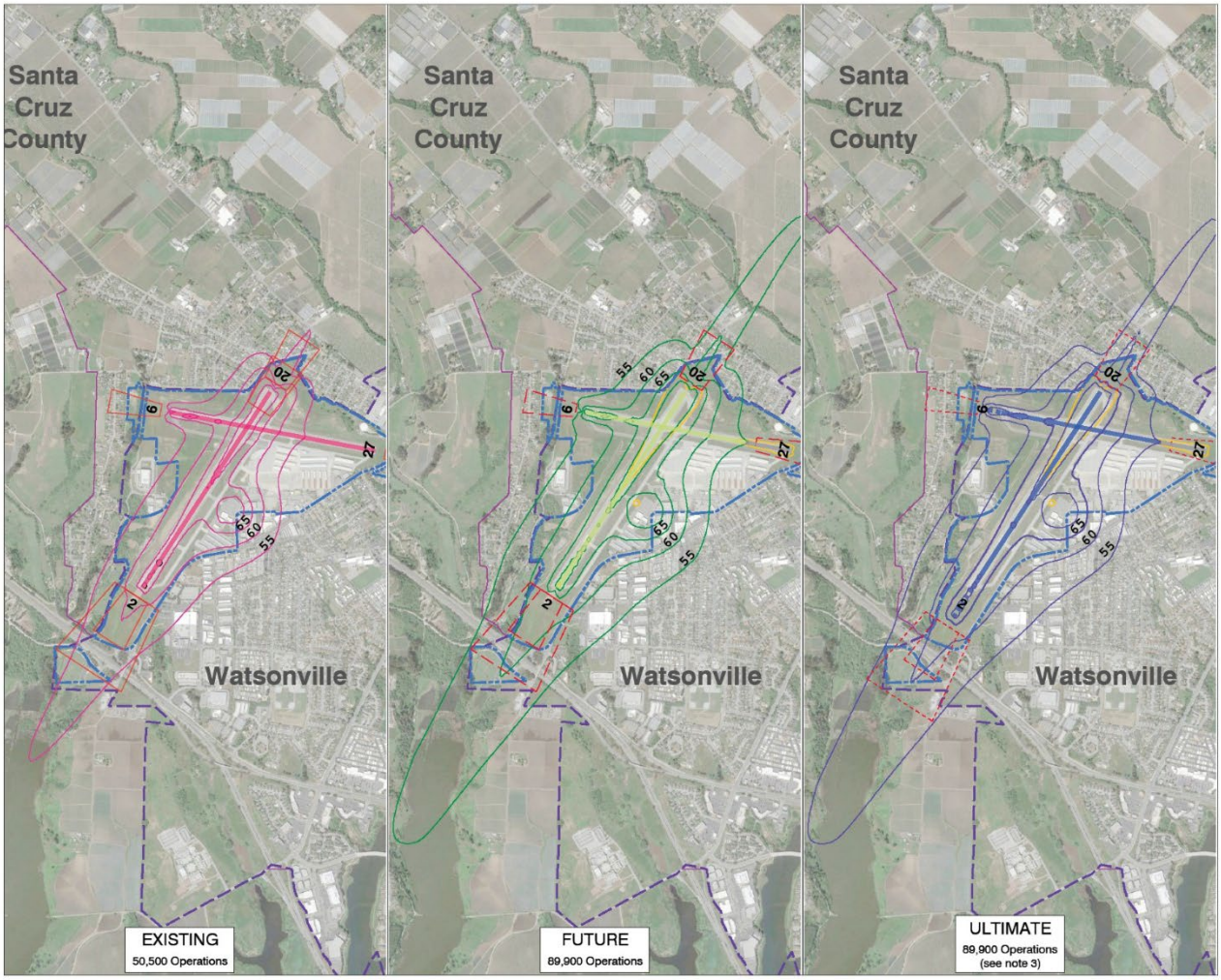
Construction

Construction activities, such as demolition, site preparation work, excavation, and foundation work, can generate groundborne vibration at land uses adjoining construction sites. Impact pile driving has the potential of generating the highest ground vibration levels and is of primary concern for structural damage. Other project construction activities, such as caisson drilling, the use of jackhammers, rock drills, and other high-power or vibratory tools, and rolling stock equipment (tracked vehicles, compactors, etc.), can generate substantial vibration levels in the immediate vicinity.

Sensitive Receptors

Sensitive receptors in the City include residences, hospitals, parks, churches, and schools. Hospitals in Watsonville include Sutter Health Medical Center, Watsonville Community Hospital, Watsonville Health Center, Watsonville Specialty Center, Kaiser Permanente Watsonville Medical Offices, Family Medicine – Dignity Health Medical Group – Watsonville, Coastal Healthcare Medical Center, and Salud Para La Gente Health. The larger parks in Watsonville include Hope Drive Park, Peace Drive Park, Marinovich Park and Community Center, Las Brisas Park, Seaview Ranch Park, Callaghan Park Cultural Center, Franich Park, Joyce-McKenzie Park, Bronte Park, Atri Park, and Pajaro Park. Churches in the City include Cornerstone United Pentecostal, Green Valley, Our Lady Help of Christians, All Saints' Episcopal, Lutheran Community, First United Methodist, Arthur Road Baptist, Church of Christ, St Patrick's Catholic Parish, First Baptist, First Christian, Bethel Tabernacle, Iglesia De Cristo Camino De Santidad, Westview Presbyterian, Our Lady of the Assumption, Calvary Chapel Watsonville, and Victory Outreach of Watsonville. The high schools in Watsonville include St. Francis, Watsonville, Oasis, Ceiba College Preparatory, New School Senior, Green Valley Christian School, the Pacific Coast Charter School, Sequoia, and Pajaro Valley. Colleges within the City include Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education, Monsbey College, Center for Employment – CET Watsonville, College Lake, Cabrillo College Watsonville Center, and Diamond Technology Institute.

Figure 4.13-2 ALUCP Airport Noise Contours—Existing, Future, and Ultimate



Source: Mead & Hunt, Inc.

Legend

Boundary Lines

- Airport Property
- City Limits
- City Sphere of Influence
- Existing Runway Protection Zone[1]
- Future Runway Protection Zone[1]
- Ultimate Runway Protection Zone[1]

Noise Contours[2]

- CNEL - Existing
- CNEL - Future
- CNEL - Ultimate[3]

Notes

[1] Runway Data Source: Existing, future, and ultimate runway lengths and runway protected zones based on the Watsonville Municipal Airport Layout Plan (Adopted October 2023).

[2] Noise Contour Source: Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) contours for the existing and future runway configuration obtained from the Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan (Adopted October 2023).

[3] Ultimate Noise Contours provided by Airport Management (October 2022). Noise contours reflect future operations on the ultimate runway configuration.

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

4.13.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.13.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

The analysis of noise impacts considers the effects of both temporary construction-related noise and long-term noise associated with operation of the development envisioned in General Plan 2050. Impacts would be significant if they would exceed the following thresholds of significance, based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines:

a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies;

b) Exposure of persons to or 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.

Construction noise thresholds established in **Action N-1.1.1** of General Plan 2050 were used to determine if the project would result in significant construction noise impacts.

> **Action N-1.1.1 Construction Noise.** Require the construction of new developments to minimize the exposure of neighboring properties to excessive construction noise levels that shall meet the Federal Transit Administration's construction noise criteria at receiving sensitive receptors in the project vicinity during all phases of construction. These criteria are summarized in **Table 12.1 Construction Noise Criteria**.

Table 12.1 Construction Noise Criteria

Land Use Category	Impact Criteria (L_{eq}, dBA)	
	Day	Night
Residential	80	70
Commercial	85	85
Industrial	90	90

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

Potential permanent traffic and operational noise sources for projects within the City would depend on the type of project, but may include traffic noise increases due to projects, mechanical equipment noise, truck loading/unloading activities, and outdoor use activities such as playgrounds or events, which may include amplified sound. The following General Plan 2050 Action would define a significant impact generated by a new development:

> **Action N-1.1.4 Permanent Noise Increase.** Minimize the noise impacts of new developments on noise-sensitive land uses to increased noise levels by limiting noise generation and by requiring

use of noise attenuation measures, such as acoustical enclosures and sound barriers, where feasible. The City considers significant noise impacts to occur if a project would:

a. Result in a permanent noise level increase of 5 dBA CNEL or more at noise-sensitive receptors where noise levels would remain at or below 65 dBA CNEL; or

b. Result in a permanent noise level increase of 3 dBA CNEL or more at noise-sensitive receptors where noise levels would exceed 65 dBA CNEL.

Construction vibration thresholds established in **Action N-1.1.3** of General Plan 2050 were used to determine if the project would result in significant construction vibration impacts.

> **Action N-1.1.3 Construction Vibration:** Potential damage to off-site buildings surrounding new developments shall be assessed using FTA's vibration criteria summarized in Table 12.3 Velocity Level and Potential Building Effects (see **Table 4.13-5**) during temporary construction activities.

Groundborne vibration thresholds established in **Action N-1.1.2** of General Plan 2050 were used to determine if the project would result in significant groundborne vibration impacts.

> **Action N-1.1.2 Vibration Assessment.** Require all vibration-sensitive buildings (e.g., residences, hospitals, buildings containing sensitive manufacturing equipment, etc.) to be at least 100 feet from the centerline of railroad tracks, unless a detailed study demonstrates compatibility at closer distances. The Federal Transit Administration's vibration impact criteria summarized in Table 12.4 Groundborne Vibration Impact Criteria and Potential Annoyance Levels shall be used to evaluate the compatibility of train vibration with proposed land uses adjoining the train corridor. Site specific vibration studies shall be completed for vibration-sensitive uses proposed within 100 feet of active railroad tracks.

Airport noise thresholds as established in the ALUCP, indicate that a significant impact would occur if the maximum CNEL threshold of 60 dBA for new noise-sensitive land uses, including residential, schools, and outdoor theaters, is exceeded in the vicinity of the Watsonville Municipal Airport (City of Watsonville, 2026a).

4.13.2.2 Methodology

Noise Monitoring Survey

A noise monitoring survey was completed to establish existing noise levels in the City. The survey included six long-term (24+ hour) noise measurements and 10 short-term (10-minute) noise measurements. Long-term (LT) measurements, made hour-by-hour over a period of 24 hours or more, are unattended and provide information on how noise levels vary throughout the day and night and may vary from day to day. Short-term (ST) measurements are attended, allowing the technician to identify the noise sources contributing to the measurement and note the level of noise associated with these identifiable sources. This assists in quantitatively and qualitatively characterizing the noise environments along the major roadways and in the quieter areas of the City.

The noise monitoring survey was conducted between Wednesday, January 21, 2026, and Friday, January 23, 2026. All measurement locations are shown in **Figure 4.13-3**. During the noise survey, weather conditions were moderate in terms of temperature and wind.

The daily trend in noise levels for each LT measurement is shown in Appendix C of the Noise and Vibration Assessment, and hourly average noise levels and community noise equivalent levels measured at each of the LTs is summarized in **Table 4.13-7**.

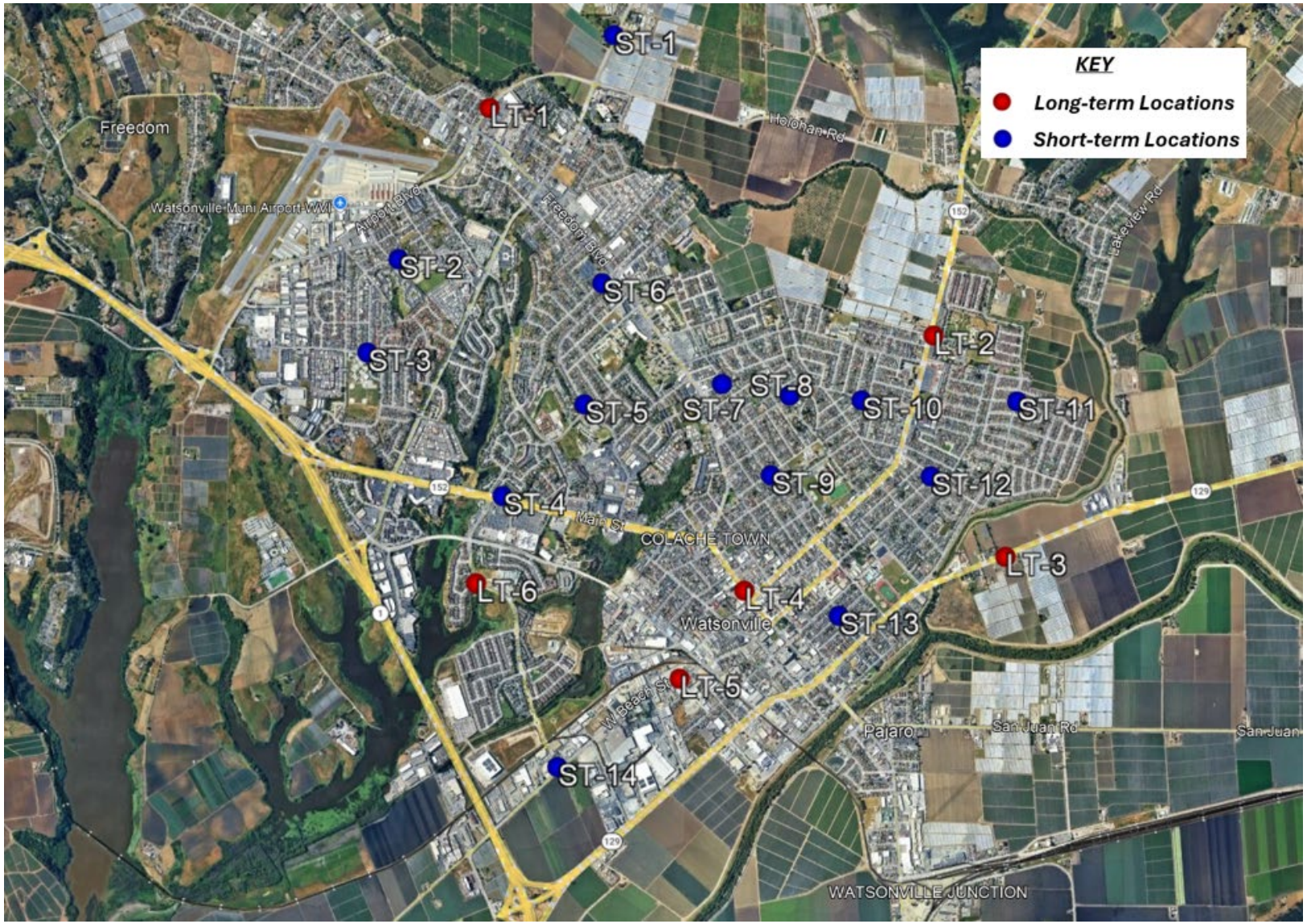
Table 4.13-7 Summary of Long-Term Noise Measurement Data at LT-1 through LT-6 from Wednesday, January 21, 2026, through Friday, January 23, 2026

Receptor ID	Location	Hourly Average Noise Levels, dBA L_{eq}			Community Noise Equivalent Level, dBA CNEL
		Daytime Hours[a]	Evening Hours[b]	Nighttime Hours[c]	
LT-1	Southwest corner of the Safeway parking lot, ~30 feet from the Airport Boulevard centerline	70 to 73	67 to 76	57 to 71	74
LT-2	Northeast corner of the SR 152/ Menasco Drive intersection, ~80 feet from the SR 152 centerline	65 to 71	62 to 66	51 to 66	69
LT-3	~30 feet from the SR 129 centerline	74 to 77	71 to 73	65 to 76	79
LT-4	Front of 518 Main Street, ~25 feet from the Main Street centerline	68 to 79	72 to 78	65 to 78	80
LT-5	Southeast corner of the West Beach Street/Pine Street intersection, ~30 feet from the West Beach Street centerline	68 to 72	64 to 69	58 to 71	74
LT-6	Northwest corner of the Ohlone Parkway/Kingfisher Drive intersection, ~65 feet from the Ohlone Parkway centerline	59 to 68	58 to 61	49 to 61	65

Source: I&R, 2026.
[a] Daytime hours = between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.
[b] Evening hours = between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.
[b] Nighttime hours = between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Short-term noise measurements were made on Thursday, January 22, 2026, between 8:20 a.m. and 1:40 p.m. in 10-minute intervals at each site. **Table 4.13-8** summarizes the noise measurement results at each location.

Figure 4.13-3 Aerial Image of the Plan Area and Surrounding Area with the Noise Measurement Locations Identified



Source: I&R, 2026.

Table 4.13-8 Summary of Short-Term Noise Measurement Data at ST-1 through ST-14 on Thursday, January 22, 2026

Noise Measurement Location	$L_{(1)}$	$L_{(10)}$	$L_{(50)}$	$L_{(90)}$	L_{eq}	Primary Noise Source
ST-1: Front of 327 Green Valley Road (1/22/2026, 8:20 to 8:30)	81	77	72	63	74	Green Valley Road traffic
ST-2: Front of 40 Holly Drive (1/22/2026, 8:40 to 8:50)	66	61	49	45	56	Holly Drive traffic
ST-3: Front of 120 Anna Street (1/22/2026, 9:00 to 9:10)	75	65	53	45	62	Anna Street traffic
ST-4: Back of 128 Terry Loop (1/22/2026, 9:30 to 9:40)	76	74	66	55	69	SR 152 traffic
ST-5: Front of 341 Arthur Road (1/22/2026, 9:50 to 10:00)	72	64	57	50	61	Arthur Road traffic
ST-6: Front of 25 Clifford Avenue (1/22/2026, 10:10 to 10:20)	72	67	55	50	62	Clifford Avenue traffic
ST-7: Front of 31 Broadis Street (1/22/2026, 10:30 to 10:40)	60	53	43	39	50	Madison Street traffic
ST-8: Front of 702 Brewington Avenue (1/22/2026, 11:20 to 11:30)	71	63	55	50	60	Stanford Street traffic
ST-9: Front of 828 Lincoln Street (1/22/2026, 11:40 to 11:50)	75	66	57	47	64	Lincoln Street traffic
ST-10: Front of 638 Oregon Street (1/22/2026, 12:00 to 12:10)	70	65	50	37	60	Tuttle Avenue traffic
ST-11: Front of 498 Vivienne Drive (1/22/2026, 12:20 to 12:20)	68	61	48	41	56	Local traffic
ST-12: Front of 557 East Beach Street (1/22/2026, 12:50 to 13:00)	70	63	54	43	60	Local traffic
ST-13: Front of 213 Marchant Street (1/22/2026, 13:10 to 13:20)	67	58	47	40	56	Local traffic
ST-14: Front of 1080 West Beach Street (1/22/2026, 13:40 to 13:50)	79	72	63	57	68	Local traffic

Source: I&R, 2026.

Noise Exposure Maps

Traffic noise levels throughout the plan area were calculated using SoundPLAN Version V9.1, a three-dimensional ray-tracing computer program based on roadway traffic volumes, travel speeds, truck mix, and local geographic conditions. Calculations took into account the source of noise, the frequency spectra of the noise source, and the topography of the area. The model was calibrated against measured noise levels, and the full modeling methodology is provided in the Noise and Vibration Technical Report.

Existing, cumulative without project, and cumulative with project traffic counts for project roadways were provided by Fehr & Peers (Fehr & Peers, 2025). Traffic volumes for additional major roadways within the City were developed using a combination of field traffic counts collected during the noise measurement program and available County average daily traffic counts (Santa Cruz County, 2022). For SR 1, traffic volumes and truck mix data input into the model were based on information published by Caltrans (Caltrans, 2024). The major corridors with the highest traffic counts are SR 1, Riverside Drive (SR 129), Main Street (SR 152), East Lake Avenue (SR 152), Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, and Airport Boulevard.

Noise exposure contours for Existing conditions along the major roadways in the City are depicted in **Figure 4.13-4**. Cumulative with plan conditions are depicted in **Figure 4.13-5**.

Figure 4.13-4 Existing Traffic Noise Contours in Watsonville



Source: I&R, 2026.

4.13.2.3 Project Impacts

a) Would the project result in 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?

Future Exterior and Interior Noise Environment

Watsonville General Plan 2050 envisions the addition of up to 5,980 new residential units and 2,672,000 square feet of nonresidential development, as summarized in **Table 4.13-9**. Project growth includes opportunity sites identified in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan and 6th Cycle 2023-2031 Housing Element.

Table 4.13-9 Watsonville 2050 Projected Growth with Plan Implementation

	Location	Residential, number of units	Nonresidential, square feet
Infill	Downtown Infill	3,883	115,000
	Corridor Infill	581	127,000
	Neighborhood Infill	96	0
	Employment	0	271,000
	Total Infill	**4,560**	**513,000**
New Growth	Buena Vista (Area A)	716	20,000
	Atkinson Lane/Area C	704	10,000
	Highway 1 Gateway	0	2,129,000
	Total New Growth	**1,420**	**2,159,000**
Total		**5,980**	**2,672,000**

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

The primary noise sources in the City include ground transportation noise sources, such as roadway traffic and trains, and local stationary noise sources, such as equipment used for industrial operations. Residential developments, schools, libraries, hospitals, convalescent homes, and places of worship are considered to be the land uses that are the most noise-sensitive because of the quiet nature of the use.

Future traffic noise levels were modeled using cumulative (General Plan buildout) traffic volumes. These traffic volumes incorporate projected growth associated with implementation of the General Plan. The analysis evaluates the extent to which projected traffic growth contributes to future roadway noise levels compared to existing conditions. **Table 4.13-10** shows the changes in noise levels between existing,

Cumulative (2050) without plan, and Cumulative (2050) with plan. The difference in CNEL between the cumulative without plan and existing conditions ranges from -0.6 to 1 dBA. The difference in CNEL between the cumulative with plan and existing conditions ranges from -0.5 to 1.8 dBA. The difference in CNEL between the cumulative with plan and cumulative without plan ranges from -0.1 to 0.8 dBA. Because these increases are less than 3 dBA, they are generally considered imperceptible to most people and would not result in a substantial increase in traffic noise levels.

The future noise exposure levels were calculated using the Cumulative 2050 Plus Project traffic volumes provided by the traffic consultant and modeled in SoundPLAN (see **Table 4.13-10** and **Figure 4.13-5**).

The following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions would minimize excessive noise exposure to sensitive land uses:

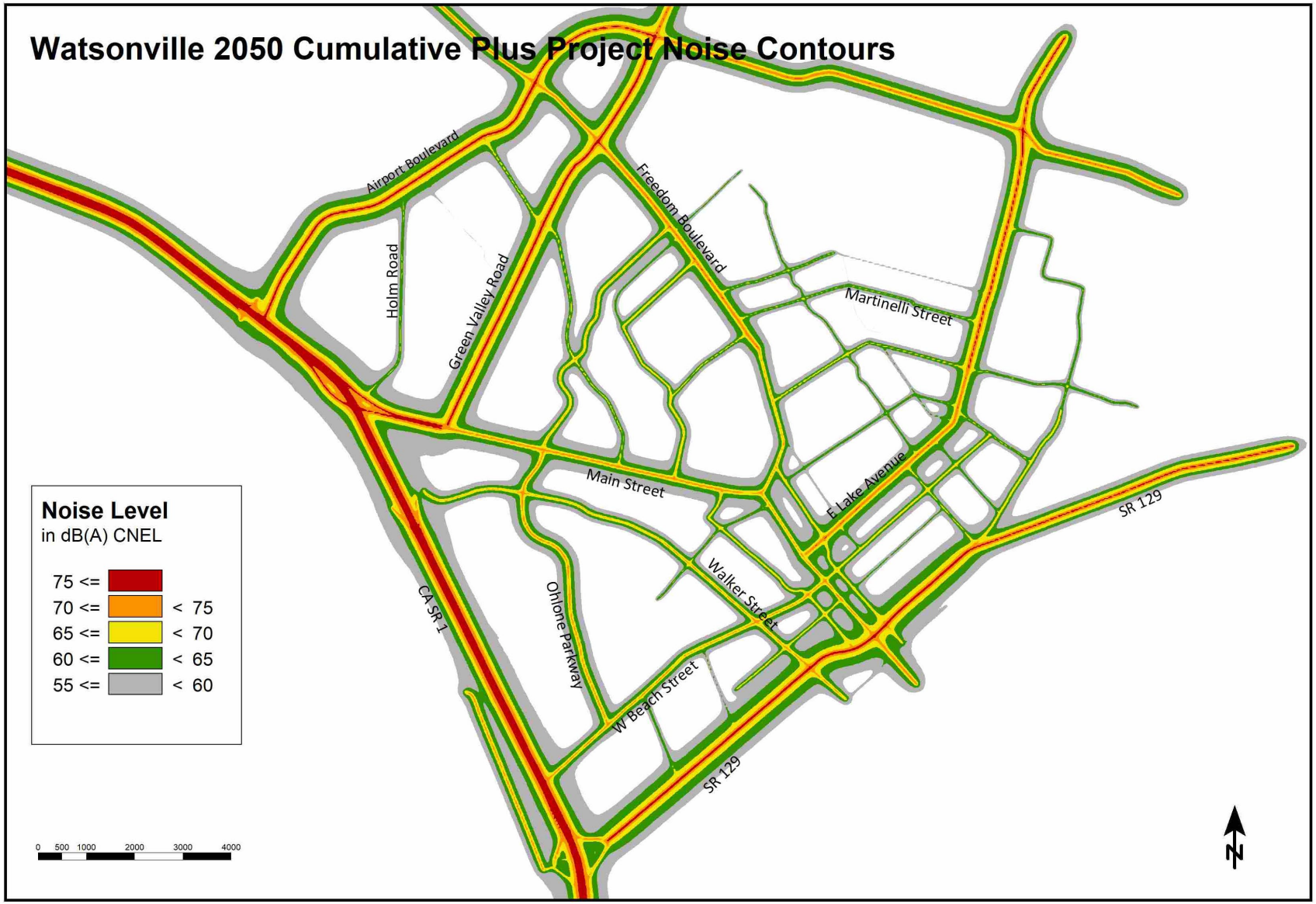
General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal N-2 Promote Existing and Future Land Compatibility.** Promote a land use pattern and development design that minimizes exposure to excessive noise levels, protects noise-sensitive uses, and ensures that new construction incorporates effective measures to reduce noise impacts.
>
> **Policy N-2.1 Future Development.** Require future development to adhere to the land use compatibility standards in Table 12.2 Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Environments.

As described in **Table 4.13-10**, future exterior noise levels at or below CNEL 65 dBA would be considered normally acceptable at outdoor use areas at residential land uses (i.e., low density, single-family, duplex, multiple family, and mobile homes); transient lodging-motels and hotels; and schools, libraries, churches, hospitals, and nursing homes. Common use outdoor areas at playgrounds and neighborhood parks; golf courses, riding stables, water recreation, and cemeteries; office buildings, businesses, commercial and professional uses; and industrial manufacturing, utilities, and agricultural uses would have a normally acceptable exterior noise environment with noise levels at or below CNEL 70 dBA.

Table 4.13-11 generally applies to ground transportation and stationary noise sources within the community. The distances to the CNEL 70 and 65 dBA future traffic noise contours for the major roadways located in the City are summarized in **Table 4.13-12**. Aircraft noise is addressed separately in the Airport Element as well as in the ALUCP (see ALUCP **Table 2-1**).

Figure 4.13-5 Cumulative Plus Project Traffic Noise Contours in Watsonville



Source: I&R, 2026.

Table 4.13-10 Existing and Future Modeled Noise Levels Along Roadways in the Plan Area Vicinity

Roadway	Segment	CNEL at 75 feet from the Roadway Centerline, dBA			Increase Over Existing, dBA CNEL		Increase of Cumulative Build Scenario Over Cumulative No Build Scenarios, dBA
		Existing	Cumulative without Plan (No Build)	Cumulative with Plan (Build)	Cumulative without Plan (No Build)	Cumulative with Plan (Build)	
Airport Blvd	Larkin Valley Rd to Nielson St	67.6	67.8	68.0	0.2	0.4	**0.2**
	Freedom Blvd to Pajaro Ln	66.0	67.5	67.4	0.5	0.4	**-0.1**
Green Valley Rd	Hope Dr to Pennsylvania Dr	67.9	68.1	68.3	0.2	0.4	**0.2**
	Amesti Rd to Holohan Rd	65.1	65.4	65.5	0.3	0.4	**0.1**
E Lake Avenue/ SR 152	Wagner Ave to Nugent Ave	66.2	67.0	67.2	0.8	1.0	**0.2**
	Manor Ave to Tuttle Ave	63.4	64.0	64.3	0.6	0.9	**0.3**
Freedom Blvd	Airport Blvd to Roache Rd	62.4	62.5	62.7	0.1	0.3	**0.2**
	Davis Ave to Blanca Ln	64.0	64.1	64.2	0.1	0.2	**0.1**
	Prospect St to Stanford St	60.4	60.6	60.7	0.2	0.3	**0.1**
Main Street/ SR 152	SR 1 to Green Valley Rd	68.0	68.2	68.4	0.3	0.4	**0.2**
	Rodriguez St to Freedom Blvd	62.4	62.5	62.8	0.1	0.4	**0.3**

Roadway	Segment	CNEL at 75 feet from the Roadway Centerline, dBA			Increase Over Existing, dBA CNEL		Increase of Cumulative Build Scenario Over Cumulative No Build Scenarios, dBA
		Existing	Cumulative without Plan (No Build)	Cumulative with Plan (Build)	Cumulative without Plan (No Build)	Cumulative with Plan (Build)	
	5th St to E Lake Ave	61.7	61.1	61.2	-0.6	-0.5	**0.1**
	Front St to San Juan Rd	63.0	63.0	63.1	0.0	0.1	**0.1**
Riverside Drive/ SR 129	Bridge St to Lakeview Rd	65.8	67.2	67.4	1.4	1.6	**0.2**
	SR 1 to Industrial Rd	68.5	68.5	68.5	0.0	0.0	**0.0**
W/E Beach Street	Harvest Dr to Pine St	59.6	60.6	61.4	1.0	1.8	**0.8**
	Marchant St to Lincoln St	57.9	58.5	58.5	0.6	0.6	**0.0**
Walker Street	Lake Ave to Beach St	60.7	60.7	61.1	0.0	0.4	**0.4**
Martinelli Street	Virginia St to Washington St	55.7	56.0	56.0	0.3	0.3	**0.0**
Ohlone Parkway	Kingfisher Dr to Landmark Elementary School Driveway	60.7	61.5	62.1	0.2	0.8	**0.6**
State Route 1	Airport Blvd to SR 129	70.4	71.4	71.4	1.0	1.0	**0.0**

Source: I&R, 2026.

Table 4.13-11 Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Environments (Table 12.2 in General Plan 2050)

Land Use Category	Community Noise Exposure (dBA CNEL)			
	Normally Acceptable[1]	Conditionally Acceptable[2]	Normally Unacceptable[3]	Clearly Unacceptable[4]
Residential – Low Density, Single-Family, Duplex, Multiple Family, Mobile Homes	65	70	75	75+
Transient Lodging-Motels, Hotels	65	70	80	80+
Schools, Libraries, Churches, Hospitals, Nursing Homes	65	70	75	75+
Auditoriums, Concert Halls, Amphitheaters	NA	70	75	75+
Sport Arenas, Outdoor Spectator Sports	NA	70	80	80+
Playgrounds, Neighborhood Park	70	75	80	80+
Golf Course, Riding Stables, Water Recreation, Cemeteries	70	75	80	80+
Office Buildings, Business, Commercial and Professional	70	75	80	80+
Industrial Manufacturing, Utilities, Agriculture	70	75	80	80+

Notes: The above exterior noise level standards typically apply to common outdoor use. CNEL are defined by the following criteria:

1 Normally Acceptable: Specified land use is satisfactory, based upon the assumption that any buildings involved are of normal conventional construction, without any special noise insulation requirements.

2 Conditionally Acceptable: New construction or development should be undertaken only after a detailed analysis of the noise reduction requirements is made and needed noise barriers or noise insulation features have been included in the design. Conventional construction, but with closed windows and fresh air supply systems or air conditioning, will normally suffice.

3 Normally Unacceptable: New construction or development should be discouraged. If new construction or development does proceed, a detailed analysis of the noise reduction requirements must be made and needed noise-insulation features must be included in the design.

4 Clearly Unacceptable: New construction or development should generally not be undertaken.

Suitable Interior Environments: One objective of locating both single and multi-family residential units relative to a known noise source is to maintain a suitable interior noise environment at no greater than CNEL 45 dB. This requirement, coupled with the measured or calculated noise reduction performance of the type of structure under consideration, should govern the minimum

acceptable distance to a noise source. Interior noise environment is considered habitable rooms; excluding bathrooms, kitchens, toilets, closets, and corridors.

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

Table 4.13-12 Preferred Project Noise Contour Distances within the City

Roadway	Segment	Distance from Centerline to Traffic Noise Contour, feet	
		CNEL 70 dBA	CNEL 65 dBA
Airport Boulevard	Larkin Valley Road to Nielson Street	50	130
	Freedom Boulevard to Pajaro Lane	45	130
Green Valley Road	Hope Drive to Pennsylvania Drive	50	140
	Amesti Road to Holohan Road	30	85
E Lake Avenue/SR 152	Wagner Avenue to Nugent Avenue	40	115
	Manor Avenue to Tuttle Avenue	20	65
Freedom Boulevard	Airport Boulevard to Roache Road	15	45
	Davis Avenue to Blanca Lane	20	65
	Prospect Street to Stanford Street	10	30
Main Street	Green Valley Road to SR 1	55	140
	Front Street to San Juan Road	15	50
	Rodriguez Street to Main Street	15	45
	5th Street to E Lake Avenue	10	35
Riverside Drive/SR 129	Bridget Street to Lakeview Road	45	120
	SR 1 to Industrial Road	55	145
Beach Street	Harvest Drive to Pine Street	10	35
	Marchant Street to Lincoln Street	<10	20
Walker Street	Lake Avenue to Beach Street	10	30

Roadway	Segment	Distance from Centerline to Traffic Noise Contour, feet	
		CNEL 70 dBA	CNEL 65 dBA
Martinelli Street	Virgina Street to Washington Street	<10	10
Ohlone Parkway	Kingfisher Drive to Landmark Elementary School Drive	15	40
California SR 1	Airport Boulevard to SR 129	105	215

Source: I&R, 2026.

Where exterior noise levels would exceed CNEL 65 dBA in new residential or noise-sensitive use developments, interior levels may exceed CNEL 45 dBA, assuming that windows and doors are open for ventilation. Interior noise levels within residential units are 20 to 25 dBA lower than exterior noise levels with the windows closed, assuming typical California Building Code construction methods. Where exterior noise levels are CNEL 60 to 70 dBA, interior noise levels can typically be maintained below CNEL 45 dBA with the incorporation of an adequate forced-air mechanical ventilation system in the residential units to allow residents the option of controlling noise by keeping the windows closed. In areas exceeding CNEL 70 dBA, the inclusion of windows and doors with high Sound Transmission Class (STC) ratings, and the incorporation of forced-air mechanical ventilation systems, may be necessary to meet CNEL 45 dBA.

Additionally, implementation of the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions would encourage new noise-sensitive land uses to be compatible with future exterior and interior noise environments at plan areas within the City:

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal N-1 Noise Control.** A City with appropriate noise and vibration levels that supports a range of places to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the public and protects from adverse noise impacts.
>
> **Policy N-1.1 Noise.** Support design standards and code enforcement to ensure that noise levels in developed areas are kept at acceptable levels, and that future noise-sensitive land uses are protected from noise that is harmful.
>
> **Action N-1.1.5 Traffic Calming and Complete Streets Design.** The City shall reduce vehicular noise impacts in residential and mixed-use areas by incorporating traffic-calming and Complete Streets improvements that encourage lower vehicle speeds. Such measures may include narrower travel lanes, speed bumps, curb extensions, raised crosswalks, roundabouts, street trees, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and “quiet” pavement materials. The City shall prioritize these improvements in areas with documented noise complaints or where measured traffic speeds exceed posted limits.
>
> **Action N-1.1.6 Reduce Vehicular Noise Impacts through Building and Site Design.** The City shall minimize vehicular noise impacts on adjacent development by promoting the use of sound-dampening or sound-insulating building materials and site design techniques rather than the construction of CMU or other solid sound walls. New development located along major roadways shall incorporate design strategies—such as acoustically rated windows and building

orientation—to achieve interior and exterior noise standards in a visually and environmentally sensitive manner.

Goal N-2: Promote Existing and Future Land Compatibility. Promote a land use pattern and development design that minimizes exposure to excessive noise levels, protects noise-sensitive uses, and ensures that new construction incorporates effective measures to reduce noise impacts.

Policy N-2.1 Future Development. Require future development to adhere to the land use compatibility standards in Table 12.2 Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Environments.

Action N-2.1.1 Guide Noise-Tolerant Uses. Plan and promote noise-tolerant land uses in noise-generating areas such as transportation corridors adjacent to major transportation corridors and the airport.

Action N-2.1.2 Protect Noise-Sensitive Land Uses. The City shall discourage the siting of noise-sensitive land uses, such as residences, schools, and hospitals, in areas where noise levels exceed the applicable standards.

Action N-2.1.3 Noise and Land Use Compatibility. New development of noise-sensitive land uses in noise-impacted areas shall incorporate effective mitigation measures into the project design to reduce exterior and interior noise consistent with Table 12.2 | Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Environments.

Action N-2.1.5 Site Planning. The City shall evaluate site orientation and building design to decrease the potential for noise intrusion, using the noise contour map and compatibility guidelines.

Goal A-2 Protect Public Health and Safety Around the Airport. Minimize the community's exposure to excessive noise and aviation-related safety hazards affecting people and property on the ground, as well as aviation users, by guiding land use development in the Airport Influence Area using established noise, overflight, safety, and airspace protection compatibility criteria.

Policy A-2.1 Promote Compatible Land Use Patterns in the Airport Influence Area. Guide future development within the Airport Influence Area to ensure compatibility with existing and planned airport operations, while recognizing established land uses and applicable development rights.

Action A-2.1.1 Airport Land Use Compatibility Zoning Overlay. Adopt, maintain, and enforce a zoning overlay district to implement the noise, safety, overflight, and airspace protection criteria established in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and guide future land use development within the Airport Influence Area consistent with that Plan.

ALUCP Policy 2.1.1. Evaluating Acceptable Noise Levels for New Development: The noise compatibility of proposed land uses within the Watsonville Municipal Airport Influence Area shall be evaluated in accordance with the policies set forth in this section, including the criteria listed in Table 2-1 and the noise contours depicted on Map 2-1. These criteria shall take precedence over any conflicting lesser criteria in the Noise Element of the Watsonville General Plan 2050.

ALUCP Policy 2.1.2. Maximum Acceptable Exterior Noise Exposure: To minimize Noise-Sensitive development in noisy areas around the Airport, new land use development shall be restricted in accordance with the following.

(a) The maximum CNEL considered normally acceptable for new noise-sensitive uses, including residential, schools, and outdoor theaters, in the vicinity of the Watsonville Municipal Airport is 60 dBA.

(b) New nonresidential development shall be deemed incompatible in locations where the Airport-related noise exposure would be highly disruptive to the specific land use as indicated in Table 2-1.

(c) Land uses not specifically listed in Table 2-1 shall be evaluated using the criteria for similar listed uses together with the above factors.

ALUCP Policy 2.1.3. Maximum Acceptable Interior Noise Levels: Land uses for which interior activities may be easily disrupted by noise shall incorporate sound attenuation design features sufficient to meet the interior noise level criteria specified by this policy. To minimize disruption of indoor activities by aircraft noise, new structures shall be required to comply with the following interior noise level criteria.

(a) The maximum, aircraft-related, interior noise level that shall be considered acceptable for land uses near the Airport is:

(1) CNEL 45 dBA in:

- Any habitable room of single- or multi-family residences (including accessory dwelling units and family day care homes with 14 or fewer children);
- Hotels, motels, and other long-term and short-term lodging;
- Hospitals, nursing homes, and other congregate care facilities;
- Places of worship, meeting halls, theaters, and mortuaries; and
- Schools, libraries, and museums.

(2) CNEL 50 dBA in offices and office areas of industrial facilities.

(b) The noise contours depicted in Map 2-1 shall be used in calculating compliance with these criteria. The calculations shall assume that windows are closed.

(c) When a proposed building lies within multiple CNEL ranges, the 5 dBA range within which the largest amount of the building is located shall apply for the purposes of determining sound attenuation requirements.

(d) When structures are part of a proposed land use Action, evidence that proposed structures will be designed to comply with the criteria in Paragraph (a) of this policy shall be submitted to the City of Watsonville under the following circumstances:

(1) Any mobile home situated where the projected exposure to Airport noise is 60-dBA CNEL or greater. [A typical mobile home has an average exterior-to-interior noise level reduction (NLR) of approximately 15 dBA with windows closed.]

(2) Any single- or multi-family residence situated where the projected exposure to Airport noise is CNEL 60 dBA or greater (note that these uses are allowed only as Infill or on existing residential lots). [Wood frame buildings constructed to meet current standards for energy efficiency typically have an average NLR of approximately 20 dBA with windows closed.]

(3) Any hotel or motel, hospital or nursing home, church, meeting hall, office building, mortuary, school, library, or museum situated where the projected exposure to Airport noise is CNEL 60 dBA or greater.

(e) Exceptions to the interior noise level criteria in Paragraph (a) of this policy may be allowed where evidence is provided that the indoor noise generated by the use itself exceeds the listed criteria.

Temporary Construction Noise

Noise impacts resulting from construction depend on the noise generated by various pieces of construction equipment, the timing and duration of noise-generating activities, and the distance between construction noise sources and noise-sensitive receptors. Construction noise impacts primarily result when construction activities occur during noise-sensitive times of the day (early morning, evening, or nighttime hours), when construction occurs in areas immediately adjoining noise-sensitive land uses, or when construction durations last over extended periods of time.

Major noise-generating construction activities associated with new projects would include removal of existing pavement and structures, site grading and excavation, installation of utilities, the construction of building foundations, cores, and shells, paving, and landscaping. The highest noise levels are typically generated during the demolition of existing structures when impact tools are used (e.g., jackhammers, hoe rams) and during the construction of building foundations when impact pile driving may be required to support the structure. Site grading and excavation activities would also generate high noise levels, as these phases often require the simultaneous use of multiple pieces of heavy equipment, such as dozers, excavators, scrapers, and loaders. Lower noise levels result from building construction activities when these activities move indoors and require less heavy equipment to complete the tasks.

Construction equipment would typically include, but would not be limited to, earth-moving equipment and trucks, pile driving rigs, mobile cranes, compressors, pumps, generators, paving equipment, and pneumatic, hydraulic, and electric tools. Construction noise levels would vary by phase and vary within phases based on the amount of equipment in operation and the location of operational equipment. Typical construction noise levels at a distance of 50 feet are shown in **Table 4.13-13** and **Table 4.13-14**. **Table 4.13-13** shows the average noise level range by construction phase, and **Table 4.13-14** shows the maximum noise level range for different construction equipment. Typical hourly average construction-generated noise levels are about 77 to 89 dBA L_{eq} measured at a distance of 50 feet from the site during busy construction periods. Large pieces of earth-moving equipment, such as graders, scrapers, and dozers, generate maximum noise levels of 85 to 90 dBA L_{max} at a distance of 50 feet. Construction noise levels drop off at a rate of about 6 dBA per doubling of distance between the noise source and receptor. Intervening structures or terrain would result in lower noise levels at distant receptors.

Table 4.13-13 Typical Ranges of Construction Noise Levels at 50 Feet, L_{eq} (dBA)

	Domestic Housing		Office Building, Hotel, Hospital, School, Public Works		Industrial Parking Garage, Religious Amusement & Recreations, Store, Service Station		Public Works Roads & Highways, Sewers, and Trenches	
	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II
Ground Clearing	83	83	84	84	84	83	84	84
Excavation	88	75	89	79	89	71	88	78
Foundations	81	81	78	78	77	77	88	88
Erection	81	65	87	75	84	72	79	78
Finishing	88	72	89	75	89	74	84	84

Source: I&R, 2026.

Table 4.13-14 Construction Equipment, 50-foot Noise Emission Limits

Equipment Category	L_{max} Level (dBA)[1,2]	Impact/Continuous
Arc Welder	73	Continuous
Auger Drill Rig	85	Continuous
Backhoe	80	Continuous
Bar Bender	80	Continuous
Boring Jack Power Unit	80	Continuous
Chain Saw	85	Continuous
Compressor[3]	70	Continuous
Compressor (Other)	80	Continuous
Concrete Mixer	85	Continuous

Equipment Category	L_{max} Level (dBA)[1,2]	Impact/Continuous
Concrete Pump	70	Continuous
Concrete Saw	80	Continuous
Concrete Vibrator	85	Continuous
Crane	85	Continuous
Dozer	85	Continuous
Excavator	85	Continuous
Front End Loader	80	Continuous
Generator	82	Continuous
Generator (25 KVA or less)	70	Continuous
Gradall	85	Continuous
Grader	85	Continuous
Grinder Saw	85	Continuous
Horizontal Boring Hydro Jack	80	Continuous
Hydra Break Ram	90	Impact
Impact Pile Driver	105	Impact
Insitu Soil Sampling Rig	84	Continuous
Jackhammer	85	Impact
Mounted Impact Hammer (hoe ram)	90	Impact
Paver	85	Continuous
Pneumatic Tools	85	Continuous
Pumps	77	Continuous
Rock Drill	85	Continuous

Equipment Category	L_{max} Level (dBA)[1,2]	Impact/Continuous
Scraper	85	Continuous
Slurry Trenching Machine	82	Continuous
Soil Mix Drill Rig	80	Continuous
Street Sweeper	80	Continuous
Tractor	84	Continuous
Truck (dump, deliver)	84	Continuous
Vacuum Excavator Truck (vac-truck)	85	Continuous
Vibratory Compactor	80	Continuous
Vibratory Pile Driver	95	Continuous
All other equipment with engines larger than 5 HP	85	Continuous

Notes:
1. Measured at 50 feet from the construction equipment, with a "slow" (1 second) time constant.
2. Noise limits apply to total noise emitted from equipment and associated components operating at full power while engaged in its intended operation.
3. Portable Air Compressor rated at 75 cfm or greater and that operates at greater than 50 psi.
Source: I&R, 2026.

While General Plan 2050 identifies acceptable exterior noise exposure levels for different land use categories, it does not define allowable construction hours or set specific construction noise limits. The following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions direct the City to revise the existing noise ordinance to establish allowable construction hours and to adopt noise limits for temporary construction noise:

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Action N-1.1.8 Noise Ordinance.** The City shall revise the noise ordinance to include provisions for minimizing noise during nighttime hours, including limitations on construction activities and imposing best management practices. The noise ordinance shall also consider regulating party noise, live events, and other potential events or activities that result in noise. Methods for reducing noise impacts shall be considered, including walls, berms, building placement, and specialized pavement for projects that will either generate significant noise, or be exposed to noise from existing sources.

If hourly average construction noise levels would exceed the noise levels in **Table 12.1** of General Plan 2050 at the nearest property lines of receptors surrounding the construction site, then the temporary noise impact would be considered a potentially significant impact.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measure NOI-1**, which requires standard construction noise control practices, would reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure NOI-1: Standard Construction Noise Controls

Project applicants shall minimize the exposure of nearby properties to excessive noise levels from construction-related activity through CEQA review, permitting/conditions of approval, and/or enforcement of the City's Noise Ordinance. Prior to issuance of demolition, grading, and/or building permits for development projects, a note shall be provided on development plans indicating that during on-going grading, demolition, and construction, the property owner/developer shall be responsible for requiring contractors to implement the following standard construction noise controls shall be implemented at a plan area within the City:

- Construction activities shall be limited to the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays. No construction is permitted on Sundays or holidays, unless permission is granted with a development permit or other planning approval.
- Utilize the best available noise suppression devices and techniques during construction activities.
- Equip all internal combustion engine-driven equipment with intake and exhaust mufflers that are in good condition and appropriate for the equipment.
- Unnecessary idling of internal combustion engines shall be strictly prohibited.
- Locate stationary noise-generating equipment, such as air compressors or portable power generators, as far as possible from sensitive receptors. Construct temporary noise barriers to screen stationary noise-generating equipment when located near adjoining sensitive land uses.
- Utilize "quiet" air compressors and other stationary noise sources where technology exists.
- Construction staging areas shall be established at locations that would create the greatest distance between the construction-related noise source and noise-sensitive receptors near the plan area during all project construction.
- Locate material stockpiles, as well as maintenance/equipment staging and parking areas, as far as feasible from residential receptors.
- Control noise from construction workers' radios to a point where they are not audible at existing residences bordering the plan area.
- Notify all adjacent businesses, residences, and other noise-sensitive land uses of the construction schedule, in writing, and provide a written schedule of "noisy" construction activities to the adjacent land uses and nearby residences.
- Designate a "disturbance coordinator" who shall be responsible for responding to any complaints about construction noise. The disturbance coordinator shall determine the cause of the noise complaint (e.g., bad muffler, etc.) and require that reasonable measures be implemented to correct the problem. Conspicuously post a telephone number for the disturbance coordinator at the construction site and include it in the notice sent to neighbors regarding the construction schedule.
- If receptors adjoin the plan area, construct a solid plywood fence along the shared property line, where feasible. A temporary noise barrier, tall enough to block direct line-of-sight with ground-

level receptors, would provide about 5 dBA attenuation for adjacent noise-sensitive receptors when construction activities occur at the ground level.

- If impact pile driving is proposed, foundation pile holes shall be pre-drilled to minimize the number of impacts required to seat the pile. Pre-drilling foundation pile holes is a standard construction noise control technique. Pre-drilling reduces the number of blows required to seat the pile.
- If impact pile driving is proposed, multiple pile drivers shall be considered to expedite construction. Although noise levels generated by multiple pile drivers would be higher than the noise generated from a single pile driver, the total duration of pile driving activities would be reduced.
- If impact pile driving is proposed, temporary noise control blanket barriers shall shroud pile drivers or be erected in a manner to shield the adjacent land uses. Such noise control blanket barriers can be rented and quickly erected. If the hammer is shrouded, about 3 to 5 dBA of noise reduction could be expected, and more reduction could be achieved with the inclusion of a property line barrier. If a noise control blanket is erected on the receiving buildings, 5 to 10 dB of noise reduction could be achieved, depending upon how much shielding can be reasonably achieved.
- If pile driving is proposed and geological conditions permit, Cast-In-Drilled-Hole (CIDH) foundation systems shall be used instead of impact or vibratory pile driving. CIDH methods could reduce noise levels by 20 dB, as compared to impact pile driving.

As part of the City's future update to the noise ordinance required by Action N-1.1.8, the standard construction noise controls identified in this mitigation measure shall be incorporated into the ordinance to ensure that appropriate construction-related noise reduction measures are codified in the Watsonville Municipal Code.

Significance After Mitigation

As part of the City's future update to the noise ordinance required by Action N-1.1.8, the potential short-term noise impacts associated with the construction of future development facilitated by Watsonville General Plan 2050 would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level with the adoption and implementation of the above standard controls. These standard controls require reasonable noise reduction measures to be incorporated into the construction plan and implemented during all phases of construction activity to minimize the exposure of neighboring properties.

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure NOI-1**, construction noise impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level. (Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation)

Permanent Traffic and Operational Noise

Traffic Noise Increase

The increased development allowed under General Plan 2050 would result in an increase in vehicular traffic as development occurs and population increases. These projected increases in traffic would occur over time and would increase noise levels throughout the City and its vicinity. Traffic volumes provided by transportation consultants were used to calculate the change in traffic noise levels attributable to the growth planned in General Plan 2050 buildout. To assess the noise level increase due to the planned growth under the buildout, the Existing Plus Project traffic volumes were compared to the Existing traffic

volumes. **Table 4.13-10** shows the calculated traffic noise increases along all major roadways in the City under the Cumulative with Project (Build) traffic scenario. Traffic noise level contours under Existing and Cumulative with Project (Build) traffic scenarios are shown graphically in **Figure 4.13-4** and **Figure 4.13-5**, respectively.

Based on the calculated noise level increase summarized in **Table 4.13-10** under the Cumulative with Project (Build) scenario, the permanent noise increase under full buildout conditions over existing would be CNEL 1.8 dBA or less, which would not exceed the respective increases of three to five decibels over 65 dBA, established in proposed Action N-1.1.4. As a result, this would be considered a less-than-significant impact. (Less than Significant Impact)

Operational Noise Sources

Development projects within the City may include residential, mixed-use residential, commercial, industrial, etc., projects, which would have varying noise-generating sources, such as mechanical equipment noise, noise due to truck loading/unloading activities (including both maneuvering and pass-by noise), project-specific noise (including playground noise, outdoor event noise with or without amplified sound, etc.).

As indicated above, the City's Municipal Code prohibits offensive noise (including audible music and amplified audio sound) at a distance of 50 feet from residential buildings or structures where the noise source originates, between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. Additionally, testing of emergency generators is limited to between 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. With no other quantitative noise limits associated with the new noise sources, the proposed Action N-1.1.4 would apply to these sources.

To achieve the allowable increases in noise levels under proposed **Action N-1.1.4 Permanent Noise Increase**, and considering the City's municipal code requirements, a significant impact would occur if the following operational noise limits are exceeded at the property lines of noise-sensitive receptors as a result of new development:

- The applicable noise limit would be 60 dBA L_{eq} during daytime (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) hours; and
- The applicable noise limit would be 50 dBA L_{eq} during nighttime (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) hours.

The above standard is appropriate because to achieve a 24-hour CNEL of no more than 65 dBA, it is assumed that noise levels would not exceed 60 dBA L_{eq} during the daytime between 7:00 a.m. -10:00 p.m., and/or would not exceed 50 dBA L_{eq} during the quiet nighttime between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. Consequently, operational noise sources would potentially result in a permanent noise level increase.

It is noted that one of the key objectives of the DWSP is to create a vibrant, safe, and active Downtown, which includes the creation of an 18-hour downtown. In areas including DWSP where ambient noise levels may already exceed or are anticipated to exceed the CNEL 65 dBA, a significant impact would be an audible or perceptible noise increase (i.e., three decibels), potentially resulting in permanent noise increases. However, the City's noise ordinance creates an exception for discretionary land use approvals pursuant to Title 14 of the City's Zoning Code as noted above. It is therefore expected that conformance with code regulations as stipulated could reduce permanent noise increases in these areas to acceptable levels.

Operational noise associated with implementation of General Plan 2050would be in accordance with the following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050:

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

> **Action N-1.1.5 Traffic Calming and Complete Streets Design.** The City shall reduce vehicular noise impacts in residential and mixed-use areas by incorporating traffic-calming and Complete Streets improvements that encourage lower vehicle speeds. Such measures may include narrower travel lanes, speed bumps, curb extensions, raised crosswalks, roundabouts, street trees, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and "quiet" pavement materials. The City shall prioritize these improvements in areas with documented noise complaints or where measured traffic speeds exceed posted limits.
>
> **Action N-1.1.6 Reduce Vehicular Noise Impacts through Building and Site Design.** The City shall minimize vehicular noise impacts on adjacent development by promoting the use of sound-dampening or sound-insulating building materials and site design techniques rather than the construction of CMU or other solid sound walls. New development located along major roadways shall incorporate design strategies—such as acoustically rated windows and building orientation—to achieve interior and exterior noise standards in a visually and environmentally sensitive manner.
>
> **Action N-1.1.7 Truck Routes.** The City shall continue efforts to designate truck routes that bypass residential areas and other noise sensitive areas.
>
> **Action N-1.1.8 Noise Ordinance.** The City shall revise the noise ordinance to include provisions for minimizing noise during nighttime hours, including limitations on construction activities and imposing best management practices. The noise ordinance shall also consider regulating party noise, live events, and other potential events or activities that result in noise. Methods for reducing noise impacts shall be considered, including walls, berms, building placement, and specialized pavement for projects that will either generate significant noise, or be exposed to noise from existing sources.
>
> **Action N-2.1.4 Truck Deliveries.** Require that commercial or industrial truck delivery hours be limited when adjacent to noise-sensitive land uses unless there is no feasible alternative or there are overriding transportation benefits.
>
> **Action N-2.1.5 Site Planning.** The City shall evaluate site orientation and building design to decrease the potential for noise intrusion, using the noise contour map and compatibility guidelines.

With the implementation of the above actions, new developments would potentially produce noise levels from mechanical equipment, amplified noise, or other project-specific noise sources exceeding the Action N-1.1.4 limits. The significance without mitigation would result in potentially significant impacts.

At individual project-level, to reduce the operational noise from future development from exceeding applicable City standards or resulting in a substantial increase over existing ambient noise levels, **Mitigation Measure NOI-2** has been identified.

Mitigation Measure NOI-2: Operation of a New Project Would Result in a Permanent Noise Increase Exceeding the Limits

Project applicants shall minimize the exposure of nearby properties to excessive noise levels from project operations through CEQA review, conditions of approval, and/or enforcement of the City's Noise Ordinance. Prior to issuance of demolition, grading, and/or building permits for development projects, a note shall be provided on development plans indicating that one or more of the following shall be implemented within the City of Watsonville if operation of a new project would result in a permanent

noise increase exceeding the limits in Action N-1.1.4 or exceeds existing ambient daytime or nighttime L_{eq} noise levels by a significant amount:

- Mechanical equipment shall be selected and designed to reduce noise levels to meet City requirements at the nearby noise-sensitive land uses. A detailed acoustical study shall be prepared during final building design to evaluate the potential noise generated by building mechanical equipment and demonstrate the necessary noise control to meet the City's Action N-1.1.4 threshold and would not exceed ambient noise levels by a significant amount. Noise control features, such as sound attenuators, baffles, and barriers, shall be identified and evaluated to demonstrate that mechanical equipment noise would not exceed the City's Action N-1.1.4 threshold or existing ambient noise levels by a significant amount at noise-sensitive locations around the plan area. The noise control features identified by the study shall be incorporated into the project prior to issuance of a building permit.
- For truck loading/unloading operations exceeding the City's noise limits at the property lines of noise-sensitive receptors, a qualified acoustical consultant shall be retained to review that one or more of the following measures have been incorporated into the project and to verify that the project does not result in a permanent noise level increase or that daytime ambient L_{eq} is not exceeded by a significant amount:
    - Implement a no idling policy that requires engines to be turned off after five minutes;
    - Ensure the truck docks are recessed into the ground;
    - Equip loading bay doors with rubberized gasket type seals to allow little loading noise to escape;
    - Locate loading docks in less sensitive locations, away from noise-sensitive receptors or shielded from noise-sensitive receptors; and
    - Construct a noise barrier between the loading docks and noise-sensitive receptors. The proposed barrier shall be continuous from grade to top, with no cracks or gaps, and have a minimum surface density of three lbs/ft^2 (e.g., one-inch-thick marine-grade plywood, ½-inch laminated glass, concrete masonry units (CMU)). The minimum height of the barrier shall be determined by the acoustical consultant and shall be tall enough to break the line-of-sight between the noise source and the sensitive receptor.
- To reduce noise levels exceeding the City limits during events, sporting activities, concerts, etc., involving amplified speech and/or music, a qualified acoustical consultant shall be retained to review that one or more of the following measures has been incorporated into the project and to verify that the project does not result in a permanent noise level increase or that daytime ambient L_{eq} is not exceeded by a significant amount:
    - Allowable hours of the events and the use of amplified speech and/or music shall be limited to daytime (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) hours only unless a special events permit has been obtained from the City; and
    - PA systems, music equipment, and speakers shall be set up such that they are oriented away from noise-sensitive receptors. The volume shall be controlled such that noise levels do not exceed existing ambient L_{eq} by a significant amount at the property lines of

noise-sensitive receptors and does not result in a significant permanent noise level increase.

As part of the City's future update to the noise ordinance required by Action N-1.1.8, the noise controls identified in this mitigation measure shall be incorporated into the ordinance to ensure that appropriate operational-related noise reduction measures are codified in the Watsonville Municipal Code.

Significance After Mitigation

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1)(B), the feasibility of the measures contained in **Mitigation Measure NOI-2** shall be determined by the City on a case-by-case basis as part of the planning process, and details of each feasible component may be developed after project approval, depending on the location of an individual project. As part of the City's future update to the noise ordinance required by Action N-1.1.8 the potential for new development projects to generate noise levels exceeding the City's thresholds and/or exceeding the existing daytime or nighttime ambient L_{eq} by a significant amount would be reduced through **Mitigation Measure NOI-2** and actions from General Plan 2050. However, due to the potential for proximity of operational noise sources to sensitive uses, operational noise impacts could result in a permanent substantial increase in noise levels above ambient conditions resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact.[2] Therefore, implementation of the plan would result in significant and unavoidable impacts with mitigation. (Significant and Unavoidable Impact)

b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Future Vibration Environment

Details regarding the number of passenger trains passing through the proposed Downtown Watsonville Passenger Rail Station are unavailable at this time. SCCRTC has begun preliminary plans for reactivating passenger rail service as part of the ZEPRT Project, which, if implemented, would provide passenger rail service between Santa Cruz and Pajaro through Watsonville. There are currently no near term plans for passenger rail services. SCCRTC has begun to explore an "interim trail" that explores using the existing rail corridor for a temporary multi-use path while retaining the rail tracks. There is no schedule detailing the number of passenger trains because reactivating passenger rail service is uncertain and would be in the long term.

Details regarding the number of passenger trains that may operate along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line in the future are not yet finalized; however, the ZEPRT Concept Report included a conceptual operating schedule for potential zero emission passenger rail service on the corridor. This conceptual schedule was developed for service with 30-minute headways totaling 33 train trips per day between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. The number of UPRR trains in the future is expected to remain four per week. To provide a conservative worst-case future usage of the UPRR and proposed passenger trains, up to 37 train events per day are assumed along the tracks at Walker Street, which falls within the FTA's "occasional usage" category. Depending on the type of noise-sensitive receptor, thresholds range from 65 to 78 VdB for occasional events.

Groundborne vibration and noise levels would be minimized with the incorporation of the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions:

[2] It should be noted that the identification of this program-level impact does not preclude the finding of less-than-significant impacts for subsequent projects analyzed at the project level.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal N-1 Noise Control.** A City with appropriate noise and vibration levels that supports a range of places to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the public and protects from adverse noise impacts.
>
> **Policy N-1.1 Noise.** Support design standards and code enforcement to ensure that noise levels in developed areas are kept at acceptable levels, and that future noise-sensitive land uses are protected from noise that is harmful.

Construction activities occurring at plan areas within the City may generate perceptible vibration when heavy equipment or impact tools (e.g., jackhammers, hoe rams) are used. Construction activities would include demolition, site preparation work, foundation work, and new building framing and finishing. Pile driving equipment, including impact and vibratory pile driving, can cause excessive vibration. The severity of a construction vibration impact is determined by the proximity of the project with respect to buildings and receptors and the sensitivity of surrounding buildings.

Construction vibration levels may be generally perceptible; however, as with any type of construction, this would be anticipated and would not be considered significant, given the intermittent and short duration of the phases that have the highest potential of producing vibration (use of jackhammers and other high-power tools). By use of administrative controls, such as notifying neighbors of scheduled construction activities and scheduling construction activities with the highest potential to produce perceptible vibration during hours with the least potential to affect nearby businesses, perceptible vibration can be kept to a minimum.

The goal in establishing construction vibration limits is to mitigate potential vibration impacts associated with demolition and construction activities to a less-than-significant level by establishing safe limits to protect structures from potential damage and to minimize vibration impacts on people and businesses. Building damage generally falls into three categories:

- Cosmetic damage (also known as threshold damage) is defined as hairline cracking in plaster, the opening of old cracks, the loosening of paint or the dislodging of loose objects;
- Minor damage is defined as hairline cracking in masonry or the loosening of plaster; and
- Major structural damage is defined as wide cracking or the shifting of foundation or bearing walls

Most buildings in the City would fall in the last three categories:

- 0.2 in/sec PPV threshold – for historic and some old buildings, which would include documented historic buildings or buildings constructed prior to the 1940s;
- 0.3 in/sec PPV threshold – for older residential buildings or buildings constructed between the 1940s and 1990s; and
- 0.5 in/sec PPV threshold – for new residential and modern commercial office buildings, which would include buildings constructed since the 1990s.

Table 4.13-15 presents typical vibration source levels for construction equipment at 25 feet. Heavy tracked vehicles (e.g., bulldozers or excavators) can generate distinctly perceptible groundborne vibration levels when this equipment operates within approximately 25 feet of sensitive land uses. Vibration levels would vary depending on soil conditions, construction methods, and equipment used.

Table 4.13-15 Vibration Source Levels for Construction Equipment

Equipment		PPV at 25 ft, in/sec	Approximately L_v at 25 feet, VdB
Pile Driver (Impact)	upper range	1.158	112
	typical	0.644	104
Pile Driver (Sonic)	upper range	0.734	105
	typical	0.170	93
Clam shovel drop		0.202	94
Hydromill (slurry wall)	in soil	0.008	66
	in rock	0.017	75
Vibratory Roller		0.210	94
Hoe Ram		0.089	87
Large bulldozer		0.089	87
Caisson drilling		0.089	87
Loaded trucks		0.076	86
Jackhammer		0.035	79
Small bulldozer		0.003	58

Source: I&R, 2026.

Pile driving has the potential to generate the highest ground vibration levels and is of primary concern for architectural damage. Impact pile drivers can generate distinctly perceptible groundborne vibration levels at distances up to about 100 feet and may exceed building damage thresholds within 25 feet of any building, and within 50 to 100 feet of a historical building or building in poor condition.

A study completed by the U.S. Bureau of Mines analyzed the effects of blast-induced vibration on buildings. The findings of this study have been applied to buildings affected by construction-generated vibrations. **Figure 4.13-6** presents the damage probability, in terms of "threshold damage" (described above as cosmetic damage), "minor damage," and "major damage," at varying vibration levels.

As shown in **Figure 4.13-6**, maximum vibration levels of 0.5 in/sec PPV or lower would result in about five percent chance of cosmetic damage and no minor or major damage. There would be about five percent chance of minor damage with vibration levels of about 1.8 in/sec PPV and about five percent chance of

major damage with vibration levels of about 2.5 in/sec PPV. Vibration levels this high would not be expected at construction sites within the City.

Vibration levels are highest close to the source and attenuate with increasing distance. Vibration levels would also vary depending on soil conditions, construction methods, and equipment used. **Table 4.13-16** presents minimum distances at which receiving buildings would not exceed the 0.5, 0.3, and 0.25 in/sec PPV vibration limits.

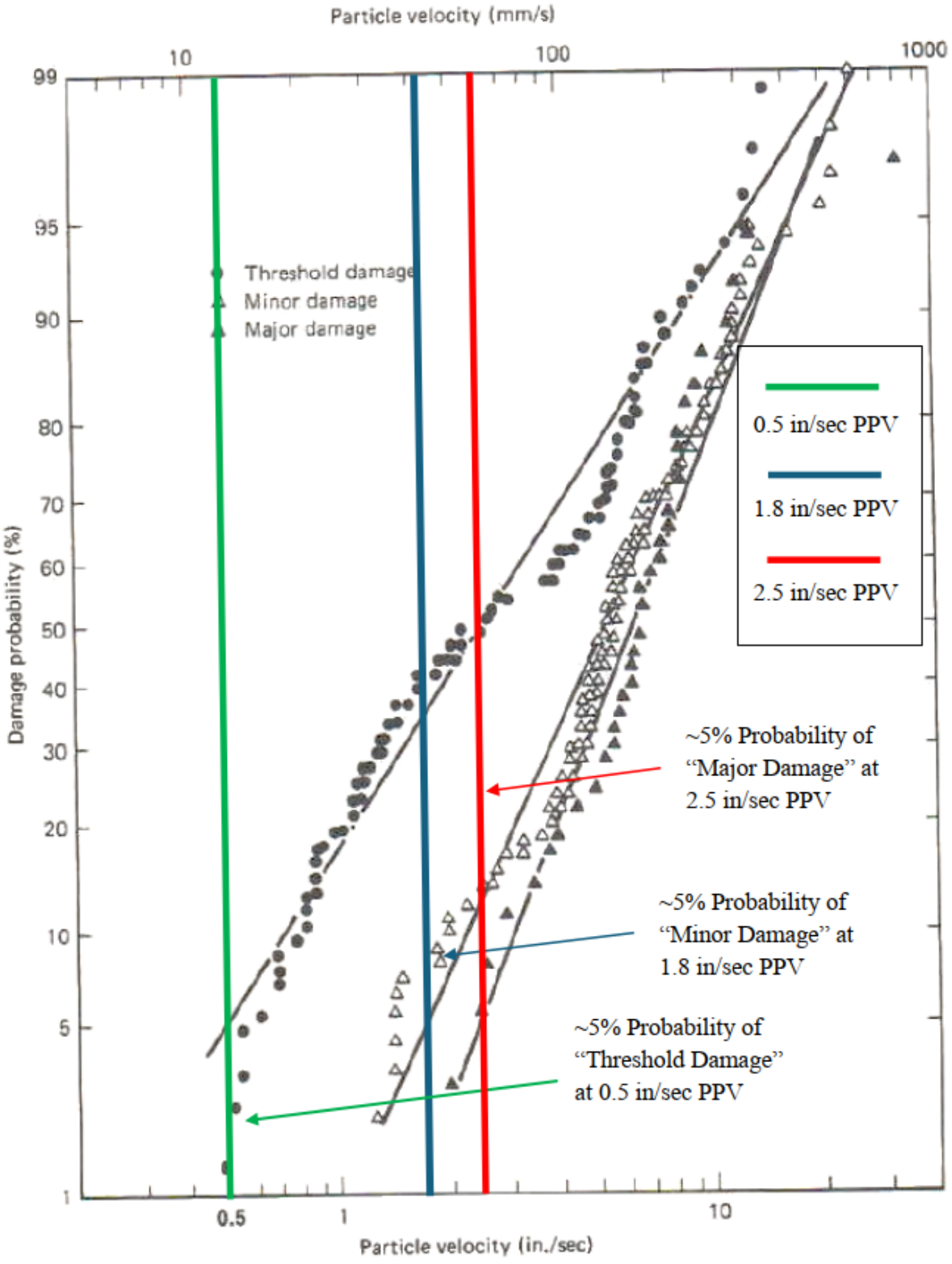
Table 4.13-16 Minimum Distances to Meet the Caltrans Vibration Limits

Equipment		Minimum Distances to Meet the Vibration Limit, feet		
		0.5 in/sec PPV	0.5 in/sec PPV	0.5 in/sec PPV
Pile Driver (Impact)	upper range	69	110	159
	typical	32	51	73
Pile Driver (Sonic)	upper range	36	57	82
	typical	10	15	22
Clam shovel drop		11	18	26
Hydromill (slurry wall)	in soil	1	1	2
	in rock	2	2	3
Vibratory Roller		12	19	27
Hoe Ram		6	9	13
Large bulldozer		6	9	13
Caisson drilling		6	9	13
Loaded trucks		5	8	6
Jackhammer		3	4	5
Small bulldozer		1	1	1

Source: I&R, 2026.

Conservatively, construction equipment used at plan areas within the City could operate within the screening distances summarized in **Table 4.13-16**, resulting in a potentially significant impact.

Figure 4.13-6 Probability of Cracking and Fatigue from Repetitive Loading



Source: I&R, 2026.

Mitigation Measure NOI-3: Exceeded Vibration Limits

Project applicants shall minimize the exposure of nearby properties to excessive groundborne vibrations from construction-related activity through CEQA review, conditions of approval, and/or enforcement of the City's General Plan 2050 Action N-1.1.3. Prior to issuance of demolition, grading, and/or building permits for development projects, a note shall be provided on development plans indicating that during on-going grading, demolition, and construction, the property owner/developer shall be responsible for requiring contractors to implement best available controls where vibration limits are exceeded at off-site buildings surrounding construction sites within the City of Watsonville:

- A list of all heavy construction equipment to be used for this project known to produce high vibration levels (tracked vehicles, vibratory compaction, jackhammers, hoe rams, etc.) shall be submitted to the City by the contractor. This list shall be used to identify equipment and activities that would potentially generate substantial vibration and to define the level of effort for reducing vibration levels below the thresholds.
- Place operating equipment on the construction site as far as possible from vibration-sensitive receptors.
- Smaller, non-pile-driving equipment (less than 18,000 pounds) shall be used near the property lines or adjacent sensitive buildings to minimize vibration levels. For example, a smaller vibratory roller similar to a Caterpillar model CP433E vibratory compactor could be used when compacting materials within 12 feet of modern buildings, within 19 feet of older buildings, and within 27 feet of historic buildings. The smaller equipment intended to implement this requirement shall be individually identified among the list of equipment required under the above condition as a subset of equipment allowed for use at the property lines.
- Avoid dropping heavy equipment and using vibratory rollers within 12 feet of modern buildings, within 19 feet of older buildings, and within 27 feet of historic buildings. Use alternative methods for breaking up existing pavement, such as a pavement grinder, instead of dropping heavy objects, within 12 feet of modern buildings, within 19 feet of older buildings, and within 27 feet of historic buildings. Select demolition methods that do not involve large impact tools, such as hoe-rams, within 12 feet of modern buildings, within 19 feet of older buildings, and within 27 feet of historic buildings. Portable jackhammers, saws, or grinders shall be used to minimize impacts to the ground.
- Notify neighbors within 500 feet of the construction site of the construction schedule and that there could be noticeable vibration levels resulting from impact or vibratory pile driving, if applicable.
- For all projects requiring impact pile driving, foundation pile holes shall be pre-drilled to minimize the number of impacts required to seat the pile.
- For all projects requiring impact pile driving, jet or partially jet piles into place to minimize the number of impacts required to seat the pile.
- If the above measures are not feasible to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level at adjoining historic buildings or at any building adjoining pile driving activities, a Construction Vibration Monitoring Plan (Plan) shall be implemented to document conditions prior to, during, and after construction or pile driving activities. The Plan shall be developed by a qualified

acoustical consultant, and all plan tasks shall be undertaken under the direction of a licensed Professional Structural Engineer in the State of California and be in accordance with industry-accepted standard methods. The Plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following tasks:

- Identify the sensitivity of nearby structures to groundborne vibration activities. A vibration survey (generally described below) would need to be performed.
- Perform a photo survey, elevation survey, and crack monitoring survey at all identified sensitive structures. Surveys shall be performed prior to any demolition or pile driving activity, at regular intervals during construction or pile driving, and after completion, and shall include internal and external crack monitoring in structures, settlement, and distress, and shall document the condition of foundations, walls, and other structural elements in the interior and exterior of said structures.
- Develop a vibration monitoring and construction contingency plan to identify structures where monitoring would be conducted, set up a vibration monitoring schedule, define structure-specific vibration limits, and address the need to conduct photo, elevation, and crack surveys to document before and after demolition/construction or pile driving. Alternative construction methods would be identified for when vibration levels approach 0.5 in/sec PPV at modern buildings, 0.3 in/sec PPV at older buildings, and 0.2 in/sec PPV at historic buildings.
- If vibration levels approach limits, suspend construction and implement alternative construction methods to either lower vibration levels or secure the affected structures.
- Conduct post-surveys on structures where either monitoring has indicated high levels or complaints of damage have been made. Make appropriate repairs or compensation where damage has occurred as a result of construction activities.
- The results of all vibration monitoring shall be summarized and submitted in a report shortly after substantial completion of each phase identified in the project schedule. The report will include a description of measurement methods, equipment used, calibration certificates, and graphics as required to clearly identify vibration-monitoring locations. An explanation of all events that exceeded the vibration limits will be included, together with proper documentation supporting any such claims.
- Designate a person responsible for registering and investigating claims of excessive vibration. The contact information of such a person shall be clearly posted on the construction site.

Significance After Mitigation

Goal N-1, Policy N-1.1, and Action N-1.1.2 would result in new noise-sensitive land uses to be compatible with future vibration environments at plan areas within the City, ensuring that FTA noise thresholds are met. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure NOI-3**, along with adherence to Action N-1.1.3 from General Plan 2050, would reduce potential groundborne vibration and groundborne noise impacts to a less than significant level. (Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation)

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 2 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?

As shown in **Figure 4.13-2**, under the existing, future and ultimate conditions of the adopted 2023 Airport Master Plan, the CNEL 65 and 70 dBA noise contours are largely confined to airport property with only minor extensions into the adjacent industrial area along Aviation Way. The CNEL 60 and 65 dBA noise contours also remain largely within airport property, but to a limited extent these contours extend off-airport property into the industrial area south of Airport Boulevard and into a residential area to the north along Buena Vista Drive. The ALUCP establishes a maximum CNEL of 60 dBA for new noise-sensitive uses, including residential, schools, and outdoor theaters, in the vicinity of the Watsonville Municipal Airport. However, no new noise-sensitive developments would be constructed within the Airport's CNEL 60 dBA noise contours as part of General Plan 2050.

Additionally, future development within the City would be compatible with the future exterior noise for aircraft noise with the incorporation of the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions:

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal A-2 Protect Public Health and Safety Around The Airport.** Minimize the community's exposure to excessive noise and aviation-related safety hazards affecting people and property on the ground, as well as aviation users, by guiding land use development in the Airport Influence Area using established noise, overflight, safety, and airspace protection compatibility criteria.
>
> **Policy A-2.1 Promote Compatible Land Use Patterns in the Airport Influence Area.** Guide future development within the Airport Influence Area to ensure compatibility with existing and planned airport operations, while recognizing established land uses and applicable development rights.
>
> **Action A-2.1.1 Airport Land Use Compatibility Zoning Overlay.** Adopt, maintain, and enforce a zoning overlay district to implement the noise, safety, overflight, and airspace protection criteria established in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and guide future land use development within the Airport Influence Area consistent with that ALUCP.
>
> **Action N-2.1.3 Noise and Land Use Compatibility.** New development of noise-sensitive land uses in noise-impacted areas shall incorporate effective mitigation measures into the project design to reduce exterior and interior noise consistent with Table 12.2 Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Environments.
>
> **Action N-2.1.5 Site Planning.** The City shall evaluate site orientation and building design to decrease the potential for noise intrusion, using the noise contour map and compatibility guidelines.
>
> **ALUCP Policy 2.1.1. Evaluating Acceptable Noise Levels for New Development:** The noise compatibility of proposed land uses within the Watsonville Municipal Airport Influence Area shall be evaluated in accordance with the policies set forth in this section, including the criteria listed in Table 2-1 and the noise contours depicted on Map 2-1. These criteria shall take precedence over any conflicting lesser criteria in the Noise Element of the Watsonville General Plan 2050.
>
> **ALUCP Policy 2.1.2. Maximum Acceptable Exterior Noise Exposure:** To minimize Noise-Sensitive development in noisy areas around the Airport, new land use development shall be restricted in accordance with the following.

(a) The maximum CNEL considered normally acceptable for new noise-sensitive uses, including residential, schools, and outdoor theaters, in the vicinity of the Watsonville Municipal Airport is 60 dBA.

(b) New nonresidential development shall be deemed incompatible in locations where the Airport-related noise exposure would be highly disruptive to the specific land use as indicated in Table 2-1.

(c) Land uses not specifically listed in Table 2-1 shall be evaluated using the criteria for similar listed uses together with the above factors.

ALUCP Policy 2.1.3. Maximum Acceptable Interior Noise Levels: Land uses for which interior activities may be easily disrupted by noise shall incorporate sound attenuation design features sufficient to meet the interior noise level criteria specified by this policy. To minimize disruption of indoor activities by aircraft noise, new structures shall be required to comply with the following interior noise level criteria.

(a) The maximum, aircraft-related, interior noise level that shall be considered acceptable for land uses near the Airport is:

(1) CNEL 45 dBA in:

- Any habitable room of single- or multi-family residences (including accessory dwelling units and family day care homes with 14 or fewer children);
- Hotels, motels, and other long-term and short-term lodging;
- Hospitals, nursing homes, and other congregate care facilities;
- Places of worship, meeting halls, theaters, and mortuaries; and
- Schools, libraries, and museums.

(2) CNEL 50 dBA in offices and office areas of industrial facilities.

(b) The noise contours depicted in Map 2-1 shall be used in calculating compliance with these criteria. The calculations shall assume that windows are closed.

(c) When a proposed building lies within multiple CNEL ranges, the 5 dBA range within which the largest amount of the building is located shall apply for the purposes of determining sound attenuation requirements.

(d) When structures are part of a proposed land use Action, evidence that proposed structures will be designed to comply with the criteria in Paragraph (a) of this policy shall be submitted to the City of Watsonville under the following circumstances:

(1) Any mobile home situated where the projected exposure to Airport noise is 60-dBA CNEL or greater. [A typical mobile home has an average exterior-to-interior noise level reduction (NLR) of approximately 15 dBA with windows closed.]

(2) Any single- or multi-family residence situated where the projected exposure to Airport noise is CNEL 60 dBA or greater (note that these uses are allowed only as Infill or on existing residential lots). [Wood frame buildings constructed to meet current standards for energy efficiency typically have an average NLR of approximately 20 dBA with windows closed.]

(3) Any hotel or motel, hospital or nursing home, church, meeting hall, office building, mortuary, school, library, or museum situated where the projected exposure to Airport noise is CNEL 60 dBA or greater.

(e) Exceptions to the interior noise level criteria in Paragraph (a) of this policy may be allowed where evidence is provided that the indoor noise generated by the use itself exceeds the listed criteria.

ALUCP Policy 2.1.4. Single-Event Noise Levels: Single-event noise levels shall be considered when evaluating the compatibility of highly Noise-Sensitive Land Uses such as residences, schools, libraries, and outdoor theaters. Single-event noise levels are especially important in areas that are regularly overflown by aircraft, but that do not produce significant CNEL contours (helicopter overflight areas are a particular example). Flight patterns for the Watsonville Municipal Airport or any proposed Heliport or Vertiport shall be considered in the review process. Acoustical studies or on-site noise measurements may be required to assist in determining the compatibility of sensitive uses.

Future noise-sensitive development within the Airport Influence Area would be subject to the exterior and interior noise compatibility criteria established in the ALUCP, including the CNEL 60 dBA maximum acceptable exterior standard for residential and other noise-sensitive uses and the required interior noise level reductions. The General Plan 2050 does not propose new noise-sensitive uses within the CNEL 60 dBA (or greater) noise contours of the Airport. Implementation of General Plan 2050 and ALUCP policies listed above would ensure adherence to applicable noise compatibility criteria that reduce noise exposure. Therefore, airport-related noise impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

4.14 Population and Housing

This section evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed plan in terms of population and housing.

During the public scoping process, one commentor expressed concerns regarding adverse impacts to the quality of housing, especially affordable housing, related to this plan. Impacts to housing, including quality and amount, are addressed in **Section 4.14.2.2, Project Impacts**.

4.14.1 Environmental Setting

4.14.1.1 Regulatory Framework

A project can induce substantial population growth by: 1) proposing new housing beyond projected or planned development levels, 2) generating demand for housing as a result of new businesses, 3) extending roads or other infrastructure to previously undeveloped areas, or 4) removing obstacles to population growth (e.g., expanding capacity of a wastewater treatment plant beyond that necessary to serve planned growth).

Federal

Fair Housing Act

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, or disability. Enacted in 1968, the Act ensures that individuals and families have equal access to housing opportunities, regardless of their background or identity. It applies to various aspects of housing, including renting, selling, financing, and advertising. The law protects individuals from discriminatory practices, such as refusing to rent or sell to prospective residents, setting different terms or conditions, or falsely denying housing availability based on protected characteristics. The Act plays a critical role in promoting fairness and equality in the housing market, fostering inclusive communities, and addressing systemic discrimination.

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) is a key component of the Fair Housing Act, aimed at preventing segregation and promoting inclusive communities. It requires communities receiving funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to actively address and eliminate patterns of segregation. In addition to prohibiting discrimination, the AFFH mandate directs local governments and housing authorities to identify barriers to fair housing and take meaningful actions to foster equal housing opportunities for all residents. This includes promoting diverse neighborhoods, improving access to services and housing for marginalized groups, and ensuring policies support economic and racial integration. The goal is to create communities where everyone, regardless of background, can thrive equally.

National Housing Act of 1934

The National Housing Act of 1934 established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to improve housing conditions, expand access to homeownership, and regulate mortgage lending practices. The FHA helped stabilize the housing market during the Great Depression by insuring loans, reducing lender risk, and encouraging banks to offer more affordable mortgage terms. It introduced long-term, fixed-rate

mortgages with lower down payments, making it easier for families to buy homes. The Act also set standards for construction and lending practices, improving housing quality and safety. By fostering greater access to credit and promoting stable homeownership, the Act played a key role in shaping the modern U.S. housing system.

Housing and Community Development Act of 1974

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 allocates funding to state and local governments to support housing development, public infrastructure, and community improvement projects. A key feature of the Act is the creation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which provides flexible funding to address a range of community needs, including affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, and public services.

The Act prioritizes projects that benefit low- and moderate-income individuals by funding initiatives like housing rehabilitation, public facility upgrades, job creation, and social services. Governments can tailor these funds to their specific challenges, ensuring that resources are directed toward local priorities. In addition to housing-related efforts, the Act supports the development of roads, water systems, and other essential infrastructure, contributing to long-term economic growth and sustainability.

This legislation reflects a shift toward community empowerment, giving local governments the ability to design and implement programs that promote both social and economic well-being. By addressing housing shortages, poverty, and infrastructure needs, the Act continues to play a vital role in shaping sustainable communities.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is the main federal law addressing homelessness, providing funding for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing solutions. It supports states, municipalities, and nonprofits in stabilizing individuals and families, offering both short-term relief and long-term housing. The Act also ensures homeless children and youth have access to education by requiring schools to provide immediate enrollment, transportation, and equal opportunities. Amended over time, including through the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009, it continues to address evolving homelessness issues with a focus on performance and accountability.

State

Housing Crisis Act of 2019

The Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (SB 330, Skinner) seeks to speed up housing production in the next half decade by eliminating some of the most common entitlement impediments to the creation of new housing, including delays in the local permitting process and cities enacting new requirements after an application is complete and undergoing local review—both of which can exacerbate the cost and uncertainty that sponsors of housing projects face. In addition to speeding up the timeline to obtain building permits, the bill prohibits local governments from reducing the number of homes that can be built through down-planning or down-zoning or the introduction of new discretionary design guidelines. The bill is in effect as of January 1, 2020 and extends until 2030, per SB 8 (Skinner, 2021).

Relocation Assistance: California Government Code Section 7261(a)

Section 7261(a) of the California Government Code requires that programs or projects undertaken by a public entity must be planned in a manner that (1) recognizes, at an early stage in the planning of the programs or projects and before the commencement of any actions which will cause displacements, the problems associated with the displacement of individuals, families, businesses, and farm operations, and (2) provides for the resolution of these problems in order to minimize adverse impacts on displaced persons and to expedite program or project advancement and completion. The displacing agency must ensure the relocation assistance advisory services are made available to all persons displaced by the public entity. If the agency determines that any person occupying property immediately adjacent to the property where the displacing activity occurs has caused substantial economic injury as a result of the displacement, the agency may also make the advisory services available to that person.

State Housing Element Statutes

State requirements mandating that housing be included as an element of each jurisdiction's general plan is known as housing-element law. The Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) is the state mandated process to identify the total number of housing units (by affordability level) that each jurisdiction must accommodate in its housing element. California housing-element law requires cities to: 1) zone adequate lands to accommodate its RHNA; 2) produce an inventory of sites that can accommodate its share of the RHNA; 3) identify governmental and non-governmental constraints to residential development; 4) develop strategies and a work plan to mitigate or eliminate those constraints; and 5) adopt a housing element and update it on a regular basis (CDHCD, 2024). The City's Housing Element and related land use policies were last updated October 2024.

SB 35 Affordable Housing: Streamlined Approval Process

SB 35 allows qualifying development projects with certain affordable housing guarantees to move more quickly through the local government review process. This bill also restricts the ability of local governments to reject these proposals. Engagement with this program is voluntary and subject to the choice of the project sponsor. The streamlined approval process of this bill applies primarily to infill developments in areas that have failed to meet their regional housing needs allocation. Eligibility for streamlining is determined by the affordability, number of units, zoning and residential uses, locations, historic buildings, workforce provisions, and land significance to California Native American tribes.

California Fair Employment and Housing Act

The California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) provides protection against discrimination in employment and in all aspects of housing. Harassment or discrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, color, creed, disability, marital status, medical condition, national origin, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. The sale, rental, or occupancy of most housing accommodations in California are subject to FEHA.

Regional

Regional Housing Needs Allocation

The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) prepares the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for each city and county within Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties. The RHNA

is based on statewide goals regarding housing affordability and accessibility. California's Housing Element Law requires all cities and counties to 1) zone adequate lands to accommodate its RHNA figures; 2) produce an inventory of sites that can accommodate its share of the regional housing need; 3) identify governmental and non-governmental constraints to residential development; 4) develop strategies and work plan to mitigate or eliminate those constraints; and 5) adopt a housing element that is to be updated on a regular recurring basis (City of Watsonville, 2024). **Table 4.14-1** shows the City's RHNA for the current Housing Element cycle (2023-2031).

Table 4.14-1 RHNA for the City of Watsonville Between 2023 and 2031

Income Group	RHNA Allocation Units Needed	**Percent (%) of total units**
Very Low	283	13.8%
Low	186	9.0%
Moderate	521	25.4%
Above Moderate	1,063	51.8%
Total	*2,053*	*100%*

Source: AMBAG, 2022.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

AMBAG serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Council of Governments for Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito counties.

AMBAG's 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), also called Connect Monterey Bay 2050, was adopted on June 10, 2026. The MTP/SCS consists of goals and strategies for how the Monterey Bay area jurisdictions can accommodate future growth and make the region more equitable and resilient in the face of unexpected challenges and achieve regional GHG emissions reduction targets established by the California Air Resources Board pursuant to Senate Bill 375.

AMBAG provides population growth estimates for each city and county within Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito counties. AMBAG's 2026 Regional Growth Forecast, adopted as a component of the MTP/SCS in June 2026, provides population, housing, and employment forecasts for the AMBAG region through the year 2050. Housing units in Watsonville are projected to grow 13 percent between 2023 and 2050 (AMBAG, 2026). Employment in Watsonville is projected to grow 6 percent from 2023 to 2050, and the population of Watsonville is anticipated to increase by 3 percent in that same time frame (AMBAG, 2026).

Local

City of Watsonville Municipal Code

Zoning regulations provide for the types and densities of residential and other uses permitted in each of the City's zoning districts. Zoning in the City establishes the maximum allowable

development in a zoning district. Zoning also includes height limitations and other development standards which together regulate development standards, such as setbacks, building heights, floor area ratios, open space and parking for each parcel in the City, as applicable.

City of Watsonville Affordable Housing Ordinance

Under City's Affordable Housing Ordinance, codified in Chapter 46 of Title 14 of the Watsonville Municipal Code (WMC), most new housing developments must include units affordable to very low-income to above moderate-income households, as defined in **WMC Section 14.46.030(o).** Affordability requirements vary by project type and size, as follows:

- For rental projects with seven or more units, 20 percent of all units must be affordable. This includes 5 percent at median income levels, 5 percent at low income levels, 5 percent at very low-income levels, and 5 percent reserved for Section 8 housing eligibility.
- For for-sale projects, the required percentage of affordable units depends on the project size. Projects with seven to 50 units must provide 15 percent affordable units, distributed as follows: 5 percent for above moderate households, 5 percent for moderate income households, and 5 percent for median income households. Projects with more than 50 units must meet a 20 percent affordable requirement, consisting of 10 percent at above moderate income levels, 5 percent at moderate income levels, and 5 percent at median income levels.

City of Watsonville 2023-2031 Housing Element

The City's Housing Element is prepared pursuant to state law and provides planning guidance in meeting the housing needs identified in AMBAG's RHNA. The Housing Element identifies the City's housing conditions and needs, and it establishes the goals, objectives, and policies that are the foundation of the City's housing growth strategy. The 2023-2031 Housing Element outlines housing sites and policies to accommodate the RHNA established in AMBAG's Final 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan. The Housing Element allocated 2,053 total housing units to the City of Watsonville, of which 283 must be very low-income, 186 must be low-income, 521 must be moderate-income, and 1,063 must be above moderate-income.

According to the City's adopted Housing Element, the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) area is expected to accommodate approximately 1,858 housing units over the 6th cycle (2023-2031), representing more than 90 percent of the City's 2023–2031 RHNA allocation. The DWSP area is anticipated to accommodate the majority of future residential growth, reflecting the City's focus on infill development and higher-density housing in its core urban area.

4.14.1.2 Existing Conditions

Population

The City of Watsonville had an estimated population of 51,809 in 2026, representing approximately 19.2 percent of the Santa Cruz County population of 270, 861 (DOF, 2026). While varying year to year, the City's population has been generally stable over the last 10 years; Watsonville had an estimated population of 52,057 in 2013, approximately only 0.5 percent greater than the 2026 population (DOF, 2021; DOF, 2026).

The City's population change in 5-year increments from 2015 to 2025 is shown in **Table 4.14-2**. The City's population decreased by approximately 1.7 percent between 2015 to 2020 and further shrank by 1.4 percent from 2020 to 2025.

Table 4.14-2 City of Watsonville Population Change

	2015	2020	2025
Population	52,689	51,809	51,101
Difference from Previous Five Years	-	- 880	- 708
Percent Total Change from Previous Five Years	-	-1.7%	- 1.4%

Source: DOF 2020, 2025.

Housing

As of January 1, 2026, there were 15,079 housing units in the City, representing approximately 13.9 percent of the County's total housing supply (DOF, 2026). The average household size in the City is 3.41 persons, notably higher than the County's average household size of 2.48 people (DOF, 2026). Approximately 51.3 percent of homes in the City of Watsonville were single-family detached homes, 20.2 percent were multifamily homes with more than five units, 11.3 percent were multifamily homes with two to four units, 9.9 percent were single-family attached homes, and 7.3 percent were mobile homes (DOF, 2026). From 2020 to 2026, the County's housing supply grew by 2,442 units (DOF, 2026). Between 2020 and 2026, the City's housing supply increased from 14,585 to 15,079, adding 494 units. Of these, 108 were single-family detached homes, 112 were single-family attached homes (e.g., townhomes), 26 were in multifamily buildings with two to four units (e.g., duplexes), and 248 were in multifamily buildings with greater than five units (DOF, 2026). The vacancy rate in the City was 3.2 percent, which is significantly lower than the County vacancy rate of 9.3 percent (DOF, 2026). The City's 2026 vacancy rate is slightly higher than its 2020 vacancy rate of 2.4 percent (DOF, 2026).

In 2024, the homeownership rate in the City was 44.8 percent, which was lower than the national homeownership rate of 65.3 percent (U.S Census, 2024a). As of 2024, the homeowner vacancy rate for the City was extremely low at approximately 0.7 percent, which is even lower than the 2020 vacancy rate of approximately 2 percent (U.S Census, 2024a; U.S Census, 2020). The average home price in the City was approximately $828,739 (Zillow, 2026).

Employment

As of 2024, there are 130,957 employed people that live in Santa Cruz County, and 21,924 of these employees live in the City of Watsonville. The County has an unemployment rate of 3.3 percent, and the City has a slightly higher unemployment rate of 4.7 percent (U.S. Census, 2024b; U.S. Census, 2024c). The City and County both had higher unemployment rates in 2014, reaching 6.8 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively (U.S. Census, 2014a; U.S. Census, 2014b). The City's labor force was slightly large in 2014, and 22,795 employees lived in the City (U.S. Census, 2014b). The County also had a larger labor force in 2014, and 129,416 employed people resided within the County (U.S. Census, 2014a).

4.14.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.14.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, a project would have a significant impact if the project would:

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); or

b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

4.14.2.2 Methodology

Population, housing, and employment data for the City and County was collected from publicly online databases, including records published by the U.S. Census Bureau, the California Department of Finance, AMBAG, and the City of Watsonville. The City's Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan was also reviewed as it relates to the location and density of new housing development.

4.14.2.3 Project Impacts

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)?

General Plan 2050 would facilitate planned growth within the City of Watsonville, including approximately 5,980 new homes and an increase of approximately 17,872 residents by 2050. This population growth of approximately 34 percent between 2023 and 2050 would result in a total population of approximately 70,186, which is significantly higher than AMBAG's projections for the City. Furthermore, the City plans to gain approximately 6,206 jobs between 2023 and 2050, and the greatest increases are anticipated in the industrial, office space, and retail industries.

General Plan 2050 would accommodate anticipated future population, job, and housing growth, in the plan area, thus the growth is planned. General Plan 2050 would accommodate the current housing cycle's RHNA, and it guides growth and accounts for the 7th and 8th housing cycles as well. Additionally, General Plan 2050 focuses growth in areas with the capacity to support more residents, such as designated new growth areas and the DWSP area. As mentioned in **Section 4.14.1.1**, the majority of the infill housing has already been planned in the downtown area as part of the DWSP. Approximately 75 percent of the new housing units envisioned in General Plan 2050 would be constructed as infill housing downtown and along commercial corridors. Furthermore, General Plan 2050 anticipates the possible annexation and development of new growth areas, such as the Buena Vista growth area and Area C. Planned growth would consist entirely of development within the City's existing SOI, as amended to account for the existing Urban Limit Line for the Buena Vista new growth area. Additionally, General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions contain development standards to guide the design and density of housing and would serve as program-level mitigation for impacts related to growth.

The following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050 would guide the planned growth within the City related to population, employment, and housing.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal LC-1 A Well-Planned City of Places. A well-planned City that: supports a wide range of complementary land uses developed and operated at intensities that accommodate anticipated growth; achieves the vision of a beautiful, diverse, and well-connected community; features unique places that respect Watsonville's agricultural and architectural heritage; and remains rooted in its unique climate, topography, history, and cultural traditions.

Policy LC-1.1 Population and Land Use. Plan the orderly intensification of existing development and expansion of the City limits within the Sphere of Influence to meet growth expectations and address the quality-of-life needs of the projected population.

Policy LC-1.5 Urban Limit Line. Adjust the Urban Limit Line via referendum to allow the phased annexation of land located within:

- The northeast corner of the Buena Vista and Area C new growth areas to enable new housing, including single-family houses;
- The Highway 1 Gateway new growth area to enable the introduction of needed employment-producing, visitor-serving, and sales tax generating uses.

Goal LC-7 Active, Pedestrian-Friendly, Revitalized Corridors. Revitalized, multi-modal corridors will provide multi-family housing, neighborhood-serving retail, and convenient access to bus transit, while continuing to accommodate automobile traffic.

Policy LC-7.1 Multi Family Development. Introduce new multifamily housing along Watsonville's corridors that:

- Face and provide access from the sidewalk;
- Provide pedestrian access into buildings directly from the sidewalk or common open spaces that connect directly to the sidewalk; and
- Locate parking, loading zones, and utilities at the center or rear of the lot with vehicular and service access from alleys or side streets.

Policy LC-7.8 Connected Development. Ensure new development is well-connected to adjoining neighborhoods, neighborhood centers, and bus stops via high quality walking and biking routes.

Policy LC-7.9 Connections Between Development Projects. Require pedestrian and, as practical, vehicular connections between adjacent development projects and associated parking lots.

Goal LC-9 Context-Sensitive Neighborhood Infill. New neighborhood-adjacent multi-family infill buildings will be designed to the scale of existing single-family houses.

Policy LC-9.1 House Form Infill. Introduce new house-form multi-family buildings consistent in scale, massing and visual character with single-family houses.

Action LC 9.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Review and revise as necessary existing adopted residential design standards and guidelines, including the City of Watsonville Residential Development Standards for Multi-Family Condominium & Townhouse Projects, and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines to guide the design of new neighborhood-adjacent house-form, multi-family buildings to be consistent with the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods.

Policy LC-10.2 Master Planned New Growth Areas. Develop designated New Growth Areas beyond the existing City limits according to master plans that conform to this General Plan and are implemented through the City's zoning ordinance, development standards, Capital Improvement Program, and environmental review process.

Action LC-10.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise zoning provisions, and other policies to:

- Maintain the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods by ensuring that any new multi-family residential development adjacent to single-family neighborhoods is house-form in scale and character.
- Ensure the creation of new neighborhoods within the new growth areas that are consistent with the human-scaled provisions ofGeneral Plan 2050. In particular, include objective design standards consistent with the General Plan that include the following design features:
    - An interconnected street and block network with a high level of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connectivity;
    - Tree-lined streets with sidewalks and on-street parking;
    - Integration of one or more community facilities, such as parks, schools, trails, or civic buildings;
    - A variety of housing types and styles appropriate to the existing neighborhood context; and
- Street-facing building entries and windows with driveways and garages generally deemphasized in the streetscape composition.

Action LC-10.2 Annexation of new neighborhood growth areas located within the Urban Limit Line. With the support of the property owners of each prospective new neighborhood growth area located within the Urban Limit Line (Buena Vista and Atkinson Lane), work with the City of Watsonville, the County of Santa Cruz, and LAFCO to:

- Prepare a phased master plan(s) and associated tract maps that incorporate the human-scale provisions ofGeneral Plan 2050 and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines.
- Work with LAFCO to conduct the annexation process.

Action LC-10.3 Annexation of new neighborhood growth areas located outside the Urban Limit Line. With the support of the property owners of each prospective new neighborhood growth area located within the Sphere of Influence but outside the current Urban Limit Line (Area C and northeast corner of Buena Vista), work with the City of Watsonville, the County of Santa Cruz, and LAFCO to:

- Hold a citywide referendum to approve extending the Urban Limit Line to include Area C and/or the northeast corner of Buena Vista.
- With citywide approval, prepare a phased master plan(s) and associated tract maps that incorporate the human-scale provisions ofGeneral Plan 2050 and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines.

- Work with LAFCO to conduct the annexation process.

Policy LC-11.3 Flexible Building and Site Design. Encourage site and building design on commercial, industrial, and employment-generating land that can "flex" to accommodate different uses over time to maximize opportunities for business expansion, increase employment opportunities, and improve the jobs to housing ratio.

New single and multi-family residential development is envisioned for the future, but this growth has been accounted for in General Plan 2050. In addition, this planned residential development is reflected in the City's current Cycle 6th Housing Element and likely subsequent next two cycles. Therefore, impacts related to development buildout would be minimal. All land use development proposals are anticipated to be consistent with General Plan 2050 land use designations and would not add growth beyond what is anticipated with plan implementation. In the case that new development would not be consistent with the project area's land use designation, the project applicant would seek discretionary approval from the City and undergo additional environmental review prior to entitlements and construction. The process for acquiring relevant permits or updating the zoning code is described further in **Section 4.11, Land Use**. The plan would not result in substantial unplanned population growth, and impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

b) Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

The plan would not displace existing people or housing. Instead, General Plan 2050 would guide future development in the City to ensure that displacement does not occur. Infill development would be prioritized by the plan to minimize the demolition of existing structures. The infill development under General Plan 2050 could result in displacement of existing residential units. However, all infill development of parcels would be voluntary in nature, and no housing units would be displaced without permission of the property owners and would require adherence to state housing laws regarding replacing housing units and relocation assistance. Additionally, General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions are intended to guide future development and serve as program-level mitigation for impacts related to housing displacement or replacement.

Future development in the plan area would be guided by the following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Policy LC-7.1 Multi Family Development. Introduce new multifamily housing along Watsonville's corridors that:

- Face and provide access from the sidewalk;
- Provide pedestrian access into buildings directly from the sidewalk or common open spaces that connect directly to the sidewalk; and
- Locate parking, loading zones, and utilities at the center or rear of the lot with vehicular and service access from alleys or side streets.

Policy LC-7.4 Reciprocal Parking and Access Agreements. For sites over two (2) acres in area that are comprised of multiple parcels or capable of being subdivided into multiple parcels:

- Require the establishment of reciprocal parking and access agreements; parking and access agreements among all property owners within the development. These agreements shall ensure coordinated vehicular and pedestrian access, shared use of

parking facilities, and mutual responsibilities for maintenance and operations of all shared driveways, parking areas, and access routes.

- Require Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs) that allow future infill housing;
- Consistent with the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines, require new, internal vehicular streets or pedestrian paseos align with and connect to existing dead-end streets (stubs) located on adjacent sites, as permitted by the adjacent use and that new dead-end vehicular streets stubs or pedestrian paseos align with future streets or paseos on adjacent undeveloped sites in anticipation of future connection.

Policy LC-7.8 Connected Development. Ensure new development is well-connected to adjoining neighborhoods, neighborhood centers, and bus stops via high quality walking and biking routes.

Policy LC-7.9 Connections Between Development Projects. Require pedestrian and, as practical, vehicular connections between adjacent development projects and associated parking lots.

Goal LC-9 Context-Sensitive Neighborhood Infill. New neighborhood-adjacent multi-family infill buildings will be designed to the scale of existing single-family houses.

Policy LC-9.1 House Form Infill. Introduce new house-form multi-family buildings consistent in scale, massing and visual character with single-family houses.

Action LC 9.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Review and revise as necessary existing adopted residential design standards and guidelines, including the City of Watsonville Residential Development Standards for Multi-Family Condominium & Townhouse Projects, and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines to guide the design of new neighborhood-adjacent house-form, multi-family buildings to be consistent with the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods.

Goal LC-10 Complete, New Neighborhoods. Unique and diverse neighborhoods will provide a range of housing types and choices and access to community facilities that support active and healthy lifestyles.

Action LC-10.1.1 Revise Existing Land Use Regulations. Revise zoning provisions, and other policies to:

- Maintain the scale and character of Watsonville's established neighborhoods by ensuring that any new multi-family residential development adjacent to single-family neighborhoods is house-form in scale and character.
- Ensure the creation of new neighborhoods within the new growth areas that are consistent with the human-scaled provisions ofGeneral Plan 2050. In particular, include objective design standards consistent with the General Plan that include the following design features:
    - An interconnected street and block network with a high level of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connectivity;
    - Tree-lined streets with sidewalks and on-street parking;
    - Integration of one or more community facilities, such as parks, schools, trails, or civic buildings;

    - A variety of housing types and styles appropriate to the existing neighborhood context; and

- Street-facing building entries and windows with driveways and garages generally deemphasized in the streetscape composition.

Action LC-10.2 Annexation of new neighborhood growth areas located within the Urban Limit Line. With the support of the property owners of each prospective new neighborhood growth area located within the Urban Limit Line (Buena Vista and Atkinson Lane), work with the City of Watsonville, the County of Santa Cruz, and LAFCO to:

- Prepare a phased master plan(s) and associated tract maps that incorporate the human-scale provisions ofGeneral Plan 2050 and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines.
- Work with LAFCO to conduct the annexation process.

Action LC-10.3 Annexation of new neighborhood growth areas located outside the Urban Limit Line. With the support of the property owners of each prospective new neighborhood growth area located within the Sphere of Influence but outside the current Urban Limit Line (Area C and northeast corner of Buena Vista), work with the City of Watsonville, the County of Santa Cruz, and LAFCO to:

- Hold a citywide referendum to approve extending the Urban Limit Line to include Area C and/or the northeast corner of Buena Vista.
- With citywide approval, prepare a phased master plan(s) and associated tract maps that incorporate the human-scale provisions of General Plan 2050 and the City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines.
- Work with LAFCO to conduct the annexation process.

Policy LC-10.3 Connected Neighborhoods. Require each new increment of residential development to provide street and trail connections to existing adjoining residential or commercial areas and provide for future connections into any adjoining parcels.

Policy LC-10.4 Balanced Neighborhoods. Promote a range of housing types (single-family detached, single-family attached, multi-family, senior housing), tenures (ownership, rental), and price levels (affordable, market-rate).

Policy LC-10.6 Conventional Suburban Neighborhood Design. Prohibit the construction of new residential neighborhoods that provide sound walls along any streets, discontinuous cul-de sac street patterns, long block lengths, single building and housing types, and lack of walking or biking access to parks, schools, goods, and services. Where this is not possible due to safety factors, existing development patterns or envisioned streetscape character, neighborhood edges shall be designed according to the following policies:

- Strongly discourage the construction of new gated communities;
- Allow sound walls to buffer new neighborhoods from existing sources of noise pollution, such as railroads and limited access roadways;
- Consider sound walls as sites for public art and/or vertical landscaping;

- Prohibit the use of sound walls to buffer residential areas from arterial or collector streets Instead address noise issues with building design and setbacks, landscaping and other techniques.
- In the case where sound walls must be provided, require pedestrian access points to improve access from the neighborhoods to nearby commercial, educational, and recreational amenities, activity centers and transit stops.
- Discourage the use of signs to distinguish one residential project from another. Strive for neighborhoods to blend seamlessly into one another. If provided, gateways should be landmarks and urban design focal points, not advertisements for home builders.

With the implementation of state housing laws and General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions included in the project, the plan would not displace existing housing or require the construction of replacement housing. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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4.15 Public Services

This section discusses impacts related to public services that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. One comment related to public services was received during the EIR scoping period. A concern was raised regarding the fire protection services in the Buena Vista area.

4.15.1 Environmental Setting

4.15.1.1 Regulatory Framework

State

California Government Code Section 65996

California Government Code Section 65996 stipulates that an acceptable method of offsetting a project's effect on the adequacy of school facilities is the payment of a school impact fee prior to issuance of a building permit. The legislation states that payments of school impact fees "are hereby deemed to provide full and complete school facilities mitigation" under CEQA (§65996[b]). The school district is responsible for implementing the specific methods of school impact mitigation under the Government Code. The CEQA documents must identify that school impact fees and the school districts' methods of implementing measures specified by Government Code Section 65996 would adequately mitigate project-related increases in student enrollment.

California Fire Code

The California Fire Code (CFC) is a statewide set of provisions and regulations for fire-related emergency management. Fire protection systems, fire hydrant locations, and hazardous materials management processes are also outlined in the CFC.

Section 4907: Defensible Space

Defensible space refers to geographic buffers between a structure/plan area and the surrounding area. Defensible space slows the spread of fire towards a structure and allows firefighters to more easily access and defend property from fire. Sections 4291, 4906, and 4907 of the CFC outline best practices for removing combustible growth and vegetation from a property. Fuel management and hazardous vegetation requirements are also outlined in these sections.

Chapter 49: Wildland-Urban Interface Areas

Chapter 49 of the CFC describes the minimum requirements necessary to mitigate conditions that may cause a fire in the wildland-urban interface fire area. Wildland-Urban Interfaces are identified by the state of California as a "Fire Hazard Severity Zone" and are typically at a significant risk of wildfires. This section of the CFC outlines the requirements of a fire protection plan and discusses best construction practices in fire hazard severity zones.

Quimby Act – California Code Sections 66475-66478

The Quimby Act (California Government Code § 66475-66478) was approved by the California legislature to preserve open space and parkland in the State. The Quimby Act authorizes local governments to establish ordinances requiring developers of new subdivisions to dedicate parks, pay an in-lieu fee, or

perform a combination of the two. As described below, the City has adopted a Parkland Dedication Ordinance and a Park Impact Ordinance, consistent with the Quimby Act.

California Occupational Safety and Health Administration

In accordance with California Code of Regulations Title 8 Sections 1270 "Fire Prevention" and 6773 "Fire Protection and Fire Equipment" the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) 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 hose 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 Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Plan

The Law Enforcement Mutual Aid System was established in 1961 and has been used to restore order during emergencies, including civil unrest, and to provide assistance to local agencies during other unusual events or catastrophic disasters. As a component of the Standardized Emergency Management System, the Mutual Aid System is based on four organizational levels: cities, counties, regions, and the State. The state is divided into seven Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Regions. The County Sheriff serves as the "Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinator". In each of the seven regions, one Sheriff, elected by his or her peers, serves as the Regional Mutual Aid Coordinator. California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Law Enforcement Branch has Assistant Chiefs assigned to each of the seven regions for direct coordination with law enforcement chiefs and sheriffs within each region.

Emergency Response/Evacuation Plans

The State of California passed legislation authorizing the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to prepare a Standard Emergency Management System (SEMS) program, which sets forth measures by which a jurisdiction should handle emergency disasters. Non-compliance with SEMS could result in the State withholding disaster relief from the non-complying jurisdiction in the event of an emergency disaster.

Senate Bill 50

According to California Government Code, a qualified agency, such as a local school district, may impose fees on developers to compensate for the impact that the project will have on existing facilities or services.

The California Legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 50 in 1998 to insert new language into the Government Code (§ 65995.5-65885.7), which authorized school districts to impose fees on developers of new residential construction in excess of mitigation fees authorized by Government Code Section 66000. SB 50 also restricts the ability of local agencies to deny project approvals on the basis that public school facilities (classrooms, auditoriums, etc.) are inadequate. School districts must meet a list of specific criteria, including the completion and annual update of a School Facility Needs Analysis, in order to impose additional fees.

Under SB 50, school districts may collect fees to offset the costs associated with increasing school capacity as a result of development. Under the terms of this statute, payment of statutory fees by property owners or property developers is considered to mitigate in full for the purposes of CEQA any impacts to school facilities associated with a qualifying project. The fees are assessed based upon the proposed square footage of the new or expanded development.

California Education Code

The California Department of Education (CDE) School Facilities Planning Division developed the Guide to School Site Analysis and Development in 2000. The Guide provides criteria for locating appropriate school sites within California, per Education Code Section 17251 and Title 5, Section 14010 of the California Code of Regulations. In order to receive state funds for the acquisition of sites under the School Facilities Program, CDE must approve of the site selection. The CDE also provides detailed recommendations for school sites and sizing, suggesting a ratio of approximately 2:1 between buildings and open land, where applicable. Specific health and safety requirements for school site selection are also under the purview of the CDE, specifically regarding air quality emissions and noise levels, as well as proximity to airports, high-voltage power transmission lines, presence of toxic and hazardous materials, and proximity to railroads.

Local

Watsonville Municipal Code

Title 8, Chapter 11, Fire Code of Watsonville Municipal Code provides administrative definitions of fire protection and services regarding building regulations in the City. The code also lists general precautions against fire and introduces fire protection systems that are required in buildings.

Title 3, Chapter 15, Park Development Impact Fees of the Watsonville Municipal Code enables the acquisition and/or development and/or improvement of neighborhood and community parks to provide both passive and active recreational opportunities to the residents of the City in order to improve the quality of life and for the public health, welfare and benefit. New development within the City generates a need for added facilities and an increased demand upon existing facilities, and the imposition of park development impact fees upon new residential development is necessary to provide funding for such new or improved facilities meeting established standards for such new development. As set forth herein, the City has established the following park development impact fees: 1) parkland impact fee; 2) park improvement impact fee; and 3) community centers and recreation facilities impact fee.

Measure Y

Adopted in March 2022, Measure Y renewed and extended Measure G, a voter-approved ½-cent local sales tax originally enacted in June 2014 that established a dedicated funding source for public safety services in the City. The measure supports enhanced police and fire protection, including the hiring and retention of personnel, modernization of equipment and facilities, and the expansion of public safety services. It also allocates funding for youth violence prevention and broader community safety programs.

The measure includes strict accountability provisions, including independent oversight by a citizen committee, regular financial audits, and public reporting requirements to ensure that revenues are expended in accordance with voter intent. In addition, the City is required to commission an independent third-party fire facility and operational needs assessment at least once every decade—no later than two years following the release of final decennial census data—the results of which must be used to update the short- and long-term facility and operational needs of the City's Fire and Police Departments.

Potential fire department needs to be coordinated with the decennial fire facility and operational needs assessment include: improved facilities that enable specialized training to other agencies and private students as a revenue source; additional staffing to maintain compliance with current inspection mandates, meet inspection demand, strengthen proactive fire prevention, and reduce the City's exposure to risk associated with fire incidents and related injuries; incorporation of in-house patient ambulance transport services; and upgrades and expansion of additional facilities and equipment. In addition, staffing, facilities, and equipment needs should be evaluated to support projected growth.

4.15.1.2 Existing Conditions

Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

The Watsonville Fire Department (WFD) provides fire protection services to the plan area. As part of mutual aid and auto aid, the WFD increased its service area to an area of approximately 14 square miles and an estimated population of 60,000. The plan area contains the two WFD stations, located at 115 Second Ave (Station 1) near Downtown Watsonville and at 370 Airport Blvd (Station 2) next to the Watsonville Municipal Airport (City of Watsonville, n.d.a). Station 1 has undergone extensive remodeling, with the addition of restrooms and improvements to the laundry room and firefighter quarters. Fire Station 2 was established in 1978 to serve the airport and surrounding areas (City of Watsonville, n.d.b) and provides emergency response services to the airport and surrounding areas. The Airport is in contact with WFD and provides training specific to aircraft emergencies (City of Watsonville, 2023).

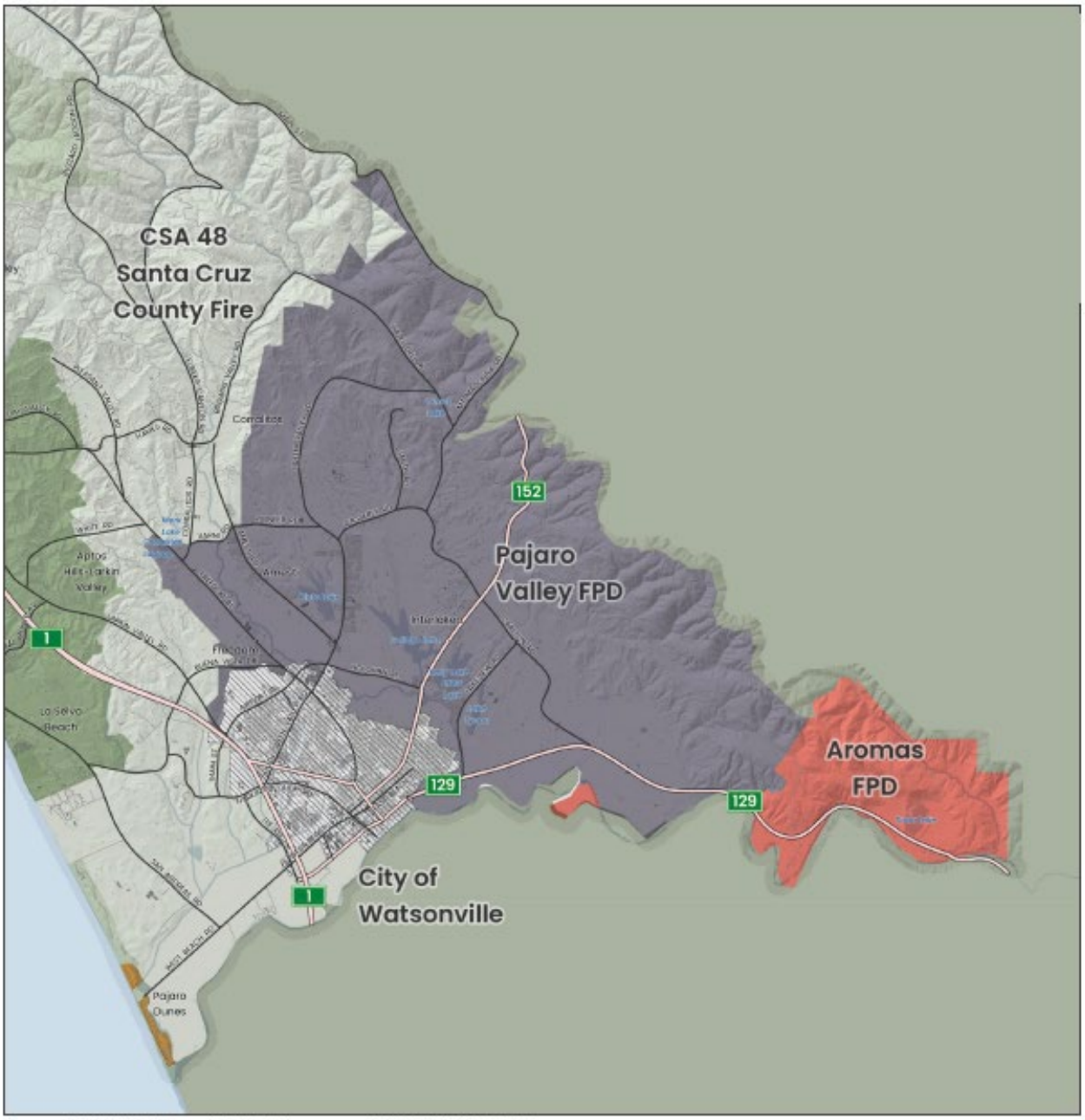
Within the WFD, there are four divisions: Administrative, Fire Prevention, Operations, and Training/Safety/EMS. The Administrative Division is responsible for human resources and financial management. The Fire Prevention Division provides public education and consultation about fire prevention and emergency response. The Operations Division administers all emergency response and fire suppression operations. The Training/Safety/EMS Division educates and trains all fire personnel on emergency response and fire suppression techniques (City of Watsonville, n.d.a).

The WFD services include administering and enforcing the Fire Code, developing and implementing hazard mitigation, monitoring and overseeing the target hazard program, coordinating the Fireworks Task Force, as well as Title 19 fire inspections, investigation oversight, and overseeing the self-inspection program for low hazard businesses within the plan area. The WFD provides training for entry-level firefighters, in-service continuation trainings for employees, and professional development trainings with specific designations. The WFD runs a safety program and provides training for paramedic staff. The WFD holds class visits, fire safety talks, and station tours as part of public education and engagement processes.

The WFD currently operates with 35 employees with no volunteer firefighters (City of Watsonville, 2025a). The WFD is structured with one Fire Chief, two administrative personnel, one Division Chief, three Battalion Chiefs, nine Fire Captains, nine Engineers, and 10 Firefighters, ensuring a well-rounded team for efficient emergency response and fire prevention services. The fire stations are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The WFD maintains three front-line response units staffed across rotating shifts and is equipped to respond to a wide range of urban and wildland incidents. Service demand has increased in recent years, with approximately 6,200 calls for service recorded in 2024, reflecting ongoing growth in emergency response needs. Per a 2022 Standards of Coverage report, the department currently meets response time standards. In addition to providing all-risk, all hazard emergency response services to the Watsonville community, the WFD has entered into contract(s) to provide fire suppression and emergency services to nearby urbanized areas outside city limits.

Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District (PVFPD) contracts with the WFD to provide emergency services in urban areas of the District that are closer to the WFD fire stations (**Figure 4.15-1**). The Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District has automatic and mutual aid agreements with the City of Watsonville, Santa Cruz County Fire in Corralitos, Aromas Tri-County Fire, and South Santa Clara County Fire District. These agreements work in favor of all departments involved. The mutual aid agreement was formalized with the City in the 2019-2020 Fire Protection Services Contract.

Figure 4.15-1 Fire Protection Districts



Source: City of Watsonville, Esri, 2026.

The PVFPD's jurisdiction encompasses the areas outside of the City but within the plan area. The Pajaro Valley Fire District is a one station department housing two type 1 engines, and one type 1 water tender and serves a rural community of approximately 18,000 people. The PVFPD covers approximately 52 square miles (the largest fire district in Santa Cruz County), a large part of which is an unincorporated area surrounding Watsonville. The PVFPD encompasses both State Responsibility Area and Local Responsibility Area lands, and has the duty to respond to all fires, medical emergencies, vehicle accidents, and many other hazardous situations. On average, the District runs 1,600 calls per year (PVFPD, n.d.). As of June 2026, PVFPD's average elapsed time from dispatch to arrival on scene was approximately seven minutes (PVFPD, 2026).

Police Protection

The Watsonville Police Department (WPD) provides police services within the city limits of the plan area. Responsibilities of the Police Department include street patrol, investigations, traffic patrol, and emergency services. Additionally, the Police Department runs several programs that aim to reduce and prevent crime, including the Chief's Advisory Board, Guest Speaker Program, Police Activities League, and National Night Out community-building campaign.

The WPD is made up of Administrative Services Division, Operations Division, and Support Services Division. The Police Department maintains 68 sworn police officers and 20 professional staff (WPD, n.d.). A single police station, located at 215 Union Street, houses the administration, records, and patrol aspects of the Police Department. Patrol officers utilize one satellite station at the Freedom Library, implementing the most innovative concept of Community Policing in the County. The Police Department is currently exploring two additional satellite stations to improve response times. Average response time for Priority 1 calls is 4 minutes 6 seconds, and shifts aim to include at least two bilingual officers (City of Watsonville, n.d.c).

Although the Police Department does not have a standard for staffing levels, the ratio of officers per 1,000 residents, based on the 2026 population estimate of 51,809 and 68 sworn police officers, is approximately 1.3 officers per 1,000 residents.

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement services in the county's unincorporated areas, while the California Highway Patrol primarily handles traffic enforcement and traffic-related incidents on state highways and county roadways. Under the California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Plan, both agencies may also provide mutual assistance within the plan area on an as-needed basis (Santa Cruz County, 2024).

Parks

The City offers 143 acres of park land in its 26 parks for the community to enjoy. City parks range from small green pocket parks to larger facilities, such as Pinto Lake Park, which offers fishing, boating, and RV camping amenities. As discussed further in **Section 4.16, Recreation,** all 26 city parks are within or in the vicinity of the plan area and are listed in **Table 4.16-1**. The City's ratio of 2.77 park acre per 1,000 residents is below the Quimby Act target of 3 acres per 1,000 residents. However, county parks in the neighboring regions provide more park space for residents in the plan area, including Pinto Lake County Park and Mesa Village County Park.

Community Centers and Recreational Facilities

As described in **Section 4.16, Recreation**, the City provides seven community centers and recreational facilities within the Plan Area that support recreational, educational, and community activities for

Watsonville residents (see **Table 4.16-2**). These facilities include the Gene Hoularis and Waldo Rodriguez Youth Center, which serves as a central hub for youth programs, indoor sports, community gatherings, and educational activities. The City also operates the Skate Park at Ramsay Park, which includes ramps and rails for skateboarding and is a popular recreational destination for local youth. Please refer to **Section 4.16, Recreation** for more information on these facilities.

Schools

The Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) serves students from the City of Watsonville and surrounding areas, covering the entire plan area. The PVUSD serves students in kindergarten through grade 12. There is a total of 18 schools within the PVUSD that serve the plan area as shown in **Table 4.15-1**. As of the 2024-2025 school year, the school district had a district-wide enrollment of approximately 17,089 students and had approximately 2,108 employees (Ed Data, 2026). In the 2024–25 school year, the PVUSD employed a total of 827 certificated staff, including 342 serving grades K–6, 140 serving grades 6–9, 242 serving grades 9–12, and 103 classified as K–12 other (Ed Data, 2026).

Table 4.15-1 PVUSD Schools Serving the Plan Area

School	Address	Grades	2024-2025 Enrollment
Freedom Elementary	25 Holly Drive, Freedom	K-5	479
Alianza Charter	115 Casserly Road, Watsonville	K-8	626
Amesti Elementary	25 Amesti Road, Watsonville	K-5	431
Hall District Elementary	300 Sill Road, Watsonville	K-5	470
Lakeview Middle	2350 East Lake Avenue, Watsonville	6-8	425
New School Community Day	165 Harkins Slough Road, Watsonville	10-12	42
T.S. MacQuiddy Elementary	330 Martinelli Street, Watsonville	K-5	438
Calabasas Elementary	202 Calabasas Road, Watsonville	K-6	512
H.A. Hyde Elementary	125 Alta Vista Street, Watsonville	K-5	476
Starlight Elementary	225 Hammer Drive, Watsonville	K-5	383
Landmark Elementary	235 Ohlone Parkway, Watsonville	K-5	419
Ann Soldo Elementary	1140 Menasco Drive, Watsonville	K-5	377
Mintie White Elementary	515 Palm Avenue, Watsonville	K-5	493
Radcliff Elementary	550 Rodriguez Street, Watsonville	K-5	409

School	Address	Grades	2024-2025 Enrollment
Linscott Charter	220 Elm Street, Watsonville	K-8	258
Rolling Hills Middle	130 Herman Avenue, Watsonville	6-8	588
Cesar E. Chavez Middle	440 Arthur Road, Watsonville	6-8	548
E.A. Hall Middle	201 Brewington Avenue, Watsonville	6-8	491
Ceiba Charter School	260 West Riverside Drive, Watsonville	6-12	501
Pajaro Valley High	500 Harkins Slough Road, Watsonville	9-12	1,293
Diamond Technology Institute	112 Diamond Drive, Watsonville	9-12	87
Watsonville High	250 East Beach Street, Watsonville	9-12	2,215

Source: EdData, 2026.

Libraries

The plan area is served by Watsonville Public Library System with two branch libraries in total. The main Watsonville Public Library is located at 275 Main Street in Downtown Watsonville. The Freedom Branch Library became a part of the Watsonville Public Library system in 1996. On August 22, 2000, the Freedom Branch Library opened at its new location at 2021 Freedom Boulevard, at the corner of Freedom Boulevard and Airport Boulevard within the City limits. The libraries provide a variety of information, materials, and services, and aim to inspire resilience and creativity of the community. The cost to operate the Watsonville Public Library System is paid by property taxes, multiple grants and donations (Watsonville Public Library, n.d.).

4.15.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.15.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

This analysis considers the projected population and employment growth associated with the proposed land use changes and intensification with implementation of the plan.

Information on existing public service providers, service areas, and facilities was obtained through review of publicly available documents. Additional information was gathered from agency websites, municipal budgets, and consultations with staff from affected departments and service districts, where applicable.

The public services analyzed in this section include:

- Fire protection
- Police protection
- Public schools
- Public libraries

- Parks and recreational facilities

The analysis focuses on whether implementation of the project would result in the need for new or physically expanded facilities to maintain existing service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives, and whether construction of such facilities could cause significant environmental effects.

This analysis identifies whether the scale or intensity of the proposed land use changes could result in the need for substantial new or expanded public service infrastructure. Any future discretionary development projects would be required to assess localized impacts and determine appropriate mitigation measures, as appropriate.

This analysis is qualitative in nature but informed by planning-level population projections and the capacity of existing public service systems. Where relevant, thresholds of significance are derived from the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, and tailored to reflect local conditions and adopted policies.

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to public services would be considered significant if the project would:

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, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:
    i. Fire Protection;
    ii. Police Protection;
    iii. Schools;
    iv. Parks; or
    v. Libraries.

4.15.2.2 Methodology

This analysis considers the projected population and employment growth associated with the buildout of General Plan 2050.

Information on existing public service providers, service areas, and facilities was obtained through review of publicly available documents. Additional information was gathered from agency websites, municipal budgets, and consultations with staff from affected departments and service districts, where applicable.

The analysis focuses on whether implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in the need for new or physically expanded facilities to maintain existing service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives, and whether construction of such facilities could cause significant environmental effects.

This analysis identifies whether the scale or intensity of the proposed land use changes could result in the need for substantial new or expanded public service infrastructure. Any future discretionary development projects would be required to assess localized impacts and determine appropriate mitigation measures, as appropriate.

This analysis is qualitative in nature but informed by planning-level population projections and the capacity of existing public service systems. Where relevant, thresholds of significance are derived from the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, and tailored to reflect local conditions and adopted policies.

4.15.2.3 Project Impacts

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:

i. Fire protection?

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would increase the demand for fire service to Watsonville residents. To maintain existing service levels to serve projected growth, either built-in fire suppression devices, such as approved sprinkler systems, or another fire station will be required, along with increased staffing and equipment. Under the proposed general plan, the majority of residential growth will likely occur within the current city limits as infill growth (approximately 75 percent), while the majority of non-residential growth will likely occur within the annexation areas outside the city limits (approximately 75 percent). Within the city limits, most residential growth is anticipated within Downtown (approximately 85 percent). Future developments in the existing city limits and urbanized areas adjacent to the PVFPD's jurisdiction would continue to be serviced by the WFD, as these infill areas are already within the City's established fire service area.

For the Buena Vista new growth area, future development would occur directly adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods along Calabasas Road and Buena Vista Drive, which lie within the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District. The City maintains a contract to provide fire suppression and emergency services to urbanized areas within the District. Similarly, the Atkinson Lane and Area C growth areas are located within the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District and near established residential neighborhoods both within the City limits and in nearby county communities such as East Lake Avenue, Holohan Road, Atkinson Lane, and College Road. As a result, future development in Areas B and C would also be served by the WFD, as it falls within the City's contracted provision of fire services to urban areas of the District.

The Highway 1 Gateway area would include future development near existing roadways including State Highway 1, Riverside Drive, and W. Beach Street, which are currently located within the County Service Area (CSA) 48 Fire Protection District. Proposed land uses within this growth area include light industrial, gateway commercial, and park/athletic designations that would provide opportunities for a new gateway into the City. No residential uses are proposed within the Highway 1 Gateway area. Additionally, the Highway 1 Gateway Area is located outside of any current fire hazard severity zones. Similar to Areas B and C above, the City maintains a mutual aid agreement between the WFD and CSA 48 to automatically dispatch resources across jurisdictional boundaries as part of the initial response to specific incident types or geographic areas. Upon the future annexation of these areas, the WFD would assume fire protection responsibilities for the Highway 1 Gateway area and future development within the area.

As a result of projected population growth being accommodated under General Plan 2050, additional staff and equipment would be required to maintain or improve current response times. It is likely that new or expanded facilities would be required to support the additional staff and serve the new development. Further, increased traffic volumes could affect the Fire Department's response time if planned roadway, circulation, and emergency-access improvements are not implemented. However, General Plan 2050's emphasis on compact, walkable development and traffic-calmed streets in the downtown and mixed-use corridors is expected to reduce vehicle speeds, traffic collisions, and associated emergency calls for service while maintaining adequate emergency access.

General Plan 2050 includes the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to lessen impacts to fire protection services:

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Mitigate Potential Impacts

Goal PSF-1: Public Safety. Protect life and property to the City of Watsonville's residents through fire prevention, training, safety, EMS, and Citywide disaster planning.

Policy PSF-1.1 Public Protection. The City shall continue to provide sufficient funding, trained and adequately staffed personnel, and all necessary equipment and facilities to maintain city standards for public safety and response time.

Action PSF-1.1.2 Fire Response Time. The City shall provide properly staffed and equipped fire stations, strategically placed, to provide adequate response times to all portions of the city.

Action PSF-1.1.6 Joint Fire Protection Efforts. The City shall continue to support joint fire protection efforts with neighboring fire districts in the Sphere of Influence. The City shall actively maintain mutual and auto-aid agreements with neighboring fire districts to perform joint fire protection efforts which offer measurable improvements to the City fire protection service with no substantial liabilities or extra costs.

Action PSF-1.1.7 Serving New Growth. The fire department shall analyze fire service coverage in conjunction with service demand (e.g., call volume) and new growth to ensure quality of service does not diminish.

Action PSF-1.1.8 Prepare Fire Master Plan. The Fire Department shall complete and update, as needed, a Fire Master Plan to establish future policy for the Department's operation including a strategic plan for service delivery, automatic and mutual aid agreements, staffing forecasts and goals (such as one firefighter per 1,000 residents), fire apparatus, risk management, priority of emergency services, and to maintain appropriate emergency services.

Goal PSF-5 Service Availability. Maintain or increase the availability of public services and facilities consistent with projected population growth.

Policy PSF-5.1 Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Coordination. The City shall identify public infrastructure needs and use the Capital Improvement Program to schedule improvements necessary for achieving long-term land use and community development objectives.

Goal S-5 Fire Safety/Protection. Ensure that all existing structures in the city are maintained at adequate levels of fire suppression standards, that new structures conform to current fire safety standards, and the coordination is maintained between urban and rural fire districts for the prevention and suppression of structural and wildland fires.

Policy S-5.3 Fire Suppression Planning. The City shall maintain a level of fire protection for the community in accordance with the Fire Master Plan that emphasizes an aggressive initial attack to stop fires in early stages as well as to have adequate staff and equipment (including mutual aid) to prevent a conflagration.

Action S-5.3.1 Level of Service. The City shall strive to provide adequate staffing, equipment, and facilities to ensure timely fire protection and emergency medical response throughout the city. Specific response time objectives and service level standards shall be established and periodically updated in the City's Fire Master Plan.

Action S-5.3.2 Future Mutual Benefit Fire Stations. The City shall work toward agreements with the Freedom, Salsipuedes, and Santa Cruz County Fire Districts to augment fire station locations as the population increases.

Action S-5.3.3 Mutual Aid. The City shall continue to fulfill legal obligations and support mutual aid efforts to coordinate fire suppression within Santa Cruz County and the State of California to prevent and suppress major wildland and urban fire destruction.

Action S-5.3.4 Fire Apparatus. The City shall maintain apparatus and equipment necessary to accomplish an aggressive and effective initial attack, as well as to prevent a potential conflagration.

Action S-5.3.5 Financing New Stations. New development shall be required to contribute a proportional share of the cost of constructing and equipping additional fire stations.

Policy S-5.15 Adequate Fire Service Capacity. Coordinate with the WFD to ensure that fire and emergency services—including personnel, equipment, infrastructure, and response times—have sufficient capacity citywide by:

- Locating new development only where adequate fire protection exists.
- Advocating for adequate fire protection services through the City's participation in the Joint Powers Authority.

As indicated above, as new land use developments occur, it is likely that new or expanded fire protection facilities will be needed to support the associated population growth. The estimated timing or location of such required facilities or the exact nature of these facilities are not known, so future project-specific environmental impacts that would occur from their construction and operation cannot be determined at this time. However, such impacts would be specifically associated with physical development projects and would therefore require planning, permitting, and environmental review in accordance with CEQA, which would ensure that any environmental impacts are disclosed and mitigated to the extent possible, in addition to compliance with applicable local, state and federal regulatory requirements. This EIR addresses impacts at a programmatic level and does not evaluate the environmental impacts of future project-specific development.

In addition, with implementation of General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions, buildout and future development, the project would not result in significant impacts to fire services. These policies ensure that fire protection services maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, and performance objectives without necessitating significant alterations or new facilities. Therefore, buildout of future development under the project would have a less than significant impact. (Less than Significant Impact)

ii. Police protection?

Under General Plan 2050, the population is expected to increase by 33 percent (nearly 18,000 new residents) by 2050. Using the City's ratio of one police officer per 600 population, the 18,000-person increase in population to the year 2050 would require an additional 30 police officers. The additional population may also require additional police support staff, equipment and operations space. Other factors that could influence the need for police services (and the required size of the department) include community attitudes about protection and police service, and the characteristics of the future population. Increased traffic volumes could affect Police Department's response time if planned roadway, circulation, and emergency-access improvements are not implemented. However, General Plan 2050's emphasis on compact, walkable development and traffic-calmed streets in the downtown and mixed-use corridors is expected to reduce vehicle trips, vehicle speeds, traffic collisions, and associated calls for police service, while maintaining adequate emergency access along major response routes.

Population increases would be concentrated primarily within the existing city limits through infill development, which would accommodate approximately 75 percent of residential growth, with about 85 percent of that growth anticipated in Downtown, while approximately 75 percent of nonresidential

growth would occur in annexation areas outside the city limits. Future development in these areas would require the Police Department to extend its services into previously unserved areas. Procedures have been developed for Police Department review of specific development projects with respect to impacts on safety and Police Department facility's needs. Through the project review process, the Planning Department also encourages developers to include design characteristics in new projects that address public safety concerns, such as increased lighting, low-level landscaping to reduce cover for prowlers, entranceways and windows facing on main accessways, and communal entrances, and onsite security personnel when appropriate.

Based on the projected growth estimates, there will be an increased demand for police facilities to accommodate additional law enforcement staff. While additional space will be required to support future staffing and operational needs, the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) identifies a potential consolidated public safety facility at the existing Fire Station site at 115 Second Street. Under the DWSP Design Framework, a new police headquarters would be constructed on a portion of the site currently used for parking and Fire Department training activities, allowing the Police Department to relocate from its existing shared facility (City of Watsonville, 2025b). Because the Fire Station site is already developed and does not contain sensitive environmental resources, modifying the site to include a modern police headquarters would not result in significant environmental impacts. Unless a new, larger police headquarters is constructed, the department may need to explore adding one or more substations to meet these workspace and operational needs. However, the estimated timing or location of such facilities, if required, or the exact nature of these facilities are not known, so project-specific environmental impacts that would occur from their construction and operation cannot be determined at this time. However, such impacts would be project-specific and would require planning, discretionary approval, and environmental review in accordance with CEQA, which would ensure that any environmental impacts are disclosed and mitigated to the extent possible, in addition to compliance with appliable local, state and federal regulations. This EIR addresses impacts at a programmatic level and does not evaluate the environmental impacts of future project-specific development.

General Plan 2050 includes the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to lessen impacts to police services:

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts

> **Policy PSF-2.1 Public Protection.** The City shall continue to provide sufficient funding, trained personnel, and all necessary equipment and facilities to maintain city standards for public safety and response time.
>
> **Action PSF-2.1.1 Project Review.** The City shall continue to include the Police and Fire Chief in development project review to ensure that new projects include public safety features, and to ensure adequate response times.
>
> **Action PSF-2.1.2 Response Time.** The Police Department shall strive to maintain a 24-hour emergency response time or response to priority-one calls that exceeds the regional average to all parts of the City through a centralized emergency communications center and to maintain personnel and effective technologies, equipment, and infrastructure necessary to meet this standard.
>
> **Goal PSF-5 Service Availability.** Maintain or increase the availability of public services and facilities consistent with projected population growth.
>
> **Policy PSF-5.1 Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Coordination.** The City shall identify public infrastructure needs and use the Capital Improvement Program to schedule improvements necessary for achieving long-term land use and community development objectives.

> **Policy S-7.1 Crime Prevention.** The City shall provide sufficient funding, adequate personnel levels, and necessary equipment to maintain civil order and prevent crime.

Although no specific sites have been identified for these future substations, the goals, policies, and actions in General Plan 2050 ensure that any necessary expansions or new facilities are properly planned, sited, and integrated into the community. These provisions ensure that new or expanded police facilities can meet future operational and workspace needs while minimizing environmental impacts. Therefore, the impact on police protection services would remain less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

iii. Schools?

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in an estimated population increase of 33 percent (nearly 18,000 new residents) by 2050. General Plan 2050 projects that 5,980 new housing units would be needed to meet the needs of this projected population. Because there is no standard for adequate school services in the proposed general plan, existing school capacity as compared to future demand is used as an indicator of adequacy. The PVUSD uses a range of student generation factors per household based on the type of school (e.g., elementary, middle, and high) and the type of housing (e.g., single family, townhouse, apartment). These factors are used to estimate future enrollment demands based on new residential development. They range from a low of 0.119 high school students per condominium/townhouse to a high of 0.346 elementary students per apartment unit. Using these factors, future development and population growth under General Plan 2050 was calculated. Based on this analysis, General Plan 2050 would contribute approximately 2,060 additional students to the District. PVUSD's 2023 School Facilities Needs Analysis identifies an existing districtwide SB 50 capacity of 18,030 seats and notes that some schools operate near maximum capacity, while others exceeded their design capacity and relied on portable classrooms. The analysis projected that 440 new residential units constructed through 2028 would generate approximately 175 students. After accounting for the capacity available at that time, PVUSD estimated that 108 of those students would require additional facilities (PVUSD, 2022).

Since preparation of the analysis, however, PVUSD has continued to experience declining enrollment. The District reported a decrease of 3,378 students, or approximately 18 percent, between the 2013–14 and 2024–25 school years and projected an additional decline of approximately 600 students in 2025–26. PVUSD also cited California Department of Finance projections indicating that enrollment in Santa Cruz County could decline by approximately 18 percent over the following decade. In response to declining enrollment and associated reductions in funding, the District has begun adjusting staffing and expenditures to align with anticipated enrollment levels (PVUSD, 2026).

These enrollment trends suggest that districtwide capacity constraints may be less pronounced than identified in the 2023 analysis. However, districtwide enrollment and capacity figures do not establish whether sufficient space is available at the individual schools and grade levels that would serve development under General Plan 2050. School capacity would therefore need to be evaluated in coordination with PVUSD as development occurs, based on then-current enrollment, attendance boundaries, facility conditions, and the geographic distribution of new students.

The specific location and timing of new housing units constructed under General Plan 2050 are not known at this time; thus, it cannot be determined precisely how the increase in student population would affect existing school facilities. Some new students will likely attend existing facilities in their attendance area within existing capacity, while others may require addition to or expansion of existing school facilities and classrooms. Increase in student population would also generate the need for new school staff, including new teachers and support staff.

Implementation of General Plan 2050 could increase demand for school facilities and contribute to existing capacity constraints within PVUSD. General Plan 2050 includes the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to lessen impacts to schools:

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts

> **Goal PSF-5 Service Availability:** Maintain or increase the availability of public services and facilities consistent with projected population growth.
>
> **Policy PSF-5.1 Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Coordination:** The City shall identify public infrastructure needs and use the Capital Improvement Program to schedule improvements necessary for achieving long-term land use and community development objectives.
>
> **Goal PSF-7: City-School District Coordination.** Coordinate facilities planning and land use planning between the City and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD).
>
> **Policy PSF-7.1 Joint Education Planning.** The City will work closely with the PVUSD planning of school sites and facilities needed to serve the residents of the City of Watsonville. The City shall encourage development of advanced educational facilities in and near Watsonville, and shall coordinate with the School District in its efforts to procure funding for such facilities.
>
> **Action PSF-7.1.1 Site Identification.** The City will work cooperatively to facilitate the development of needed schools and supporting facilities that will be funded with available resources.
>
> **Action PSF-7.1.2 Advanced Educational Opportunities.** The City shall work with Cabrillo College to continue to expand program offerings at the Watsonville facility. Additionally, the City shall support efforts to establish a branch campus and/or satellite facilities of the California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) system in the local vicinity, particularly as it relates to CSU-Monterey Bay at the former Fort Ord Army base in Monterey County and University of California, Santa Cruz.
>
> **Action PSF-7.1.4 Coordinate Population Growth Projections With District.** The City shall update the school district on population projections and new residential projects that are proposed in the City to facilitate school district projections for enrollment and site locations for new facilities.
>
> **Action PSF-7.1.5 School Site Land Dedication.** The City shall coordinate with the PVUSD, property owners and other interested parties during the planning process to identify school sites or other measures necessary to serve the anticipated population.

In accordance with SB 50, future development would be required to pay applicable school impact fees at the time of building permit issuance, which PVUSD would use to fund new or expanded school facilities to serve students generated by such development. Pursuant to California Government Code Section 65996, payment of these statutory fees is deemed to fully mitigate both project-level and cumulative impacts on school facilities under CEQA. Additionally, implementation of General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions included in the project, buildout and future development, the project would not result in a substantial impacts to schools. Accordingly, impacts related to school facilities would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

iv. Parks?

As of the year 2026, the City has 26 parks that provide approximately 153 acres of parkland, 25 of which are located within the city limits and one of which is located two miles to the north at Pinto Lake. It should also be noted that of Watsonville's 153 acres of parkland, approximately 70 of these acres consist

of the City-owned portion of the waterway at Pinto Lake Park. Despite this park network, Watsonville faces a recreational "deficit" in terms of park acreage and facilities. While national standards call for 10 acres of park per 1,000 residents, Watsonville presently has approximately 2.8 acres per 1,000 residents. Forecasted population growth would increase the demand for recreational facilities dramatically. Watsonville's population is expected to increase by 33 percent (nearly 18,000 new residents) by 2050. Importantly, school playgrounds and fields are not factored into this calculation although they provide significant opportunities for community recreation. To take advantage of these community assets, the City has established a joint use program with PVUSD to allow for community use at school sites outside of school hours. As of 2026, two school fields/playgrounds are open and available for public use (Landmark Elementary School and E.A. Hall Middle School). These additional parks and joint-use school facilities greatly expand access to parks, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities.

As explained above, new residents from development allowed by General Plan 2050 would increase the demand for parks and recreational facilities, and park service standards would require the construction of new or expanded park facilities. Although General Plan 2050 identifies potential locations of future park facilities, the ultimate locations will be determined in the future as part of the proposed development.

General Plan 2050 includes the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to lessen impacts to parks.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal PSF-5 Service Availability.** Maintain or increase the availability of public services and facilities consistent with projected population growth.
>
> **Policy PSF-5.1 Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Coordination.** The City shall identify public infrastructure needs and use the Capital Improvement Program to schedule improvements necessary for achieving long-term land use and community development objectives.
>
> **Goal PR-1 Parks and Open Space For All.** Enhance the health and quality of life by assuring the equitable provision of Parks, Open Space, Recreational Facilities and programs that meet the needs and desires of the community.
>
> **Policy PR-1.1 Recreation and Parks Planning.** The City shall plan for park and recreation needs in coordination with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Santa Cruz County, and other partners to meet the demands of the growing population.
>
> **Action PR-1.1.1 Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update.** The City shall regularly update the Parks and Open Space Master Plan to address any deficiencies in park space, identify specific sites, assesses accessibility to parks, identify funding sources, fees and charges, and establish maintenance programs.
>
> **Action PR-1.1.2 Community Engagement.** The City shall solicit ongoing community feedback and cooperate with and encourage the formation of resident support groups for the purpose of fund-raising, special events, resident participation, and the design and program of park and recreation facilities.
>
> **Action PR-1.1.3 Coordination with Partners.** The City shall consult with and advise Santa Cruz County, Monterey County, and PVUSD on the development of parks, recreation facilities, open space and a trail network to serve the Watsonville area.
>
> **Action PR-1.1.4 Joint Use of School Facilities.** The City shall seek joint use agreements with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District to ensure public access to school facilities during non-school use periods.

Action PR-1.1.7 Park Acquisition, Development, and Maintenance. The City shall ensure the provision of parks and recreation facilities in identified new growth areas that reflect the population growth and neighborhood need, existing park access and adopted park acreage and maintenance standards.

Action PR-1.1.8 Parks and Recreational Amenities. Introduce new parks and recreational amenities in conjunction with development in identified new growth areas, as follows:

- In conjunction with new development in the Area C new growth area, introduce community recreational and athletic fields in the 100-year flood basin;
- Introduce a revenue-generating regional sports and entertainment complex in the Highway 1 Gateway that hosts regional and state wide athletic tournaments, concerts, festivals, and other events; and,
- Require developers of the Area C and Buena Vista new growth areas to introduce neighborhood parks that provide dog parks, playgrounds, and passive and active recreational amenities.

Action PR-1.1.9 City Park Acreage Standards. The City shall strive to provide 5.0 acres of new parkland for every 1,000 residents and ensure that new development, particularly in identified new growth areas, complies with this requirement. New parkland shall be distributed as follows:

- Pocket Parks less than 2.0 acres in size within existing neighborhoods: 1.0 acres per 1,000 persons.
- Neighborhood parks 2 to 10 acres in size within identified new growth areas: 2.0 acres per 1,000 persons
- Community parks more than 15 acres in size and special use facilities within identified new growth areas: 3.0 acres per 1,000 persons.
- School playgrounds and fields shall be counted where access is ensured by a joint use agreement.

Action PR-1.1.10 Park Development Priorities. The City shall consult the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan to prepare an annual parks and recreation development priority list for implementation, to establish phasing priorities, annual funding and personnel needs, to pursue grants, and to hold developers accountable for providing park space in new growth areas.

Action PR-1.1.1 On-Site Private Recreation Facilities. The City shall use the development review process to ensure that new residential, commercial, and industrial development projects provide on-site recreational facilities for the use of residents and employees.

Action PR-1.1.15 Private Development. The City shall encourage and facilitate the development of outdoor sports and recreational facilities by private organizations.

Action PR-1.1.17 New Growth Areas. In the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C, and the Highway 1 Gateway future growth areas, the extent and location of new parks shall be consistent with Figure 5.3 and shall be linked to the trail and bicycle network. In coordination with area planning efforts, the City shall require developing properties within these new growth areas to dedicate parkland so as to meet or exceed park demand generated by anticipated new development.

The project is anticipated to increase demand for park facilities due to the growth in population by 2050. However, General Plan 2050 includes specific goals, policies, and actions designed to ensure that park

and recreational needs are met for the growing population. These provisions include the acquisition of new parkland, improvements to existing facilities, and the establishment of park standards to maintain accessibility and quality of service. As a result, the project's impact on park facilities is considered less than significant, as the relevant goals and policies will effectively address the increased demand. (Less than Significant Impact)

v. Other public facilities?

As previously discussed, the continued implementation of the approved General Plan is likely to induce growth and, therefore, an increase in the residential population within the plan area. As established in **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**, the implementation of General Plan 2050 is likely to result in an increase of approximately 18,000 residents within the plan area by horizon year 2035. An increase in the permanent occupants within the plan area would result in an increased demand for other public facilities, such as libraries, community centers, and municipal administrative facilities, which could require construction or expansion of public facilities to maintain adequate service levels.

General Plan 2050 includes the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to lessen impacts to other public facilities.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal PSF-5 Service Availability.** Maintain or increase the availability of public services and facilities consistent with projected population growth.
>
> **Policy PSF-5.1 Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Coordination.** The City shall identify public infrastructure needs and use the Capital Improvement Program to schedule improvements necessary for achieving long-term land use and community development objectives.
>
> **Goal PR-4 Library Services.** Continue to improve the present library facilities and services. Explore the development of a third facility to serve population growth in the eastern and northern portions of the city and Sphere of Influence.
>
> **Policy PR-4.1 Library Services.** The City shall maintain, improve, and expand library resources services, and programming for all residents of the City of Watsonville, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of children, youth, and families.
>
> **Action PR-4.1.1 Library Strategic Plan.** The City shall periodically update the Library Strategic Plan to ensure that library facilities, services, resources, and program continue to meet community needs and remain aligned with population growth and demographic changes.
>
> **Action PR-4.1.2 Library Agreement.** The City of Watsonville shall continue to collaborate with the City of Santa Cruz, the County of Santa Cruz and the cities of Capitola and Scotts Valley to ensure adequate and equitable funding for library services in accordance with the Joint Exercise of Powers Library Agreement.

As future public facilities, such as libraries, community centers, and municipal administrative facilities, are developed through discretionary projects resulting from the implementation of General Plan 2050, there may be adverse environmental impacts associated with their construction and operation. Typical impacts include air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, noise, traffic, and lighting. General Plan 2050 includes specific goals, policies, and actions for libraries that will help mitigate potential impacts from future library facilities. The estimated timing or location of libraries and other public facilities such as community centers or municipal administrative facilities are not currently known, so project-specific environmental impacts that would occur from their construction and operation cannot be determined at this time. However, such impacts would be project-specific and would require planning, permitting, and

environmental review in accordance with CEQA, which would ensure that any environmental impacts are disclosed and mitigated to the extent possible, in addition to compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations. This EIR addresses impacts at a programmatic level and does not evaluate the environmental impacts of future project-specific development. Therefore, the impact is less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

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4.16 Recreation

This section discusses the impacts to recreational facilities that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. No public scoping comments regarding recreation facilities were received.

4.16.1 Environmental Setting

4.16.1.1 Regulatory Framework

State

Assembly Bill 1191 and 1359 – Quimby Act

The Quimby Act, which is within the Subdivision Map Act, authorizes the legislative body of a city or county to require the dedication of land or impose fees for park or recreational purposes as a condition to the approval of a tentative or parcel subdivision map, if specified requirements are met. On September 8, 2013, Governor Brown signed Assembly Bill (AB) 1359, the purpose of which was to amend the existing Quimby Act to authorize local governments to spend Quimby Act funds beyond parks that serve the development from where the funds were sourced. To reallocate the funds in this manner, AB 1359 requires the legislative body to hold a public hearing before using fees as prescribed in the bill. Subsequently, on September 8, 2015, Governor Brown signed AB 1191, the purpose of which was to amend the existing Quimby Act to authorize the legislative bodies of cities and counties to require land dedication or to impose fees for future park or recreational purposes as a required condition of approval of a tentative or parcel subdivision map. AB 1191 also eliminated the requirement for a local municipality to repay any unspent funds accrued through the Quimby Act after a five-year period resulting from such fees.

State Public Park Preservation Act

The State Public Park Preservation Act of 1971 (California Public Resources Code, §5400-5409) aims to protect public parklands in California from being converted to non-park uses. Under this act, if a public agency acquires parkland for a non-park purpose, they are required to provide substitute parkland of equal size and comparable utility, ensuring the replacement land serves the same population that used the original park. Alternatively, compensation can be provided to acquire or develop new parkland, and a public hearing is often required before any agreement is finalized. This ensures that valuable public park spaces are preserved for recreational use and public enjoyment.

Local

City of Watsonville Municipal Code

The Watsonville Municipal Code (WMC) includes several regulations aimed at the management and preservation of public parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces. These regulations are primarily found under Title 10, which addresses the use, protection, and maintenance of recreational areas

Chapter 2 of Title 10 establishes specific rules for public park use, including limiting park hours from sunrise to sunset (WMC § 10-2.15), prohibiting littering (WMC § 5-15.08), graffiti (WMC § 5-41.03), and the consumption of alcohol in parks (WMC § 10-2.14). Additional rules restrict unauthorized advertising and vending within park boundaries, requiring permits for large gatherings of 20 or more people (WMC §

10-2.18) and amplified sound (WMC § 10-2.16) to maintain a safe and peaceful environment for all visitors.

Furthermore, the Parks and Recreation Commission, as outlined in the Municipal Code, advises the City Council on policies relating to recreation programs, the acquisition and development of parks, and the care and maintenance of trees within public spaces. The commission ensures the preservation of parkland and evaluates proposals for new recreational facilities.

City of Watsonville Trails & Bicycle Master Plan for the Watsonville Scenic Trails Network

The City of Watsonville Trails & Bicycle Master Plan for the Watsonville Scenic Trails Network focuses on enhancing recreational opportunities by developing an extensive network of scenic trails that allow residents and visitors to enjoy the City's natural and urban landscapes. The plan emphasizes providing access to parks, open spaces, and natural areas, encouraging outdoor activities like walking, jogging, and cycling for leisure and fitness. By connecting recreational areas through well-designed trails, the City aims to promote active lifestyles, improve community health, and increase engagement with local natural resources.

The trails are planned to highlight Watsonville's scenic beauty, offering routes that lead through green spaces and along waterways, creating peaceful and enjoyable experiences for users. In addition to promoting physical health, the plan fosters a sense of community by providing public spaces where individuals and families can engage in outdoor recreation. Through these efforts, the City is supporting a stronger recreational infrastructure, ensuring that residents have ample opportunities to enjoy the outdoors while preserving the area's natural charm.

City of Watsonville Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan

The City of Watsonville Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, adopted in 2009, provides a comprehensive framework for the development, management, and enhancement of the City’s parks and recreational spaces. The plan outlines the City's long-term vision for increasing access to recreational opportunities, improving the quality of existing parks, and promoting community engagement through active, outdoor spaces. Key elements of the Master Plan include the expansion of parkland, the development of new recreational facilities, and upgrades to existing infrastructure.

A significant focus of the plan is on meeting the needs of Watsonville's growing population by addressing gaps in recreational services and ensuring equitable access to parks and facilities across all neighborhoods. The plan also emphasizes environmental sustainability, encouraging the preservation of natural spaces while promoting new green infrastructure, such as community gardens and trail networks. It aligns with the City’s broader goals for environmental stewardship, health, and community connectivity.

By setting specific goals and strategies for park improvements, trail development, and facility management, the Master Plan serves as a guide for city planning, budgeting, and public engagement in park-related projects.

City of Watsonville Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan

The City of Watsonville Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan was adopted in 2020 as an update and supplement to the 2009 Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. This Strategic Plan sets specific goals and strategies for the next five years, focusing on enhancing the City's parks, recreation programs, and

community services. Key priorities include increasing park accessibility, improving maintenance of existing facilities, and expanding recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.

The plan emphasizes a community-centered approach, integrating feedback from residents and stakeholders to ensure the City's recreational offerings meet the diverse needs of the population. It also focuses on sustainability, aiming to preserve and improve green spaces while promoting environmental stewardship and enhancing the overall quality of life in Watsonville. The Strategic Plan outlines actionable steps and identifies funding priorities to support the continued growth and enhancement of Watsonville's parks and recreational infrastructure.

4.16.1.2 Existing Conditions

Parkland

As discussed in **Section 4.15, Public Services**, the City provides a variety of neighborhood, community-serving, and regional parks, totaling approximately 153 acres of parkland across 26 parks. These parks offer a wide range of recreational amenities, from smaller neighborhood spaces to larger regional parks. Pinto Lake Park, a regional park, is one of the largest, featuring fishing, boating, and RV camping opportunities. Ramsay Park, a key community-serving park, spans 25 acres and offers sports fields, playgrounds, and trails. Smaller parks, such as Callaghan Park, a 2.64-acre neighborhood park, provide localized recreational amenities like playgrounds, basketball courts, and tennis courts for residents in the downtown Watsonville area. **Table 4.16-1** lists all 26 parks and open spaces located in the plan area.

In terms of parkland-to-population ratio, Watsonville provides roughly 2.8 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (City of Watsonville, 2009). The City currently has a population of approximately 51,101 (DOF, 2025). The county and state parks in the surrounding neighboring regions, such as Pinto Lake County Park, Marshal Field at the County Fairgrounds, Pajaro Park, and Freedom Lake County Park, provide more park space for residents in the plan area. While the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan does not outline specific parkland requirements, there is a strategic focus on expanding access to recreational areas and enhancing existing facilities to meet the needs of the growing population and promote community well-being.

Table 4.16-1 Parks and Open Space in and near the Plan Area

Park	Location	Amenities	Acres
Atri Park	602 Atri Court Watsonville, CA	Trail access, picnic tables	0.32
Arista Park	52 Arista Court Watsonville, CA	Playground	0.27
Brentwood Park	320 Brentwood Drive Watsonville, CA	Green area	0.41
Bronte Park	615 Bronte Avenue Watsonville, CA	Picnic tables	0.28
Callaghan Park	225 Sudden Street Watsonville, CA	Basketball courts, cultural center, playground, picnic tables, tennis courts	2.64

Park	Location	Amenities	Acres
Cherry Blossom Park	41 Loma Prieta Avenue Watsonville, CA	Playground	0.15
City Plaza Park	350 Main Street Watsonville, CA	Park benches	1.4
Crestview Park	Brewington Avenue and Crestview Drive Watsonville, CA	Tennis courts	2.01
Emmett Courts Park	37 Sudden Street Watsonville, CA	Handball courts	0.15
Flodberg Park	219 Alvarado Street Watsonville, CA	Basketball court, horseshoe pit, picnic tables, playground	1.07
Franich Park	795 Vista Montana Dr Watsonville, CA	Dog park, tail access, baseball/basketball/volleyball courts, picnic tables, playground, barbecues	14.02
Hazlewood Park	297 Herman Avenue Watsonville, CA	Green area	1.07
Hope Drive Park	75 Hope Drive Watsonville, CA	Trail access, picnic tables, playground	2.46
Joyce-Mckenzie Park	500 Joyce Drive Watsonville, CA	Trail access, tennis/volleyball courts, horseshoe pit, playground	1.72
Kearney Park	118 Kearney Street Watsonville, CA	Basketball courts, playground	0.29
Las Brisas Park	1028 Nueva Vista Avenue Watsonville, CA	Basketball courts, picnic tables, playground	1
Marinovich Park	120 Second Street Watsonville, CA	Basketball courts, picnic tables, playground	1.03
Memorial Park	Main St / Freedom Blvd Watsonville, CA	Green area	0.22
Muzzio Park	26 West Front Street Watsonville, CA	Community center, basketball court, playground	1.12
Peace Drive Park	62 Peace Drive Watsonville, CA	Basketball court, picnic tables, playground	1.4

Park	Location	Amenities	Acres
Pinto Lake Park	757 Green Valley Road Watsonville, CA	Playground, picnic tables, barbecues, basketball/soccer/softball fields, dog park, fitness equipment, fishing, trails	78
Ramsay Park	1301 Main Street Watsonville, CA	Baseball/basketball/tennis/volleyball courts, playground, soccer field, trail access, bicycle track	25.91
River Park	100 East Front Street Watsonville, CA	Basketball court, picnic tables, playground, barbecue	1.43
Riverside Mini Park	127 Riverside Drive Watsonville, CA	Basketball court, picnic tables	0.34
Seaview Ranch Park	105 Lighthouse Drive Watsonville, CA	Picnic tables, playground, barbecue	14
Victorian Park	106 Weeks Drive Watsonville, CA	Green area	0.13
Total Parks	**26**	**Total Acres**	**152.84**

Source: City of Watsonville, 2024.

Trails

The City features a well-developed trail system with over seven miles of scenic pathways, providing residents and visitors with access to both recreational and commuting options. These trails serve as key connectors between neighborhoods, parks, schools, and natural areas, including the Watsonville Slough and surrounding wetlands. One of the primary trail systems, the Watsonville Slough Trail, offers multiple segments with routes through the 800-acre freshwater wetland area, making it ideal for walking, cycling, and wildlife observation. Additionally, Pinto Lake Trail, located within Pinto Lake Park, is a popular spot for walking, birdwatching, and enjoying the lake's recreational amenities. Many of the City's trails are wheelchair accessible, and trailheads are located throughout various neighborhoods, ensuring easy access for all.

Community Centers and Other Recreational Facilities

The City provides a variety of community centers and recreational facilities to meet the needs of its residents. **Table 4.16-2** lists the seven community centers and recreational facilities in the plan area. The Gene Hoularis and Waldo Rodriguez Youth Center serves as a central hub for local youth, offering spaces for indoor sports, community gatherings, and educational activities. Watsonville also includes a Skate Park located at Ramsay Park, which includes ramps and rails designed for skateboarding, making it a popular spot for the City's youth.

Table 4.16-2 City of Watsonville Community Centers and Recreational Facilities

Center Name	Address	Description
Callaghan Park Cultural Center	225 Sudden Street Watsonville, CA	Offers gymnastics, youth programs, and cultural events.
Watsonville Youth Center	30 Maple Avenue Watsonville, CA	A safe space for youth in grades 6-12 with various activities.
Marinovich Park Community Center	120 Second Street Watsonville, CA	Home to the Science Workshop and community events.
Muzzio Park Community Center	26 West Front Street Watsonville, CA	Available for events, with recreational programs.
Ramsay Park Family Center	1301 Main Street Watsonville, CA	Hosts family events and is available for rental.
Watsonville Senior Center	114 East Fifth Street Watsonville, CA	Provides programs and services for adults aged 50+.
Veterans Memorial Building	215 East Beach Street Watsonville, CA	Hosts family events and is available for rental.
Civic Plaza Community Rooms	275 Main Street Watsonville, CA	Multi-purpose rooms for community gatherings and events.

Source: Watsonville, n.d.a, n.d.b.

One of the largest recreational areas is Pinto Lake Park, a 78-acre regional park offering a wide range of amenities, including a lake for boating and fishing, RV camping spots, picnic areas, and open spaces for walking and birdwatching. Similarly, Ramsay Park, at approximately 25 acres, is the City's largest park and offers sports fields, a dog park, playgrounds, and walking trails, along with the skate park.

Watsonville also encourages local sustainability and community engagement through its community gardens, which provide residents with opportunities to grow their own food and participate in local gardening initiatives. Additionally, the Watsonville Municipal Swimming Pool offers aquatic programs such as swimming lessons and recreational swim during the summer months, providing a vital recreational outlet for families.

Planned Parks and Recreation Improvements

The City of Watsonville has several planned improvements and expansions for its parks and recreational facilities aimed at enhancing community access to green spaces and recreational activities (see **Table 4.16-3**). One of the most significant projects is the Ramsay Park Renaissance Project, which includes a multi-phase plan to upgrade Watsonville's largest park. Planned improvements include the addition of a new soccer field, a pump track, and expanded playground areas. These enhancements are designed to increase the park's recreational offerings and serve more residents across the City (City of Watsonville, 2024a).

Another major initiative is the Watsonville City Plaza Expansion and Revitalization Project, which would restore key historic features of the Plaza, including the gazebo and fountain, while improving pedestrian circulation, landscaping, seating, lighting, and other public amenities. The project is intended to maintain the Plaza's historic character while enhancing accessibility and creating a more usable public space for community events, everyday recreation, and downtown activity (City of Watsonville, n.d.c).

These planned improvements reflect Watsonville's ongoing commitment to expanding and improving its parks and trails, fostering a healthy and connected community through accessible outdoor spaces and recreational amenities.

Table 4.16-3 Planned Projects

Project Name	Description	Status
Ramsay Park Renaissance Project	Comprehensive upgrade to Ramsay Park, including a new multi-use synthetic turf field, an inclusive playground, a dog park, and a nature center. This project aims to enhance recreational facilities and accessibility throughout the park.	Active/under construction. Estimated completion is winter 2026.
Watsonville City Plaza Expansion and Revitalization Project	The project includes restoration of key historic features, including the gazebo and fountain, along with improvements to pedestrian circulation, landscaping, seating, lighting, and other public amenities. The project is intended to preserve the Plaza's historic character while creating a more accessible space for community events, daily use, and downtown activity.	Active/under construction. Construction began in summer 2026.

Source: City of Watsonville, 2024a, n.d.c.

4.16.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.16.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to recreation would be considered significant if the project would:

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.

4.16.2.2 Methodology

The analysis considers whether the growth planned for in General Plan 2050 would result in an increased use of parks and recreational facilities such that the demand would exceed the ability of existing facilities to accommodate increased use. In evaluating the potential impacts to parks and recreational facilities, increased use resulting in physical deterioration or accelerated wear on sports facilities was considered, as was the need for new or expanded facilities. The planned population increase anticipated by General Plan 2050, national parkland-to-person ratios, and planned parks and recreational facilities in designated "new growth" areas were all considered when evaluating potential impacts related to parks and recreation facilities in the plan area.

4.16.2.3 Project Impacts

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?

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in an estimated population increase of 33 percent (nearly 18,000 new residents) by 2050. As discussed in **Section 4.15, Public Services**, as of the year 2026, the City has 26 parks that provide over 153 acres of parkland, 25 of which are located within the City limits and one of which is located two miles to the north at Pinto Lake. It should also be noted that of Watsonville's 153 acres of parkland, approximately 70 of these acres consist of the City-owned portion of the waterway at Pinto Lake Park. Despite this park network, Watsonville faces a recreational "deficit," in terms of park acreage and facilities. While national standards call for 10 acres of park per 1,000 residents, Watsonville presently has approximately 2.8 acres per 1,000 residents. Forecasted population growth would increase the demand for recreational facilities. Watsonville's population is expected to increase by 33 percent (nearly 18,000 new residents) by 2050. Importantly, school playgrounds and fields are not factored into this calculation although they can provide opportunities for community recreation, which, as shown in **Figure 4.16-1**, are conveniently accessible to many residents. To take advantage of these community assets, the City has established a joint use program with PVUSD to allow for community use at school sites outside of school hours. As of 2026, two school fields/playgrounds are open and available for public use (Landmark Elementary School and E.A. Hall Middle School). These additional parks and joint-use school facilities greatly expand access to parks, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities.

New residents from development allowed by the proposed General Plan 2050 would increase the demand for parks and recreational facilities, and park service standards would require the construction of new or expanded park facilities to avoid physical deterioration of existing park facilities.

General Plan 2050 would implement the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce impacts to regional parks and recreational facilities.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Goal PR-1. Parks and Open Space For All.** Enhance the health and quality of life by assuring the equitable provision of Parks, Open Space, Recreational Facilities and programs that meet the needs and desires of the community.
>
> **Policy PR-1.1 Recreation and Parks Planning.** The City shall plan for park and recreation needs in coordination with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Santa Cruz County, and other partners to meet the demands of the growing population.
>
> **Actions**
>
> > **PR-1.1.1 Parks and Open Space Master Plan Update.** The City shall regularly update the Parks and Open Space Master Plan to address any deficiencies in park space, identify specific sites, assesses accessibility to parks, identify funding sources, fees and charges, and establish maintenance programs.
> >
> > **PR-1.1.2 Community Engagement.** The City shall solicit ongoing community feedback and cooperate with and encourage the formation of resident support groups for the purpose of fund-raising, special events, resident participation, and the design and program of park and recreation facilities.

PR-1.1.3 Coordination with Partners. The City shall consult with and advise Santa Cruz County, Monterey County, and PVUSD on the development of parks, recreation facilities, open space and a trail network to serve the Watsonville area.

PR-1.1.4 Joint Use of School Facilities. The City shall seek joint use agreements with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District to ensure public access to school facilities during non-school use periods.

PR-1.1.7 Park Acquisition, Development, and Maintenance. The City shall ensure the provision of parks and recreation facilities in identified new growth areas that reflect the population growth and neighborhood need, existing park access and adopted park acreage and maintenance standards.

PR-1.1.8 Parks and Recreational Amenities. Introduce new parks and recreational amenities in conjunction with development in identified new growth areas, as follows:

- In conjunction with new development in the Area C new growth area, introduce community recreational and athletic fields in the 100-year flood basin;
- Introduce a revenue-generating regional sports and entertainment complex in the Highway 1 Gateway that hosts regional and statewide athletic tournaments, concerts, festivals, and other events; and,
- Require developers of the Area C and Buena Vista new growth areas to introduce neighborhood parks that provide dog parks, playgrounds, and passive and active recreational amenities.

PR-1.1.9 City Park Acreage Standards. The City shall strive to provide 5.0 acres of new parkland for every 1,000 residents and ensure that new development, particularly in identified new growth areas, complies with this requirement. New parkland shall be distributed as follows:

- Pocket Parks less than 2.0 acres in size within existing neighborhoods: 1.0 acres per 1,000 persons.
- Neighborhood parks 2 to 10 acres in size within identified new growth areas: 2.0 acres per 1,000 persons.
- Community parks more than 15 acres in size and special use facilities within identified new growth areas: 3.0 acres per 1,000 persons.
- School playgrounds and fields shall be counted where access is ensured by a joint use agreement.

PR-1.1.10 Park Development Priorities. The City shall consult the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan to prepare an annual parks and recreation development priority list for implementation, to establish phasing priorities, annual funding and personnel needs, to pursue grants, and to hold developers accountable for providing park space in new growth areas.

PR-1.1.1 On-Site Private Recreation Facilities. The City shall use the development review process to ensure that new residential, commercial, and industrial development projects provide on-site recreational facilities for the use of residents and employees.

> **PR-1.1.15 Private Development.** The City shall encourage and facilitate the development of outdoor sports and recreational facilities by private organizations.
>
> **PR-1.1.17 New Growth Areas.** In the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, Area C, and the Highway 1 Gateway future growth areas, the extent and location of new parks shall be consistent with **Figure 5.3** and shall be linked to the trail and bicycle network. In coordination with area planning efforts, the City shall require developing properties within these new growth areas to dedicate parkland so as to meet or exceed park demand generated by anticipated new development.

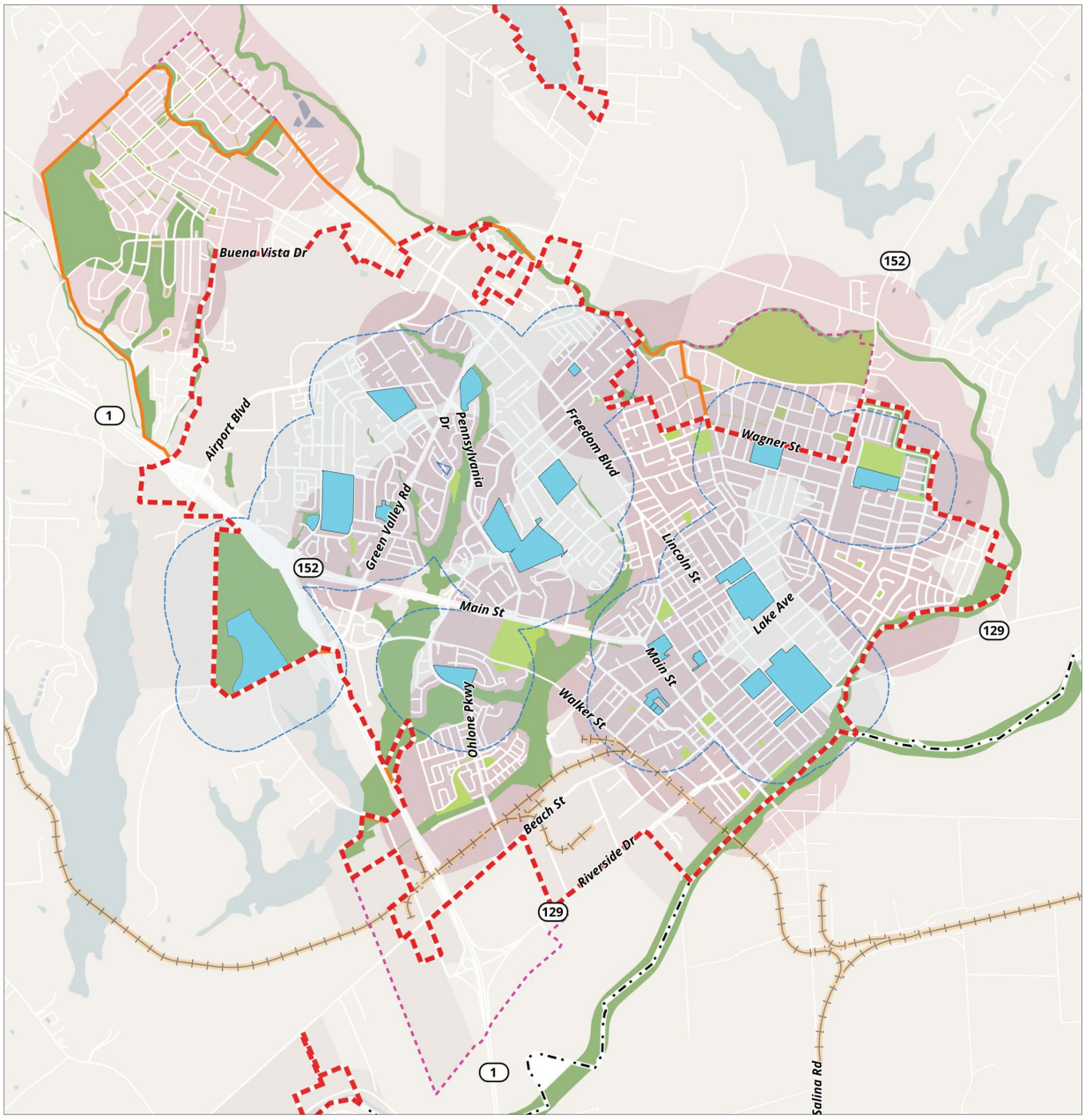
General Plan 2050 is anticipated to increase demand for park facilities due to population growth by 2050. However, General Plan 2050 includes specific goals, policies, and actions designed to ensure that park and recreational needs are met for the growing population and that a substantial physical deterioration of facilities would not occur. These provisions include the acquisition of new parkland, improvements to existing facilities, and the establishment of park standards to maintain accessibility and quality of service. As a result, the project's impact on park facilities is considered less than significant, as the relevant goals and policies will effectively address the increased demand. (Less than Significant Impact)

b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

A significant impact would result if the project were to include the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that could cause an adverse physical effect on the environment. Under General Plan 2050, development in the City's undeveloped "new growth" areas provides one of the few opportunities to set aside sufficient land for new park and recreational facilities in optimal location, including in locations adjacent to natural open spaces as shown in **Figure 4.16-1**. These new growth areas are planned to accommodate needed parkland within future residential neighborhoods in the Buena Vista and Area C New Growth Areas to help meet existing and future demand for neighborhood-serving parks. In addition, the Highway 1 Gateway area is planned to accommodate a large regional sports complex that would expand Watsonville's recreational opportunities and provide additional sports fields that the City is currently unable to provide within the built-out city limits.

Although the proposed General Plan 2050 identifies general locations where future park and recreation facilities may be developed, it does not propose new parkland within the existing city limits because Watsonville is largely built-out and has very limited vacant land available for adding significant acreage of new parks. The City currently maintains 26 parks distributed throughout Watsonville, providing a wide range of recreational opportunities for residents. To fill gaps in park accessibility—particularly in areas lacking parks within a ¼-mile walking distance—the City also works with PVUSD to establish joint-use agreements, where possible, that expand public access to school fields and playgrounds when not in use for school activities. Smaller parks may be more easily integrated in both urbanized and new growth areas, and they can be incorporated into larger developments to provide recreational open space. Depending on the location and jurisdiction of these spaces, parks may be privately-owned and maintained and made accessible only to a development's residents rather than available to the public. In contrast to the built-out city limits, General Plan 2050 includes new parkland in the designated new growth areas (Buena Vista, Area C, and the Highway 1 Gateway), where sufficient undeveloped land exists to create neighborhood parks, community parks, and a large regional sports complex. These planned facilities would ensure that future development can meet parkland demand without causing adverse physical environmental effects, and any specific future park projects would undergo appropriate CEQA review to evaluate project-level impacts.

Figure 4.16-1 Envisioned Watsonville Park Distribution



Source: 2009 City of Watsonville Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan.

Legend

- County Boundary
- Watsonville City Boundary
- Existing Urban Limit Line
- Proposed Urban Limit Line
- Natural Open Space
- Existing Parks
- 1/4 Mile Radii to Park
- Existing Schools
- 1/4 Mile Radii to School

Source: City of Watsonville, 2009.

The addition of recreational facilities or parks is a result of the new opportunities in "new growth" General Plan 2050 offers. General Plan 2050 includes the following Goals, Policies, and Actions to avoid and reduce impacts to recreational facilities.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal LC-14. Conserved Natural Features and Accessible Recreational Amenities. The City's parks will be accessible to all modes of transportation, accommodate a wide range of recreational amenities, reflect the City's small town character, feature rich landscaping and tree canopy, and provide appropriate transitions between abutting neighborhoods and other land uses.

Policy LC-14.1 Parks and Recreational Amenities. Introduce new parks and recreational amenities in conjunction with development in new growth areas, as follows:

- In conjunction with new development in the Area C new growth area, introduce community recreational and athletic fields in the 100-year flood basin;
- Introduce a revenue-generating regional sports and entertainment complex in the Highway 1 Gateway that hosts regional and statewide athletic tournaments, concerts, festivals, and other events; and
- Require developers of the Area C and Buena Vista new growth areas to introduce neighborhood parks that provide dog runs, playgrounds and passive and active recreational amenities.

Policy LC-14.2 Park and Plaza Design. Design new parks to be accessible to pedestrians of all abilities, accommodate a wide range of recreational amenities, reflect the City's small-town character, feature rich landscaping and tree canopy, and provide appropriate transitions between abutting neighborhoods and other land uses. Key design components include:

- Visibility from one side of the park to the other from adjacent streets required (e.g., low hedges and walls shall not exceed 36" in height).
- Surrounding buildings sited to front park or plaza with windows and entries.
- Accessible paths connect to adjacent sidewalk(s).
- Park and plaza access points align with adjacent crosswalks.
- On-street parking provided on street, either in parallel, angled, or perpendicular configurations.
- Any parking lots located along street frontages screened from view of street with low walls and/or plantings.

Although the proposed General Plan 2050 identifies some potential locations of future park facilities, the ultimate locations will be determined in the future as part of the proposed development. Further, the estimated timing or location such facilities or the exact nature of these facilities, if required, are not known, so project-specific environmental impacts that would occur from their construction and operation cannot be determined at this time. However, such impacts would be project-specific and would require permitting and review in accordance with CEQA, which would ensure that any environmental impacts are disclosed and mitigated to the extent possible. This EIR is a programmatic document and does not evaluate the environmental impacts of future project-specific development.

Further, General Plan 2050 is anticipated to increase recreational facilities due to the "new growth" areas. However, General Plan 2050 includes specific goals, policies, and actions designed to ensure that the recreational facilities meet the needs of the community and that the construction or expansion of recreational facilities would not result in a significant physical effect on the environment. These

provisions include accessibility, conservation, and recreational amenities. As a result, impacts on parks and recreation facilities is considered less than significant, as the relevant goals and policies will effectively address the increased demand. (Less than Significant Impact)

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4.17 Transportation

This section discusses the impacts to transportation that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. The following discussion is based on a Transportation Analysis Report (TAR) prepared for the General Plan by Fehr & Peers (October 2025). This study is contained in **Appendix F**. The transportation analysis was conducted to determine the potential transportation impacts based on the standards and methodologies set forth the City's VMT Policy (September 2022), the VTA Congestion Management Program's Transportation Impact Guidelines (June 2025), and CEQA.

During the public scoping process, six commenters raised concerns regarding traffic associated with General Plan 2050. Specifically, commenters requested that the following topics be considered in the EIR:

- Additional traffic on residential streets and associated safety impacts
- Bicycle and pedestrian improvements including sidewalks and bicycle lanes
- Project-related VMT increases
- Level of service impacts
- Inclusion of the Santa Cruz County Rural Highway Safety Action Plan.

Each of these traffic-related topics are addressed in **Section 4.17.2.2, Project Impacts**.

4.17.1 Environmental Setting

4.17.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 provides comprehensive rights and protections to individuals with disabilities. The goal of the ADA is to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities. To implement this goal, the United States Access Board, an independent Federal agency created in 1973 to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, has created accessibility guidelines for public rights-of-way. While these guidelines have not been formally adopted, they have been widely followed by jurisdictions and agencies nationwide in the last decade. The guidelines, last revised in July 2011, address various issues, including roadway design practices, slope and terrain issues, pedestrian access to streets, sidewalks, curb ramps, street furnishings, pedestrian signals, parking, and other components of public rights-of-way.

Federal Highway Administration

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the agency of the United States Department of Transportation responsible for the federally funded roadway system, including the interstate highway network and portions of the primary State highway network. FHWA funding is provided through the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act. Federal funds can be used to fund eligible local transportation improvements such as projects to improve the efficiency of existing roadways, traffic signal coordination, bikeways, pedestrian facilities, and transit system upgrades.

State

Assembly Bill 1358 (California Complete Streets Act)

Assembly Bill (AB) 1358 or the California Complete Streets Act, was signed into law on September 30, 2008. Since January 1, 2011, AB 1358 has required circulation element updates to address the transportation system from a multimodal perspective. The Act states that streets, roads, and highways must "meet the needs of all users in a manner suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the General Plan." The Act requires a circulation element to plan for all modes of transportation where appropriate, including walking, biking, car travel, and transit. In addition, the Act requires circulation elements to consider the multiple users of the transportation system, including children, adults, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

Assembly Bill 32 (Global Warming Solutions Act)

AB 32 or the Global Warming Solutions Act was signed into law on September 27, 2006. AB 32 established a comprehensive program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change. This Bill requires the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop regulations that reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. On January 1, 2012, the greenhouse gas rules and market mechanisms, adopted by CARB, took effect and became legally enforceable. The reduction goal for 2020 is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent of the current rate to meet 1990 levels, and a reduction of 80 percent of current rates by 2050. The AB 32 Scoping Plan contains the main strategies California will use to reduce greenhouse gases. The scoping plan has a range of greenhouse gas reduction actions, which include direct regulations, alternative compliance mechanisms, monetary and non-monetary incentives, voluntary actions, market-based mechanisms, and an AB 32 program implementation regulation for funding. In 2016, the Legislature passed SB 32, which codifies a 2030 GHG emissions reduction target of 40 percent below 1990 levels. CARB recognizes cities as "essential partners" in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Air Resources Board has developed a Local Government Toolkit with guidance for GHG reduction strategies such as improving transit, developing bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure, increasing City fleet vehicle efficiency, and other strategies.

Assembly Bill 98

AB 98 was signed on September 29, 2024, and introduces new requirements for the development of logistics-related projects, with a focus on large warehouse facilities over 100,000 square feet in size. The law is aimed at mitigating the environmental and health impacts these facilities may have on nearby communities, especially sensitive receptors like schools, daycares, and residential areas. Notably, the law requires buffer zones which mandate that new logistics developments maintain a minimum buffer zone of 1,000 feet from sensitive receptors, such as homes, schools, and healthcare facilities. This is intended to reduce exposure to pollution and noise generated by truck traffic and warehouse operations.

Senate Bill 32

On September 8, 2016, the governor signed Senate Bill (SB) 32 into law, extending the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 by requiring the state to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 (the other provisions of AB 32 remain unchanged). On December 14, 2017, the CARB adopted the 2017 Scoping Plan, which provides a framework for achieving the 2030 target. The 2017 Scoping Plan relies on the continuation and expansion of existing policies and regulations, such as the Cap-and-Trade Program, and implementation of recently adopted policies and legislation.

Senate Bill 375

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375), signed in August 2008, enhances the state's ability to reach GHG emissions goals by directing the California Air Resources Board to develop regional GHG emission reduction targets to be achieved from passenger vehicles by 2020 and 2035. SB 375 aligns regional transportation planning efforts, regional GHG reduction targets, and affordable housing allocations.

Senate Bill 743

On September 27, 2013, the governor signed SB 743 into law. SB 743 changed the way transportation impact analysis is conducted as part of CEQA compliance. These changes eliminated automobile delay, level of service (LOS), and other similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion as a basis for determining significant impacts under CEQA.

Prior rules treated automobile delay and congestion as an environmental impact. SB 743 requires the *CEQA Guidelines* to prescribe an analysis that better accounts for transit and reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. In December 2018, the former Office of Planning and Research (OPR) released the final update to *CEQA Guidelines* consistent with SB 743, which recommends using vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the most appropriate metric of transportation impact to align local environmental review under CEQA with California's long-term greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. The *Guidelines* require all jurisdictions in California to use VMT-based thresholds of significance no later than July 1, 2020.

At the same time as the release of the updated *CEQA Guidelines,* OPR also released a non-binding *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA*, which outlines potential VMT analysis methodologies and thresholds of significance for use by agencies in California based on substantial evidence developed by OPR related to achievement of the State's greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets.[1]

Senate Bill 932

(SB 932 was signed into law in September 2020 and requires that any General Plan circulation element update needs to incorporate the FHWA Safe Systems Approach. This includes incorporating Vision Zero style policies, developing bike/pedestrian/traffic calming plans based on those policies, and regularly reviewing progress toward those goals.

California Department of Transportation Planning Documents

Caltrans is responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining the State highway system. Federal highway standards are implemented in California by Caltrans. Any improvements or modifications to the highway system, including ramps and access points, within the study area would need to be approved by Caltrans. The following Caltrans planning documents emphasize the State of California's focus on transportation infrastructure that supports mobility choice through multimodal options, smart growth, and efficient development.

- Smart Mobility 2010: A Call to Action for the New Decade (Smart Mobility Framework)
- Complete Streets Implementation Action Plan
- Strategic Plan 2020-2024

- California Transportation Plan 2050

Smart Mobility Framework

The purpose of the Smart Mobility Framework, published in February 2010, is to address the State mandate to find solutions to climate change, reduce per capita VMT, and create a safe and equitable transportation system.[2] The Smart Mobility Framework includes ten implementing themes to achieve its purpose, including integration into Caltrans and other transportation agencies' policy and practice, collection of data and tools to implement the Smart Mobility Framework, undertaking of major cross-functional initiatives, and integration into local government land use and transportation planning.

Complete Streets Implementation Action Plan

AB 1358 requires any substantive revision of the circulation/mobility element of a city or county's general plan to identify how they will safely accommodate the circulation of all users of the roadway including pedestrians, bicyclists, children, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and transit riders, as well as motorists.

Caltrans Deputy Directive 64-R1: Complete Streets – Integrating the Transportation System

In 2001, Caltrans adopted Deputy Directive 64; a policy directive related to non-motorized travel throughout the State. In October 2008, Deputy Directive 64 was strengthened to reflect changing priorities and challenges. Deputy Directive 64-R1 states:

> The Department views all transportation improvements as opportunities to improve safety, access, and mobility for all travelers in California and recognizes bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes as integral elements of the transportation system. Providing safe mobility for all users, including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and transit riders, contributes to the Department's mission/vision: "Improving Mobility across California."

Successful long-term implementation of this directive is intended to result in more options for people to go from one place to another, less traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, more walkable communities (with healthier, more active people), and fewer barriers for older adults, children, and people with disabilities.

Director's Policy 22: Director's Policy on Context Sensitive Solutions

Director's Policy 22, a policy regarding the use of "Context Sensitive Solutions" on all State highways, was adopted by Caltrans in November of 2001. The policy reads:

> The Department uses "Context Sensitive Solutions" as an approach to plan, design, construct, maintain, and operate its transportation system. These solutions use innovative and inclusive approaches that integrate and balance community, aesthetic, historic, and environmental values with transportation safety, maintenance, and performance goals. Context sensitive solutions are reached through a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach involving all stakeholders.

The context of all projects and activities is a key factor in reaching decisions. It is considered for all State transportation and support facilities when defining, developing, and evaluating options. When considering the context, issues such as funding feasibility, maintenance feasibility, traffic demand, impact on alternate routes, impact on safety, and relevant laws, rules, and regulations must be addressed.

The policy recognizes that "in towns and cities across California, the State highway may be the only through street or may function as a local street," that "these communities desire that their main street be an economic, social, and cultural asset as well as provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods," and that "communities want transportation projects to provide opportunities for enhanced non-motorized travel and visual quality." The policy acknowledges that addressing these needs will assure that transportation solutions meet more than just traffic and operational objectives.

Director's Policy 37: Director's Policy on Complete Streets

Caltrans Director's Policy 37, a policy calling for new transportation projects on State highways to include "complete street" features that provide safe and accessible options for people walking, biking and taking transit, was adopted by Caltrans in December 2021. The policy reads:

> The Department recognizes that walking, biking, transit, and passenger rail are integral to our vision of delivering a brighter future for all through a world-class transportation network.

Additionally, Caltrans recognizes that streets are not only used for transportation but are also valuable community spaces. Accordingly, in locations with current and/or future pedestrian, bicycle, or transit needs, all transportation projects funded or overseen by Caltrans will provide comfortable, convenient, and connected complete streets facilities for people walking, biking, and taking transit or passenger rail unless an exception is documented and approved. When decisions are made not to include complete streets elements in capital and maintenance projects, the justification will be documented with final approval by the responsible District Director.

Opportunities for complete streets exist in all phases of project development from planning and design to construction, operations, and maintenance. Complete streets projects should prioritize underserved communities that have been historically harmed and segmented by the transportation network and should serve people of all ages and abilities. Furthermore, Caltrans commits to removing unnecessary policy and procedural barriers and partnering with communities and agencies to ensure projects on local and state transportation systems improve the connectivity to existing and planned pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities, and accessibility to existing and planned destinations, where possible.

This policy is intended to expand the availability of sustainable transportation options to help meet the state's climate, health and equity goals.[3]

Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Caltrans' 2020-2024 Strategic Plan weaved sustainability principles through all of its goals. Goals of the Strategic Plan are related to safety, enhancing and connecting the multimodal transportation network, lead climate action, and advancing equity in all communities.[4]

California Transportation Plan 2050

Caltrans completed the California Transportation Plan to comply with Title 23, Code of Federal Regulation Section 450.214 and pursuant to California Government Code Title 7 Division 1 Chapter 2.3. The California Transportation Plan provides a roadmap for making effective, equitable, transparent, and transformational transportation decisions in California. The vision of the California Transportation Plan is: "California's safe, resilient, and universally accessible transportation system supports vibrant communities, advances racial and economic justice, and

improves public and environmental health," which is supported by goals related to safety, climate, equity, accessibility, public health, economy, environment, and infrastructure.[5]

California Encroachment Permits

Work within the existing Caltrans right of way must comply with Caltrans permitting requirements. This includes a traffic control plan that adheres to the standards set forth in the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). As part of these requirements, there are provisions for coordination with local emergency services, training for flagmen for emergency vehicles traveling through the work zone, temporary lane separators that have sloping sides to facilitate crossover by emergency vehicles, and vehicle storage and staging areas for emergency vehicles. MUTCD requirements also provide for construction work during off-peak hours and flaggers.

Regional

Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Council of Governments for Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito counties. AMBAG prepared regional population, housing, and employment growth forecasts for jurisdictions within the tri-county region and also distributes the state Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) to each city and county. AMBAG's 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (Connect Monterey Bay Area 2050), adopted on June 10, 2026, consists of goals and strategies for how the Monterey Bay area jurisdictions can accommodate future growth and make the region more equitable and resilient in the face of unexpected challenges and achieve regional GHG emissions reduction targets established by the California Air Resources Board pursuant to Senate Bill 375.

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan is a comprehensive planning document that provides guidance for transportation policy and projects through the planning horizon (e.g., 2050). The goals of the 2050 Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Plan include:

- Reduce VMT in order to establish livable communities that improve people's access to their regular needs;
- Eliminate transportation related fatalities and serious injuries for all transportation modes; and
- Deliver transportation improvements and maintenance cost effectively and responsive to the needs of all users of the transportation system.

The 2050 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan identifies measurable outcomes, called targets that are each linked to a sustainability goal. There are many targets in the Regional Transportation Plan. Examples of some targets include:

- Increase the length of urban bikeway miles relative to total urbanized area arterial and collector roadway miles to 85 percent by 2035 and to 100 percent by 2050;
- Reduce per capita VMT by 20 percent by 2035 and by 25 percent by 2050 (compared to 2005 VMT);

- Decrease single occupancy commute trip mode share by 6.5 percent by 2035 and by 10 percent by 2050 (compared to 2020); and
- Reduce the number of transit vehicles in "distressed" condition to 20 percent by 2035 and to 10 percent by 2050.

Santa Cruz County Rural Highways Safety Plan

The Santa Cruz County Rural Highways Safety Plan (RHSP) was adopted by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) to eliminate traffic-related injuries and fatalities by 2050. Improvements are planned along major highways throughout the County, including State Routes 1, 9, 236, 35, 129, and 152, to minimize crashes and improve roadway safety for all travelers.

Santa Cruz County General Plan

The Santa Cruz County (County) General Plan includes an Access and Mobility Element that outlines planned improvements to the countywide transportation network, including Complete Streets programs, improved roadway efficiency, and increased transit accessibility. Continued support for the cargo service offered at the Watsonville Municipal Airport is another opportunity highlighted for improvement in the General Plan area, as is increased connectivity for all travelers between and throughout sections of the County. Policy AM-4.1.3 (Trail Network) of the General Plan identifies the County's goal to expand and solidify the regional trail network in incorporated and unincorporated areas through cooperative planning with all stakeholders.

Local

City of Watsonville Municipal Code

The City's Municipal Code includes several regulations associated with traffic, truck and transit routes, and overall circulation. Title 4, Chapter 5, Traffic of the Municipal Code outlines the traffic practices allowed and enforced in the City, as well as the restricted use of certain streets for varying types of vehicles.

City of Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines

In 2001, the Watsonville City Council adopted the Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines (Guidelines) with the objective of developing more housing in a way that conserves the desirable characteristics of established neighborhoods, while improving new and evolving neighborhoods. Based on seven neighborhood and architectural design principles, the Guidelines provide a framework of neighborhood and design criteria for shaping residential development in the City. The Guidelines indicate that new housing should 1) connect to the community, 2) use block patterns that are similar to Watsonville's traditional neighborhoods, 3) avoid flood and wetland areas, and 4) fully integrate parks and community facilities where appropriate.

Analyzing Vehicle Miles Traveled for CEQA Compliance

The City adopted *Analyzing Vehicle Miles Traveled for CEQA Compliance: SB 743 Implementation Guidelines for the City of Watsonville* (VMT Policy) in September 2022. The document was developed to serve both as the basis of SB 743 implementation in Watsonville and VMT analysis within Watsonville. The document provides instruction and guidance on evaluating the VMT of

both land-use development and transportation projects. The document also provides screening criteria for VMT impacts.

City of Watsonville Vision Zero Action Plan 2021

Vision Zero is a global strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries to ensure safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. In January 2018, the Watsonville City Council adopted a resolution that outlines how the City can draw upon existing resources to successfully implement Vision Zero. Following that, the City adopted the *City of Watsonville Zero Action Plan 2021* (City of Watsonville, 2021). The City's Vision Zero Action Plan acknowledges that traffic deaths and severe injuries are preventable. The goal is to eliminate both in a set time frame with clear, measurable, and timely strategies. The Action Plan sets forth action items to achieve this goal. There are many actions items. Examples of some action items include:

- Provide schools with bicycle safety equipment, such as bicycle helmets;
- Work with State legislators to support reducing roadway speed limits;
- Develop and incorporate Complete Streets into projects;
- Prioritize the development of safe roadways and the highest level of safety for all road users through new policies, systems, and infrastructure improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists; and
- Explore new approaches to infrastructure enhancements, including speed cameras, sidewalk decals, and pedestrian crosswalk flags.

City of Watsonville Trails & Bicycle Master Plan for the Watsonville Scenic Trails Network

The *City of Watsonville Trails & Bicycle Master Plan for the Watsonville Scenic Trails Network* (City of Watsonville, 2012) includes designations of the routes along roadways that can be used by bicycling commuters and recreational riders for safe access to major employers, shopping centers and residential areas.

City of Watsonville Downtown Complete Streets Plan

The Downtown Complete Streets Plan (2019) establishes a vision for a multimodal downtown that is safer and more accessible for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. The plan outlines improvements intended to enhance safety, expand access, and provide amenities for people traveling to and through the downtown area. Certain recommendations of the Downtown Complete Streets Plan have since been superseded by the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan, which provides updated street design standards and circulation guidance.

Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan

In 2023, the City adopted the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) to guide land use, urban design, and infrastructure improvements within the City's downtown core. Building on previous complete streets planning efforts, the DWSP establishes a vision and framework for multimodal transportation in the downtown area, including recommendations for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit network improvements. The DWSP identifies opportunities to revitalize underutilized and vacant parcels, support mixed-use development, build more housing, and enhance the character and economic vitality of the

downtown while preserving its historic identity. The DWSP includes detailed standards and guidelines for the street network, public realm design, pedestrian improvements, and bicycle facilities. Key transportation improvements identified in the DWSP include reducing the number of travel lanes on Main Street from four to three with a center left-turn lane or landscaped median between Riverside Drive and Freedom Boulevard; converting East Lake Avenue and East Beach Street from one-way couplets to two-way streets; and reconfiguring the connection between Union Street and Alexander Street by "squaring off" the roadway alignment and vacating a portion of Union Street to accommodate private development. These network changes are intended to create a safer, more walkable downtown street system that supports multimodal travel and complements planned land use changes.

4.17.1.2 Existing Conditions

Roadway Network

Regional

The hierarchy of streets in Watsonville provide various levels of access and mobility, with regional highways accommodating the highest volumes and speeds, major cross-town arterial streets connecting to freeways and operating at moderate speeds and/or volumes, and local access roads that link neighborhoods, parks, and schools to the cross-town streets and to each other, with many of these serving adjacent development and neighborhoods. State Route (SR) 1, SR 129, and SR 152 are the primary routes connecting the City of Watsonville to the region and are identified as essential roadways for the country's economy and mobility by the Federal Highway Administration.

State Route 1 is a major north-south state highway extending from Orange County to Mendocino County along California's coastline. SR 1 runs down the western edge of Watsonville and connects to the City of Santa Cruz to the north and Monterey to the South. Near and through Watsonville, SR 1 is also known as Cabrillo Highway, and it serves as a four-lane roadway with a median. In the City, SR 1 averages about 30,000 to 60,000 vehicle trips on an average day.

State Route 129 is a generally east-west state highway that runs through the south side of Watsonville, connecting to SR 1 to the west and US 101 to the east. SR 129 is a four-lane road with a median until it meets Union Street; where it converges into a two-lane street. Within the City, SR 129 is primarily known as Riverside Drive until it branches off to Riverside Road at Bridge Street. SR 129 in Watsonville supports an average of 13,000 to 23,000 vehicle trips per day.

State Route 152 is a north-south street that runs through Watsonville, from Gilroy and US 101 to the east to SR 1 to the west. SR 152 provides regional access to US Highway 101 in Gilroy and Interstate 5 west of Los Banos. SR 152 connects to Downtown as Main Street and then becomes East Lake Avenue in the westbound direction and Beach Street eastbound at Main Street. The portion of SR 152 on Main Street is four lanes with a center median and converts to two lanes when SR 152 becomes East Lake Avenue and Beach Street. Past Lincoln Street, SR 152 is two lanes and runs to the eastside of Watsonville as East Lake Avenue. The average daily traffic volume on SR 152 typically ranges from 15,000 to 30,000 vehicles within the City.

Plan Area Local Routes

The major local roadways within the City of Watsonville include Freedom Boulevard, Main Street Airport Boulevard, and Green Valley Road. Many of these streets are generally four lanes, except for Freedom Boulevard and Beach Street, which are two lanes (e.g. one lane in each direction).

Freedom Boulevard extends north from SR 152, providing access to northern Watsonville and cities and towns north of Watsonville before connecting to SR 1 in Rio Del Mar. There is an average of 16,000 to 24,000 daily weekday vehicle trips on Freedom Boulevard. The speed limit is 25 mph.

Main Street serves as the main road in Downtown Watsonville despite being part of SR 152. Past Beach Street, Main Street becomes a local road that connects to Pajaro southeast of the Pajaro River. The average daily weekday traffic volume on Main Street is between 25,000 to 30,000 vehicles, and its speed limit is 25 mph.

Airport Boulevard borders Watsonville Airport on the northwest side of the City. The road serves as a major thoroughfare on the northern side of the City, connecting travelers to the airport. Airport Boulevard connects to SR 1 to the southwest and to Holohan Road to the northeast. Airport Boulevard has an average of 16,000 to 19,000 vehicle trips on an average weekday, and its speed limit is 40 mph.

Green Valley Road runs north-west though Watsonville connecting SR 152 Main Street in the south to Holohan Road and Amesti (a Census-designated place) in the north. Green Valley Road cuts through primarily residential areas within Watsonville and supports between 20,000 and 22,000 trips each weekday. Green Valley Road has a speed limit ranging from 25 mph to 40 mph.

West/East Beach Street is an east-west street that extends through the southern side of Watsonville. West Beach Street runs on the west side of the City and primarily serves industrial areas. West Beach Street converts to East Beach Street downtown and serves residential neighborhoods to the east. There is an average of 8,000 to 9,000 daily weekday trips on Beach Street. The speed limit ranges from 45 mph outside of downtown to 25 mph through downtown.

East Lake Avenue extends from Main Street as part of SR 152 through downtown and then runs north/south through the east side of Watsonville. The road services residential neighborhoods and acts as a commercial corridor through the City. East Lake Avenue carries about 14,000 vehicle trips on an average weekday, and its speed limit ranges from 25 mph to 30 mph.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Sidewalks are consistently available throughout the plan area along neighborhood streets and major streets such as Main Street, Beach Street, Lake Avenue, 5th Street, and others. These major streets have sidewalks on both sides of the roadway in the plan area and have sidewalks on at least one side of the roadway as they approach City boundaries, moving outward from the plan area. In addition to on-street facilities, the City of Watsonville maintains approximately 10 miles of slough and levee trails along Struve Slough, Watsonville Slough, the Pajaro River, and Salsipuedes Creek (City of Watsonville 2012).

Four categories of bikeways are specified in the Caltrans Highway Design Manual and Sections 885.1 et seq. of the California Streets and Highways Code. These categories are:

- **Class I Bikeway (Bike Path):** Bike paths provide a completely separate right-of-way and are designated for the exclusive use of people riding bicycles and walking with minimal cross-flow traffic.
- **Class II Bikeway (Bike Lane):** Bike lanes provide designated street space for bicyclists, typically adjacent to the outer vehicle travel lanes. Bike lanes include special lane markings, pavement legends, and signage. Bike lanes may be enhanced with painted buffers between vehicle lanes and/or parking, and green paint at conflict zones (such as driveways or intersections).
- **Class III Bikeway (Bike Route):** Bike routes provide enhanced mixed-traffic conditions for bicyclists through signage, striping, and/or traffic calming treatments, and provide continuity to a

bikeway network. Bike routes are typically designated along gaps between bike trails or bike lanes, or along low-volume, low-speed streets. Bicycle boulevards provide further enhancements to bike routes by encouraging slow speeds and discouraging non-local vehicle traffic, often through the use of traffic calming. Bicycle boulevards can also feature special wayfinding signage to nearby destinations or other bikeways.

- **Class IV Bikeway (Separated Bikeway):** Separated Bikeways, also referred to as cycle tracks or protected bikeways, are bikeways for the exclusive use of bicycles which are physically separated from vehicle traffic. Separations may include grade separation, flexible posts, physical barriers, or on-street parking.

The plan area contains Class I, Class II, and Class III bikeways (**Figure 4.17-1**). Specifically, within the plan area, Class I, Class II, and Class III bikeways are provided along the following corridors:

Class I bikeways:

- Main Street from Pennsylvania Drive to Porter Drive
- Pennsylvania Drive from Green Valley Road to Clifford Avenue
- Ohlone Parkway from Harkins Slough Road to Ohlone Loop Trail and from Skyline Vista Way to the Union Pacific Railroad line
- Along Bridge Street from Marcela Drive to Cereze Street

Class II bikeways:

- West Beach Street from Lee Road to Walker Street
- Walker Street from Green Valley Road to Bridge Street
- Harkins Slough Road from Green Valley Road to Ohlone Parkway
- Green Valley Road from Harkins Slough Road to Amesti Road
- Holohan Road from City limits to East Lake Avenue
- Pennsylvania Drive from Clifford Avenue to Main Street
- Airport Boulevard from Larkin Valley Road to City limits
- Bridge Street from East Bronte Avenue to Joyce Road
- Freedom Boulevard from northwest to Airport Boulevard

Class III bikeways:

- Beach Street from Walker Street to Lincoln Street
- West Beach Street west to Lee Road
- Riverside Drive from Walker Street to Blackburn Street
- Bridge Street from Walker Street to East Bronte Avenue
- Main Street from Airport Boulevard to Pennsylvania Drive
- Larkin Valley Road from Airport Boulevard to SR 1

- Arthur Road from Freedom Boulevard to Main Street
- Freedom Boulevard from Airport Boulevard to Bridge Street
- Green Valley Road from Amesti Road to the northeast

According to the California Office of Traffic Safety, Watsonville reported 27 pedestrians and 18 bicyclists killed or injured in crashes in 2023. This ranks 4th and 3rd worst, respectively, for cities of similar size in California (OTS 2026).

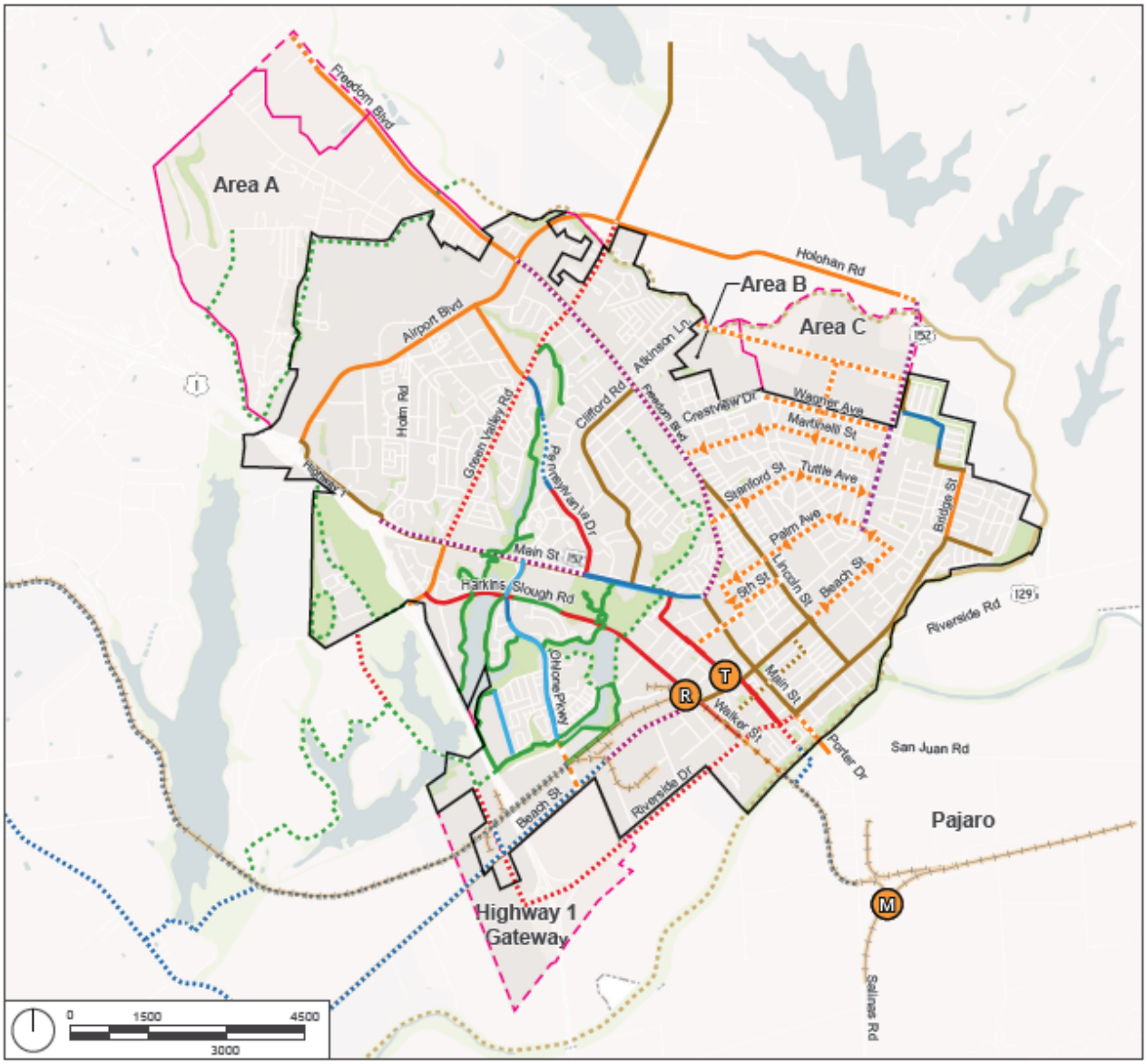
Transit Service

Transit in Watsonville includes buses, trains, and other on-demand vehicles that are operated by public agencies to transport larger groups of passengers than personal vehicles. Transit is beneficial because it can efficiently move people throughout Watsonville at a low cost to the rider. Transit provides a reliable travel option to those without a car or who are unable to drive and can help to reduce congestion on streets. Watsonville has both local bus service via Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District (METRO) and regional bus service via METRO and Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST).

Regionally, MST provides bus service from the Watsonville Transit Center to the Salinas/Prunedale and Castroville/Marina areas in Monterey County. Amtrack Thruway buses provide regional connections to and from Watsonville, linking passengers to the broader Amtrak rail network. Greyhound does not directly serve the Watsonville Transit Center, with its nearest stops located in Santa Cruz or Salinas. METRO provides regional bus service between Santa Cruz and Watsonville on regular routes (Routes 1 and 2) and throughout the Santa Cruz region. METRO also offers service between Watsonville and San José via the Highway 17 Express.

Local bus service is also provided by METRO. As of 2026, there are six local bus routes—72, 72W, 74S, 75, 78, and 79—that serve the Watsonville area (**Figure 4.17-2**). In addition to providing service through Watsonville, Routes 72 and 75 connect to Amesti and Route 72W connects Corralitos. Route 74S is a school route that stops at the Freedom Center and Pajaro Valley High School. Route 78 stops in Freedom and Route 79 only services Watsonville. In addition to fixed route transit service, demand-responsive paratransit is available for elderly and/or disabled persons. All routes pass through the Watsonville Transit Center, which is located on Rodriguez Street and West Lake Avenue. Bicycle and vehicle parking areas and covered loading platforms are also available. The Watsonville Transit Center connects regional transit services to local buses and shuttles.

Figure 4.17-1 Existing and Potential Bicycle Facilities in General Plan 2050 Area



Source: City of Watsonville; Sargent Town Planning.

Legend

- City Limit Boundary
- Existing Urban Limit Line
- Proposed Urban Limit Line
- County Border
- Watsonville Transit Center
- Potential Downtown Passenger Rail Station
- Planned Pajaro/Watsonville Multi-Modal Transit Center
- Potential Greenway Trail
- Existing Greenway Trail
- Existing Levee Trail - Paved
- Potential Levee Trail - Paved
- Potential Nature Path
- Existing Class I Bike Trail
- Existing Class II Buffered Bike Lane
- Existing Class II Bike Lane
- Existing Class III Bike Route
- Potential Class I Bike Trail
- Potential Buffered Bike Lane
- Potential Class II Bike Lane
- Potential Class II Bike Lane - 1 Way
- Potential Class III Bike Route
- Potential Class VI Separated Bikeway
- Existing Railroad Tracks

Figure 4.17-2 Bus Routes in General Plan 2050 Area

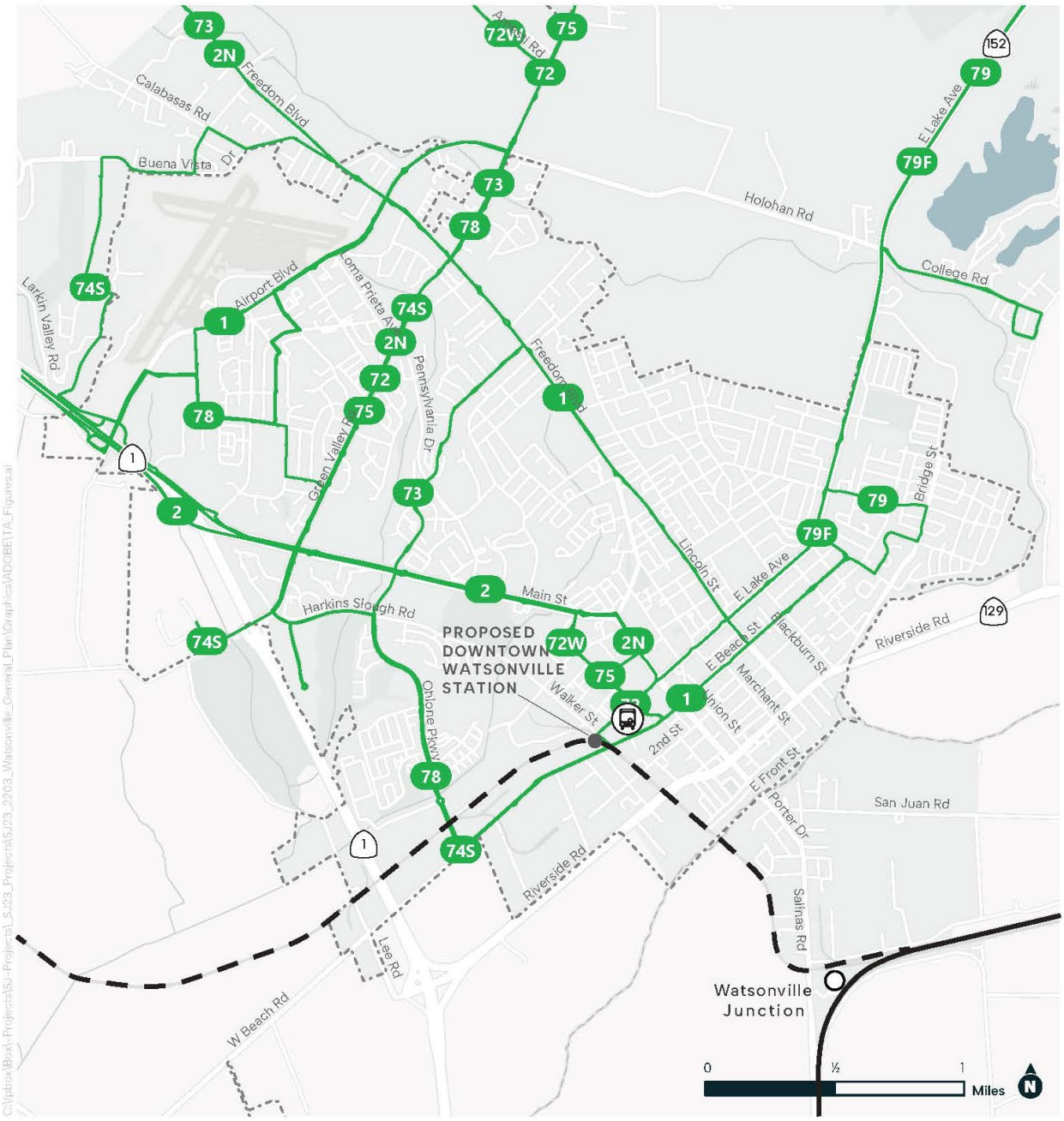


FIGURE 8
Existing Transit Routes (2025)

Fehr & Peers

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2025.

Rail Travel

SCCRTC is currently in the planning phase of their Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail Project, which would convert the underutilized Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line into a multimodal corridor with a passenger rail line and multi-use trail. The passenger rail roughly parallels Highway 1 and, if reactivated, would connect Santa Cruz to Pajaro through Watsonville. A station is planned in Downtown Watsonville at or near the Historic Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, or potentially along Walker Street between West Beach Street and Second Street. Future phases of the project would involve preparing required environmental documentation and securing funding.

In addition, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) is advancing the Monterey County Rail Extension project, which proposes new passenger rail service extending from Santa Cruz County south to Salinas. Phase 2 of this project includes a new station in Pajaro, approximately 1.5 miles from downtown Watsonville. The Pajaro station would provide a stop on the Amtrak Coast Starlight and could serve future extensions of Caltrain and Capitol Corridor. In addition, the station would provide intermodal connection to bus services operated by MST, and METRO. Environmental documentation for the project is expected to be completed in 2026, and construction could begin as early as 2029.

Air Travel

The Watsonville Municipal Airport (WVI or Airport) is a non-towered, general aviation airport located in northwestern Watsonville, and it is the only public airport in Santa Cruz County and one of five public-use airports in the Monterey Bay area. WVI is classified as a regional airport, and it serves City residents as well as travelers from other surrounding areas. The Airport is owned and operated by the City of Watsonville. The Airport is accessible by SR-1, SR-129, and SR-152, as well as through local streets via Airport Boulevard and Aviation Way.

The City adopted an updated Airport Master Plan (AMP) in October 2023. The primary focus of the AMP is the proposed development of facilities on airport property and their anticipated future use. The AMP forecasts based aircraft to increase from the 280 counted in 2020 to 327 in 2040. Similarly, aircraft operations are forecasted to increase from 50,500 operations in 2020 to 89,900 in 2040. Single-engine airplanes are expected to continue to comprise the majority of aircraft operations, with most take-offs and landings occurring during the daytime (7 AM to 5 PM) on Runway 20.

4.17.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.17.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the plan would result in potentially significant impacts related to transportation if it would:

1. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
2. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b);
3. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible use (e.g., farm equipment); or
4. Result in inadequate emergency access.

Section 15064.3 of State CEQA Guidelines, referenced in Threshold 2 above, pertains to VMT. While the City's SB 743 Implementation Guidelines includes CEQA thresholds of significance for

individual land use projects, it does not provide thresholds for general plan updates. Because the proposed land use changes in General Plan 2050 would have a widespread effect on total VMT within the City and County, the VMT analysis would need to involve a comprehensive VMT assessment (i.e., VMT including all vehicle trips, vehicle types, and trip purposes without separation by land use). In accordance with OPR recommendations for general plans, the following thresholds were utilized to consider both the General Plan's long-term effect on citywide VMT per service population and countywide boundary VMT per service population:

- Total citywide VMT per service population (under Cumulative with Project Conditions) less than 15 percent below countywide total VMT per service population; and
- Net increase in total boundary countywide VMT per service population (comparing Cumulative No Project Conditions and Cumulative with Project Conditions).

More details regarding this threshold for the General Plan are provided in the TAR prepared by Fehr & Peers for General Plan 2050, included as Appendix F to this EIR.

4.17.2.2 Methodology

General Plan 2050 is a planning document to guide development; it does not propose specific development projects. Therefore, the following discussions provide program-level review of the potential transportation impacts that could result from implementation of General Plan 2050.

The analysis presented herein is derived primarily from the TAR prepared by Fehr & Peers for General Plan 2050. The TAR presents an analysis conducted for compliance with CEQA and its implementing Guidelines. The TAR evaluates the proposed VMT resultant from General Plan 2050 and describes potential significant impacts and mitigation, where applicable, for inclusion in the EIR. While level of service (LOS) is no longer required as a criterion for evaluating traffic impacts in accordance with SB 743, the TAR includes LOS measurements to evaluate street performance based on traffic flow, speed, travel time, and delays. However, LOS discussions are not pertinent to compliance with CEQA thresholds.

The TAR evaluates potential VMT impacts of the buildout or growth projections of General Plan 2050. For the TAR, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission Travel Demand Model (SCCRTC Model) was used to prepare daily VMT and roadway segment forecasts and informed air quality, energy consumption, and GHG analyses. For the VMT analysis, Existing Conditions were based on SCCRTC Model 2019 baseline conditions and were updated to reflect existing (Year 2024) land uses in the City of Watsonville.

4.17.2.3 Project Impacts

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

Transit

Implementation of General Plan 2050 will not result in modifications to the transit network that would disrupt existing or planned facilities or services, or interfere with the implementation of adopted transit programs, plans, policies, or ordinances. Although buildout of the plan would increase the number of residents and jobs in Watsonville, which would result in higher demand for transit and potentially contribute to increased roadway congestion. The plan's land use strategy is designed to support and enhance transit use over time.

General Plan 2050 directs higher-density residential and mixed-use development to Downtown and

major transit corridors, particularly along Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue. Focusing growth along these corridors leverages existing public investment in bus transit service and provides residents with convenient access to retail and services. Integrating land uses and transportation in this manner expands access to transit, encourages walking, and is expected to increase transit ridership. This approach supports the plan's intent to create revitalized, multimodal corridors that accommodate multi-family housing, neighborhood-serving commercial uses, and convenient bus transit access while continuing to serve automobile traffic.

METRO operates the bus transit system serving Watsonville. The anticipated increase in demand for transit service would be accommodated by METRO's existing and planned enhancements to the transit system under the Reimagine Metro initiative, which includes more direct routing, improved frequencies, and expanded weekend service. As such, the land use and circulation changes in the plan would not interfere with existing or planned transit facilities or services.

Roadway

The roadway changes proposed in General Plan 2050 are designed to better align with the Safe System approach required by SB 932, reflecting a paradigm shift toward addressing roadway safety for all users. Because the proposed improvements do not remove any through vehicle lanes, they are not expected to increase traffic delay. These changes also support the City's Complete Streets priorities by reallocating roadway space to improve safety, comfort, and mobility for people walking, bicycling, and driving. Highways serving the plan area, including State Route 1, State Route 152, and State Route 129, are included in the SCCRTC RHSP, and countermeasures to reduce fatalities and injuries are planned along these roadways.

The improvements listed below illustrate how the proposed changes advance both the Safe System approach and Complete Streets principles:

- Freedom Boulevard from High Street to Lincoln Street: Narrow vehicle lanes, remove turn lane, add medians and bike lanes in each direction.
- Freedom Boulevard from Lincoln Street to Crestview Drive: Acquire 24 feet of right-of-way from private property, narrow vehicle lanes, widen sidewalks, and add parking and bike lanes.
- Freedom Boulevard from Crestview Drive to Airport Boulevard: Narrow vehicle lanes and add bike lanes in each direction.
- Green Valley Road from Main Street to Freedom Boulevard: Narrow vehicle lanes and widen bike lanes.
- Main Street from Pacifica Boulevard to Auto Center Drive: Narrow vehicle lanes and widen bike lanes in each direction.
- West Beach Street from Lee Road to Industrial Street: Replace Class II bike lanes with a Class I shared-use path in the northbound direction and add a shoulder on left side (southbound direction).
- West Beach Street from Industrial Street to Walker Street: Replace Class II bike lanes with a Class IV separated bikeway in the northbound direction, remove the parking lane in northbound direction, and widen parking lane in southbound direction.
- Riverside Drive from Lee Road to Union Street: Acquire 22 feet of right-of-way from private property, narrow vehicle lanes, replace the median with a narrowed turn lane/median, add parking lanes and Class IV protected bike lanes in each direction, and widen sidewalks.

- Walker Street from Riverside Drive to Front Street: Widen vehicle lanes, replace the railroad track lane with widened railroad track and ramp embankment lane, and remove parking lanes in both directions.
- East Lake Avenue from Manor Avenue to Wagner Avenue: Narrow vehicle lanes, add bike and parking lanes in each direction, and narrow turn lane and replace with a median in some locations.
- East Lake Avenue from Wagner Avenue to Bridge Street: Narrow vehicle lanes, replace median with narrowed turn lane/median, widen bike lanes in the northbound direction, add flex zone in the southbound direction.

Bicycle

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would not conflict with existing or planned bicycle facilities or with adopted bicycle-related plans, policies, or ordinances. To accommodate future growth, the plan includes a Complete Streets network and supporting transportation policies and actions that expand and improve bicycle infrastructure. The plan encourages bicycling by updating and building upon the City's existing bicycle and trail planning efforts, including the City of Watsonville Trails and Bicycle Master Plan (2012), to create a connected bike and trail network.

The plan's improvements are intended to eliminate gaps and create a safe, convenient, and low-stress comprehensive and community-wide network of on-street and off-street bicycle facilities. Commuting by bicycle would be supported with a street system that enhances bicycle connections by shortening bicycle distances and providing a higher quality bicycle network (with lower vehicle speeds and volumes where possible) within the City. Implementation of General Plan 2050 is expected to improve bicycle circulation and access and would not disrupt existing or planned bicycle facilities.

Pedestrian

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would not conflict with existing or planned pedestrian facilities or with adopted pedestrian-related plans, policies, or standards. To accommodate future growth, the plan includes a Complete Streets network and supporting transportation policies that expand and improve pedestrian facilities. The plan encourages walking by improving pedestrian connectivity through a safe, continuous pedestrian network designed to shorten walking distances and improve pedestrian connections to key destinations throughout the City.

The proposed improvements will enhance the quality and safety of pedestrian routes and close gaps in the existing network. Implementation of the plan would not interfere with existing pedestrian facilities or conflict with planned pedestrian facilities or adopted pedestrian system plans, guidelines, policies, or standards. Furthermore, implementation of General Plan 2050 will create new and improved pedestrian facilities, resulting in beneficial effects on pedestrian circulation and access.

As part of project implementation, compliance with existing and proposed transportation plans and programs would be ensured in accordance with the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Lessen Impacts:

> **Policy LC-1.1 Population and Land Use.** Plan the orderly intensification of existing development and expansion of the City limits within the Sphere of Influence to meet growth expectations and address the quality-of-life needs of the projected population.
>
> **Policy LC-1.6 Connectivity and Mobility.** Preserve and enhance Watsonville's existing street and

trail network to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists of all abilities and improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between existing neighborhoods; retail and services along corridors; parks, schools, recreation and natural open spaces; bus transit and the planned passenger rail station; and Downtown Watsonville and Pajaro.

Action LC-1.1.3 Street and Trail Network Improvements. Plan and implement targeted improvements to the quality and number of pedestrian and bicycle routes within the street and trail network, prioritizing connections to schools, parks, neighborhood activity centers, and downtown.

Policy LC-6.2 Interconnected Street Network. Require projects on parcels 5 acres in area or larger to be developed with a pedestrian environment by:

- Introducing an interconnected street and block network that links to adjacent neighborhoods;
- Designing internal streets to provide sidewalks, street trees, and on-street parking; and
- Requiring buildings to face and provide pedestrian access directly from the sidewalk.

Policy LC-7.8 Connected Development. Ensure new development is well-connected to adjoining neighborhoods, neighborhood centers, and bus stops via high quality walking and biking routes.

Policy LC-7.9 Connections Between Development Projects. Require pedestrian and, as practical, vehicular connections between adjacent development projects and associated parking lots.

Policy LC-7.11 Safe Street Crossings. Improve pedestrian street crossings across corridors to enable safe access for pedestrians of all abilities to schools, parks, transit, and neighborhood-serving retail and services.

Policy LC-10.3 Connected Neighborhoods. Require each new increment of residential development to provide street and trail connections to existing adjoining residential or commercial areas and provide for future connections into any adjoining parcels.

Policy LC-12.2 Connectivity to Natural Open Space. Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections to existing slough trails, planned trails along the Pajaro River levees, and the beach along Beach Street.

Goal MA-1 Complete Streets. Provide a safe, convenient and sustainable network of streets prioritizing the movement of people in all modes of transportation and as opportunities to create places that people enjoy and thrive in.

Policy MA-1.2 Complete Street Design Principles. Design, plan, maintain, and operate streets using complete streets principles for all types of transportation projects including design, planning, construction, maintenance, and operations of new and existing streets and facilities.

Policy MA-1.3 Connectivity. Encourage connectivity and accessibility to a mix of land uses that meets residents' daily needs within walking distance. Typically, this means creating walkable neighborhoods with block lengths between 300’ and 500’ in length.

Policy MA-1.5 Street Design Guidelines. Seek to design streets consistent with the example cross sections described in this chapter, and update street design guidance periodically to proactively respond to new and emerging travel modes and the City’s changing needs.

Action MA-1.1,2 Transportation Study Checklist. Update the City’s transportation study guidelines by adopting transportation performance measures focused on access and quality of

service for all travel modes, including level of traffic stress, transit capacity and activity connectedness, as described in this chapter.

Goal MA-2 Transit Facilities and Services. Promote the use of transit as a desirable, convenient and sustainable form of travel.

Policy MA-2.2 Planning For Transit. Support planning efforts for a new rail station within Downtown Watsonville that provides multimodal access to other County and regional destinations.

Policy MA-2.3 Transit Promotion. To encourage the use of transit by all age groups and trip purposes, the City will take an active role in designing and maintaining transit centers and stops that are safe, comfortable and well-maintained.

Goal MA-3 Active Transportation. Plan and implement a first-class safe active transportation network that embraces walking and bicycling as priority travel modes.

Policy MA-3.1 Active Transportation Network. Establish a safe, comfortable, convenient and well-connected network of walking and bicycling routes that connect all parts of the City.

Policy MA-3.2 Active Transportation Plan. Regularly update the City's Active Transportation Plan to respond to City needs and to capitalize on active transportation funding opportunities.

Policy MA-3.3 Bicycle Friendly Community. Support efforts to achieve a gold or platinum level bike friendly community designation by the League of American Bicyclists.

Policy MA-3.4 Trail Network. Develop a robust and integrated off-street trail system that maximizes connectivity to local and regional destinations, including to the sloughs, creeks, and Pajaro River, and along the rail corridor to other parts of Santa Cruz County.

Policy MA-3.5 Emerging Active Modes. Plan and design active transportation facilities to support new forms of two-wheeled mobility, such as e-bikes and scooters, and as ways to increase sustainable travel in the City.

Action MA-3.1.1 Active Transportation Plan Updates. Plan for and seek funding to update the City's Active Transportation Plan every five years to incorporate active transportation best practices and regularly monitor progress toward a connected active transportation network.

Policy MA-5.2 Commercial Truck Restrictions. Truck travel should be minimized near sensitive land uses such as schools and residential neighborhoods to discourage cut-through truck traffic and in compliance with AB 98.

Policy MA-5.2 Commercial Truck Restrictions. Truck travel should be minimized near sensitive land uses such as schools and residential neighborhoods to discourage cut-through truck traffic and in compliance with AB 98.

Goal MA-6 Sustainable Transportation. Promote a transportation network that anticipates changing mobility needs and emerging transportation technologies while preserving community values of safety, comfort and sustainability.

Policy MA-6.1 Minimize VMT. Work to reduce VMT through land use planning, improved transit connections, and better active transportation access**.**

Action MA-6.1.2 City Guidelines. Regularly update City guidelines and standards to proactively address the opportunities and risks associated with newer travel modes and technologies.

> **Action MA-6.1.3 Emerging Mobility Action Plan.** Develop an Emerging Mobility Action Plan to identify key needs and readiness considerations to proactively prepare for new travel modes like autonomous vehicles, autonomous freight delivery, and advanced air mobility (AAM).
>
> **Goal MA-7: Safety and Emergency Access.** Support a safe transportation system that seeks to eliminate traffic-related deaths and severe injuries.
>
> **Policy MA-7.1 Vision Zero**. Actively work to eliminate traffic related fatalities and severe injury collisions by prioritizing systemic safety and Vision Zero goals.
>
> **Policy MA-7.2 Active Transportation Safety.** Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements citywide, but especially in pedestrian zones and designated bikeway corridors, to encourage active transportation use by people of all ages and abilities.
>
> **Action MA-7.1.1 Safe Speeds.** Evaluate existing speed limits and prima facie speed limits as established in the Municipal Code. Update speed limits to align with recent state legislation (e.g., AB 43), including reducing speed limits on high-collision corridors and near schools and applicable commercial areas.

The changes to the vehicle circulation system as part of the plan would not be expected to interfere with existing transit facilities or conflict with planned transit services, facilities, or adopted transit plans, guidelines, policies, or standards. Similarly, the plan would not interfere with existing roadway facilities or conflict with planned roadway improvements or adopted transportation plans, guidelines, policies, or standards. The plan promotes Complete Streets projects, improving and expanding bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the plan area, and safer circulation along and near major roadways aligns with the improvements envisioned in the RHSP. Therefore, implementation of the plan would result in a less than significant impact on transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. (Less than Significant Impact)

b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) requires evaluation of transportation impacts based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The City's established methodology used for evaluating VMT is described in **Section 4.17.2.1**, above. As noted in the TAR preparedfor General Plan 2050 (see **Appendix F**), because General Plan 2050 would have a widespread effect on total VMT within the City and County, customized thresholds of significance were developed to appropriately account for VMT impacts in accordance with OPR's technical advisory on evaluating transportation impacts in CEQA (OPR, 2018). A comprehensive VMT assessment (i.e., VMT including all vehicle trips, vehicle types, and trip purposes without separation by land use) is presented in this report and considers both General Plan 2050 direct impacts relative to "project" generated VMT per service population and cumulative impacts, which considers General Plan 2050 long-term effect on VMT using boundary VMT per service population.

For purposes of evaluating General Plan 2050, the TAR prepared by Fehr & Peers estimated total VMT and VMT per service population (residents + students + employees) under Existing Conditions, Cumulative (2050) No Project Conditions, and Cumulative (2050) with Project Conditions. The service populations for the City of Watsonville and Santa Cruz County were calculated as shown in Table 4.17-1. As shown in Table 4.17-2, under the Cumulative (2050) with Project Conditions scenario, the citywide

VMT per service population is 23.3, which is 29 percent below the significance threshold of 32.7.[1] This indicates that implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in VMT levels exceeding the project-generated VMT threshold.

A boundary VMT analysis was conducted to evaluate whether General Plan 2050 would increase VMT countywide.[2] The growth in boundary VMT captures the combined effect of:

- shifting existing VMT due to land use and transportation network changes in Santa Cruz County;
- shifts in existing traffic to alternate travel routes or modes; and
- new VMT from additional land use development in Santa Cruz County.

General Plan 2050 would result in a significant impact on VMT if it caused an increase in the cumulative countywide daily boundary VMT per service population. As shown in **Table 4.17-3**, under the Cumulative (2050) with Project Conditions scenario, the General Plan's effect on boundary VMT per service population would not result in an increase and is equal to the boundary VMT threshold of 18.3. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would not cause a net increase in regional VMT that exceeds the applicable threshold.

Table 4.17-1 Service Populations and VMT Analysis

Population	Existing Conditions (A)	Cumulative (2050) No Project Conditions (B)	Cumulative (2050) with Project Conditions (C)	Change (C-A)
City of Watsonville				
Residents (A)	52,310	66,960	70,190	17,880
Students (B)	11,640	11,640	11,640	0
Employees (C)	27,190	28,630	31,360	22,050
Service Population (A+B+C)	91,140	107,230	113,190	22,050
Santa Cruz County				
Residents (D)	272,300	299,330	302,560	30,260
Students (E)	55,790	62,210	62,210	6,420
Employees (F)	133,490	150,880	153,610	20,120
Service Population (D+E+F)	461,580	512,420	518,380	56,800

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2025.
Notes: Change calculations include TAZs within the City of Watsonville and 8 TAZs outside city limits but within the plan area. Students include K-12 and university students.

[1] The project generated VMT threshold is set 15% below the County total VMT per service population. Threshold equation: Total Santa Cruz Countywide VMT ÷ Service Population x 85% = 17,764,430 ÷ 461,580 x 0.85 = 32.7.

[2] Boundary VMT is defined as all VMT within the jurisdictional boundary and includes all of Santa Cruz County.

Table 4.17-2 General Plan 2050 Project-Generated VMT for VMT Assessment

	Existing Conditions	Cumulative (2050) No Project Conditions	Cumulative (2050) with Project Conditions
City of Watsonville Total VMT			
Total VMT (A)	2,562,780	2,431,770	2,642,070
Service Population (B)	91,140	107,230	113,180
Total VMT per Service Population (A/B)	28.1	22.7	23.3
Impact Assessment			
Total VMT per Service Population Threshold (32.7)	-	**23.3** (29% below threshold)	
Impact Conclusion	-	**Less than Significant Impact**	

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2025.
Notes: Service population is defined as the sum of all residents, students, and employees.

Table 4.17-3 General Plan 2050's Effect on VMT (Using Boundary VMT) for VMT Assessment

	Cumulative (2050) No Project Conditions	Cumulative (2050) with Project Conditions
Boundary VMT (A)	9,359,530	9,482,650
Countywide Service Population (B)	512,420	518,380
Boundary VMT per Service Population (A/B)	18.3	18.3
Impact Assessment		
Boundary VMT per Service Population Threshold (18.3)		**18.3**
Impact Conclusion		**Less than Significant Impact**

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2025.
Notes: Service population is defined as the sum of all residents, students, and employees.

Additionally, projected increases in population, households, and jobs associated with the planned growth of General Plan 2050 were analyzed against the projections outlined in the Connect Monterey Bay 2050 plan. As shown in **Table 4.17-4**, the projected increases in Watsonville's population exceed what was anticipated in the Connect Monterey Bay 2050 plan. However, the plan provides guidance for this growth and development, consequently minimizing potential impacts to the transportation system. Furthermore, the plan includes guidance and infrastructure plans that would shift to non-car modes of transportation, reducing potential impacts related to a growing population.

Table 4.17-4 General Plan 2050 Buildout Comparison to Connect Monterey Bay 2050 Projections

Forecasts	Watsonville 2050		Connect Monterey Bay 2050 Projections (City of Watsonville)	
	Existing Conditions	Cumulative (2050) with Project Conditions	2023	2050
Population	52,314	70,186	50,820	52,251
Housing Units	14,779	20,759	14,699	16,642
Number of Jobs	27,194	33,400	28,125	29,804

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2025; AMBAG, 2026.

Impacts related to transportation performance measures and capacity would be evaluated in accordance with the following General Plan 2050 Policies and Actions.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Lessen Impacts:

Policy MA-1.4 Performance Measurement. Consider automobile level of service (LOS) alongside other multimodal performance metrics based on mode prioritization, as defined in Section 7.3b of the General Plan.

- On streets in Zone 1 where pedestrians and bicyclists are prioritized, street performance should prioritize improvements that help eliminate traffic related fatalities and severe injury collisions and LOS should not typically be considered. Level of traffic stress (LTS) should permit LTS 1 or 2 conditions, and the area should be accessible (10-minute pedestrian travel times and 25-minute bicycle travel times).
- In Zone 2, performance should prioritize improving safety, comfort, and connectivity for pedestrians, bicycle, and transit and be based on alignment with Vision Zero goals, LTS 1 or 2, good activity connectedness (15-minute pedestrian travel time and 30-minute bicycle travel time), and sufficient transit capacity to support demand. If used, LOS should typically permit LOS E conditions based on the average of the peak two (2) hours of typical weekday travel, as further detailed in the City's transportation study guidelines.
- In Zone 3, improvements should consider usability and safety for all road users. Performance metrics should include LTS 1 or 2 or a parallel low stress route. Activity connectedness should be less than 35 minutes for bicyclists and transit capacity much be sufficient to meet demand. LOS should typically permit LOS E conditions based on peak hour average.

Action MA-1.2 Transportation Study Checklist. Update the City's transportation study guidelines by adopting transportation performance measures focused on access and quality of service for all travel modes, including level of traffic stress, transit capacity and activity connectedness, as described in this chapter.

Policy MA-6.1 Minimize VMT. Work to reduce VMT through land use planning, improved transit connections, and better active transportation access.

Action MA-6.1.1 City TDM Guidelines. Develop TDM Guidelines for development projects to provide site specific mitigation options for projects with VMT impacts helping to reduce VMT.

Plan effects on VMT would not result in significant transportation impacts. The total citywide VMT per service population would not exceed the threshold of 15 percent below the countywide total VMT per service population. In addition, the cumulative countywide daily boundary VMT per service population would remain the same (i.e., no net increase). Because the General Plan's projected VMT levels remain at or below the project-generated VMT and boundary VMT thresholds, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in a significant transportation-related impact under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b). (Less than Significant Impact)

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)?

Safety impacts may occur when the physical or operational conditions of the transportation network create unexpected traffic conditions or conflict with the original multimodal design of the roadway. Such conditions may include changes in traffic volume, mix, or speed that could increase the potential for collisions or reduced roadway efficiency if not properly accounted for in roadway design.

Under General Plan 2050, any subsequent development—including new roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, or transit improvements—would be required to comply with applicable City standards and specifications to address specific design hazards, such as sight distance, driveway placement, signage, and roadway striping. New or modified transportation infrastructure would also be required to meet industry design standards and best practices and be in alignment with the City's adopted plans, zoning codes, public works standards, and inspection requirements. Additionally, General Plan 2050 accounts for Complete Streets improvements throughout the City. Transportation improvements in downtown Watsonville would be guided by the standards in the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan, which incorporates recommendations in the Downtown Complete Streets Plan, ensuring safer and more accessible transportation for all users, and improvements throughout the plan area would align with the goals outlined in the Vision Zero Action Plan. The standards established in these City-level plans promote safety and mobility for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit users and reduce conflict points that contribute to collisions.

As part of an individual project's review process, the City would evaluate access and circulation for new development to ensure compliance with City standards related to vehicular operations and the safe accommodation of pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit users. Consequently, specific public improvements may be required as part of individual project approval. Through this review process, and adherence to applicable design requirements, implementation of General Plan 2050 is not anticipated to substantially increase hazards due to geometric design features or incompatible uses.

Furthermore, hazards related to geometric design features, unsafe traffic corridors, or incompatible uses with transportation infrastructure would be minimized in accordance with the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Lessen Impacts:

Policy LC-7.11 Safe Street Crossings. Improve pedestrian street crossings across corridors to enable safe access for pedestrians of all abilities to schools, parks, transit, and neighborhood-serving retail and services.

Goal MA-1 Complete Streets. Provide a safe, convenient and sustainable network of streets prioritizing the movement of people in all modes of transportation and as opportunities to create places that people enjoy and thrive in.

Policy MA-1.4 Performance Measurement. Consider automobile level of service (LOS) alongside other multimodal performance metrics based on mode prioritization, as defined in Section 7.3b of the General Plan.

- On streets in Zone 1 where pedestrians and bicyclists are prioritized, street performance should prioritize improvements that help eliminate traffic related fatalities and severe injury collisions and LOS should not typically be considered. Level of traffic stress (LTS) should permit LTS 1 or 2 conditions, and the area should be accessible (10-minute pedestrian travel times and 25-minute bicycle travel times).
- In Zone 2, performance should prioritize improving safety, comfort, and connectivity for pedestrians, bicycle, and transit and be based on alignment with Vision Zero goals, LTS 1 or 2, good activity connectedness (15-minute pedestrian travel time and 30-minute bicycle travel time), and sufficient transit capacity to support demand. If used, LOS should typically permit LOS E conditions based on the average of the peak two (2) hours of typical weekday travel, as further detailed in the City's transportation study guidelines.
- In Zone 3, improvements should consider usability and safety for all road users. Performance

metrics should include LTS 1 or 2 or a parallel low stress route. Activity connectedness should be less than 35 minutes for bicyclists and transit capacity much be sufficient to meet demand. LOS should typically permit LOS E conditions based on peak hour average.

Policy MA-3.1 Active Transportation Network. Establish a safe, comfortable, convenient and well-connected network of walking and bicycling routes that connect all parts of the City.

Action MA-3.1.2 Safe Routes to School. Provide safe walking and bicycling routes to school, including publishing suggested route maps and promoting access and street crossing improvements along these routes.

Goal MA-7 Safety and Emergency Access. Support a safe transportation system that seeks to eliminate traffic-related deaths and severe injuries.

Policy MA-7.1 Vision Zero. Actively work to eliminate traffic related fatalities and severe injury collisions by prioritizing systemic safety and Vision Zero goals.

Policy MA-7.2 Active Transportation Safety. Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements citywide, but especially in pedestrian zones and designated bikeway corridors, to encourage active transportation use by people of all ages and abilities.

Action MA-7.1.1 Safe Speeds. Evaluate existing speed limits and prima facie speed limits as established in the Municipal Code. Update speed limits to align with recent state legislation (e.g., AB 43), including reducing speed limits on high-collision corridors and near schools and applicable commercial areas.

The plan is not anticipated to increase hazards related to geometric design or incompatible vehicle uses. Any new streets or development that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050 would be subject to City engineering standards and the General Plan policies and actions. Therefore, with the implementation of the listed policies and actions from General Plan 2050, the plan would result in a less than significant impact to transportation hazards. (Less than Significant Impact)

d) Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

There are no specific development projects associated with General Plan 2050. Instead, it provides a framework to guide future planned growth through the City. Any future development, including new housing and non-residential development, would be subject to review by the City of Watsonville and relevant emergency service providers to ensure compliance with applicable emergency access requirements. The City also requires the preparation of construction management plans that minimize temporary obstruction of traffic during site construction, and these plans would be required for any new development. All projects must meet California Building Code and City Public Works Standards, which collectively address access width, turning radii, fire apparatus clearance, and related emergency response needs.

New development sites may also increase the number of vehicles along certain roadway routes, which has the potential to delay emergency response vehicles during peak commute hours. However, emergency responders maintain response plans which include the use of alternate routes, sirens, and other methods to bypass congestion and minimize response times. During construction activities for individual development projects, applicants may be required, as part of the encroachment permit process, to prepare standard construction management plans and implement Best Management Practices (e.g., use of flagmen, detour signs for roadway closures, etc.) that minimize temporary obstruction of roadways and maintain access for emergency vehicles. Although increases in population and development may add vehicles to the roadway network, potentially increasing congestion during peak hours, emergency responders maintain established response protocols—including use of alternative

routes, sirens, and driver right-of-way requirements under state law—that ensure emergency vehicles can bypass congestion and maintain acceptable response times. Compliance with California laws and emergency service response protocols would further ensure that planned growth and development associated with General Plan 2050 does not adversely affect emergency access.

General Plan 2050 also includes a comprehensive set of policies and actions aimed at maintaining and improving emergency access citywide, including planning for evacuation routes, coordinating with regional agencies, and ensuring new development provides adequate ingress and egress. Adequate emergency access would be provided to the plan area in accordance with the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Lessen Impacts:

Goal MA-7 Safety and Emergency Access. Support a safe transportation system that seeks to eliminate traffic-related deaths and severe injuries.

Policy MA-7.3 Emergency Access. Ensure emergency access and evacuation plans are done proactively with relevant data analysis and equitably integrate community values.

Policy S-2.1 Emergency Medical Care. The City shall strive to maintain field emergency medical services consistent with population growth in the Planning Area.

Policy S-2.2 Rescue Service. The City shall strive to maintain emergency rescue services consistent with population growth in the City.

Policy S-2.3 Emergency Preparedness. The City shall be prepared to maintain critical public services during emergencies.

Action S-2.3.4 Evacuation Routes. The City shall designate evacuation routes for the Planning Area, consistent with AB 747 and SB 99 requirements. Evacuation route planning shall be guided by the Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis adopted by the City and shall be updated periodically in coordination with Santa Cruz County and other regional emergency response partners.

Policy S-2.6 Emergency Response and Evacuation Routes. The City shall ensure that emergency response and evacuation routes are accessible throughout the City.

Action S-2.6.1 Review of Designated Evacuation Routes. The City shall periodically review designated evacuation routes identified in the Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis to evaluate their condition and identify improvements to ensure the safety, capacity, and viability of these routes.

Action S-2.6.2 Signage for Evacuation Routes. The City shall install and maintain clear, reflective signage marking evacuation routes throughout the City.

Policy S-2.7 Ingress and Egress Routes for New Development. The City shall require new development to have two ingress and egress routes that account for existing and proposed traffic evacuation volumes at buildout.

Policy S-2.8 Maintain and Improve Evacuation Route Infrastructure. Prioritize routine maintenance and capital improvements along designated evacuation routes to ensure ongoing accessibility and serviceability during emergencies. Address pavement conditions, signage, drainage, and vegetation management as part of regular upkeep.

Action S-5.1.1 Access. The City shall require that new driveways and roadways meet minimum standards of the Uniform Fire Code or subsequent standards established by City ordinances.

Action S-5.1.7 Emergency Access. On dead-end streets longer than allowed by City development

standards, secondary emergency access shall be required for use by emergency vehicles or approved built-in fire protection provided.

Adequate emergency access would be provided to new development sites and existing development areas within the City. With adherence to City standards, state law requirements, and the emergency access policies and actions included in the 2050 General Plan, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in inadequate emergency access. Therefore, the impact would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

4.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

This section describes the conditions of tribal cultural resources within the plan area and vicinity and assesses the potential impacts that may result with implementation of General Plan 2050.

During the public scoping process, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) issued a notification acknowledging the receipt of the NOP and outlined requirements for compliance with Assembly Bill (AB) 52 and Senate Bill (SB) 18, recommending the preparation of Cultural Resources Assessments. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of San Juan Bautista made suggestions to conduct a search of the Sacred Lands Files (SLF) and California Historical Resource Information Systems, as well as to coordinate with the Native American Heritage Commission if this has not yet been done. Additionally, they suggested that recommendations be followed if cultural or historic sensitivity is identified within one mile of the plan area. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe also requested an opportunity to consult on the project.

A CHRIS search was requested from the Northwest Information Center (NWIC) on April 28, 2026 and a response from NWIC was provided on May 12, 2026. A record search of the NAHC SLF was completed on October 7, 2024 for the project.

4.18.1 Environmental Setting

4.18.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

American Indian Religious Freedom Act

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act established federal policy to protect and preserve the inherent rights of freedom for Native groups to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions. These rights include but are not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rites.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 sets provisions for the intentional removal and inadvertent discovery of human remains and other cultural items from federal and tribal lands. It clarifies the ownership of human remains and sets forth a process for repatriation of human remains and associated funerary objects and sacred religious objects to the Native American groups claiming to be lineal descendants or culturally affiliated with the remains or objects. It requires any federally funded institution housing Native American remains or artifacts to compile an inventory of all cultural items within the museum or with its agency and to provide a summary to any Native American tribe claiming affiliation.

State

Assembly Bill 52 of 2014

AB 52 expanded CEQA by defining a new resource category, “tribal cultural resources.” AB 52 establishes that “A project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the

environment" (PRC §21084.2). It further states that the lead agency shall establish measures to avoid impacts that would alter the significant characteristics of a tribal cultural resource, when feasible (PRC §21084.3).

AB 52 also establishes a formal consultation process for California tribes regarding those resources. The consultation process must be completed before a CEQA document can be adopted or certified. Under AB 52, lead agencies are required to "begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project." Native American tribes to be included in the process are those that have requested notice of projects proposed within the jurisdiction of the lead agency.

Senate Bill 18 of 2004

California Government Code Section 65352.3 (adopted pursuant to the requirements of SB 18) requires local governments to contact, refer plans to and consult with tribal organizations prior to their decision to adopt or amend a general or specific plan. The tribal organizations eligible to consult have traditional lands in a local government's jurisdiction, and are identified, upon request, by the NAHC. As noted in the California Office of Planning and Research's Tribal Consultation Guidelines (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." SB 18 refers to PRC Sections 5097.9 and 5097.995 to define cultural places as:

- Native American sanctified cemetery, place of worship, religious or ceremonial site, or sacred shrine (PRC §5097.9); and
- Native American historic, cultural, or sacred site, that is listed or may be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources pursuant to Section 5024.1, including any historic or prehistoric ruins, any burial ground, any archaeological or historic site (PRC §5097.995).

Government Code Sections 6254(r) and 6254.10

These sections of the California Public Records Act were enacted to protect archaeological sites from unauthorized excavation, looting, or vandalism. Section 6254(r) explicitly authorizes public agencies to withhold information from the public relating to "Native American graves, cemeteries, and sacred places maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission." Section 6254.10 specifically exempts from disclosure requests for "records that relate to archaeological site information and reports, maintained by, or in the possession of the Department of Parks and Recreation, the State Historical Resources Commission, the State Lands Commission, the Native American Heritage Commission, another state agency, or a local agency, including the records that the agency obtains through a consultation process between a Native American tribe and a state or local agency."

4.18.1.2 Existing Conditions

PRC Section 21074 (a)(1)(A) and (B) defines tribal cultural resources as "sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe" and is:

1. 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

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 Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying these criteria, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Watsonville is located within an area traditionally occupied by the Ohlone, also known as the Costanoan people. At the time of Euroamerican contact, Native American groups in the Watsonville area spoke Mutsun, a language within the Costanoan/Ohlone language family. Ohlone territory generally extended from San Pablo Bay south to Point Sur, with the inland boundary likely formed by the interior Coast Ranges. The Ohlone language family included several regional dialects, including Mutsun.

Prior to Euroamerican contact, the Ohlone were generally semi-sedentary and lived in a settlement system that included base camps made of tule reed houses, as well as specialized seasonal camps. Larger groups occupied more permanent villages but also used seasonal camps to access specific resources. Villages were organized into smaller political units, often referred to as tribelets, which were typically led by a chief who helped resolve disputes, served as a war leader during conflict, and oversaw economic and ceremonial activities. Ohlone subsistence was based on hunting, gathering, and fishing. Mussels, fish, sea mammals, acorns, and other plant and animal resources were important parts of their diet. The Ohlone also used tule balsa rafts to access aquatic resources, prepared acorns through leaching, smoked tobacco, and practiced controlled burning to encourage plant growth.

Although the ethnographic literature does not identify Native American resources within or immediately adjacent to the plan area, environmental conditions in and around Watsonville suggest that the area has a high potential to contain unrecorded Native American resources. In this part of Santa Cruz County, Native American resources are commonly found near the coast, along intermittent and perennial freshwater courses, and in areas with oak, buckeye, manzanita, pine, wetlands, waterways, and other plant and animal resources. The plan area is located inland from Monterey Bay, immediately north of the Pajaro River, and contains or is adjacent to wetlands and waterways that support plant and animal resources known to have been used. Based on these environmental similarities, there is a high potential for unrecorded Native American resources within the plan area.

Following Euroamerican settlement and the establishment of Franciscan missions in the late 1700s, Ohlone people were increasingly brought into the mission system. The Ohlone population declined substantially during this period, from an estimated 10,000 people in 1770 to approximately 1,300 by 1814 (City of Watsonville, 2023). Despite this decline, descendants of the Ohlone have continued to organize politically and culturally, including efforts beginning in the 1970s to revitalize aspects of Ohlone culture.

Historical literature and map review for the CHRIS also indicate that the plan area has a high potential to contain unrecorded historic-period archaeological resources. General Land Office survey maps show development in the plan area as early as 1858, and the area has continued to be used since that time. Additionally, the 1954 Watsonville West and 1955 Watsonville East United States Geological Survey 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles depict multiple buildings and structures within the plan area. These previously unrecorded buildings or structures meet the Office of Historic Preservation's (OHP) minimum age standard, which recognizes that buildings, structures, and objects 45 years or older may have historical value.

Cultural Resources

Based on the CHRIS search results for the project, there have been 147 cultural resource studies that cover approximately 80 percent of the plan area, as described in **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources**. The plan area contains four recorded Native American archaeological resources consisting of lithic scatters,

habitation debris, a plant gathering site and burials. One is listed in the Archaeological Resource Directory with a status code of 1S meaning it is listed in the National Register and the California Register. The plan area also contains five historic-period archaeological resources, which consist of historic-era refuse, a monument, a farm, and a bridge footing. Additionally, the plan area contains one informal resource of an unknown age.[1]

Historical literature and maps indicate historic-period activity within the plan area. General Land Office survey maps show development in the plan area as early as 1858 and there has been continued use of the area since. With this information in mind, there is a high potential for unrecorded historic-period archaeological resources to be within the plan area.

Consultation Results

As part of its tribal cultural resources' consultation process under AB 52 and SB 18, the City of Watsonville sent letters via certified mail on October 11, 2024, to the following Native American tribes that that were identified by the NAHC's SLF as being traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area:

- Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
- Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of Mission San Juan Bautista
- Costanoan Ohlone Rumsen-Mutsun Tribe
- Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan
- Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band
- Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe

Copies of the consultation letters sent to these tribes are included as **Appendix G** to this EIR.

Under AB 52 and SB 18, Native American tribes typically have 30 days and 90 days, respectively, to respond and request further project information and formal consultation. On October 14, 2024, the City received a response via email from Henry Muñoz and Samuel Thunder Rodriguez, the cultural resource officers for the Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe representing the Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan, requesting consultation on the project. Following receipt of the Tribe's request for consultation, the City initiated the consultation process, which included a virtual meeting on April 7, 2026. Consultation with the Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe was concluded on June 22, 2026. The Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe acknowledged Tribal Cultural Resources could be encountered during construction of the development envisioned in General Plan 2050 and agreed to collaborate with the Watsonville Wetlands Watch on a few efforts, including habitat restoration, wetland management, and native plant propagation.

Additionally, on October 25, 2024, the City received correspondence from the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band requesting formal AB 52 consultation regarding General Plan 2050. The City made multiple good-faith

[1] Informal resources are those resources that have not been recorded on Department of Parks and Recreation 523A Primary Record forms and have not been submitted in CHRIS standard format to an Information Center by the OHP.

efforts to initiate consultation and schedule a meeting; however, the Tribe did not respond.[2] The City has made reasonable and good-faith efforts to initiate consultation consistent with and in full compliance with the requirements of SB 18 and AB 52. However, the City remains open and willing to engage in consultation should Tribes wish to do so.[3]

Accordingly, since the City did not receive a written response from the Tribe within fourteen calendar days of receipt of the Tribe's desire to proceed with consultation and providing attempts of availability for a meeting, the City will conclude that mutual agreement cannot be reached at this time and will consider consultation concluded under Government Code sections 65352.3 and 65352.4 and Public Resources Code section 21080.3.2 for purposes of General Plan 2050.

This determination will not preclude the City from considering information provided by the Tribe as part of the EIR process for General Plan 2050, nor does it limit the Tribe's ability to participate in public review processes associated with General Plan 2050 Update.

4.18.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.18.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G of the State *CEQA Guidelines*, the proposed project would result in potentially significant environmental effects on tribal cultural resources if it would:

a) 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, 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. In applying the 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.

4.18.2.2 Methodology

The evaluation of tribal cultural resources for this project was conducted in accordance with CEQA and other relevant state and federal laws. The analysis involved a comprehensive review of existing data

[2] Consultation attempts were made on April 29, 2025, May 2, 2025, and May 7, 2025.

[3] Government Code sections 65352.3 and 65352.4 provide that tribal consultation may be considered concluded when either: (1) the parties reach mutual agreement concerning appropriate measures for preservation or mitigation; or (2) either the local government or the tribe, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached. Similarly, Public Resources Code section 21080.3.2(b) provides that consultation under AB 52 is concluded when the parties agree to mitigation measures to avoid or reduce a significant effect on tribal cultural resources, or when a party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, determines that mutual agreement cannot be reached.

sources to identify any known tribal cultural resources within the plan area. An SLF search was conducted with the California NAHC to identify potential tribal cultural resources. The SLF returned a positive result, and six Native American tribal groups were contacted for consultation.

The assessment of impacts on cultural resources was based on the CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G) and relevant local and state regulations. Tribal cultural resources were evaluated for their significance using criteria established under CEQA and other relevant frameworks, and the project's potential to directly or indirectly impact tribal cultural resources was thoroughly considered. If significant tribal cultural resources were identified, the project was evaluated for the potential impacts of activities such as construction, grading, or alteration of historic structures, and mitigation measures were proposed to avoid, minimize, or compensate for those impacts.

4.18.2.3 Project Impacts

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code § 21074 as either a site, feature, place, 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)

&

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 § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

Implementation of General Plan 2050 has the potential to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of tribal cultural resources in the plan area, defined in PRC Section 21074, as either a site, feature, place, 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. According to the CHRIS results, the plan area contains four recorded Native American archaeological resources, five historic-period archaeological resources, and one informal resource of an unknown age.[4]

Pursuant to AB 52, the City contacted the NAHC to request an SLF search, which yielded a positive result.[5] NAHC provided a formal list of tribal contacts within the plan area. Of the six tribes that were contacted for consultation, two tribes responded requesting consultation. As discussed in **Section 4.18.2.1, Existing Conditions**, the City had a virtual meeting with the Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe and consultation was concluded on June 22, 2026. The second Tribe that requested formal consultation, the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, did not respond to the City's efforts to schedule a meeting. Therefore, consultation with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band has been concluded for purposes of the Draft EIR

[4] Informal Resources are those resources not recorded on DPR 523A primary record forms and not submitted in CHRIS standard format to an Information Center by the OHP. They are not available in List form.

[5] The SLF search provides a regional yes/no determination rather than site-specific findings.

analysis. However, the City remains willing to engage in formal consultation should the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band request to do so as part of the EIR process.

Direct permanent impacts to tribal cultural resources (resources either listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or local register of historical resources, or resources determined by the lead agency to be significant) result from ground disturbance associated with construction, such as grading and excavation, but also from other types of activities that can affect rocks, sacred plants and/or sacred places. Implementation of General Plan 2050 has the potential to directly impact tribal cultural resources, primarily by grading or excavation in previously undisturbed soil and by the disturbance of buried resources that have not been previously identified. There is also the potential to impact other types of tribal cultural resources that may not be buried including site features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places and objects. The potential for direct impacts to tribal cultural resources may be comparatively lower in developed or previously disturbed areas within the plan area; however, future development or redevelopment facilitated by General Plan 2050 could still result in ground-disturbing activities that have the potential to affect previously unidentified tribal cultural resources. Regardless of prior disturbance, however, as discussed in **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources**, construction has the potential to directly impact undocumented archaeological resources.

While there are state requirements in place to minimize adverse impacts to tribal cultural resources, there is still the potential for damage to such resources as a result of implementation of General Plan 2050. General Plan 2050 could result in direct impacts through substantial alteration or removal of tribal cultural resources and/or indirect impacts from access-related damage from construction projects and ongoing operations resulting from projects implemented as a result of the plan.

Future development that would be allowed by the plan could result in physical changes to a tribal cultural resource, such that the resources' ability to convey their significance is materially impaired, resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact. General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions contain development standards to guide the design and would serve as program-level mitigation for impacts to tribal cultural resources.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Impacts:

> **Goal LC-1 A Well Planned City of Places.** A well-planned City that: supports a wide range of complementary land uses developed and operated at intensities that accommodate anticipated growth; achieves the vision of a beautiful, diverse, and well-connected community; features unique places that respect Watsonville's agricultural and architectural heritage; and remains rooted in its unique climate, topography, history, and cultural traditions.
>
> **Policy LC-1.2 Contextual Design**. Celebrate Watsonville's agricultural history, culture, and significance, as well as the ongoing importance of agricultural processing, through architecture, public art, signage, and spaces for community events.
>
> **Policy LC-1.3 Infill and Preservation of Small Town Character.** Promote, encourage, and cultivate infill, reuse, and revitalization along Watsonville's commercial corridors, neighborhood centers, and in and adjacent to downtown.
>
> **Policy LC-1.4 Adaptive Reuse.** Support the adaptive reuse of older and historic buildings, especially within Downtown Watsonville.
>
> **Action LC-1.1.1 Public Arts Master Plan.** Continue to highlight and celebrate Watsonville's historic and cultural heritage by implementing the Watsonville Public Arts Master Plan in the City's parks, schools, trails, streets, and buildings.

Policy LC-3.9 Entertainment and Events. Collaborate with local businesses to increase local leisure and entertainment options, sponsor events and festivals, and improve recreation offerings that promote Watsonville's cultural heritage and increase the City's profile as a unique and desirable place to live, work, and play**.**

Policy LC-4.1 Environmental Impacts. In accordance with the CEQA, the California Endangered Species Act, and other federal and state laws, new development shall: minimize impacts to air, water, and soil quality; avoid or mitigate the loss of sensitive habitat; limit greenhouse gas emissions; and preserve historic, cultural, and tribal resources.

Goal C-1 Protection of Ecologically Sensitive Areas. Encourage protection of ecologically sensitive areas in the various environmental settings found in Watsonville.

Policy C-1.1 Protection of Ecologically Sensitive Areas. The City shall seek to protect ecologically sensitive areas, including the Pajaro River, Salsipuedes Creek, Corralitos Creek, and the Wetlands of Watsonville.

Action C-1.1.6 Rewilding. The City shall support the rewilding of riparian and wetland habitat by requiring it as a condition of development where it abuts private projects, and by seeking grants and other resources, as reasonable for restoration in other areas. Rewilding efforts shall be planned comprehensively and use native plants from regional seed stocks.

Goal C-7 Archaeological Resources. To protect archaeological resources from adverse impacts of development.

Policy C-7.1 Historic and Cultural Resource Identification and Preservation. The City shall identify, maintain, and protect historic and prehistoric resources through ongoing inventory and regulatory measures, while encouraging private participation in their preservation and stewardship.

Action C-7.1.1 Inventory. The City shall periodically update and maintain the City of Watsonville Historic Building Register to include an inventory of historic and pre-historic sites, structures, and landmarks of historic and cultural significance in order to determine the potential impacts on these resources from proposed projects.

Action C-7.1.2 Private Participation. The City shall foster and encourage private efforts to preserve historic and prehistoric sites and cultural artifacts.

Action C-7.1.3 Ordinance. The City shall continue to enforce the historic preservation ordinance and consider modifications that will increase protection of historic and prehistoric resources.

Additionally, the implementation of mitigation measures, including **Mitigation Measures CUL-1(a), CUL-1(b)** and **CUL-2**, which address potential impacts from the discovery of archaeological resources during construction, and **Mitigation Measure CUL-4**, which addresses impacts in the event that human remains are unearthed during excavation, would serve to reduce potential tribal cultural resource impacts associated with development and other activities implemented under General Plan 2050. **Mitigation Measure TCR-1** has also been added to further address potential impacts to tribal cultural resources.

Mitigation Measure TCR-1: Suspension of Work in the Area of Potential Tribal Cultural Resources

In the event that potential tribal cultural resources, such as archaeological resources of Native American origin or tribal traditional tangible spaces or artifacts (historic-era and pre-contact era), are identified during implementation of a future development project within the plan area, the project applicant/

landowner shall ensure that on-site project activities within 50 feet of the find shall be temporarily suspended or redirected until either a qualified archaeologist meeting the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards (SOIS) for Archeology has evaluated the nature and significance of the find (if archaeological) as a pre-contact or Native American- associated resource and an appropriate local Native American representative is consulted, or an appropriate local Native American representative is consulted regarding the significance of the resource (if not archaeological). If the City of Watsonville, in consultation with local Native American Tribes, determines that the resource is a tribal cultural resource and thus significant under CEQA, a mitigation plan shall be prepared and implemented for the specific development project in accordance with state guidelines and in consultation with local Native American group(s). The plan shall include avoidance of the resource or, if avoidance of the resource is infeasible, the plan shall outline the appropriate treatment of the resource in coordination with the appropriate local Native American tribal representative and, if applicable, a qualified archaeologist. Examples of appropriate mitigation for tribal cultural resources include, but are not limited to, protecting the cultural character and integrity of the resource, protecting traditional use of the resource, protecting the confidentiality of the resource or providing Tribal cultural sensitivity training about the resource to applicable City staff if it will be managed, appropriate public outreach regarding the resource, or heritage recovery (recovering items of tribal cultural heritage according to established tribal customs).

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in development and land use changes throughout the plan area that could affect both known and previously undiscovered tribal cultural resources. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures CUL-1(a) to 1(c), CUL-2, CUL-4,** and **TCR-1,** as well as applicable General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions would reduce potentially significant impacts to tribal cultural resources to a to less-than-significant level. (Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation)

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4.19 Utilities

This section discusses the impacts to utilities that would result from implementation of General Plan 2050. During the public scoping period, one commenter requested that the EIR include a discussion of new utility connections required to serve the plan. This chapter was prepared with information from the Water Supply Assessment (WSA) prepared for the Public Works and Utilities Department's Water Division by Harris & Associates for the plan in February 2026 (Appendix H). New utility connections are described in **Section 4.19.1.1, Project Impacts**.

4.19.1 Environmental Setting

4.19.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

Clean Water Act

The U.S. Congress amended the Federal Water Pollution Control Act in 1972, prohibiting the addition of pollutants to waters of the U.S. from any point source unless it is compliant with a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. This amended act is the Clean Water Act (CWA). Broadly, the Clean Water Act establishes regulations for the discharge of pollutants into the waters of the United States. It aims to restore and maintain the integrity of the Nation's waters by placing restrictions on pollution discharges.

Section 402

Section 402 of the Clean Water Act establishes the NPDES, a permitting system for discharges of pollutants into any Waters of the U.S. This Section requires that pollutant discharges from a point source to surface waters of the U.S. must be regulated by an NPDES permit. The NPDES permit program is managed by Regional Water Quality Control Boards in the U.S. Section 402(p) requires permits for discharges of storm water from industrial and municipal separate storm sewer systems.

Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations

Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR) codifies federal regulations for the protection of the environment and discusses the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) mission of protecting human health and the environment. 40 CFR includes chapters that discuss the EPA, the relationship between the EPA and the Department of Justice, the establishment of a council on environmental quality, and the establishment of several councils that manage environmental risks and restore natural resources.

State

Department of Water Resources

Established in 1956, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) aims to sustainably manage the water resources within the state of California. DWR is responsible for water-related disaster prevention and response, habitat restoration, planning for future water needs, and educating the public on water issues. Dam safety, drought mitigation, and flood preparedness are key aims of DWR.

Groundwater Management Act (Assembly Bill 3030)

Assembly Bill 3030, also called the Groundwater Management Act, was passed in 1992 to establish specific procedures for managing local groundwater resources. The Groundwater Management Act also outlines procedures on how to develop and adopt groundwater management plans for local agencies.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), passed in 2014, provided a statewide framework that outlines long-term protection for groundwater resources. SGMA requires local agencies to create groundwater sustainability agencies in areas with high and medium priority groundwater basins. These agencies develop and implement groundwater sustainability plans that mitigate adverse effects to groundwater and prevent water overdraft within a 20-year period.

Water Conservation Act of 2009

The Water Conservation Act of 2009 (Senate Bill X7-7) requires that all water suppliers in California improve the efficiency of their water usage. Urban water projects, agricultural projects, and combined urban-agricultural projects are all covered under this Act, and specific regulations for reporting and mitigation are outlined for each type of project.

Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

Water efficient landscape ordinances (WELO) may be implemented anywhere in California to increase water efficiency and improve environmental conditions in the built environment. New and retrofitted landscape water efficiency standards are governed by the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO). The MWELO provides the baseline for WELO programs, and all local agencies must adopt, implement, and enforce either the MWELO or a local WELO that is at least as effective as the MWELO. The MWELO requires that certain documents, like a soil management report, irrigation plans, and water efficiency reports, be prepared for each project. The installation of recycled water irrigation and graywater systems is encouraged.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code)

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act protects and preserves the quality of California waters in order to preserve their public benefits. This Act also established Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) throughout California to administer permits for discharges of any pollutant into California waters.

Title 22 of California Code of Regulations

California Title 22 sets standards for drinking water cleanliness, hazardous waste management, and toxic substances control. Acceptable processes of and uses for recycled water are outlined in Division 4, Chapter 3, and it also describes acceptable means of water treatment. Division 4.5 of Title 22 outlines regulations for hazardous waste minimization, management, and disposal. Prohibited chemical additives are also identified, and specialized management and mitigation measures are provided where applicable.

California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery

The California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) oversees waste management, recycling, and waste reduction programs in the state. Initiatives under CalRecycle include the Integrated Waste Management Act, which introduced stricter solid waste reduction goals for each city and county. This Act also established a comprehensive system of permitting, enforcement, and maintenance for solid waste facilities. CalRecycle also implemented the Beverage Container Recycling and Litter Reduction Act, where consumers may recycle their beverage containers in exchange for a 5-cent or 10-cent refund deposit.

Senate Bill 1016 – Per Capita Disposal and Goal Measurement

Senate Bill (SB) 1016 builds on 1989 Assembly Bill (AB) 939, which required each jurisdiction in California to divert at least 50 percent of its solid waste stream away from landfills. AB 939 also implemented a framework for program implementation, solid waste planning, and landfill compliance. SB 1016 implements a simplified measure of a jurisdiction's performance. By eliminating complex calculations, programs can be evaluated more quickly and more affordably by using simple evaluation approaches. Each year, CalRecycle will calculate the per capita disposal rates for each jurisdiction; this calculation indicates jurisdiction growth. By comparing the reported per capita disposal rate to the 50 percent per capita disposal target, CalRecycle can assess a jurisdiction's progress in waste diversion.

Senate Bill 1374 – Construction and Demolition Waste Materials Diversion Requirements

SB 1374 encourages CalRecycle to provide information regarding the diversion of construction and demolition (C&D) materials to jurisdictions. A model C&D diversion ordinance should also be developed so that local jurisdictions may voluntarily use it as a reference. CalRecycle's example is intended to be flexible so that it can meet the varying needs of each jurisdiction. Many jurisdictions found that adopting and enforcing a C&D diversion ordinance was effective in diverting solid waste from disposal facilities, instead opting for recycling processes.

Senate Bill 1383

SB 1383 aims to reduce short-lived climate pollutants, like black carbon, fluorinated gases, and methane, that result from the decomposition of organic waste sent to landfills. These pollutants contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, and SB 1383 set a goal for a 75 percent reduction in the level of statewide disposal of organic waste by 2025. Furthermore, SB 1383 set a target for 20 percent recovery of commercial edible food from disposal by 2025. Residences, multi-family complexes, businesses, schools, and public agencies are all subject to the regulations implemented by SB 1383.

Urban Water Management Planning Act

As mandated by the DWR, Urban Water Management Plans (UWMPs) are prepared by urban water suppliers every five years to support long-term water resource planning. California Water Code Section 10610-10656 and Section 10608 outline requirements for UWMPs, including the contents of the plan and the per capita reduction targets (20 percent by 2020). Actions for future uncertainties are outlined in the UWMP so the relevant jurisdiction will have a resilient portfolio and robust water recycling and conservation programs. Contingency plans for natural disasters, specifically drought events, are also developed and implemented through UWMPs.

Assembly Bill 939

Established in 1989, Assembly Bill (AB) 939 required each jurisdiction in California to divert at least 50 percent of its solid waste stream away from landfills. AB 939 also implemented a framework for program implementation, solid waste planning, and landfill compliance. SB 1016 implements a simplified measure of a jurisdiction's performance. AB 939 was amended by SB 1016.

Assembly Bill 341 – Mandatory Commercial Recycling

AB 341, the "Mandatory Commercial Recycling" plan, was adopted in 2017 and focuses on increasing commercial waste diversion as a means to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions. The implementation of this bill is anticipated to reduce GHG emissions by 5 million metric tons of CO_2 equivalents. Under this bill, an additional 2 to 3 million tons of materials will need to be recycled from the commercial sector each year by 2020.

Assembly Bill 1826

AB 1826, the "Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling" program, requires businesses to recycle their organic waste depending on the amount of organic waste they generate weekly. Local governments are required to implement organic waste recycling programs to divert organic waste generated in the commercial sector and multifamily residential buildings with at least five units. Organic waste, under this bill, includes food waste, landscape waste, wood waste, and green waste.

Senate Bill 610 and 221

Collectively, SB 610 and SB 221 require public agencies to evaluate water supplies and determine if adequate water supplies exist for large development projects. SB 610 requires that water supply and demand information be prepared for any "projects" which are the subject of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) document. The sharing of this detailed information about water availability between water suppliers and lead agencies promotes collaborative project planning and management. SB 221 requires written verification that sufficient water supplies exist for qualifying residential developments, typically those with over 500 dwelling units. Approval of tentative or parcel maps would be prohibited until water supplies are determined to be adequate.

California Green Building Standards Code Compliance for Construction, Waste Reduction, Disposal and Recycling

The California Green Building Standards (CalGreen) Compliance for Construction, Waste Reduction, Disposal and Recycling outlines green building standards for new and remodeled structures in California. Section 5.408.1 requires that at least 65 percent of non-hazardous construction and demolition waste be recycled. Section 5.408.1.1 calls for the development of a construction waste management plan. Section 5.408.1.4 requires proper documentation of waste management plans and reduction strategies to the enforcing agencies.

2025 California Plumbing Code

California Code of Regulations Title 24, Part 5, also called the Plumbing Code, outlines state standards for the design and construction of plumbing systems. The Plumbing Code establishes regulations for water fixtures and water conservation guidelines to restrict the inefficient or excessive use of water. Compared to the 2022 iteration of the Plumbing Code, the 2025 edition pushes for lower flow rates in new

construction and mandates low-flow fixtures, such as aerated faucets and efficient showerheads, in new construction or large-scale renovations.

NPDES Permit Program

Section 402 of the Clean Water Act establishes the NPDES permit program, a system for the approval or rejection of pollutant discharges into Waters of the U.S. Section 402 requires that pollutant discharges from a point source to surface waters of the U.S. must be regulated by an NPDES permit. The Regional Water Quality Control Board manages the NPDES permit program and administers wastewater permits to agencies for qualifying projects. Storm water from industrial or municipal separate storm sewer systems is also permitted, as is described in Section 402(p) of the Clean Water Act.

California Energy Efficiency Resource Standards

California's EERS prioritize cost-effective energy conservation as a means of energy efficiency. Additionally, onsite power generation and renewable energy generation are practices considered beneficial for energy efficiency. For the future, California utilities providers are expected to reduce their demand forecasts so as to meet long-term energy savings goals.

California Public Utilities Commission

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates privately owned utilities, including services that provide electricity, gas, water, telecommunications, rail transit, and passenger transportation. CPUC also regulates the planning and approval of electric generation facilities as well as natural gas distribution pipelines. CPUC is responsible for ensuring that utilities are provided in a safe, reliable, and efficient manner and are available at affordable rates.

California Energy Commission

The California Energy Commission (CEC) is primarily responsible for energy policy and planning in California. The major responsibilities of this agency include: the maintenance of historical energy data and forecasting of future trends, the licensing of thermal power plants that are 50W or larger, the promotion of energy efficiency with building standards, the development of energy technologies and support of renewable energy practices, and the creation of plans for state-level energy emergencies.

California Building Standards Code

- Title 24, Part 6: California Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings
    - These standards were adopted to ensure building construction, system design, and installation achieve energy efficiency
- Title 24, Part 11: California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen Code)
    - 2025 CALGreen measures include mandatory measures for non-residential development, including regulations on site development, energy efficiency, material and resource conservation, and environmental quality.
    - 2025 Building Energy Efficiency Standards (Energy Code) aim to reduce overall energy usage by strengthening solar power systems and battery storage in new homes, strengthening ventilation standards, and encouraging efficient electric heat pumps.

Senate Bill 1389 (CA PRC Sections 25300-25323)

Senate Bill (SB) 1389 requires the CEC to prepare a biennial energy policy report to evaluate trends and issues relating to electricity, natural gas, and transportation fuel sections. The CEC must also provide policy recommendations to conserve resources and protect the environment within California.

Senate Bill 350 – Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015

Enacted in 2015, this Act set new objectives for pollution reduction by 2030, including an aim to increase procurement of electricity from renewable sources (33 percent to 50 percent) and a goal to double energy efficiency savings of retail customers through energy efficiency and conservation.

Senate Bills 1078, 107, and Executive Order S-14-08

These bills adopted standards to increase the percentage of electricity that retail sellers provide that must be renewable. Retail sellers are required to increase the percentage of electricity obtained from renewable sources to 33 percent by 2020 and 50 percent by 2030.

Senate Bill 100

Senate Bill (SB) 100 established a policy requiring that 100 percent of electric retail sales are renewable energy and zero-emission resources by 2045. The CEC, CPUC, and CARB must jointly submit a report to State legislature every four years. SB 100 requires retail sellers and publicly owned electric utilities to procure eligible renewable electricity at increasing rates: 44 percent of retail sales by the end of 2024, 52 percent by the end of 2027, and 60 percent by the end of 2030.

Senate Bill 375 – Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008

In 2011, CARB approved GHG reduction targets for 18 regional planning bodies in the state. Senate Bill (SB) 375 supplements these reduction targets from new vehicle technologies and fuel standards. SB 375 also required that regions with a metropolitan planning organization must adopt a Sustainable Communities Strategy as a component of their regional transportation plan (RTP). The Sustainable Communities Strategy would be designed to achieve certain goals related to the reduction of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. The State Air Resources Board would review each regional strategy and ensure that it would contribute to desired reduction in greenhouse gases.

Assembly Bill 117 and Senate Bill 790

AB 117 was passed in 2002, allowing public agencies and joint power authorities to form a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA). CCAs allow a city, county, or collective of cities/counties to pool electricity demand and purchasing. Typically, CCAs purchase and/or generate power, which is delivered by regional utility providers, like Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), to customers. SB 790 strengthened AB 117 by introducing a code of conduct that must be followed by incumbent utilities agencies.

Local

Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency Strategic Plan

The Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA) Strategic Plan outlines Valley Water's approaches to building a resilient future that protects and preserves groundwater quality. By increasing water conservation and the stability of groundwater and surface water supplies, PVWMA aims to create a sustainable groundwater basin that proactively addresses issues of climate change and sea level rise. This Strategic Plan allows PVWMA to better serve communities in the Pajaro Valley for several generations.

City of Watsonville 2020 Urban Water Management Plan

The City of Watsonville UWMP outlines projected water usage in connection with planned population growth and water management programs. Population growth, water demand, and potential drought events are projected over a 25-year planning period, and reliability of existing water supplies are evaluated with these parameters in mind. The UWMP introduces policies and management practices to promote water conservation and to ensure that the water supply is resilient to future demand pressures.

City of Watsonville Municipal Code

Title 6 Chapter 3 - City Utilities

Chapter 3 of Title 6 of the Watsonville Municipal Code (WMC) discusses the policies regarding City utilities, including water, wastewater, and sewer systems. The chapter outlines acceptable water uses in the City as well as the unlawful usage, waste, and pollution of water, where applicable. Water resale is prohibited, and water conservation and recycling are promoted wherever possible. Pollutant discharges are also regulated under WMC Title 6, Chapter 3, and NPDES permits are necessary before any waste discharge into water.

4.19.1.2 Existing Conditions

Water Supply

The City provides potable water service to residential, commercial, and industrial sectors in Watsonville and some unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County (City of Watsonville, 2024f). The City's service is split into nine zones, reaching north of the City limits and including the Pajaro Dunes area along the coast (**Figure 4.19-1**).

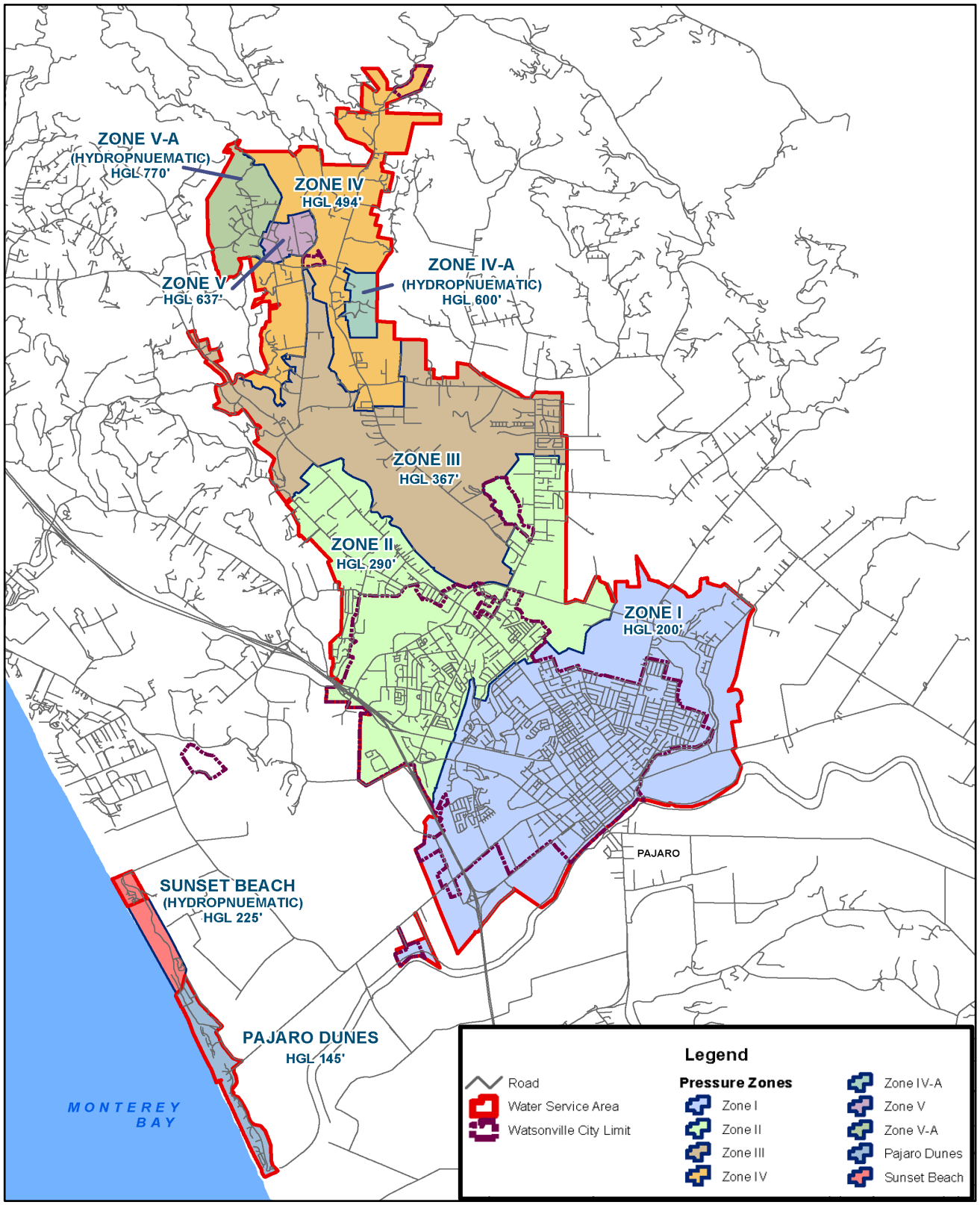
City water is primarily sourced from groundwater wells in the area, and 10 percent of the City's water comes from local creeks (City of Watsonville, 2024b). The City's Water Division is responsible for the intake and filtration of drinking water. The City's regional water system includes 190 miles of pipelines, 8 reservoirs, and 14 wells (City of Watsonville, 2024f). The Corralitos Filtration Plant (CFP) treats and delivers drinking water to the City. The Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency manages groundwater supplies for non-potable uses but does not provide water. The CFP treats up to 900 acre-feet per year (AFY), and it has a maximum design capacity of 2 million gallons (mgd) per day (City of Watsonville, 2026).

The City's water supply consists mainly of groundwater (97.1 percent) with occasional augmentation from surface water (2.9 percent). When possible, the City uses a combination of surface water and groundwater sources. The City has groundwater rights of 21,000 AFY, and the City-owned sand filtration plant (City of Watsonville, 2026).

Groundwater

As of 2026, approximately 91.7 percent of Watsonville's water supply is groundwater, primarily sourced from the Aromas Red Sands Aquifer (City of Watsonville, 2026). The City of Watsonville is served by the Corralitos groundwater basin and the Corralitos-Pajaro Valley sub-basin. This basin is managed by PVWMA, a groundwater sustainability agency as defined by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The Corralitos-Pajaro Valley basin is not adjudicated, and it is classified as a critically overdrafted basin (DWR, 2020).

Figure 4.19-1 City of Watsonville Water Service Area



Source: City of Watsonville, 2011.

Surface Water

The Pajaro River watershed is comprised of the Watsonville Slough system, Corralitos Creek, and Salsipuedes Creek. The City's regional water system includes eight reservoirs, including the Freedom reservoir, the Uvas dam and reservoir, and the Chesbro dam and reservoir (PVWMA, 2026b). The Uvas reservoir has a capacity of 9,688 acre-feet (AF) of water and is currently at 77.7 percent of reservoir capacity. The Chesbro reservoir has a capacity of 7,967 AF of water and a surface area of approximately 283 acres. As of May 2026, the Chesbro reservoir is at 70.2 percent of its capacity (PVWMA, 2026a).

Imported Water

Santa Cruz County's domestic water supply does not receive any imported water (SCCEH, 2024). In 2002, Watsonville adopted a revised Basin Management Plan (BMP) that called for an import water pipeline project that would supply 11,900 AFY of imported water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (PVWMA, 2014). However, the Ad Hoc BMP Committee determined that this project was politically unacceptable in 2010, and it was removed from consideration. Therefore, it was not implemented, and water continues to be supplied domestically (PVWMA, 2014).

Distribution

The City manages the distribution of potable water to Watsonville and some unincorporated areas in Santa Cruz County (City of Watsonville 2024f). The public water supply system includes nine hydraulic pressure zones, nine booster stations, and the CFP. Potable water is distributed through 190 miles of pipeline to deliver water to 65,231 customers (City of Watsonville, 2026). PVWMA operates approximately 20 miles of distribution pipeline for recycled water delivery to agricultural water users (PVWMA, 2014).

Recycled Water

In 2009, the City's Wastewater Treatment facility opened and began operating the City's new Wastewater Recycling facility (City of Watsonville, 2024b). The City and PVWMA partnered to create Watsonville's Water Recycling Project. This project aims to efficiently provide recycled water to farmers throughout the coastal areas of Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. By distributing recycled, treated wastewater, groundwater usage in the agricultural industry is limited. The recycling program also reduces wastewater discharges into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (City of Watsonville, 2024b).

Wastewater

The City owns and operates a wastewater treatment facility. The City's sewer systems include over 170 miles of sanitary sewer pipeline, 20 City-owned wastewater pump stations, and 13 lift stations that transport wastewater throughout the City's 21 square-mile service area. The City's sewer system serves the City of Watsonville, as well as unincorporated areas in Santa Cruz County supported by the Freedom, Salsipuedes, and Pajaro Sanitation Districts. The sewer systems deliver wastewater to the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility, which is managed by the City's Wastewater Division. Originally constructed in the 1920s, this facility serves residents, commercial businesses, and industrial centers. The treatment facility processes an average of 5 mgd of wastewater daily from approximately 60,000 people (City of Watsonville, 2021a). The facility can process up to 12 mgd during dry weather, and it can process up to 36 mgd of wastewater during wet weather (City of Watsonville, 2024e). Secondary wastewater treatment is conducted for water discharged to the ocean, and tertiary treatment is applied to water used for food crop irrigation. The organic residual matter from wastewater treatment, or "biosolids," are applied to agricultural land to grow feed crops for livestock. The City of Watsonville Public Works and

Utilities Department issues wastewater discharge permits for industrial users, mobile waste haulers, and groundwater discharge (City of Watsonville, 2024e).

The City has collaborated with PVWMA to develop and build a recycled water treatment facility (RWF) to provide recycled water for crop irrigation in the coastal areas of the south Santa Cruz and north Monterey counties. The RWF provides an alternative to well extraction, protecting the region's groundwater supplies.

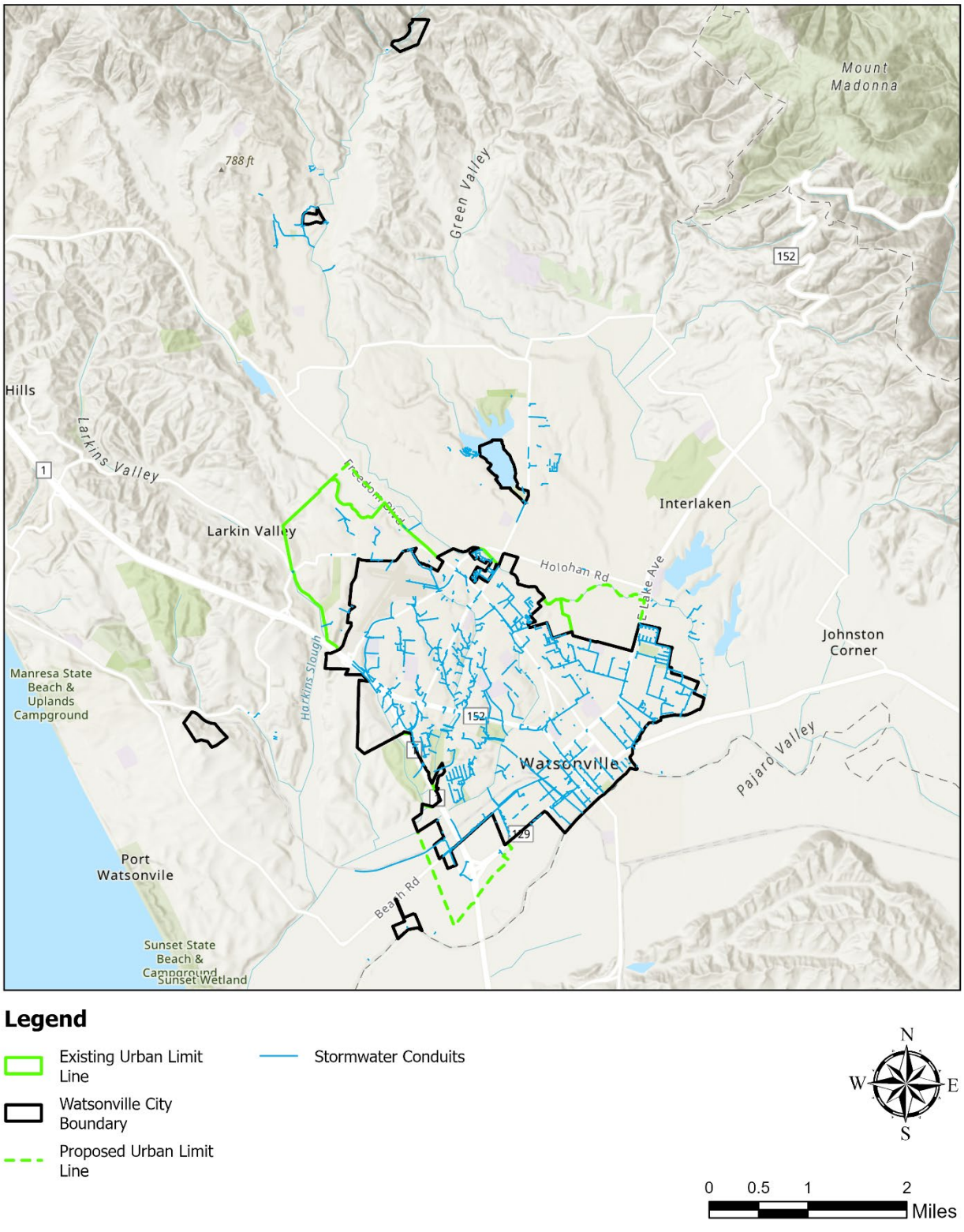
Stormwater

The City's storm drain system aims to prevent floods caused by rain and stormwater. Storm drains are not connected to the City's sewer system, and any stormwater flows out into waterways. In Watsonville, storm drains lead to local wetlands, creeks, and the Pajaro River (City of Watsonville, 2024d). Per the City's 2020 UWMP, the City does not currently plan to recover, treat, or reuse stormwater (City of Watsonville, 2021b; 2026). The majority of storm drain conduits through the plan area are closed, and some open storm drain conduits run along Struve Slough through the plan area (SCCGIS, 2026). There are approximately 58.1 miles of storm drain infrastructure throughout the plan area (SCCGIS, 2026). **Figure 4.19-2** shows the storm drain networks, inlets, and culverts through General Plan 2050 area, including new growth areas. **Figure 4.19-3** shows the storm drain infrastructure, including bioswales, infiltration basins, and sand filters, in the plan area.

Solid Waste

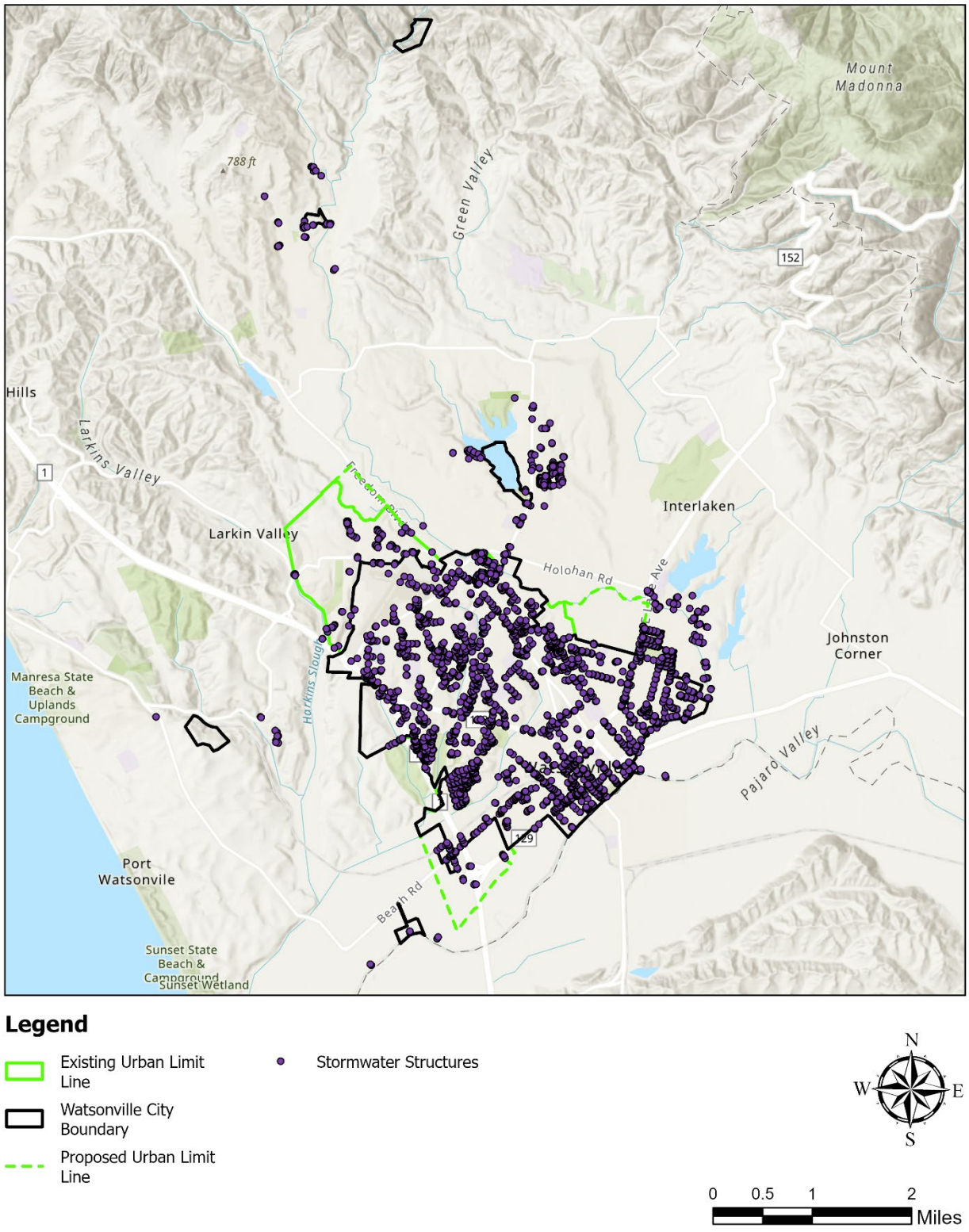
The City of Watsonville Landfill's Cell 3 reached capacity in 2018, when it was closed and capped. However, the City re-opened the landfill with the addition of Cell 4, located at 730 San Andreas Road. The new cell is expected to process up to 60 tons of waste daily and has an estimated life of 25 years (Lookout Santa Cruz, 2025). Cell 4 is the fourth of five planned additions. Once Cell 4 is full, it will be capped and Cell 5, planned to have a 50-year life, will be built and opened (Lookout Santa Cruz, 2025). The City seeks to minimize waste and conserve resources while managing solid waste to preserve the lifespan of Cell 4. In addition to Cell 4 of the City's landfill, the City utilizes the Buena Vista Landfill, a Class III landfill, for the disposal of solid waste. Although the Ben Lomond Transfer Station accepts refuse, the Buena Vista Landfill is the only landfill in the County that is currently operational. The Buena Vista landfill accepts an average of 350 tons from the County each day, and an additional 100 tons of refuse are trucked over from the Ben Lomond Transfer Station daily (Santa Cruz County, 2024). In 2019, the Buena Vista landfill received approximately 42,979 tons of solid waste from the City of Watsonville (CalRecycle, 2024b). The Buena Vista landfill has approximately 1,766,000 cubic yards of capacity remaining (CalRecycle, 2024a). Commercial and residential recycling services are offered by the City's Solid Waste Division, which also provides an Organics Waste Recycling service for businesses (City of Watsonville, 2024c).

Figure 4.19-2 Stormwater Conduits in General Plan 2050 Area



Source: SCCGIS, 2026.

Figure 4.19-3 Stormwater Structures in General Plan 2050 Area



Source: SCCGIS, 2026.

Electricity

Electricity is provided by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) to the entire plan area. Residential units and businesses are both served by PG&E's services. The City consumed approximately 230 GWh of electricity in 2024. Of this consumption, approximately 107.1 GWh were for residential uses and 122.9 GWh were allocated to non-residential uses (CEC, 2026b). The Centra Coast Community Energy (3CE) is the primary electricity provider for communities in Santa Cruz County including the Plan area. 3CE sources electricity, and PG&E delivers it to customers using existing PG&E utility lines. 3CE assumes exclusive responsibility for electricity generation, including purchasing electricity from generators, investing in generating resources, and balancing supply with demand. PG&E retains sole responsibility for 3CE customers' electricity distribution, including grid infrastructure investment and energy delivery (Transmission and Distribution charges). PG&E is also responsible for metering and billing, including one comprehensive bill including 3CE Electric Generation Charges. Since beginning operations in 2018, 3CE has enrolled 33 Central Coast communities and now serves more than 1.1 million customers. 3CE is on track to deliver 100 percent clean and renewable energy to its customers (3CE, 2024).

In 2024, 216,181 GWh of electricity was generated in-state in California (CEC, 2026a). 62,157 GWh of electricity were imported to California from the northwest and southwest. 34 percent of electricity generated in California in 2024 came from natural gas, 62.2 percent came from renewable resources, and 9.3 percent came from nuclear energy. Approximately 1.9 percent of produced electricity came from biomass, 4.6 percent came from geothermal energy, and 1.5 percent came from small hydroelectric power (CEC, 2026a).

Natural Gas

Natural gas is provided to the plan area through PG&E. PG&E sources their natural gas from Canada, the Rocky Mountains, and the southwestern U.S. (PG&E, 2024). PG&E has also started procuring renewable natural gas derived from organic matter, including matter sourced from agricultural waste, landfills, and organic materials (PG&E, 2024).

Telecommunications

Cable services are provided to the plan area by DIRECTV, DISH Network, Spectrum, and Xfinity, provided by Comcast (SCCCOC, 2024). Phone service coverage is provided by Verizon, Sprint, AT&T, and T-Mobile. Nextiva phone service is available for businesses. Internet service is provided to the plan area by Spectrum, AT&T, Verizon, Xfinity, Viasat, Earthlink, Hughesnet, Cruzio, and Starlink. In 2014, the City of Watsonville, in partnership with Santa Cruz Fiber, began installing a fiber optic network to provide affordable, high-speed internet to residents and businesses (Santa Cruz Fiber, 2018). The network is currently operational and will be expanded as funding becomes available.

4.19.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.19.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with Appendix G to the State CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to utilities and service systems would be considered significant if the project would:

a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, or wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects;

a) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years;

b) 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;

c) 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; or

d) Not comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste project impacts.

4.19.2.2 Methodology

Publicly-available information about utility usage, providers, and infrastructure was used to analyze potential General Plan 2050 impacts related to water supply, wastewater, solid waste, and electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications infrastructure. This analysis was also prepared with information from the WSA prepared for the Public Works and Utilities Department's Water Division by Harris & Associates (City of Watsonville, 2026).

4.19.2.3 Project Impacts

a) Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, or wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

General Plan 2050 projects the addition of up to 5,980 new residential units and 2.672 million square feet of non-residential development. This development would incrementally increase demand on utility services. However, the plan includes the provision of services and utilities to serve the growing population in the plan area, including water, storm drainage, wastewater, and solid waste.

Water service to the plan area would be provided by the City. New development would likely result in the expansion of water facilities as connections, especially as non-urbanized areas become developed. LAFCO must review municipal services before adopting updates to service areas or spheres (LAFCO, 2023). LAFCO only makes determinations regarding the possibility for expansion, but it does not initiate changes of service based on its findings (LAFCO, 2023). The City's municipal services have been previously extended through extraterritorial service agreements, which allow the City to provide water service to areas outside of the City and its sphere (LAFCO, 2023). In 2021, LAFCO requested that the City of Watsonville submit an annexation plan that would encompass the extraterritorial service agreements in its jurisdiction. LAFCO also suggested that the City of Watsonville consider future growth as a component of General Plan 2050, and this consideration has been reflected in this EIR.

Full buildout of General Plan 2050 is anticipated to increase water demand by 346 AFY, resulting in a total demand of 7,134 AFY. Any new water facilities, particularly wells, would tie directly to the potable water distribution system transmission mains (i.e., water mains) throughout the City. As growth occurs in the plan area, whether through infill development or in new growth areas, new development may require the installation of new or upsized water mains to connect to the existing potable water distribution system to accommodate additional service needs. In new growth areas, these new water distribution mains would typically be installed as part of roadway construction and other infrastructure

improvements to serve those areas. Such improvements represent typical extensions of the City's existing potable water system and would not necessitate the construction of new or expanded water treatment or supply facilities that could result in significant environmental effects. Based on the WSA prepared in February 2026, future growth and development would be accounted for in General Plan 2050, and demand would not exceed the capacity of City water systems and any newly-constructed water resources, like wells (City of Watsonville, 2026). Overall, water demand under the 2050 General Plan would remain within the capacity of the City's existing and planned water supply and distribution systems.

The City owns and maintains the sanitary sewer drain system in the plan area. The plan area is served by a network of sanitary sewer mains. If new sanitary sewer laterals were constructed to support expanded development in the City, the laterals would tie into the existing sanitary sewer mains. New development may require the installation of new or upsized sanitary sewer mains to connect to the existing sewer system to accommodate additional service needs. New sanitary sewer lines would typically be installed as a part of roadway construction or other infrastructure improvements that may otherwise require the expansion of sewer service through the plan area. These extensions would not necessitate the construction of new or expanded water treatment facilities that may result in significant environmental impacts.

The Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility would continue to treat sewage in the plan area. The City's treatment facility capacity is approximately 4,100 AFY. Water demand may incrementally increase as the plan area's population grows. However, the City's treatment facility has not been used to its full capacity in at least ten years. Increases in wastewater are not anticipated to exceed the treatment facility's current capacity. Additionally, the plan area is expected to produce approximately 8,170 AFY of recycled water by 2050, which exceeds the 2050 demand of 7,134 AFY (City of Watsonville, 2026).

As new growth would be accounted for in General Plan 2050, growth is not expected to exceed the treatment capacity of the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility.

New development, especially in designated growth areas with little to no existing infrastructure, would likely necessitate the installation and use of expanded storm drains. In new growth areas, agricultural and open space lands may be converted to non-agricultural use, potentially introducing new impervious surfaces. Accordingly, these areas may require the addition of storm drain networks to minimize flooding and runoff. These drains would be connected to the existing storm drain network (**Figure 4.19-2**) via new storm laterals. New development within the plan area would be required to align with the City's post-construction stormwater requirements (City of Watsonville, 2014). Runoff would be directed to stormwater treatment systems before entering the City's storm drainage system. The construction of new or expanded stormwater facilities would be accounted for in General Plan 2050. To minimize adverse impacts related to the increase in impervious surface area, new paving or development would adhere to the City's post-construction stormwater requirements (City of Watsonville, 2014).

The City operates 14 supply wells that pump from the Pajaro Valley Groundwater sub-basin and collectively can provide up to 21,000 AFY of water (City of Watsonville, 2024b). Additionally, PVWMA operates two production wells with a blended water supply to augment the supplemental water supply. Under full buildout of General Plan 2050, the total water demand would be approximately 7,134 AFY, which remains within the City's available water supply (City of Watsonville, 2026). Accordingly, the future growth anticipated under General Plan 2050 is not anticipated to increase water demand beyond the capacity of the City's 14 operational wells.

As described in **Section 4.6, Energy**, the project would have a less than significant impact related to potentially wasteful or inefficient energy consumption. General Plan 2050 would establish guidelines and efficiency measures to minimize the consumption of energy, and the General Plan would align with the

most recent CBC standards, Title 24 energy efficiency standards (or subsequently adopted standards during the one-year construction term), and CALGreen building codes.

Any provision or relocation of telecommunication facilities would be coordinated between future project applicants and telecommunication provider, and no significant environmental effects are anticipated. The expansion of telecommunication facilities would be accounted for in General Plan 2050. Potential environmental impacts are addressed by goals, policies and actions of the plan as well as mitigation measures required in this EIR.

Impacts to the relocation of existing utilities, or the construction of new utility infrastructure, would be minimized where possible. The following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions would guide potential utility expansions and promote efficiency in the usage of energy and water.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Lessen Impacts:

Policy LC-4.4 Water-efficient technologies. Periodically review and revise zoning and building codes in accordance with state law to accommodate new technologies (i.e., low flow fixtures, low flow commodes, drought tolerant landscaping, etc.) and to promote water efficiency.

Policy LC-4.5 Water efficient incentives. Continue to promote water saving programs and incentives designed to support residents and businesses in reducing water use and improving efficiency. Examples include:

- Rebates for replacing high-water-use lawns and sprinkler-irrigated areas with drought-tolerant landscaping and efficient irrigation systems;
- Rebates for replacing less efficient washing machines;
- Rebates for installing rainwater harvesting systems such as rain barrels;
- Rebates for installing laundry-to landscape greywater systems; and
- Distribution of complimentary low-flow fixtures (showerheads, hose nozzles, shower timers, moisture sensors, and faucet aerators).

Policy LC-11.6 Energy and Water Efficiency. Promote enhanced energy and water efficiency measures for energy and water-intensive industrial uses.

Action LC-11.1.3 Energy and Water Consumption Monitoring. Monitor energy and water consumption in large industrial facilities and consider fee structures that encourage energy and water efficiency.

Action LC-11.1.4 Reclaimed Water. In accordance with the City's Recycled Water Master Plan, extend reclaimed water service to industrial areas.

Policy LC-15.3 Undergrounding of Electricity Lines. In coordination with Pacific, Gas, & Electric, pursue the undergrounding of existing and proposed electricity lines.

Goal C-2 Water Conservation & Quality. Conserve scarce water resources and preserve water quality for the variety of local uses.

Policy C-2.1 Promotion of Water Conservation. The City shall promote the conservation of water and provide for the protection of water quality to assure its use for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological needs.

Action C-2.1.1 Water Availability: The City shall cooperate with the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA) in its efforts to secure a reliable long-term supply of water.

Action C-2.1.2 Water Conservation Programs. The City shall also continue to improve City water conservation programs. The City shall continue to educate and create incentives for measures targeting private water users, including: water-efficient plumbing fixtures and faucets, reducing use of lawns and other water-intensive plants, encouraging drought-tolerant native plants and "xeriscapes," mulching to retain soil moisture, and using water-efficient irrigation systems.

Action C-2.1.5 Water Quality. The City shall continue to source, treat and deliver high quality potable water that meets current and future State and Federal Drinking Water standards and work with the Groundwater Basin Manager, PVWMA, to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Pajaro Valley groundwater basin.

Action C-3.1.1 The City shall require all projects to reduce the use of impervious surfaces to the maximum extent practicable. Wherever possible, natural BMPs (such as grassy swales, ponds and biofilters) shall be used. These BMPs should be incorporated into site landscaping design, for recreational and aesthetic enhancement. Engineered BMPs (such as vaults and interceptors) shall only be used when no natural BMP can be incorporated into the site design, or when a critical natural resource requires protection beyond that attainable by natural BMPs alone.

Action C-4.2.2 Energy Efficient Buildings. The City shall encourage energy efficient building design by promoting the use of interior daylighting, LED lighting, shaded windows and heat-exchange units; reflective roofs; super-insulated windows; passive solar heating and hot water; natural cross-ventilation; high-efficiency appliances and heating/cooling systems; and the generation of electricity through wind generation, solar panels, and photovoltaics.

Action C-4.2.3 Energy Efficiency Rebates and Credits. The City shall encourage use of these energy efficient methods by encouraging applicants to pursue utility company rebates and encouraging financial institutions to credit real savings in energy consumption when calculating income available to pay back loans.

Action C-6.1.1 Water Conservation. The City shall continue the water conservation program which encourages existing rebates and provision of water conserving devices. Public education methods include the use of local print and electronic English and Spanish language media, including social media, as well as articles in the City's own newsletter and inserts in the City utility bills. The City shall expand its educational efforts to promote low or no-water use plantings as well as a more efficient use of landscape water on lawns, and to promote reuse, recycling, and composting of discarded materials. The City shall use multiple methods of communication in English, Spanish, and any other significant language group identified.

Policy PSF-3.1 Water System Design. The water system shall be designed, constructed, and managed to provide a sufficient quantity of appropriate-quality water for the existing and planned community.

Action PSF-3.1.1 Urban Water Management Plan. The City shall continue to review and update the Urban Water Management Plan to ensure that the water system can provide adequate water, of appropriate quality, to meet the density of development in accordance with the City's development policies throughout the existing and proposed water service area for the City.

> **Action PSF-3.1.5 New Water Demand Mitigation and Conservation.** The impact of new development on the availability of the existing water system to serve the development shall be considered. The development shall meet City water conservation standards and meet State and Federal requirements. Development shall continue the payment of groundwater impact fees in accordance with City policy.
>
> **Policy PSF-4.1 Wastewater Management.** The City shall continue to provide adequate and environmentally sound wastewater collection treatment levels to meet the needs of the City and the service area customers in a manner that at a minimum meets all applicable state and federal regulatory standards to protect the health of the service population and the surrounding natural environment.
>
> **Goal PSF-5 Service Availability.** Maintain or increase the availability of public services and facilities consistent with projected population growth.
>
> **Policy PSF-5.1 Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Coordination.** The City shall identify public infrastructure needs and use the Capital Improvement Program to schedule improvements necessary for achieving long-term land use and community development objectives.
>
> **Action PSF-5.1.5 Growth Management.** Through the use of specific plans in new growth areas, the City shall regulate the timing and location of future urban development to be consistent with the service capacity and financial capability of current support services and the five-year Capital Improvement Program schedule.

The estimated timing or location of required water, sewer, electrical, natural gas, stormwater drainage and pumping facilities or the exact nature of these facilities are not known, so future project-specific environmental impacts that would occur from their construction and operation cannot be determined at this time. However, impacts would be specifically associated with physical development projects and would therefore require permitting and additional review in accordance with CEQA, which would ensure that any environmental impacts are disclosed and mitigated to the extent possible, in addition to compliance with applicable local, state and federal regulations. Further, proposed General Plan Policies and Actions direct the City to design public facilities to maintain and improve the visual quality of the urban environment. This EIR addresses impacts at a programmatic level and does not evaluate the environmental impacts of future project-specific development. For the reasons presented above, General Plan 2050 is not expected to require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded wastewater treatment, storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

General Plan 2050 would not directly increase water demand; rather, it would establish a long-term growth framework within the plan area, including water service provisions. To evaluate whether sufficient water supplies exist to meet projected demand, the City prepared a WSA consistent with SB 610 requirements. The WSA modeled water reliability over a 20-year time period, including under normal, single dry, and multiple dry water year conditions. As such, the WSA accounts for the water demand increases from the projected population growth and development in General Plan 2050.

The City's current average-year water demand is 6,788 AFY, supplied almost entirely by groundwater and supplemented by surface water diversions from Corralitos and Browns Creeks to the CFP (see **Table 4.10-**

3 in **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**). The WSA determined that full buildout of General Plan 2050 would increase municipal demand by 346 AFY (City of Watsonville, 2026). The WSA considered changes in land use that would occur with buildout of General Plan 2050, including the conversion of agricultural land within the plan area to housing and non-residential development. This conversion reduces overall water demand (by 883 AFY) because agricultural irrigation is the highest-intensity water use in the plan area. In addition, a demand offset (of 128 AFY) represents the additional supply from the RWF to agricultural users. Altogether, the estimated water demand associated with buildout of General Plan 2050 results in a net increase of 346 AFY.[1]

The WSA determined that water supplies will remain sufficient to meet projected General Plan 2050 demand under all water-type years. Projected water reliability within the plan area under normal, single, and multiple dry-year conditions is shown in **Table 4.19-1**. While some years appear to show demands that exceed the water supply, wet and very-wet years are anticipated to provide positive impacts and offset these differences. In total, the projected water demand of General Plan 2050 would not exceed the water supply within the plan area. Furthermore, the water supply of the plan area may be supplemented by recycled water as needed. By 2050, the plan area is expected to produce approximately 8,170 AFY of recycled water which exceeds the 2050 demand of 7,134 AFY (City of Watsonville, 2026).

Table 4.19-1 Water Reliability in Normal, Single, and Multiple Dry-Years (AFY)

Year Type	Supply and Demand	2025	2030	2025	2040	2045
Normal Year	Supply Total	7,832	7,832	7,832	7,832	7,832
	Demand Total	6,788	7,134	7,134	7,134	7,134
	Difference	**1,044**	**698**	**698**	**698**	**698**
Single Dry-Year	Supply Total	7,982	7,982	7,982	7,982	7,982
	Demand Total	7,359	7,734	7,734	7,734	7,734
	Difference	**623**	**248**	**248**	**248**	**248**
Second Dry-Year	Supply Total	7,982	7,982	7,982	7,982	7,982
	Demand Total	8,318	8,742	8,742	8,742	8,742
	Difference	**-336**	**-760**	**-760**	**-760**	**-760**
Third Dry-Year	Supply Total	8,122	8,122	8,122	8,122	8,122
	Demand Total	7,865	8,266	8,266	8,266	8,266
	Difference	**257**	**-144**	**-144**	**-144**	**-144**
Fourth Dry-Year	Supply Total	8,122	8,122	8,122	8,122	8,122
	Demand Total	7,128	7,491	7,491	7,491	7,491
	Difference	**994**	**631**	**631**	**631**	**631**

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

Water supplies would be conserved and distributed to meet increased need in accordance with the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions.

[1] Calculation: Proposed buildout water demand – agricultural land conversion – RWF demand offset: 1,357 AFY – 883 AFY – 128 AFY = 346 AFY

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Lessen Impacts:

Policy LC-4.4 Water-efficient technologies. Periodically review and revise zoning and building codes in accordance with state law to accommodate new technologies (i.e., low flow fixtures, low flow commodes, drought tolerant landscaping, etc.) and to promote water efficiency.

Policy LC-4.5 Water efficient incentives. Continue to promote water saving programs and incentives designed to support residents and businesses in reducing water use and improving efficiency. Examples include:

- Rebates for replacing high-water-use lawns and sprinkler-irrigated areas with drought-tolerant landscaping and efficient irrigation systems;
- Rebates for replacing less efficient washing machines;
- Rebates for installing rainwater harvesting systems such as rain barrels;
- Rebates for installing laundry-to landscape greywater systems; and
- Distribution of complimentary low-flow fixtures (showerheads, hose nozzles, shower timers, moisture sensors, and faucet aerators).

Policy LC-11.6 Energy and Water Efficiency. Promote enhanced energy and water efficiency measures for energy and water-intensive industrial uses.

Action LC-11.1.3 Energy and Water Consumption Monitoring. Monitor energy and water consumption in large industrial facilities and consider fee structures that encourage energy and water efficiency.

Action LC-11.1.4 Reclaimed Water. In accordance with the City's Recycled Water Master Plan, extend reclaimed water service to industrial areas.

Goal C-2 Water Conservation & Quality. Conserve scarce water resources and preserve water quality for the variety of local uses.

Policy C-2.1 Promotion of Water Quality Conservation. The City shall promote the conservation of water and provide for the protection of water quality to assure its use for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and ecological needs.

Action C-2.1.1 Water Availability. The City shall cooperate with the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA) in its efforts to secure a reliable long-term supply of water.

Action C-2.1.2 Water Conservation Programs. The City shall also continue to improve City water conservation programs. The City shall continue to educate and create incentives for measures targeting private water users, including: water-efficient plumbing fixtures and faucets, reducing use of lawns and other water-intensive plants, encouraging drought-tolerant native plants and "xeriscapes," mulching to retain soil moisture, and using water-efficient irrigation systems.

Action C-2.1.4 Aquifer Protection & Saltwater Intrusion. The City shall continue to cooperate with the PVWMA to analyze and implement solutions that reduce or eliminate additional saltwater intrusion into area aquifers.

Action C-2.1.5 Water Quality. The City shall continue to source, treat and deliver high quality potable water that meets current and future State and Federal Drinking Water standards and

work with the Groundwater Basin Manager, PVWMA, to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Pajaro Valley groundwater basin.

Action C-6.1.1 Water Conservation. The City shall continue the water conservation program which encourages existing rebates and provision of water conserving devices. Public education methods include the use of local print and electronic English and Spanish language media, including social media, as well as articles in the City's own newsletter and inserts in the City utility bills. The City shall expand its educational efforts to promote low or no-water use plantings as well as a more efficient use of landscape water on lawns, and to promote reuse, recycling, and composting of discarded materials. The City shall use multiple methods of communication in English, Spanish, and any other significant language group identified.

Goal PSF-3 Water Supply. Continue to construct, operate, and maintain a safe, reliable, and adequate water supply that meets the needs of the existing and planned community and that meets or exceeds all regulatory drinking water standards.

Policy PSF-3.1 Water System Design. The water system shall be designed, constructed, and managed to provide a sufficient quantity of appropriate-quality water for the existing and planned community.

Action PSF-3.1.1 Urban Water Management Plan. The City shall continue to review and update the Urban Water Management Plan to ensure that the water system can provide adequate water, of appropriate quality, to meet the density of development in accordance with the City's development policies throughout the existing and proposed water service area for the City.

Action PSF-3.1.2 Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA). Continue to collaborate with PVWMA to help ensure the protection and sustainability of the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin, including basin management planning, recycled and potable water delivery, and other shared objectives to halt the impacts of seawater intrusion into the basin.

Action PSF-3.1.3 Water Quality Protection on Private Developments. New projects within the urbanized area shall be developed in a manner that protects groundwater quality. The City shall continue the program to identify abandoned wells or geotechnical borings within the groundwater table and have them sealed to prevent aquifer contamination.

Action PSF-3.1.4 Water Allocation. The City shall establish a system for prioritizing the allocation of water connections and maximum flows in the event of water conservation requirements at the local, state, or federal level.

Action PSF-3.1.5 New Water Demand Mitigation and Conservation. The impact of new development on the availability of the existing water system to serve the development shall be considered. The development shall meet City water conservation standards and meet State and Federal requirements. Development shall continue the payment of groundwater impact fees in accordance with City policy.

Action PSF-3.1.6 Water Conservation Program. The City of Watsonville shall continue to implement its water use reduction program. Program elements include residential, commercial, and industrial water conservation guidelines and education programs; guidelines for low water use/drought tolerant landscaping; incentives for efficient water use; and water reclamation.

The plan's projected increase in water demand would not exceed the City's existing water supply. Therefore, adequate water is available to serve the project in compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15155 and impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

c) Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has inadequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

Wastewater from the City is treated at the Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility (treatment facility). The plan would not directly add demand for wastewater treatment, but it instead would establish guidelines to expand wastewater systems to accommodate increases in population. The treatment facility has capacity to treat and deliver up to 4,100 AFY and storing over 2 million gallons. The 4,100 AFY of recycled water can be blended with 2,000 AFY of "blend" water from other sources. With some recycled water supplied via nearby water recycling projects, such as those occurring in the South County and Hollister Urban area, the plan area is expected to produce approximately 8,170 AFY of recycled water by 2050, which is greater than the projected demand of 7,134 AFY (City of Watsonville, 2026).

Water demand would incrementally increase as discussed in **Impact Analysis b),** and correspondently there are increased opportunities to treat wastewater and potentially produce more recycled water for agricultural and industrial use. Between 2016 and 2024, the City used an average of approximately 2,828 AFY. The year with the highest usage of recycled water, 2020, where 3,287 AFY of recycled water were sold, did not meet the 4,100 AFY capacity of the City's treatment facility. In 2024, the City only sold 1,671 AF of recycled water, less than half of the City's treatment capacity (City of Watsonville, 2026). Increases in wastewater have been accounted for in General Plan 2050, and these increases are not anticipated to exceed the existing capacity of the City's treatment facility. Instead, the City's treatment facility has the capacity to recycle more wastewater per year, accommodating projected increases in water demand through 2050 (City of Watsonville, 2026).

To ensure that wastewater treatment organizations in the plan area have adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand, the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions would be implemented.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Lessen Impacts:

> **Policy LC-4.4 Water-efficient technologies.** Periodically review and revise zoning and building codes in accordance with state law to accommodate new technologies (i.e., low flow fixtures, low flow commodes, drought tolerant landscaping, etc.) and to promote water efficiency.
>
> **Policy LC-4.5 Water efficient incentives.** Continue to promote water saving programs and incentives designed to support residents and businesses in reducing water use and improving efficiency. Examples include:
>
> - Rebates for replacing high-water-use lawns and sprinkler-irrigated areas with drought-tolerant landscaping and efficient irrigation systems;
> - Rebates for replacing less efficient washing machines;
> - Rebates for installing rainwater harvesting systems such as rain barrels;
> - Rebates for installing laundry-to landscape greywater systems; and
> - Distribution of complimentary low-flow fixtures (showerheads, hose nozzles, shower timers, moisture sensors, and faucet aerators).

Action LC-11.1.3 Energy and Water Consumption Monitoring. Monitor energy and water consumption in large industrial facilities and consider fee structures that encourage energy and water efficiency.

Action LC-11.1.4 Reclaimed Water. In accordance with the City's Recycled Water Master Plan, extend reclaimed water service to industrial areas.

Action C-2.1.2 Water Conservation Programs. The City shall also continue to improve City water conservation programs. The City shall continue to educate and create incentives for measures targeting private water users, including: water-efficient plumbing fixtures and faucets, reducing use of lawns and other water-intensive plants, encouraging drought-tolerant native plants and "xeriscapes," mulching to retain soil moisture, and using water-efficient irrigation systems.

Action C-2.1.3 Point and Non-Point Pollutants. The City shall continue to control pollutants from point and non-point sources through a comprehensive NPDES Stormwater program.

Action C-2.1.4 Aquifer Protection & Saltwater Intrusion. The City shall continue to cooperate with the PVWMA to analyze and implement solutions that reduce or eliminate additional saltwater intrusion into area aquifers.

Action C-2.1.5 Water Quality. The City shall continue to source, treat and deliver high-quality potable water that meets current and future State and Federal Drinking Water standards and work with the Groundwater Basin Manager, PVWMA, to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Pajaro Valley groundwater basin.

Action C-3.1.4 Municipal and Industrial Stormwater Compliance. The City shall implement all applicable State and Federal regulations governing stormwater discharges, including requirements under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit as a regulated small Phase II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) to reduce pollutants in runoff to the maximum extent practicable, thereby helping protect local sloughs, creeks, rivers, and other natural resources.

Action C-6.1.2 Storm Water Pollution Prevention. The City shall continue to expand its residential storm water pollution prevention program that includes placement of storm drain warning markers on all drainage inlets, provision of educational materials and tools door-to-door, continued collection of used motor oil at the curb and at convenient drop-off locations, continued regularly scheduled street sweeping, and continued general education and enforcement in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors regarding storm water pollution prevention. The City shall continue public education programs on water quality issues, including Best Management Practices, for residents, businesses, contractors and City employees.

Goal PSF-4 Wastewater Management. Continue the safe, sustainable, and efficient collection and treatment of wastewater in a manner that meets or exceeds all regulatory standards in order to protect the health of the service population and the surrounding environment.

Policy PSF-4.1 Wastewater Management. The City shall continue to provide adequate and environmentally sound wastewater collection treatment levels to meet the needs of the City and the service area customers in a manner that at a minimum meets all applicable state and federal regulatory standards to protect the health of the service population and the surrounding natural environment.

Action PSF-4.1.1 Facility Funding. The City shall pursue grants, revenue bonds, and other funding sources for future wastewater system improvements determined to be practical or required.

Action PSF-4.1.2 Wastewater Treatment. Ensure that all wastewater generated within the City is treated and managed in compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Action PSF-4.1.3 Connection. The City shall coordinate with Santa Cruz County and State funding/consolidation opportunities to encourage private property owners currently on septic tanks to connect to the appropriate sanitation district in their area to the benefit of public and environmental health.

Action PSF-4.1.4 Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Designation. The City shall continue to monitor requirements connected with the designation of the Monterey Bay as a National Marine Sanctuary, particularly those related to the impact on the City's wastewater outflow facilities.

Action PSF-4.1.5 Monitoring Non-Point Source Discharges. The City shall continue to register and monitor non-point source discharges through its source control program and monitor legislation and regulation applicable to non-point source water discharge.

Action PSF-3.1.7 Water System. The water system shall be designed, constructed, and managed to provide a sufficient quantity of appropriate quality water for the existing and planned community.

Action PSF-3.1.8 Water Quality Compliance. Develop and implement a compliance program to address the treatment of forever chemicals such as Chromium-6 (Cr6+), Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), and any future contaminants identified by the State to ensure the City's water supply system meets or exceeds the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) requirements. The program shall include monitoring, evaluation of treatment technologies, and capital improvements as necessary to maintain compliance and protect public health.

Action PSF-6.1.3 Litter Control. The City shall continue a proactive program of street cleaning and litter abatement in order to prevent water pollution and provide for a cleaner urban environment.

The plan would account for the increase in dry weather flow and would not require additional treatment capacity. Additionally, with the implementation of the above General Plan Goals, Policies, and Actions, stormwater and wastewater flows would be reduced through comprehensive conservation programs. Therefore, the plan would have less than significant impacts on wastewater treatment capacity. (Less than Significant Impact)

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?

General Plan 2050 would not directly result in an increase in solid waste generation. Instead, the plan would establish guidelines to promote responsible solid waste management as Watsonville's population grows. The plan area would be primarily served by Cell 4 of the City of Watsonville landfill, operated by the City, and the Buena Vista Landfill owned and operated by the County of Santa Cruz. The City landfill has the capacity to process 60 tons of solid waste per day (Lookout Santa Cruz, 2025). The County of Santa Cruz accepts more than 450 tons of solid waste each day via the Buena Vista Landfill, with approximately 100 tons of this waste being trucked over from the Ben Lomond Transfer Station. The permitted capacity of the City's Cell 4 landfill is approximately 21,900 tons per year, and total permitted capacity of the two County landfills is approximately 1.64 million tons per year, or 1.66 million tons per year total (Lookout Santa Cruz, 2025; CalRecycle, 2024a). With the current rate of refuse acceptance, County has the capacity to operate for approximately 10 years. Cell 4 of the City landfill has the capacity

to accept refuse for 25 years, through 2050. Following the closure of Cell 4, Cell 5 will be constructed, which is projected to operate for 50 years following its opening (Lookout Santa Cruz, 2025).

The City follows the waste reduction goals outlined in Senate Bill 1383, including a 75 percent reduction in landfilled organic waste by 2030 (City of Watsonville, 2021a). Additionally, the City aims to recover at least 20 percent of edible surplus foods by 2025 (City of Watsonville, 2025). New food-generating businesses must sign written agreements with food recovery organizations and services to coordinate the pick-up and distribution of surplus food (City of Watsonville, 2025). The City anticipates composting 6,500 tons of organic waste each year, diverting 8 percent of the City's annual GHG emissions. The City also requires that at least 65 percent of construction and demolition materials be recycled. New development would be required to meet, at minimum, these waste diversion goals during the construction phase. Operationally, new residential or commercial development would be encouraged to work toward the goals related to organic waste diversion. The waste diversion policies and practices in General Plan 2050 would continue to promote waste diversion in line with SB 1383 goals. Although the construction and operation of new development is anticipated to increase solid waste production, waste diversion rates are also anticipated to increase. New growth and development, as accounted for in General Plan 2050, is not anticipated to conflict with or impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals.

Solid waste within the plan area would be managed in accordance with the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Lessen Impacts:

> **Policy C-6.1 Promotion of Water Conservation.** The City shall continue to expand its education efforts to promote water conservation and efficiency, reduce water pollution, and reduce li sod waste disposal.
>
> **Goal PSF-6 Solid Waste Management.** Operate a waste management program that reduces solid waste production and promotes recycling and composting with engaging community outreach. Manage collection operations and the existing landfill site in an efficient and economical manner that protects public health and the environment.
>
> **Policy PSF-6.1 Solid Waste Management.** Operate a waste management program that leads and educates the community in reducing waste and increasing recycling and reuse while continuing to operate an efficient and economical collection service and landfill site that protects public health and the environment.
>
> **Action PSF-6.1.1 Landfill.** The City shall use the best available technology and management practices to prolong the existing landfill life in a manner that protects public health and the environment and meets state and federal regulations.
>
> **Action PSF-6.1.2 Waste and Recycling Center Services.** The City shall continue to provide the waste and recycling center services to provide a safe and convenient way to dispose of hazardous waste and minimize illegal dumping within the City.
>
> **Action PSF-6.1.3 Litter Control.** The City shall continue a proactive program of street cleaning and litter abatement in order to prevent water pollution and provide for a cleaner urban environment.
>
> **Action PSF-6.1.4 Materials Recovery.** The City shall continue to encourage the development of a regional materials recovery facility either as a joint City/County effort or as a contractual arrangement to use a facility in another community. The City shall also investigate composting, or

other beneficial use, of municipal sludge, green waste, and other biodegradable materials, as well as energy production from solid waste.

The plan would establish guidelines for waste management through 2050. Population growth and new development would be accounted for in General Plan 2050, and demand would not exceed the threshold established by the plan. With the implementation of General Plan 2050 Policy, solid waste generation would not exceed the capacity of existing infrastructure. (Less than Significant Impact)

e) Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Impacts related to solid waste generation are anticipated to be less than significant, per **Impact Analysis d)**. Plan implementation would not directly result in increases related to solid waste generation, and the demand for solid waste services is not anticipated to exceed the thresholds established by the plan. Operation of development allowed under the proposed General Plan 2050 would involve recycling and composting of appropriate categories of solid waste, with total solid waste diversion of 50 percent or greater, by residential, multi-family residential, and commercial land uses, in accordance with AB 939, AB 341, and AB 1826, and all other federal, state and local regulations. The City aligns with the waste diversion goals outlined in SB 1383, which aims for a 75 percent diversion of organic waste from landfills and a 20 percent recovery of surplus food that would otherwise go to the landfill (City of Watsonville, 2025). Future residential and commercial development in the plan area would be encouraged to participate in waste diversion practices, such as composting and recycling, to meet the City's waste diversion goals.

Compliance with solid waste management and reduction regulations would be ensured in accordance with the following General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions to Mitigate Impacts:

Goal PSF-6 Solid Waste Management. Operate a waste management program that reduces solid waste production and promotes recycling and composting with engaging community outreach. Manage collection operations and the existing landfill site in an efficient and economical manner that protects public health and the environment.

Policy PSF-6.1 Solid Waste Management. Operate a waste management program that leads and educates the community in reducing waste and increasing recycling and reuse while continuing to operate an efficient and economical collection service and landfill site that protects public health and the environment.

Action PSF-6.1.4 Materials Recovery. The City shall continue to encourage the development of a regional materials recovery facility either as a joint City/County effort or as a contractual arrangement to use a facility in another community. The City shall also investigate composting, or other beneficial use, of municipal sludge, green waste, and other biodegradable materials, as well as energy production from solid waste.

Construction and operation of the development that is allowed under General Plan 2050 would not conflict with State and local regulations governing solid waste disposal and diversion, and General Plan 2050 includes policies and actions to promote consistency with other solid waste regulations. Therefore, impacts related to waste management and reduction legislation would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

4.20 Wildfire

This section discusses any wildfire impacts that could result from implementation of General Plan 2050. During the scoping process, no comments were received regarding wildfire.

4.20.1 Environmental Setting

4.20.1.1 Regulatory Framework

Federal

International Fire Code

The International Fire Code establishes minimum regulations for fire prevention and fire protection systems using prescriptive and performance-related provisions. It is founded on broad-based principles that make possible the use of new materials and new system designs. The provisions of this code provide protection for public health, safety and welfare from the hazards of fire, explosion or dangerous conditions in buildings, structures and premises. This code includes requirements or expanded requirements for: vacant premises, indoor displays, fire protection water supply, fire apparatus access roads, key boxes, high-piled storage, tire rebuilding and tire storage, mechanical refrigeration systems, explosion control, smoke and heat vents, lead acid battery systems.

Federal Disaster Mitigation Act

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 amended the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), creating the framework for state, local, tribal and territorial governments to engage in hazard mitigation planning to receive certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance. Since the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 amended the Stafford Act, additional laws have been passed that help to shape hazard mitigation policy.

National Fire Plan

The National Fire Plan (NFP) was developed in August 2000, following a landmark wildland fire season, with the intent of actively responding to severe wildland fires and their impacts to communities while ensuring sufficient firefighting capacity for the future. The NFP addresses five key points: Firefighting, Rehabilitation, Hazardous Fuels Reduction, Community Assistance, and Accountability. As it nears its fifth year, the NFP continues to provide invaluable technical, financial, and resource guidance and support for wildland fire management across the U.S. Together, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the Department of the Interior are working to successfully implement the key points outlined in the NFP by taking the following steps: 1) Assuring that necessary firefighting resources and personnel are available to respond to wildland fires that threaten lives and property; 2) Conducting emergency stabilization and rehabilitation activities on landscapes and communities affected by wildland fire; 3) Reducing hazardous fuels (dry brush and trees that have accumulated and increase the likelihood of unusually large fires) in the country's forests and rangelands; 4) Providing assistance to communities that have been or may be threatened by wildland fire; 5) Committing to the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, an interagency team created to set and maintain high standards for wildland fire management on public lands.

State

California Building Code Chapter 7A

The California Building Standards Code (CBC) (California Code of Regulations, Title 24) provides minimum standards for the design and construction of buildings and structures in California. Minimum standards are organized under Part 1 to 12 and include code standards for buildings, mechanical, plumbing, energy, historical buildings, fire safety, and green building standards. State law mandates that local government enforce these regulations, or local ordinances, with qualified reasonably necessary and generally more restrictive building standards than provided in the CBC. Title 24 is applicable to all occupancies, or structures, throughout California, whether or not the local government takes an affirmative action to adopt Title 24. Chapter 7A in the Building Code establishes minimum standards for the protection of life and property by increasing the ability of a building located in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) within State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) or any Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area to resist the intrusion of flames or burning embers projected by a vegetation fire and contributes to a systematic reduction in conflagration losses.

California Emergency Services Act

The California Emergency Services Act is a law that establishes the basis for California to prepare for and respond to emergencies. The Act establishes the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to respond to emergencies and disasters. It requires state agencies to prepare for emergencies and to use minimum resources to continue normal services. It also requires counties to send updated emergency plans to the OES. The Act authorizes the use of the Emergency Alert System to inform the public about emergencies and allows political subdivisions to provide mutual aid to affected areas during a local emergency.

State of California Emergency Plan

The California State Emergency Plan (SEP) plays a key role in guiding state agencies, local jurisdictions, and the public on emergency management. It describes the methods for conducting emergency operations, rendering mutual aid, emergency response capabilities of state agencies, resource mobilization, public information, and continuity of government during an emergency or disaster. The SEP provides an overview of how the state prepares, mitigates, responds, and recovers from emergencies in California.

California Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

The State Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP) is California's primary hazard mitigation guidance document and represents the State's continued commitment to a comprehensive mitigation strategy. California's mitigation strategy is centered on the reduction or elimination of hazard risks and disaster impacts, resulting in less loss of life and property, faster disaster recovery, and a more resilient California. Specifically, the SHMP details California's historical and current hazards, identifies mitigation strategies and actions to address those hazards, and provides guidance to local jurisdictions developing their own hazard mitigation plans. The SHMP is updated on a five-year cycle and the 2023 SHMP will expire on August 29, 2028.

The 2023 SHMP was developed in close collaboration with various federal, state, Tribal Nation, local, and non-governmental partners, as well as with members of the public. The 2023 SHMP expands on previous SHMP discussions of hazard impacts on equity priority communities and of climate change as an

exacerbator to hazard events. The 2023 SHMP also organizes hazards according to an impact rating, rather than by hazard type as seen in previous plans.

Senate Bill 1241

Senate Bille (SB) 1241 would require cities and counties to address fire risk in SRAs and Very High FHZSs in the safety element of their general plans upon the next revision of the housing element. This bill also requires cities and counties to make certain findings regarding available fire protection and suppression services before approving a tentative map or parcel map.

Assembly Bill 3074

Assembly Bill (AB) 3074 (Fire prevention: wildfire risk: defensible space: ember-resistant zones) was approved in 2020 to introduce a five-foot ember resistant zone around structures, also called "Zone 0." Officially adopted by the State Fire Marshal in January 2021, this law requires a five-foot ember resistant zone around all structures located in a FHSZ. The full enforcement of AB 3074 on new construction is anticipated to be in 2025 and is anticipated to be in 2026 on existing structures.

Public Resources Code Section 4201-4204

Sections 4201 through 4204 of the California PRC direct the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to map FHSZ within SRAs, based on relevant factors such as fuels, terrain, and weather. Mitigation strategies and building code requirements to reduce wildland fire risks to buildings within SRAs are based on these zone designations.

Government Code Section 51175-51189

Sections 51175 through 51189 of the California Government Code directs CAL FIRE to recommend FHSZs within Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs). Local agencies are required to designate Very High FHSZs in their jurisdiction within 120 days of receiving recommendations from CAL FIRE and may include additional areas not identified by CAL FIRE as Very High FHSZs.

California Fire Code (Title 24, Part 9)

The 2025 California Fire Code (CFC) contains regulations consistent with nationally recognized and accepted practices for safeguarding life and property from the hazards of fire and explosion, dangerous conditions arising from the storage, handling and use of hazardous materials and devices, and hazardous conditions in the use or occupancy of buildings or premises. The CFC also contains provisions to assist emergency response personnel. These fire-safety-related building standards are referenced in other parts of Title 24.

California Wildland-Urban Interface Code (Title 24, Part 7)

The 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code was previously Chapter 49 of the CFC, but it was broken out into a separate part of Title 24 for the 2025 edition of the California Building Standards Code. The WUI Code contains regulations for mitigating the risk of wildfire spread from wildland and natural areas to nearby structures and communities.

Chapter 4: Wildland-Urban Interface Area Requirements

Chapter 4 of the WUIC describes the minimum requirements necessary to mitigate conditions that may cause a fire in the wildland-urban interface fire area. Wildland-Urban Interfaces are identified by the state of California as a "Fire Hazard Severity Zone" and are typically at a significant risk of wildfires. This section of the WUIC outlines the requirements of a fire protection plan and discusses best construction practices in fire hazard severity zones.

Section 602: Defensible Space

Defensible space refers to geographic buffers between a structure/project site and the surrounding area. Defensible space slows the spread of fire towards a structure and allows firefighters to access and defend property from fire more easily. Sections 603, A102, and B101 of the WUIC outline best practices for removing combustible growth and vegetation from a property. Fuel management and hazardous vegetation requirements are also outlined in these sections.

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

The Board of Forestry and Fire Prevention (BOF) is a Governor-appointed body within CAL FIRE. It is responsible for developing the general forest policy of the state, determining the guidance policies of CAL FIRE, and representing the state's interest in federal forestland in California. Together, the BOF and CAL FIRE work to carry out the California Legislature's mandate to protect and enhance the state's unique forest and wildland resources.

The BOF is charged with developing policy to protect all wildland forest resources in California that are not under federal jurisdiction. These resources include major commercial and non-commercial stands of timber, areas reserved for parks and recreation, woodlands, brush-range watersheds, and all private and state lands that contribute to California's forest resource wealth. In addition, the BOF is responsible for identifying Very High FHSZs in SRAs and LRAs. Local agencies are required to designate, by ordinance, VHFHSZ, require landowners to reduce fire hazards adjacent to occupied buildings within these zones, and maintain defensible space (Government Code Sections 51179 and 51182). The intent of identifying areas with very high fire hazards is to allow CAL FIRE and local agencies to develop and implement measures that would reduce the loss of life and property from uncontrolled wildfires (Government Code Section 51176).

PRC Sections 4114 and 4130 authorize the BOF to establish a fire plan, which, among other things, determines the levels of statewide fire protection services for SRA lands. The primary goals of the 2019 Strategic Plan are focused on fire prevention efforts. Government Code Section 65302.5 gives the BOF statutory authority to evaluate General Plan Safety Elements for their land use policies in the SRAs and VHFHSZs, as well as methods and strategies for wildland fire risk reduction and prevention in those areas.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

CAL FIRE is the state agency established for fire protection and stewardship of over 31 million acres of the state's privately-owned wildlands and to provide emergency services in 36 of California's 58 counties via contracts with local governments. PRC Section 4291 gives CAL FIRE the authority to enforce 100 feet of defensible space around all buildings and structures in mountainous areas, on forest-covered lands, on brush-covered lands, on grass-covered lands, or on any land that is covered with flammable material. PRC Sections 4790 through 4799.04 provide statutory authority for CAL FIRE to administer the California Forest Improvement Program. PRC Sections 4113 and 4125 give CAL FIRE the responsibility for preventing and extinguishing wildland fires in SRAs). The SRAs do not include lands within city boundaries or in federal ownership. The PRC, beginning with Section 4427, includes fire safety statutes that restrict the

use of equipment that may produce a spark, flame, or fire; require the use of spark arrestors on construction equipment with internal combustion engines; specify requirements for the safe use of gasoline-powered tools in fire hazard areas; and specify fire suppression equipment that must be provided on site for various types of work in fire-prone areas.

2024 Strategic Plan for CAL FIRE

The 2024 Strategic Plan, prepared by CAL FIRE and California Natural Resources Agency, describes central goals for reducing and preventing the impacts of fire in the state. The goals are meant to establish, through local, state, federal, and private partnerships, a natural environment that is more resilient and human-made assets that are more resistant to the occurrence and effects of wildland fire. The goals of the 2024 Strategic Plan include the following: Improve core capabilities; Enhance internal operations; Ensure health and safety; and build an engaged, motivated, and innovative workforce.

In addition to the 2024 Strategic Plan, individual CAL FIRE Units develop Fire Plans, which are major strategic documents that establish a set of tools for each CAL FIRE Unit for its local area. Updated yearly, Unit Fire Plans identify wildfire protection areas, initial attack success, assets and infrastructure at risk, pre-fire management strategies, and accountability within their unit's geographical boundaries. The Unit Fire Plan identifies strategic areas.

The plan area is located within the administrative boundary of CAL FIRE San Mateo – Santa Cruz Unit. The latest Strategic Fire Plan for the Unit in 2024 provides updated information regarding priority landscapes and firefighting capabilities. The plan describes current and future pre-fire management strategies and tactics for the Unit with general recommendations from CAL FIRE.

Regional

Santa Cruz County General Plan

The Santa Cruz County General Plan includes a Public Safety Element that discusses safety hazards outside of the coastal zone, including wildland and urban fire hazards. Areas in unincorporated Santa Cruz County would be subject to the County-designated requirements regarding defensible space, vegetation maintenance, road access during emergency events, and fire protection standards to minimize the risks of starting or spreading wildfires.

Local

City of Watsonville Municipal Code – Wildland-Urban Interface Code

The City of Watsonville has adopted by reference the California Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code, Part 7 of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations (WMC § 8-9.01). The WUI Code establishes minimum construction and site-planning standards intended to reduce wildfire ignition potential and enhance fire-resistant design within areas where development interfaces with wildland vegetation. These requirements address building materials, ignition-resistant construction, and defensible-space provisions. The Watsonville Fire Department is responsible for enforcing the WUI Code through plan review and inspections for new development within designated WUI areas.

City of Watsonville Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

The City of Watsonville 2020 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), was adopted by the City Council in January 2021 and approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in September 2021 and, therefore, was in effective until 2026. The LHMP identifies potential local natural hazards and then

identifies and prioritizes vulnerable areas in the local community. The LHMP helps communities be prepared in case of natural hazards and can help protect the public and city infrastructure. Chapter B in the LHMP provides hazard identification and risk assessment within and near the City, including the description of the type, location, and extent of natural hazards that can affect each jurisdiction. Chapter C in the LHMP provides potential mitigation strategies and action plans to reduce natural hazard risks. The City, through its Public Works Department, coordinated with the County of Santa Cruz on the development of the Santa Cruz County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, also referred to as the Regional Joint Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was adopted in April 2026 as the five-year update to the 2020 LHMP.

An Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis was prepared as a supplement to the 2020 LHMP. The analysis determined that every type of road, including connectors, bridges, and arterial roads, have a role in acting as an evacuation network. Every residential parcel has access to at least two evacuation routes. Under earthquake scenarios, Freedom Boulevard acts as the most viable evacuation route. In the case of flooding, Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, and East Lake Avenue headed north serve as viable outbound evacuation routes. Viable outbound evacuation routes in response to fires are dependent on the location of fires:

- Northern fire scenarios: East Lake Avenue, Riverside Road, Salinas Road
- Eastern fire scenarios: Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, Salinas Road
- Southern fire scenarios: Freedom Boulevard, Green Valley Road, East Lake Avenue

All but one outbound evacuation route depends on a bridge, so inspection protocols for bridges have been established in this analysis.

Santa Cruz County Emergency Operations Plan

The Santa Cruz County Operational Area (OA) Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) provides the foundational framework for a coordinated, scalable, and organized response to emergencies. The EOP takes into consideration the County's Operational Area obligations and authority, and sets a vision for a more equitable human-centered approach to emergency management throughout the county. The EOP delineates operational concepts, risks, and hazards across all phases of the emergency management cycle: Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

Santa Cruz County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a mechanism for communities to address their wildfire risk by promoting collaboration and local action. The CWPP allows the community to establish their own Wildland Urban Interface boundary, which can improve and influence access to funding sources. It allows the community to conduct wildfire prevention planning across the landscape by recommending projects that benefit the community as a whole and types and methods of treatment to be used. The latest version of Santa Cruz (and San Mateo) County CWPP was published in October 2022.

Santa Cruz County Wildfire Resilience Program

The Wildfire Resilience Program was developed by the county of Santa Cruz following the catastrophic Lightning Complex Fire in 2020 to enhance wildfire preparedness across the County. The program collaborates with many partners to better inform residents with wildfire warnings/alerts and preparedness skills, including other county departments such as Public Works Road Maintenance, Human Services, and the Sheriff's office.

4.20.1.2 Existing Conditions

Wildfire Behavior and Controlling Factors

Wildfire behavior is a product of several variables, primarily weather, vegetation, topography, and human influence, which jointly affect how, when, and where fires burn. Wildfires are characterized by several factors, such as fire frequency, intensity, severity, and area burned.

Human Influence on Wildfire

Human influences on wildfire include direct influences, such as the ignition and suppression of fires, and indirect influences through climate change and alterations in land use patterns. Human influence on wildfire most substantially controls fire frequency (i.e., number of ignitions) because humans are responsible for most wildfire ignitions. In California, humans account for starting approximately 95 percent of wildfires. Human ignitions may result from debris and brush-clearing fires, electrical equipment malfunctions, campfire escapes, smoking, fireworks, vehicles, or arson. Consequently, areas near human development generate fires at a more frequent rate than very remote or urban areas. Drought conditions and high temperatures in California have made the environment particularly vulnerable to human-caused fires, and more people and households are introduced to the WUI each year. A 2018 study indicates that the number of houses in the WUI increased nationwide by 41 percent between 1990 and 2010 (UCSC, 2021).

Climate Change and Wildfire

Wildfires are a significant threat throughout California, especially as the landscape responds to climate change and decades of fire suppression efforts. It is estimated that since 1985, more than 50 percent of the increase in the area burned by wildfire in the western United States is attributable to anthropogenic climate change. As climate change persists, increasing temperatures and drier conditions will generate greater amounts of dry fuels. For example, the 2020 Lightning Complex Fires were the result of lightning storms coupled with dry fuels, igniting a series of fires throughout Northern California. Wildfires tend to be larger under drier atmospheric conditions and when fed by drier fuel sources (CAL FIRE, 2020).

Wildfire Risk Reduction

Wildfire mitigation and prevention typically include a combination of hazardous fuel reduction projects, fire prevention planning, and fire prevention education. Wildfire prevention programs engaging private landowners, homeowners, and government agencies maximize the effectiveness of all wildfire mitigation treatments and programs.

Vegetation Management

Vegetation management is the primary approach to wildfire management, as it slows the movement of fire, potentially reducing the intensity and severity of wildfire. Vegetation management is also a form of fuel reduction, which works to protect specific resources, such as areas of high fire hazard, in limited geographic areas. Firefighting effectiveness has reportedly increased with vegetation management treatments, as it increases visibility through the area, decreases the heat and smoke of wildfire, and allows for quicker suppression of spot fires (UCSC, 2021).

Community Wildfire Hazard Reduction Programs

Community wildfire hazard reduction practices are essential to establishing a fire-adapted community and lowering the overall risk of wildfires. Key practices include:

- Establishing defensible space around homes, commercial buildings, and other structures;
- Home hardening, or using construction features, building materials, and regular maintenance to increase a home's resistance to ignition;

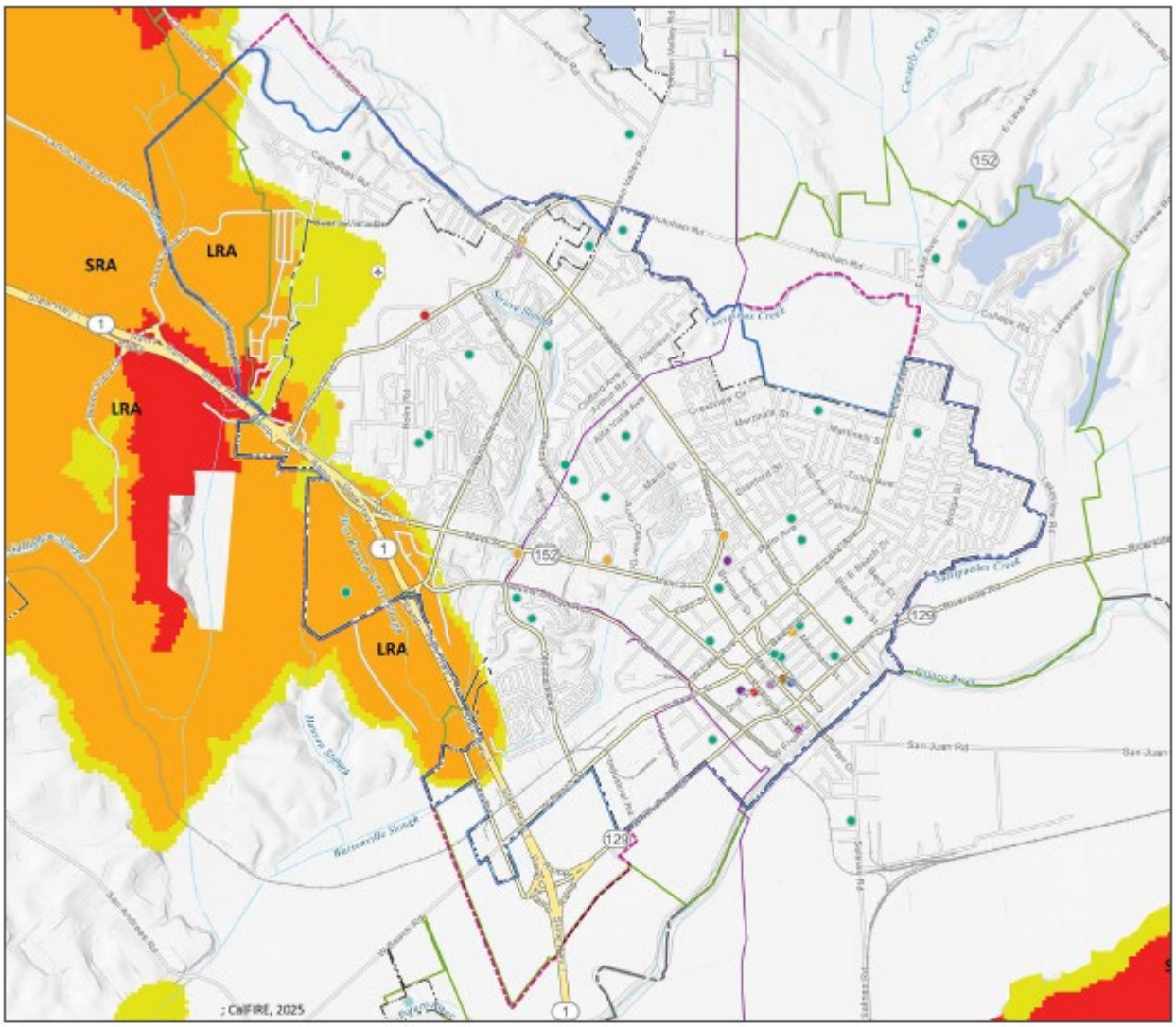
Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 4291, "Clearance Around Structures," requires individual homeowners to clear and remove vegetation around homes and buildings. Compliance with PRC Section 4291 is required by any person who owns, leases, or maintains a structure in or adjoining any mountainous area, forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands, grass-covered lands, or land that is covered with flammable material and is within CAL FIRE's State Responsibility Area. PRC Section 4291 requires 100 feet of "defensible space" (or to the property line if less than 100 feet) from every building or structure that is used for support or shelter of any use or occupancy. CAL FIRE has developed specific defensible space guidelines for homeowners per PRC 4291, to help individual homeowners implement defensible space and home hardening techniques (CAL FIRE, n.d.).

Existing Wildfire Setting

The plan area represents a diverse land use setting, which is comprised of a mixed-use downtown core surrounded by medium-to high density residential use, general commercial use along major highway corridors, industrial use on the southern and southwestern part, agricultural use with scattered low density residential in outskirts to the north and east, and a mix of environmental management, utility and agricultural use along its western boundary. CAL FIRE identifies FHSZs at the local, state, and federal level, which cover all fire-prone areas in the state. LRAs are not mapped by CAL FIRE, and they are usually managed by a town or city. The City of Watsonville is an LRA, and the City designates the western border of the plan area as moderate to high FHSZ. The majority of the plan area is not within a FHSZ.

While the City is considered an LRA, Santa Cruz County is responsible for identifying wildfire risks surrounding Watsonville. Per the latest FHSZ designation in Santa Cruz County, a portion of the plan area is designated as a Moderate, High and/or Very High FHSZ. This area is largely along the western boundary of the City including portions of the Watsonville Municipal Airport and along Highway 1 in the vicinity of Pajaro Valley High School and Struve Slough. Beyond city limits in the northwest portion of the plan area, existing rural settings of the Buena Vista new growth area contain Moderate to High FHSZs. While no portion of this new growth area is designated as a Very High FHSZ, a small portion of unincorporated land nearby, partially within the South Manfre Road Area and to the south of Highway 1 near Harkins Slough, is designated as a Very High FHSZ (CAL FIRE, 2025). **Figure 4.20-1** depicts the SRA and LRA FHSZ designations within and surrounding the plan area.

Figure 4.20-1 State and Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones near Plan Area



Source: Harris & Associates, 2019; Placeworks, 2025

Legend

- City Boundary
- Existing Urban Limit Line
- Proposed Urban Limit Line
- City Sphere of Influence
- County Boundary
- Railroad
- Transmission Lines

Critical Facilities

- Airport
- City Hall
- Community Center
- Library
- Schools
- Medical Facilities
- Fire Station
- Police Station
- Wastewater Treatment Plant

Fire Hazard Severity Zones

- Moderate
- High
- Very High
- LRA Local Responsibility Area
- SRA State Responsibility Area

Source: City of Watsonville, 2026.

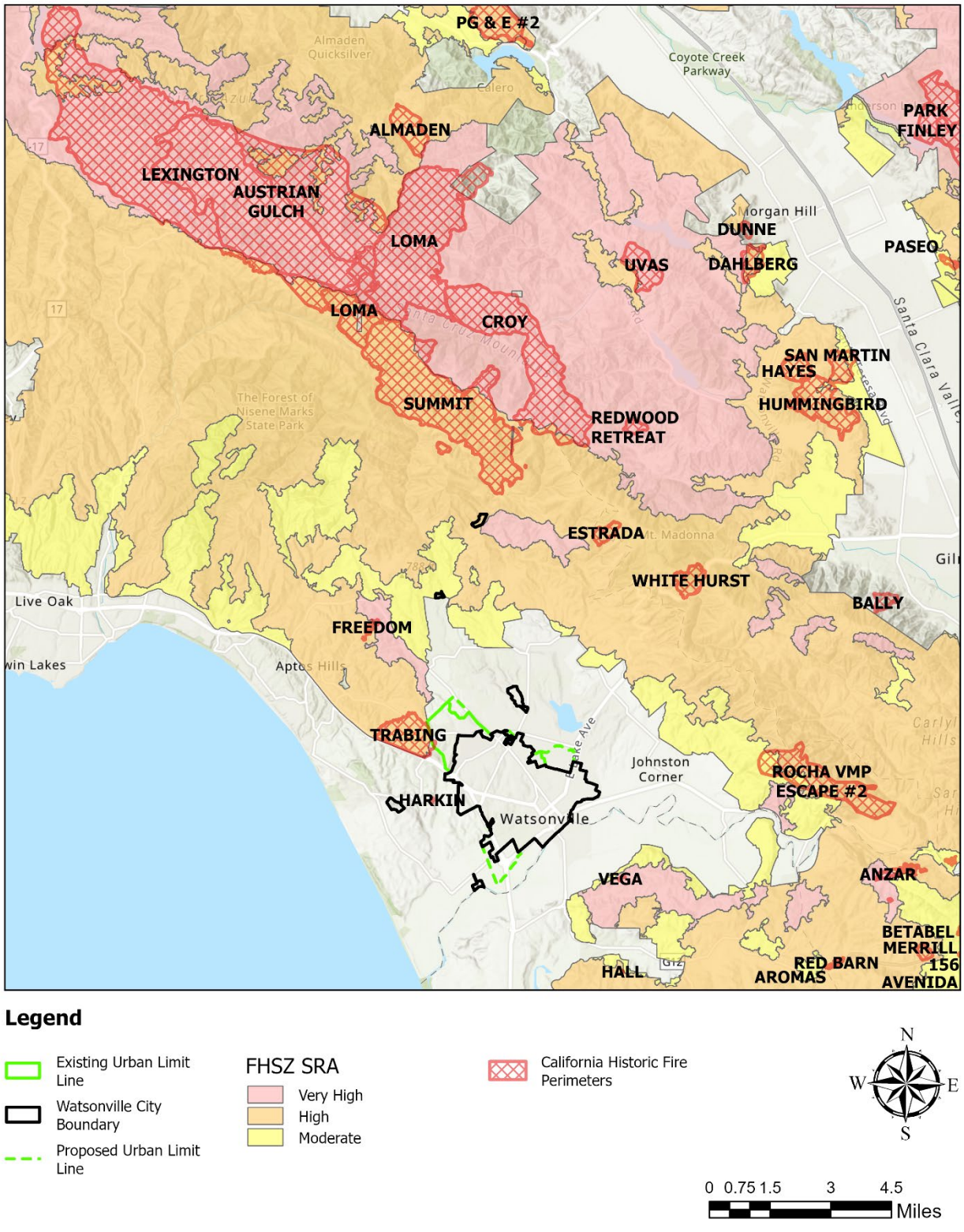
There are a total of nine wildland fires that occurred within 15 miles of the plan area in the past 20 years (**Table 4.20-1** and **Figure 4.20-2**).

Table 4.20-1 Recent Wildland Fires in Plan Area Vicinity

Name	Distance from Plan Area	Year	Cause	Acres Consumed
Redwood Retreat	8 miles NE	1997	Vehicle	90
Croy Fire	11 miles NE	2002	Unknown; suspected human-caused	3,007
Summit Fire	7 miles NW	2008	Human-caused	4,175
Hummingbird Fire	11 miles NE	2008	Lightning	786
Whitehurst Fire	5 miles NE	2008	Lightning	256
Trabing Fire	0.25 miles W	2008	Vehicle	594
Red Barn	8 miles SE	2011	Vehicle	22
Ballybunion Fire	9 miles NE	2017	Human-caused	109

Source: Capital Public Radio, 2026.

Figure 4.20-2 Historic Fires near Plan Area



Source: Circlepoint, 2026.

4.20.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.20.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this analysis and in accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, a project impact to wildfire would be considered significant:

a) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan;

a) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project 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;

b) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, 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; or

c) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, 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

4.20.2.2 Methodology

The analysis in this section is informed by a combination of publicly accessible databases and historic records related to emergency access and wildfire. Wildfire risks and FHSZs were designated via CAL FIRE criteria. Data regarding evacuation routes in the plan-area was gathered from a prior Evacuation Route Analysis conducted by the City.

4.20.2.3 Project Impacts

a) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

The majority of the project site ("plan area") is urbanized and not located within an area of moderate, high, or very high fire hazard severity designated as an LRA. As shown on **Figure 4.20-1**, only the western portion of the City is designated as Moderate and High FHSZs, including portions of the Watsonville Municipal Airport and along Highway 1 in the vicinity of Pajaro Valley High School and Struve Slough. In addition, some regions adjacent to city limits in the plan area contain land designated as a Moderate to High FHSZs. For instance, the Buena Vista new growth area, in the northwestern portion of the plan area, overlaps with land that has been designated as a High FHSZ within the LRA. No portion of the plan area contains any SRA FHSZs.

Watsonville's Local Multi-Hazards Mitigation Plan and Emergency Operation Plan establishes the emergency management organization required to mitigate any significant emergencies and identifies roles and responsibilities required to protect the health and safety of City residents and property. The Santa Cruz Operational Area EOP also coordinates disaster response efforts across local agencies, organizations, and mutual aid partners. Individual projects in the Plan Area may result in road closures near project sites. The Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis prepared for the LHMP determined that

every residential parcel would be able to use at least two roads for evacuation access. During construction activities for individual development projects, applicants may be required, as part of the encroachment permit process, to prepare standard construction management plans and implement Best Management Practices (e.g., use of flagmen, detour signs for roadway closures, etc.) that minimize temporary obstruction of roadways and maintain access for emergency vehicles. By providing clear communications regarding construction-related road closures and maintaining roadway access where possible, evacuation routes would remain accessible, and impacts related to road closures would not be significant.

To ensure new development within the plan area does not impair adopted emergency response or evacuation plans, the City would adhere to following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

Goal S-2 Emergency Preparedness. Anticipate the potential for disasters, maintain continuity of life-support functions during an emergency, and maximize efforts for post-emergency recovery.

Policy S-2.2 Rescue Services. The City shall strive to maintain emergency rescue services consistent with population growth in the city.

Action S-2.2.1 Light Rescue. The Fire Department shall maintain adequate equipment and hand tools for the extraction of victims from vehicles, aircraft, buildings, and for other emergency rescue circumstances.

Policy S-2.3 Emergency Preparedness. The City shall be prepared to maintain critical public services during emergencies.

Action S-2.3.1Training. All City departments shall conduct the appropriate level of training activities to ensure preparedness before an emergency, continuity of services during an emergency, and recovery operations after the event.

Action S-2.3.2 Critical Facilities. The City shall evaluate the ability to survive and continue to operate during emergency conditions and identify alternate facilities and operating plans for post-emergency recovery.

Action S-2.3.3 Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning. The City shall draft and periodically update its emergency preparedness and response procedures and coordinate emergency planning efforts with the local community, the Santa Cruz County Office of Emergency Services, and regional and State partners.

Action S-2.3.4 Evacuation Routes. The City shall designate evacuation routes for the Planning Area, consistent with AB 747 and SB 99 requirements. Evacuation route planning shall be guided by the Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis adopted by the City, and shall be updated periodically in coordination with Santa Cruz County and other regional emergency response partners.

Policy S-2.5 Incorporation of FEMA-Approved Hazard Mitigation Plan. Upon update and certification by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the City shall incorporate the most recently adopted and FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan into this Safety Element by reference, as permitted by California Government Code Section 65302.6.

Action S-2.5.1 Review and Update LHMP: The City shall review and update the LHMP every five years, per the requirements of the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.

Policy S-2.6 Emergency Response and Evacuation Routes. The City shall ensure that emergency response and evacuation routes are accessible throughout the city.

Action S-2.6.1 Review of Designated Evacuation Routes. The City shall periodically review designated evacuation routes identified in the Emergency Evacuation Route Analysis (Appendix B) to evaluate their condition and identify improvements to ensure the safety, capacity, and viability of these routes.

Action S-2.6.2 Signage for Evacuation Routes. The City shall install and maintain clear, reflective signage marking evacuation routes throughout the city.

Policy S-2.8 Maintain and Improve Evacuation Route Infrastructure. Prioritize routine maintenance and capital improvements along designated evacuation routes to ensure ongoing accessibility and serviceability during emergencies. Address pavement conditions, signage, drainage, and vegetation management as part of regular upkeep.

Action S-5.1.7 Emergency Access. On dead end streets longer than allowed by City development standards, secondary emergency access shall be required for use by emergency vehicles or approved built-in fire protection provided.

Action S-5.2.5 Public Education on Fire Preparedness. The City shall make available and share educational and outreach materials, rebate programs, and incentives with the public to help residents understand appropriate fire mitigation and preparedness activities, such as vegetation management, home hardening, defensible space, evacuation routes, and emergency evacuation procedures during a fire hazard.

Action S-5.3.1 Level of Service. The City shall strive to provide adequate staffing, equipment, and facilities to ensure timely fire protection and emergency medical response throughout the city. Specific response time objectives and service level standards shall be established and periodically updated in the City's Fire Master Plan.

Action S-5.3.7 Pre-planning. The Fire Department shall continually evaluate high-risk facilities and areas fire hazards and pre-plan for major emergencies.

Action S-5.3.8 Planning Area Fire Protection. The City shall promote the concepts of fire prevention and suppression adopted in the City's General Plan in the Planning Area located outside the City limit boundaries.

Policy S-5.5 Maintain Fuel Breaks and Evacuation Routes. Coordinate with CAL FIRE, Santa Cruz County Fire Department, Watsonville Fire Department, Caltrans, emergency responders, and landowners to maintain and enhance fuel breaks, vegetation clearance, and emergency access and evacuation routes on public and private roads to ensure adequate capacity, safety, and viability for both effective fire suppression and safe evacuations.

Policy S-5.6 Improve Visibility for Emergency Response. Support measures that help firefighting crews and emergency response teams respond to fire hazards or work under low-visibility conditions, such as high-visibility signage for streets and building addresses that meet or exceed the standards in the California Fire Safe Regulations (Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Division 1.5, Chapter 7, Articles 2 and 3, Sections 1273 and 1274).

Policy S-5.10 Ensure Adequate Emergency Access. Require new development in the Fire Hazard Severity Zones to provide adequate access for fire and emergency vehicles and equipment that meets or exceeds State standards in two parts of the California Fire Safe Regulations (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 1.5, Chapter 7): Subchapter 2, Articles 1–5 (commencing

with section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations), and Subchapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations).

Policy S-5.13 Repair and Maintain Roads for Fire Safety. Prepare and implement plans to repair and maintain City-owned roadways as needed to meet current standards and encourage private property owners to do the same, to the extent feasible and given the absence of other site constraints. These standards include road standards for evacuation and emergency vehicle access, vegetation clearance, and other requirements of the California Fire Safe Regulations, Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Division 1.5, Chapter 7): specifically, Subchapter 2, Articles 1-5 (commencing with Section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations); and Subchapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with Section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations).

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would include the establishment of best practices regarding fire safety and evacuation protocols. Additionally, the fire mitigation protocols outlined in the state WUI Code, as adopted by the City, and the General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions stated above, would be implemented to further minimize wildfire-related risks. The project would not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan, and project implementation would not create any barriers to emergency access routes or other vehicle movement in the area. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

b) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project 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?

The western portion of the Plan Area is designated as Moderate and High FHSZs within the LRA. However, this area does not have any significant slopes that would contribute to an exacerbated wildfire risk. Although portions of the Buena Vista new growth area are designated as High FHSZ within the LRA, no portion of this new growth area is designated as a Very High FHSZ and its environmental setting would not contribute to increased fire risk due to the presence of prevailing winds or steep slopes. Despite this new growth area being somewhat hilly, the slopes are not so steep such that they would substantially exacerbate wildfire risks to current or future development. Introducing development in previously non-developed areas such as growth areas have the potential to exacerbate the wildfire risks from human ignition. Best practices regarding fire safety and evacuation protocols would also be followed. Additionally, the fire mitigation protocols outlined in the state WUI Code, as adopted by the City, and the General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions stated above, would be implemented to further minimize wildfire-related risks. Thus, factors such as slopes and prevailing winds are not anticipated to significantly impact the plan area. There are no other conditions in the plan area that would be anticipated to facilitate the spread of wildfire. In addition, compliance with federal, state and local regulations, and proposed General Plan 2050 policies and actions would further reduce the risks associated with any factors that could exacerbate the wildfire risks. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would not inherently exacerbate wildfire risks, and plan implementation would not significantly expose plan area occupants to pollutants from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire. (Less than Significant Impact)

c) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, 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?

The western portion of the city limits, particularly along Highway 1, are designated as Moderate and High FHSZs within the LRA. Portions of the Buena Vista new growth area, located to the northwest of the

existing city limits, includes land designated as Moderate and High FHSZ. Land designated a Moderate, High and Very High FHSZ beyond the plan area to the northwest is within a SRA.

As shown on **Figure 4.20-1**, a small portion of land beyond city limits but within the urban limit line is designated as a Very High FHSZ. This area is associated with the upper reaches of Harkins Slough near the intersection of Larkin Valley Road and Manfre Road, and contains an existing residential neighborhood in unincorporated Santa Cruz County. This area is not planned for further residential development. The Buena Vista new growth area to the northwest of this area contains land designated as a High FHSZ but not as a Very High FHSZ. For the portion of this new growth area that is within a High FHSZ, as shown on **Figure 2-8** in **Section 2, Project Description**, the planned land uses include either natural open space or very low-density residential development. These land use designations would allow for more defensible space around future housing, which is in accordance with the state WUI code, as adopted by the City (WMC § 8-9.01). Providing adequate defensible space reduces the risk of wildfire spread and reduces the need for additional fire suppression infrastructure in these areas. Practices outlined in the WUI code would also be applicable to any proposed development in areas not designated as FHSZ to best reduce wildfire risks.

Due to the urbanized location of much of the Plan Area, as well as limited interfacing with natural areas that may be susceptible to wildfire, General Plan 2050 would not require the installation or additional maintenance of fire suppression or related infrastructure. Furthermore, future housing development proposed to be in the Buena Vista new growth area would not be located in the Very High FHSZ, nor would it be located within a SRA. Open space designations also exist in this area. In addition, any new developments near Very High FHSZ or SRA would also have to adhere to the standards established by the state WUI codes, as adopted by the City or County, to minimize risks related to wildfire. Much of the plan area is designated as urbanized and considered “no threat” or moderate fire hazard due to its built-out environment, paved surfaces, and limited flammable vegetation. Therefore, due to the project’s urbanized location and limited interface with any natural areas susceptible to wildfire, the project would not require the installation or maintenance of associated fire suppression or related infrastructure.

To ensure the installation or maintenance of infrastructure associated with new development would not exacerbate fire risks, the project would adhere to following Goals, Policies, and Actions in General Plan 2050.

General Plan 2050 Goals, Policies, and Actions that Lessen Potential Impacts:

> **Policy LC-4.2 Natural Hazards.** New development shall be sited and designed to withstand natural hazards, including wildfire, flooding, seismic activity, and drought. In hazard-prone areas (e.g., floodplains, fire hazard severity zones), new development shall be sited and designed to avoid compounding risk for adjacent properties and the surrounding area.
>
> **Action S-2.3.5 Hazard Mitigation Plan Implementation.** The City of Watsonville shall actively pursue the implementation of the recommendations included in the Watsonville Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and any subsequent updates adopted by the City.
>
> **Action S-2.5.1 Review and Update LHMP.** The City shall review and update the LHMP every five years, per the requirements of the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.
>
> **Goal S-5 Fire Safety/Protection.** Ensure that all existing structures in the city are maintained at adequate levels of fire suppression standards, that new structures conform to current fire safety standards, and the coordination is maintained between urban and rural fire districts for the prevention and suppression of structural and wildland fires.

Policy S-5.1 Fire Safety Standards. The City shall use development approval authority, code enforcement, and periodic inspections to ensure that fire prevention standards are maintained.

Action S-5.1.10 Building Safety. Property owners shall be responsible for maintaining their structures at a reasonable degree of fire and life safety as identified by the uniform fire, building, mechanical, electrical and other such adopted codes and City ordinances.

Action S-5.1.11 Built-in Protection. The City shall continue to promote the installation of built-in fire extinguishing systems and early warning fire alarm systems. The City acknowledges that built-in fire protection is a better substitute than expanding public fire protection services.

Policy S-5.3 Fire Suppression Planning. The City shall maintain a level of fire protection for the community in accordance with the Fire Master Plan that emphasizes an aggressive initial attack to stop fires in early stages as well as to have adequate staff and equipment (including mutual aid) to prevent a conflagration.

Action S-5.3.7 Pre-planning. The Fire Department shall continually evaluate high-risk facilities and areas fire hazards and pre-plan for major emergencies.

Action S-5.3.8 Planning Area Fire Protection. The City shall promote the concepts of fire prevention and suppression adopted in the City's General Plan in the Planning Area located outside the City limit boundaries.

Policy S-5.5 Maintain Fuel Breaks and Evacuation Routes: Coordinate with CAL FIRE, Santa Cruz County Fire Department, Watsonville Fire Department, Caltrans, emergency responders, and landowners to maintain and enhance fuel breaks, vegetation clearance, and emergency access and evacuation routes on public and private roads to ensure adequate capacity, safety, and viability for both effective fire suppression and safe evacuations.

Policy S-5.6 Improve Visibility for Emergency Response. Support measures that help firefighting crews and emergency response teams respond to fire hazards or work under low-visibility conditions, such as high-visibility signage for streets and building addresses that meet or exceed the standards in the California Fire Safe Regulations (Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Division 1.5, Chapter 7, Articles 2 and 3, Sections 1273 and 1274).

Policy S-5.7 Review Development in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Require review by the Community Development Department and Watsonville Fire Department of proposed construction projects and conceptual landscaping plans in the High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones identified by CAL FIRE prior to the issuance of development permits (see Figure 7.10: Fire Hazard Severity Zones). Plans for proposed development in such areas shall include, at a minimum:

- Site plan, planting plan, planting palette, and irrigation plan to reduce the risk of fire hazards and with consideration to site conditions, including slope, structures, and adjacencies.
- Development and maintenance of defensible space.
- More than one point of ingress and egress to improve evacuation, emergency response, and fire equipment access and adequate water infrastructure for water supply and fire flow that meets or exceeds the standards in the California State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations (commencing with Section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations); and Subchapter 3, Article 3, commencing with Section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations).

- Class A roofing assemblies for new and replacement roofs.
- Location and source of anticipated water supply.

Policy S-5.8 Fire-Resistant Landscaping and Defensible Space Requirements. All new development in the High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone must comply with fire-resistant landscaping and defensible space requirements. These standards shall meet or exceed Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations. This specifically includes Division 1.5, Chapter 7, Subchapter 2, Articles 1 to 5 (commencing with section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations), and Division 1.5, Chapter 7, Subchapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations). New development shall also comply with the Public Resource Code Section 4291 (State Defensible Space Requirements), which requires the following:

- Create a defensible space of at least 100 feet around the structure.
- Remove all dead plants, grass, weeds, and other flammable vegetation from the defensible space.
- Remove tree limbs that are within 10 feet of the chimney or stovepipe of the structure.
- Trim tree limbs that are within 6 feet of the ground or within 10 feet of the structure.
- Remove all dead branches, leaves, and other debris from roofs and rain gutters.
- Create horizontal and vertical spacing between trees and shrubs to prevent the spread of fire.
- Space trees at least 10 feet apart from each other.
- Maintain the defensible space throughout the year, not just during fire season.
- Obtain any necessary permits from local fire agencies before conducting any vegetation management activities.
- Provide and maintain access to the property for emergency vehicles.

Policy S-5.9 Ensure Adequate Emergency Access. Require new development in the High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones to provide adequate access for fire and emergency vehicles and equipment that meets or exceeds State standards in two parts of the California Fire Safe Regulations (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 1.5, Chapter 7): Subchapter 2, Articles 1–5 (commencing with section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations), and Subchapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations).

Policy S-5.10 Locate Development Outside Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. To the greatest extent possible, locate new residential development and public and critical facilities, such as police stations, schools, and community centers, outside of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Policy S-5.11 Development Within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Where no feasible alternative location exists, require new development within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones to demonstrate compliance with applicable state and local building and fire code regulations and incorporate appropriate mitigation measures and design considerations, including disaster response and evacuation plans, defensible space, fire-resistant materials, fire-resistant landscaping, adequate emergency access, and adequate water infrastructure, as applicable.

Policy S-5.12 Fire Protection Plans for New Development. Require fire protection plans for all new development projects in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, including plans for long-term, comprehensive, fuel reduction and management. The main components of a fire protection plan shall be consistent with California Fire Code, Chapter 49, and include:

1. Risk Analysis
2. Fire Response Capabilities
3. Fire Safety Requirements – Defensible Space, Infrastructure, and Building Ignition Resistance
4. Mitigation Measures and Design Considerations for Non-Conforming Fuel Modification
5. Wildfire Education Maintenance and Limitations

Policy S-5.13 Repair and Maintain Roads for Fire Safety. Prepare and implement plans to repair and maintain City-owned roadways as needed to meet current standards and encourage private property owners to do the same, to the extent feasible and given the absence of other site constraints. These standards include road standards for evacuation and emergency vehicle access, vegetation clearance, and other requirements of the California Fire Safe Regulations, Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Division 1.5, Chapter 7): specifically, Subchapter 2, Articles 1-5 (commencing with Section 1270, SRA Fire Safe Regulations); and Subchapter 3, Article 3 (commencing with Section 1299.01, Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations).

Policy S-5.14 Plan for Post-Fire Recovery and Resilience. Develop and update programs as needed that ensure recovery and redevelopment after a large fire and that reduce future vulnerabilities to fire hazard risks through site preparation, redevelopment layout design, fire-resistant landscape planning, and home hardening building design and materials.

Policy S-5.15 Adequate Fire Service Capacity. Coordinate with the Watsonville Fire Department to ensure that fire and emergency services—including personnel, equipment, infrastructure, and response times—have sufficient capacity citywide by:

- Locating new development only where adequate fire protection exists.
- Advocating for adequate fire protection services through the City's participation in the Joint Powers Authority.

Policy S-5.16 Secure Water Supply for Fire Suppression. Coordinate with the City of Watsonville Water Division and regional partners, including the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency and the Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management group, to ensure an adequate, long-term water supply is maintained for fire suppression needs throughout the community.

Policy S-5.17 Review of Development Within in Near SRAs. Develop a review program for new development in or near SRAs. The review will consider whether new residential development includes a fuel break near SRAs to reduce risks of wildfire spread.

Implementation of the General Plan 2050 would not inherently add any new structures or components that would necessitate the installation of associated infrastructure and compliance with California Building Code and other regulations would result in reduced wildfire risks. Additionally, with the implementation of the above goals, policies, and actions, impacts would be less than significant. (Less than Significant Impact)

d) If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, 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?

As described in the previous discussion, the plan would not expose people or structures to significant wildfire risks given its highly urban location away from natural areas susceptible to wildfire. The western portion of the City on Airport property and along Highway 1 is designated as a Moderate and High FHSZ within the LRA. Beyond city limits, portions of the Buena Vista new growth area include land that is designated as a Moderate to High FHSZ in the LRA. The vegetation and hilliness in this region present the potential for post-fire slope instability and erosion. However, this area is designated for low-density residential development or open space (**Figure 2-8**). Vegetation clearing practices and defensible space would be maintained in accordance with the state WUI codes, as adopted by the City, reducing the risk of wildfire spread. Additionally, the maintenance of adequate defensible space would reduce potential exposure of people and structures to significant fire-related risks.

Additionally, the General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions described above would be implemented to further minimize impacts in SRAs or lands classified as Very High FHSZs to a less-than-significant level. (Less than Significant Impact)

5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts, as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), refer to two or more individual effects, which when combined, compound or increase other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts may result from individually minor, but collectively significant, effects taking place over a period of time. CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 states that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) should discuss cumulative impacts "when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable." The discussion does not need to be in as great detail as is necessary for project impacts but is to be "guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness." The purpose of the cumulative analysis is to allow decision makers to better understand the impacts that might result from approval of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, in conjunction with the project addressed in this EIR.

The CEQA Guidelines advise that a discussion of cumulative impacts should reflect both the severity and the likelihood of their occurrence. To accomplish these two objectives, the analysis should include either a list of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects or a summary of projections from an adopted general plan or similar document. The analysis must then determine whether the project's contribution to any cumulatively significant impact is cumulatively considerable, as defined by CEQA Guideline Section 15065(a)(3).

An EIR is not required to discuss impacts that do not result in part from the project it evaluates. However, it is required to discuss the cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15130). When the lead agency determines that the incremental impact of the project is not cumulatively considerable, it does not need to consider that impact significant. However, the agency must provide a brief explanation for that determination. Cumulative impacts may be discussed in the form of either:

- a list of past, present, or reasonably foreseeable probable future projects producing related cumulative impacts; or
- a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior adopted or certified environmental document.

5.1 Cumulative Project Impacts

The cumulative impacts analyses in this EIR use method No. 2. The proposed project consists of General Plan 2050. Consistent with Section 15130(b)(1)(B) of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR analyzes the environmental impacts of projected development that will occur under the proposed General Plan through its horizon year of 2050. Because the proposed project is a General Plan, the impact analyses in **Sections 4.1** through **4.20** are an effective cumulative impact analyses, which examines the cumulative effects of each resource topic through buildout of General Plan 2050 within the City of Watsonville and the region surrounding it, as appropriate. The cumulative impact area has been defined for each resource. Where feasible, the cumulative impact analysis is quantitative (e.g., traffic, air quality, and noise modeling considers the proposed general plan's effects together with all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects built into the traffic model; acreage of prime farmlands and sensitive habitats are calculated); where quantitative analysis is not feasible, the analyses is qualitative. For a detailed discussion of General Plan 2050 impacts and methods for estimating the incremental contribution of the impact on a particular resource, see the appropriate chapter in this EIR.

5.1.1 Aesthetics

The total area of cumulative impacts related to aesthetics would be contiguous with the ULL but considers views to distant visual resources. Previous developments and associated design have defined the community character and design standards for current and future development. Developments occurring in more recent years may have more modern design influences, and the overall visual landscape of development in the plan area may have some variance.

General Plan 2050's Goals, Policies, and Actions would guide future development such that it will be cohesive with existing development and retain the community character of Watsonville. Additionally, the plan works to preserve natural and open space lands, contributing to an aesthetically pleasing natural landscape and maintaining the City's natural character, such as along the Watsonville Slough system. These protections would provide for the appreciation of these natural features by Watsonville's residents and visitors. Implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact related to aesthetics and visual resources.

5.1.2 Agricultural Farmland and Forestland

Cumulative impacts would be contiguous with the ULL but also consider regional resources. The proposed plan would adopt goals, policies, and actions that protect and are compatible with agricultural lands and would preserve the small-town character of Watsonville. The plan provides long-range planning guidance to protect and encourage the City's main industry. With the growth planned in General Plan 2050, some agricultural lands would be converted to urban or non-agricultural uses. Due to the amount of agricultural land within the new growth areas and the space needed to accommodate future development, impacts to agricultural land would be considered significant and unavoidable. However, the goals, policies, and actions outlined in the plan protect existing open space lands and encourages new growth in designated areas such that it would not overflow into open space that had not previously been designated for growth. Implementation of General Plan 2050 would preserve the rural character of the County because its outward growth is limited. Additionally, the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses would commit future generations to using these spaces for non-agricultural purposes, resulting in a long-term change in land use.

Implementation of General Plan 2050, as well as its included mitigation measures, would guide future development such that impacts related to the conversion of agricultural lands are reduced. **Mitigation Measure AG-1** would reduce agricultural resources impacts by requiring project applicants to demonstrate evidence of an agricultural conservation easement or the payment of an in-lieu mitigation fee; however, conversion of agricultural lands to urban uses would continue to reduce the amount of valuable farmland available for crop production and would contribute to the long-term depletion of a valuable natural resource in the plan area. However, **Mitigation Measure AG-1** may not be feasible for all project types, and the efficacy of mitigation cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, significant cumulative impacts related to the conversion of agricultural land would still occur.

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would potentially conflict with one existing Williamson Act contract for Prime Agriculture land in the Highway 1 Gateway area. Additionally, the conversion of agricultural land designated by the County as Commercial Agriculture would conflict with the County General Plan. Impacts related to conflicts with the County General Plan and related plans and policies cannot be minimized through mitigation efforts. Consequently, cumulative impacts to lands zoned for agricultural use or Williamson Act lands would be considered significant and unavoidable.

There is no forest land or timberland within the plan area. However, as described above, the plan would involve other changes that could convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. Therefore, implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in a cumulatively considerable impact related to agricultural conversion.

5.1.3 Air Quality

Cumulative impacts related to air quality are based on the regional boundaries of the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD). The MBARD is designated as nonattainment for certain criteria air pollutants, and emissions generated by development under General Plan 2050 would combine with emissions from other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects throughout the region.

Although General Plan 2050 guides future planned growth in the plan area. The construction activities of current and potential future projects result in temporary increases in criteria pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. However, these emissions would be limited in scope and would be accounted for within General Plan 2050. Additionally, several new roadway improvements in the plan area, specifically those related to pedestrian and bicycle facilities, would promote active transportation methods that produce fewer air contaminants and pollution.

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would conflict with the MBARD Air Quality Management Plan and its air quality thresholds. General Plan 2050 could also result in significant construction-related health risks because multiple development projects could be constructed concurrently. Applicable regulations, General Plan goals, policies, and actions, and **Mitigation Measures AQ-1** and **AQ-2** would reduce these emissions and health risks to the maximum extent feasible. However, because the timing, location, and intensity of future development are not known and multiple projects could occur simultaneously, it cannot be demonstrated that emissions would be reduced below the applicable thresholds set by the MBARD AQMP. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to regional criteria air pollutant emissions and construction-related health risks.

With implementation of **Mitigation Measures AQ-3** and **AQ-4** localized health risks associated with exposure of new sensitive receptors to toxic air contaminants would be reduced below applicable thresholds. **Mitigation Measures AQ-1** and **AQ-2** would also require project-specific analysis and mitigation of potential odor impacts. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to localized toxic air contaminant exposure or odors.

5.1.4 Biological Resources

Cumulative impacts related to biological resources would be contiguous with the ULL but would also consider potential regional habitat loss in the Santa Cruz County region based on the range of the protected species. Past and present development within the plan area has reduced the range and number of wildlife species in the plan area, including special-status species. Potential impacts to special-status plant and animal species within the plan area may occur as a result of general construction activities. There are also riparian habitats and trees significant to nesting birds within the plan area, and these may be impacted adversely by future development. However, the plan sets forth several mitigation and implementation actions to guide future development and minimize potential adverse impacts to special-status species and habitats. Any development would be compliant with the measures outlined in the plan, and it would adhere to the standards detailed in the City of Watsonville Municipal Code and City's Tree Protection Ordinances and policies. The new growth areas would be annexed from

the County and placed under the City's jurisdiction, so these areas would be subject to the City-level requirements related to biological resources.

Implementation of General Plan 2050, as well as its included mitigation measures, would guide future development such that it would not have significant adverse effects to special-status species, protected habitats, and wildlife corridors. **Mitigation Measures BIO-4** through **Mi BIO-11** and **Mitigation Measures BIO-13** through **BIO-18** would be implemented to reduce impacts to special-status animal species to less than significant levels. **Mitigation Measure BIO-8**, **Mitigation Measure BIO-11**, and **Mitigation Measure BIO-12** would reduce impacts to riverine habitats to less than significant levels. **Mitigation Measures BIO-19** through **BIO-21** would be implemented to minimize adverse effects to riparian or sensitive habitats within the plan area. **Mitigation Measures BIO-20**, **BIO-21**, and **BIO-22** would be implemented to minimize harm to federally protected wetlands. The plan would not considerably contribute to a cumulative impact related to wetlands, nor would it conflict with any biological policies or Habitat Conservation Plans.

With implementation of General Plan 2050 goals, policies, actions, and **Mitigation Measures BIO-1** through **BIO-22**, the plan would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to regional impacts on special-status species, sensitive habitats, wetlands, or wildlife corridors.

5.1.5 Cultural Resources

Cumulative impacts related to cultural resources would be contiguous with the ULL. Two types of potentially cumulative cultural resource impacts could result from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in conjunction with buildout of General Plan 2050. These include direct and indirect impacts associated with General Plan 2050 and buildout of the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan, as well as impacts associated with the construction and operation of other development within and adjacent to the plan area. Such development could result in the demolition, alteration, or permanent loss of built historic resources and could encounter previously unknown archaeological resources or human remains during ground-disturbing activities. General Plan 2050 policies, applicable regulations, environmental and design review procedures, standard permit conditions, and mitigation measures would reduce these impacts. However, the permanent loss of built historic resources could still occur. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would result in cumulatively considerable impacts on built historic resources.

As of 2026, there are nine recorded historic resources in the plan area based on 147 cultural resource studies that cover approximately 80 percent of the plan area. As a result, the potential for encountering unrecorded archaeological resources and historic-period archaeological resources within the plan area is considered high. The majority of the plan area consists of previously disturbed land and is occupied primarily by residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses. However, the overall archaeological sensitivity of this land remains high. Therefore, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to impacts on archaeological resources or human remains.

Future development allowed under General Plan 2050, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development within and adjacent to the plan area, could result in physical changes to built historic resources or their immediate surroundings that materially impair the resources' ability to convey their historical significance. Accordingly, **Mitigation Measures CUL-3(a)** and **CUL-3(b)**, incorporated in this EIR from the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan EIR, would apply throughout the plan area as feasible, along with the newly added **Mitigation Measure CUL-3(c)**.

Ground-disturbing activities associated with future development could also damage or destroy known or previously unidentified archaeological and other cultural resources or result in the discovery and disturbance of human remains. **Mitigation Measures CUL-1(a), CUL-1(b), CUL-1(c)** and **CUL-2** would address potential impacts to archaeological and other cultural resources, while **Mitigation Measure CUL-4** would address the inadvertent discovery of human remains.

Implementation of the applicable mitigation measures would reduce General Plan 2050's contribution to cumulative impacts on archaeological resources, other cultural resources, and human remains such that the contribution would not be cumulatively considerable. However, because the permanent alteration, demolition, or loss of built historic resources could still occur, implementation of General Plan 2050 could result in cumulatively considerable impacts on built historic resources.

5.1.6 Energy

The cumulative boundary for energy use would be contiguous with the SOI boundary. Population growth associated with General Plan 2050 is anticipated to increase the use of non-renewable energy sources, as more vehicles and expanded infrastructure may require increased consumption of gasoline and diesel power. The plan aims to promote sustainable land uses and energy sources, reducing long-term reliance on fossil fuels and nonrenewable energy sources. Therefore, the plan is not anticipated to result in wasteful or inefficient use of energy. Current and planned development would implement federal and state policies and is anticipated to result in the reduction of per capita energy usage, and the plan would not conflict with any existing regulations regarding renewable energy or energy efficiency. In addition, implementation of the proposed General Plan 2050 would result in the commitment of limited renewable resources, like lumber and water, and would irretrievably commit nonrenewable resources for the construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure. However, by following the goals, policies, and actions outlined in General Plan 2050, the commitments to using non-renewable resources are reduced. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact related to energy.

5.1.7 Geology and Soils

Cumulative impacts related to geology and soils would be contiguous with the ULL. The plan area is approximately 5 miles southwest of the San Andreas Fault Line, presenting a potential for seismic risks over time. The southeastern portion of the plan area is considered to be at a high to very-high risk of liquefaction, which may result in ground displacement.

The plan provides guidance for future development, including safety standards related to seismicity. While portions of the plan area are considered to be at high risk of liquefaction, planned growth would be focused in areas where these risks are low. Additionally, although the plan area is in close proximity to the San Andreas Fault, new development would be constructed in compliance with the City's building standards, protecting against seismic hazards and minimizing risks to safety. Additionally, the plan established goals, policies, and actions that would further reduce the risk of geologic hazards related to land, people, and structures.

General Plan 2050 would not expose people or structures to substantial adverse effects related to seismicity or liquefaction. Additionally, the plan and its included development would not result in substantial erosion or increase the risk of landslides. Development associated with buildout of General Plan 2050 would be subject to the Watsonville Municipal Code, which requires new development to

connect to the City's sanitary sewer system rather than rely on septic systems.[1] Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to geologic and seismic hazards, soil erosion, landslides, or unstable soils.

5.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The cumulative boundary for greenhouse gas emissions would be worldwide as greenhouse gases are not limited to a geographic scope or locality. As no single site-specific development project over the timeframe of the General Plan is large enough individually to result in a measurable increase in global concentrations of GHG emissions, climate change impacts of the program-level General Plan Update are considered on a cumulative basis in the first place.

Implementation of General Plan 2050, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development, would not conflict with the City's local climate and sustainability planning documents, including the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan. General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions would support implementation of these plans through compact and infill development, multimodal transportation improvements, reduced vehicle miles traveled, energy-efficient and low-carbon development, expanded active transportation facilities, green infrastructure, and climate adaptation measures. Other development within the plan area would also be required to comply with applicable climate and sustainability plans and programs. Therefore, General Plan 2050 would not conflict with an applicable climate plan, policy, or regulation, and would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulative impacts related to conflicts with applicable climate plans, policies, or regulations. Accordingly, no impact would occur.

Implementation of General Plan 2050 policies and actions, together with **Mitigation Measure GHG-1**, would require project-level GHG analysis and implementation of all feasible emissions-reduction measures for applicable future discretionary development. These requirements would reduce GHG emissions to the extent feasible. However, General Plan 2050, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development, would continue to generate GHG emissions that contribute to the cumulative effects of climate change. Therefore, implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in a cumulatively considerable impact to GHG emissions and climate change.

5.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Cumulative impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials would be contiguous with the ULL. Past and current development within the plan area has contributed to increased risks related to hazards, as it often includes the increased transport, use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials. The majority of planned development within the plan area would be in the residential sector, however, which typically does not present a significant hazard related to hazardous materials. Additionally, future development accounted for in General Plan 2050 would be guided by its included goals, policies, and actions, further reducing potentially adverse impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials. General Plan 2050 development within Airport Safety Zones would also comply with the land uses outlined in the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan to minimize risks to airport operations and nearby residents and employees. Compliance with these measures, as well as the City's established protocols

[1] WMC § 13-7.02 Improvements required—Limitations on parcel map improvements; WMC § 6-3.502 Sanitary sewer required; WMC § 6-3.503 Separate sanitary sewer laterals.

for handling hazardous materials, would ensure that implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials.

5.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Cumulative impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be contiguous with the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin; flood impacts would be contiguous with the City's water service area. Previous and ongoing construction projects have the potential to contribute to adverse surface and groundwater quality impacts. Site excavation and disturbance increase the risks of soil erosion and may release pollutants into surface water. However, the City and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) have stringent standards on monitoring and maintaining water quality standards. Therefore, future development has the potential to worsen water quality, especially during construction, but impacts are not anticipated to be substantial. Additionally, the plan includes goals, policies and actions that further preserve and protect surface water and groundwater quality.

A Water Supply Assessment (WSA) was prepared for General Plan 2050. As described in the WSA, groundwater supply through 2050 is expected to meet demand through 2050. Despite the planned addition of impervious surface area, groundwater recharge would not be adversely impacted by plan implementation, and the installation of features like infiltration basins would further improve groundwater recharge throughout the plan area. Current flood risks are minimal within the plan area, but some locations along the Watsonville or Harkins Sloughs are at a one percent annual risk of flooding. Federal and state laws, as well as City-level regulations, discourage construction in these areas and describe post-construction BMPs to minimize adverse impacts related to flood risks. Plan implementation would not increase risks related to flood hazards.

The plan would not violate any water quality standards, nor would it alter existing drainage patterns throughout the plan area. Additionally, the plan area would have adequate groundwater supplies to serve the plan area through 2050 and beyond. Plan implementation is not expected to create excess runoff water, degrade water quality, or place housing or structures within a 100-year flood hazard zone. Risks related to hydrology and water quality are expected to remain low following plan implementation. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to surface water quality, groundwater supplies or recharge, drainage, runoff, or flooding.

5.1.11 Land Use and Planning

Cumulative impacts related to land use and planning would be contiguous with the ULL but consider regional land use planning based on the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). Previous and ongoing development projects must comply with the land use and zoning designations at the time of project approval. Projects may not conflict with these designations unless certain permits, such as a conditional use permit, discretionary actions have been completed and approved.

Implementation of General Plan 2050 would not physically divide an established community, nor would it introduce physical features, such as roadways or railroads, that may divide an existing community. The plan would guide future development and would not create new barriers throughout the plan area. Land use and place types proposed under General Plan 2050 would remain consistent with existing designations. The most substantial changes to place type designations would occur in the new growth areas. General Plan 2050 establishes two new mixed-use place type designations, Corridor Mixed-Use and Corridor Mixed-Use Center, that would accommodate mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood

centers. Additionally, implementation of General Plan 2050 would establish the new Industrial Light and Gateway Commercial designations, which would accommodate a range of light industrial, office, regional retail, hotel, restaurant, entertainment, and parks and recreational development in the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area. The majority of new housing is anticipated to be infill development in the downtown area and along major corridors, which would align with existing land use designations. Infill development would be adequately served by the existing roadway system. New developments in the designated growth areas would be consistent with the assigned land use designation in terms of land use, density/intensity, and community character and the zoning code's land use and development standards. The plan outlines several goals, policies, and actions to promote cohesive and compatible neighborhoods, minimizing potentially adverse impacts related to land use.

General Plan 2050 would be largely consistent and compatible with existing development patterns and land uses. Development in new growth areas would result in the conversion of County-designated Commercial Agriculture from agricultural to non-agricultural uses. This presents a potential conflict between General Plan 2050 and the County General Plan. However, only one set of land use policies may apply at a time and, at the time of annexation, the new growth areas would be subject to City place-type designations rather than those established by the County. Implementation of General Plan 2050 would also be in conformance with the sustainable transportation, growth, and development policies outlined in regional planning documents, including the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments & Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's Regional Transportation Plan. Future development would preserve the plan area's small-town character while promoting connectivity, protecting open space, and supporting sustainable long-term growth. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to the physical division of established communities or conflicts with applicable local and regional land use plans, policies, or regulations.

5.1.12 Mineral Resources

Cumulative impacts related to minerals would be contiguous with the ULL. The plan area was determined to show little to no evidence of mineral materials. The nearest mineral resource zone (MRZ) is the A.R. Wilson Quarry, which is 5.5 miles east of the plan area and designated as MRZ-2, indicating that significant mineral deposits may be present. Previous and current development within the plan area has not resulted in impacts to mineral resources, and implementation of General Plan 2050 would not affect the availability of any known mineral resources. Accordingly, General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts on mineral resources.

5.1.13 Noise and Vibration

Cumulative impacts related to noise would be contiguous with the ULL. Previous growth within the plan area has contributed to ambient noise increases, especially in residential and employment hubs. Traffic noise, primarily resulting from cars and trucks and occasionally public transportation vehicles, has increased as the City of Watsonville has expanded. Stationary noise levels are attributable to residential growth and the establishment of commercial and industrial hubs. Two of the largest sources of noise in the plan area are Highway 1 and the Watsonville Municipal Airport.

Noise and vibration increases are anticipated with the construction of future development. Traffic noise following plan implementation is also expected as the plan area grows and welcomes additional residents. Commercial and industrial land uses are not expected to expand significantly and would not contribute to increased noise or vibration levels. Furthermore, the plan centers a shift from vehicle

travel toward active or public transportation modes and supports traffic calming measures that would reduce vehicle speeds, traffic volumes, and associated traffic noise levels over time. The plan would comply with existing noise standards and would not exacerbate traffic noise levels.

Infill development is prioritized in 2050 General Plan 2050, as is the preservation of natural open space. While stationary noise levels may increase as the plan area grows, these increases would remain close to existing hubs and would not result in substantial cumulative noise increases, especially related to stationary noise. Sensitive receptors, such as schools and hospitals, within the plan area are already located near residential and commercial spaces. The development accounted for in General Plan 2050 would not result in changes in land use or substantial increases related to noise. There is existing development near Watsonville Municipal Airport that would not change under General Plan 2050. The 60 and 65 dBA Community Noise Equivalent Level contours remain largely within Airport property, and proposed housing development in proximity of the Airport would be outside of these noise contours. Additionally, any new development in proximity of the Airport would continue to be located and designed to minimize noise impacts associated with Watsonville Municipal Airport, with new development complying with applicable airport land use compatibility noise standards and regulations.

Noise levels associated with the plan and its included growth would not exceed established noise standards during construction or traffic noise, nor would this development result in long-term excessive vibration. **Mitigations Measure NOI-1** through **NOI-3** would be implemented to ensure that construction-related and operational noise levels do not exceed the thresholds established by the City at individual project-level. Ambient noise levels in the project vicinity may increase due to increased concentrations of residences or commercial uses in certain parts of the City such as the DWSP area. Future development would not expose people to excessive noise in areas within the vicinity of Watsonville Municipal Airport, and there are no private airstrips within the plan area. Accordingly, with implementation of **Mitigation Measures NOI-1** through **NOI-3**, General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to construction noise, traffic operational noise, vibration, or airport noise. However, due to the potential for proximity of operational noise sources to sensitive uses, operational noise impacts could result in a permanent substantial increase in noise levels above ambient conditions, and is likely to result in a cumulative significant and unavoidable ambient noise impact in certain parts of the City.

5.1.14 Population and Housing

Cumulative impacts related to population and housing would be contiguous with the County boundaries. As the City of Watsonville has grown and expanded, the population and housing supply has steadily increased. A large portion of past and current development projects in the plan area are housing-related, often including the construction of multi-family housing or apartment buildings. The population of the plan area has been relatively stable over the past ten years, and, as of 2026, the City had a population of 51,809. The number of housing units in the City of Watsonville increased by 494 between 2020 and 2026, 274 of which were multi-family units. As of January 1, 2026, there were 15,079 housing units in the City, and the average household size was 3.41 persons per household. The housing supply in the City grew more rapidly than the population did.

General Plan 2050 accounts for future population, employment, and housing growth with a specific focus on allocating housing units based on financial need. Through 2031, the City's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) identified a need for 2,053 new housing units. The growth anticipated with plan implementation is planned growth, and the plan provides guidance for responsible and sustainable expansion throughout Watsonville while preserving natural and open space lands. The plan focuses on

infill development, which concentrates residential uses within existing areas rather than encroaching into natural lands. The plan would not displace existing housing, but rather it would increase housing density where feasible, to create mixed-use communities and infill development where housing, jobs, and amenities are all easily accessible.

The plan would not induce substantial unplanned population growth, as growth and expansion are accounted for within the plan itself. Additionally, new development would not result in the displacement of existing housing or residents, and newly constructed housing would not serve as replacement housing. Accordingly, General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to unplanned population growth or the displacement of housing or people.

5.1.15 Public Services

Cumulative impacts related to public services would be contiguous with the service area boundaries of the service providers evaluated in this section. Previous and ongoing development has increased the need for public services and facilities, including emergency response teams and schools. These services have expanded with the population, ensuring that an adequate level of service is provided to the entire plan area.

The proposed plan includes population growth and housing expansion with the potential to increase demand for emergency services. The plan also accounts for the growth within emergency response teams, and additional fire stations (with appropriate staffing and equipment) would be evaluated to support projected growth. Additionally, the City would need to add police officers as necessary to maintain the existing level of service.

New or expanded school facilities may also be required to support the projected growth of the plan area's population, as the addition of new residential units would likely bring new students into the plan area. Planned population growth would also increase the need for parks and recreational facilities. The City is presently partnered with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD), allowing for community use at school sites outside of school hours. This practice, in conjunction with maintenance of existing parks, provides adequate access to recreational facilities.

Development under General Plan 2050, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable development, could increase demand for public services and potentially require new or expanded facilities. However, the goals, policies, and actions outlined in the plan account for this growth and provide mechanisms to maintain adequate service levels while avoiding substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the construction of new or expanded facilities. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to public services.

5.1.16 Recreation

Cumulative impacts related to recreation would be contiguous with the ULL. Previous development in the plan area has encroached on open space, potentially limiting the ability of these areas to act as recreational or park spaces. Ongoing development, however, has been planned to avoid open space lands and park areas. Future development, such as that planned within General Plan 2050, would be restricted to previously developed areas and the City's designated new growth areas. This allocation, in conjunction with a focus on infill housing and mixed-use development, would limit potential adverse impacts to parks and recreational spaces. Additionally, the City plans to continue its partnership with PVUSD to expand public access to parks and recreational facilities, even as the population grows.

The plan would increase the use of existing parks and recreational facilities, as the plan accounts for increases in population growth. However, this growth and increased usage would not result in increased or hastened deterioration of the recreational facilities. The planned growth may result in a need to construct new or expanded recreational facilities. These facilities would be constructed or expanded in accordance with applicable City standards and within the planned growth areas and would not result in substantial adverse physical effects on the environment. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to the deterioration of existing recreational facilities or the construction or expansion of new facilities.

5.1.17 Transportation

Cumulative impacts related to transportation and traffic consider regional transportation improvements identified in the regional traffic model. The cumulative boundaries for the transportation analysis include the County boundaries and the City ULL. As the plan area has grown and expanded over time, previous development projects have contributed to increased traffic and the need for travel-related infrastructure.

Development under General Plan 2050 is not anticipated to result in a need for new or expanded infrastructure related to car travel. Instead, roadway improvements would work towards a Safe Systems approach and expanded cyclist and pedestrian infrastructure, promoting accessibility and safety for active travel modes. This reduced reliance on car travel results in a net decrease in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), as would the planned improvements in public transportation systems. Although the population within the plan area is expected to grow through 2050, the plan provides goals, policies, and actions to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicle travel while supporting a growing population. These improvements include infill development and mixed-use communities, allowing for closer-knit walkable neighborhoods where active transportation is more feasible.

The plan would not conflict with an existing plan or policy related to the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian travel. The plan's projected VMT would remain below applicable thresholds, especially as walkable neighborhoods and active transit improvements would be prioritized, and impacts related to VMT are anticipated to be less than significant through 2050. The plan would not increase hazards related to roadway design; instead, the plan includes improvements to existing infrastructure that would promote safety for all travelers. The plan would not result in inadequate emergency access, as roadway access to new and existing developments would remain accessible to emergency response vehicles and teams. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to VMT, conflicts with applicable circulation plans and policies, transportation hazards, or emergency access.

5.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Cumulative impacts related to tribal cultural resources would be contiguous with the ULL. Previous and ongoing development in the plan area has resulted in several cultural resource studies within the plan area. The plan has the potential to cause substantial adverse changes in the significance of tribal cultural resources in the plan area, both known and those that have not yet been encountered. A California Historical Resources Information System search for the plan area determined that there are four recorded Native American archaeological resources, five historic-period archaeological resources, and one informal resource of an unknown age. A Sacred Lands File search conducted for the plan area returned a positive result, the plan requires **Mitigation Measure TCR-1** to minimize impacts to tribal cultural resources in the case that they are encountered during any future development within the plan

area. As mentioned in **Section 4.1.5, Cultural Resources**, the plan area is considered to be of a high archaeological sensitivity, again increasing the risk of encountering buried tribal cultural resources within the plan area. In accordance with Assembly Bill (AB) 52, public agencies must formally consult with Native American tribal groups to identify and protect tribal cultural resources from potential project impacts. Prior to plan implementation, the City of Watsonville will coordinate with local tribal groups. The potential for direct impacts to tribal cultural resources may be lower in areas that have been previously disturbed or are presently developed. However, the development associated with General Plan 2050's growth may include ground-disturbing activities that may affect unidentified tribal cultural resources.

With the implementation of **Mitigation Measure TCR-1** and **Mitigation Measures CUL-1(a)** through **CUL-4**, and tribal consultation in accordance with AB 52, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts on tribal cultural resources.

5.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Cumulative impacts related to utilities and service systems would be contiguous with the service area boundaries of the utility providers evaluated in this section. Previous development within the plan area has included the expansion of utilities and service systems, particularly those systems associated with expanding residential developments. The plan would include the addition of up to 5,980 new residential units and 2.672 million square feet of non-residential space. These expansions would require the expansion of electrical systems, telecommunications services, and, potentially, natural gas connections. While electricity usage is expected to increase with the plan area's growing population, energy usage would not be wasteful or inefficient, and new development would comply with the latest CALGreen building codes and Title 24 energy efficiency standards. Telecommunications expansion would be coordinated between individual developers and telecommunications providers. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impact related to energy infrastructure or telecommunications services.

5.1.19.1 Water Supply

The plan has accounted for increased water usage related to the projected increases in the plan area's population. The City operates 14 supply wells, and supplemental water is provided by two blended water wells as needed. Per the Urban Water Management Plan prepared by the City, as well as the WSA prepared for General Plan 2050, the City expects to have an adequate water supply through 2050, even when considering the growth planned in General Plan 2050. The growth is not expected to increase water demand beyond the capacity of the City's 14 operational wells, and supplemental blended water may be used for field irrigation to offset any excess in water demand. As the blended water is not pumped groundwater from the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin, it would help prevent groundwater overuse and resulting seawater intrusion. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulative impacts related to potable water supplies or the need for new or expanded water supply facilities.

5.1.19.2 Wastewater

The City owns and maintains the sanitary sewer drain system within the plan area. Between 2016 and 2024, the City used an average of approximately 2,828 acre-feet per year (AFY), which is notably lower than the City's wastewater treatment capacity of 4,100 AFY. Increases in wastewater production have

been considered in General Plan 2050, and the increases are not anticipated to exceed the existing capacity of the treatment facility. In 2024, the City only sold 1,671 AF of recycled water, which comprises less than half of the City's treatment capacity and reflects a trend toward increased water efficiency. The Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility will continue to treat sewage throughout the plan area, and planned growth is not expected to increase the demand for sewage treatment beyond the existing system's capacity. Continued water efficiency usage and development standards are expected to reduce potential impacts related to wastewater. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to wastewater collection or treatment capacity or the need for new or expanded wastewater facilities.

5.1.19.3 Stormwater

The City's Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) notes that the City does not plan to recover, treat, or reuse stormwater, but rather plans to focus on managing runoff. New development, especially in previously undisturbed areas, may result in substantial increases in impervious surfaces, particularly in new growth areas that would be converted from agricultural use. However, the majority of new housing and development would be infill and would occur in areas that are already paved. Additionally, new development throughout the plan area would be required to adhere to the City's post-construction stormwater requirements, which may include the installation of infiltration basins and expanded storm drains to minimize adverse impacts related to runoff. However, the potential need for new storm drainage and stormwater treatment systems are accounted for in the plan, and new storm drains would be connected to the existing storm drain network via new storm laterals. Runoff would continue to be directed to stormwater treatment systems before entering the City's storm drainage system. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to stormwater conveyance or treatment capacity or the need for new or expanded stormwater facilities.

5.1.19.4 Solid Waste

The plan would not directly result in increases in solid waste generation. The plan establishes goals, policies, and actions for solid waste management as the population in the plan area grows. The plan area is served by two landfills, the Buena Vista landfill and the City of Watsonville Landfill's Cell 4, and one transfer station, the Ben Lomond Transfer Station. The two landfills have the capacity to accept approximately 1.66 million tons per year total. The Buena Vista landfill has the capacity to operate for approximately 10 years, while Cell 4 has the capacity to operate through 2050. Following Cell 4's closure, the City will open Cell 5, which would have the capacity to operate for another 50 years. Therefore, plan implementation would not increase the demand for solid waste services such that it exceeds the existing service capacity. Additionally, the plan would comply with the federal, state, and local statutes related to solid waste management, disposal, and reduction Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to landfill capacity or compliance with applicable solid waste statutes and regulations.

5.1.20 Wildfire

Wildfire risks have been a consideration for previous development and ongoing projects within the plan area. Over time, environmental circumstances, such as droughts, high winds, and high temperatures, have increased the risk of wildfires, and more stringent regulations have been established across California. The plan area is within a Local Responsibility Area (LRA) when it comes to designated Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FSHZs). The western portion of the plan area is considered to be in a Moderate-High FHSZ within the LRA, including portions of the Watsonville Municipal Airport and along Highway 1 in the vicinity of Pajaro Valley High School and Struve Slough. Beyond city limits in the northwest portion of the plan area, existing rural settings of the Buena Vista new growth area contain Moderate to High FHSZs. While no portion of this new growth area is designated as a Very High FHSZ, a small portion of unincorporated land nearby, partially within the South Manfre Road Area and to the south of Highway 1 near Harkins Slough, is designated as such and is not planned for further residential development.

Moderate-to-Very High FHSZ require special considerations for development and emergency access for purposes of controlling wildfires. General Plan 2050 includes goals, policies, and actions that further minimize risks related to wildfire sparking and spreading. Protocols like brush-clearing, defensible space establishment, and appropriate signage would continue to be implemented throughout the plan area to minimize risks related to wildfire damage. Additionally, future housing development in the Buena Vista new growth area would not be located within a State Responsibility Area or Very High FHSZ, and the planned land uses within the mapped LRA High FHSZ include either natural open space or very low-density residential development, which would allow for more defensible space around future housing. Development in this area would adhere to the standards established by the State and City Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) codes to minimize risks related to wildfire.

The plan area is not within a State Responsibility Area, and new development would comply with the existing emergency response and evacuation plans. Emergency access to new and existing developments would be established, and construction-related road closures and detours would be communicated with community members and emergency responders. Slope and prevailing winds are not expected to exacerbate wildfire risks in the plan area, nor are runoff and drainage changes expected to be substantial concerns. The fire mitigation protocols outlined in the California WUI Code, and the goals, policies, and actions stated above, would be implemented to further minimize wildfire-related risks. Accordingly, implementation of General Plan 2050 would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to wildfire, emergency access and evacuation, or post-fire runoff and drainage.

6 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

6.1 Introduction

An EIR is required to include a detailed discussion of the growth-inducing impacts of a project pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21100 (b) (5) and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(e). The growth-inducing analysis is intended to address the ways in which a project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. This includes consideration of whether the project would remove obstacles to population growth or otherwise encourage activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively.

For purposes of this analysis, General Plan 2050 will be considered growth-inducing if its implementation would:

- Cumulatively exceed official regional or local population projections;
- Directly induce substantial growth or concentration of population, including by facilitating new housing, employment-generating uses, or accelerated development in undeveloped areas beyond levels planned in adopted local land use plans; or
- Indirectly induce substantial growth or concentration of population, such as through the introduction of unplanned infrastructure or expansion of critical public facilities, including roads or sewer lines, that could support new development not accounted for in adopted local general plans.

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(e), this analysis does not assume that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

6.2 Project Impacts

a) Would the project cumulatively exceed official regional or local population projections?

As discussed in **Chapter 4.14, Population and Housing**, General Plan 2050 would facilitate planned growth within the City, including approximately 5,980 new homes and an increase of approximately 17,872 residents by 2050. This population growth of approximately 34 percent between 2023 and 2050 would result in a total population of approximately 70,186, which is higher than AMBAG's projections for the City. While the plan would induce substantial population, job, and housing growth, this growth is planned. Several chapters of General Plan 2050 provide guidance for development and growth within the downtown area, including **Chapter 4, Land Use and Community Character Element; Chapter 5, Parks, Recreation and Libraries Element; Chapter 6, Public Services and Facilities Element; Chapter 7, Mobility and Access Element; Chapter 8, Housing Element; and Chapter 10, Conservation Element**. These chapters establish guiding policies and goals for orderly development and aim to ensure that growth does not outpace the capacity of existing infrastructure, services, and facilities. **Chapter 7, Mobility and Access Element**, in particular, outlines the vision and framework for improving and growing the pedestrian, bicycle, vehicle, and transit network in Watsonville.

Chapter 4, Land Use and Community Character Element, would directly facilitate orderly development in the City by providing the amounts, intensities, types and character of future development—to ensure that it aligns with the community's vision, values, and needs. It describes the desired land uses and their

development intensity and density; identifies land use and placemaking strategies to ensure new development reflects Watsonville's small-town community character. Additionally, the plan sets standards for infill growth and development to ensure that most of the population growth is focused in areas with the capacity to support more residents. Planned growth under General Plan 2050 would consist entirely of development within the City's proposed Urban Limit Line (ULL).

Finally, **Chapter 6, Public Services and Facilities Element**, outlines recommended upgrades and improvements for the existing water, sewer, and stormwater systems in Watsonville to serve anticipated growth and development.

Overall, General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions contain development standards to guide the design and density of housing and would serve as program-level mitigation for impacts related to growth.

b) Would the project directly induce substantial growth or concentration of population, including by facilitating new housing, employment-generating uses, or accelerated development in undeveloped areas beyond levels planned in adopted local land use plans?

or

c) Would the project indirectly induce substantial growth or concentration of population, such as through the introduction of unplanned infrastructure or expansion of critical public facilities, including roads or sewer lines, that could support new development not accounted for in adopted local general plans?

California planning law requires each city and county to adopt a "comprehensive, long-term general plan for 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" (Government Code, Section 65300). As discussed in **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**, implementation of General Plan 2050 would introduce approximately 5,980 new homes and an increase of approximately 17,872 residents by 2050. As discussed in **Section 4.11, Land Use and Planning**, the most significant areas of change that would occur under General Plan 2050's place type designations would be within proposed boundaries and areas of new growth within the proposed Urban Limit Line. Additionally, growth areas would include infill growth areas, which are vacant and underutilized sites located within the existing City limits. Growth associated with the plan would therefore not be considered "unplanned." Construction of the project would generate an economic stimulus from activities such as the use of building materials, employment of construction workers, and the introduction of new or relocated consumer demand in the area. However, construction is temporary and therefore, most of the construction workforce is anticipated to be from the local labor pool and would not result in indirect growth inducement.

The primary mechanism for this growth within the City and the ULL is the proposed General Plan land use map, which allows for some development in areas that are not currently developed. The anticipated locations of this growth are shown in **Figure 2-3** and **Figure 2-8** in **Chapter 3, Project Description**.

The proposed General Plan 2050 land use map allows some development in portions of the New Growth areas presently used as agriculture and vacant land. However, through the Open Space and Agriculture designations in the proposed land use map, combined with policies and actions enacted under the General Plan, the proposed project would control the intensity and geographical extent of growth and encourage sustainable patterns of urban land uses, resulting in the proposed General Plan 2050 accommodating growth rather than inducing growth in areas with existing agriculture and vacant land. Planned growth would consist entirely of development within the City's ULL. In addition, the proposed

General Plan 2050 commits the City to controlled and orderly use of its natural resources through policies to conserve agricultural land and promote compact growth. The proposed General Plan 2050 would allow additional growth, but it also includes specific policies that apply to growth within the Urban Limit Line and encourage sustainable patterns of urban land uses. These policies ensure that new growth is consistent with the human-scaled vision of General Plan 2050 and is implemented in coordination with property owners, the City, the County of Santa Cruz, and LAFCO. General Plan 2050 also includes goals, policies, and actions to ensure that public facilities and services can accommodate future growth.

These provisions are intended to ensure that, as growth occurs, public facilities are maintained, expanded, or improved as needed to continue providing adequate service levels (see **Section 4.15, Public Services**, **Section 4.16, Recreation**, **Section 4.19, Utilities**, and **Section 4.17, Transportation**).

Overall, while implementation of the proposed plan would result in some growth, this growth is anticipated and would occur incrementally aligning with the community's vision of keeping Watsonville a compact, cohesive small city, expanding cautiously and thoughtfully, preserving Watsonville's smalltown character, offering a growing variety of housing choices, bringing more sales and hotel tax revenue into the City to support municipal services, expanding mobility options, and preserving valuable natural and cultural resources.

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7 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

7.1 Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

A significant unavoidable impact is an impact that cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level if the project is implemented as it is proposed. The following significant unavoidable impacts have been identified for the project, despite the implementation of all feasible mitigation measures:

- **Agricultural Resources**
    - a) Implementation of the proposed project would 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) Implementation of the proposed project would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
    - e) Implementation of the proposed project would 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.
- **Air Quality**
    - a) Implementation of the proposed project would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable (MBARD) air quality plan.
    - b) Implementation of the proposed project would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard.
    - c) Implementation of the proposed project would expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.
- **Cultural Resources**
    - a) Implementation of the proposed project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to in §15064.5.
    - b) Implementation of the proposed project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5.
- **Greenhouse Gas**
    - a) Implementation of the proposed project would generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment.
- **Noise**
    - a) Implementation of the proposed project would result in generation of a substantial 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.

As a result, the City Council of the City of Watsonville will be required to adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations for these significant unavoidable impacts pursuant to Section 15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines, when the proposed project is considered for approval. All other significant impacts of the project would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with the implementation of mitigation measures identified in this EIR.

The majority of the Watsonville General Plan area is classified as Urban and Built-up Land, but there are swaths of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide importance along the plan area's boundaries and within the Urban Limit Line (ULL). The ULL was established to restrict urban develop in open space and natural lands. However, as planned growth areas have been identified in areas currently occupied by farmland, the conversion of farmland from agricultural to non-agricultural use is anticipated. This conversion would reduce the amount of valuable farmland available for crop reduction and deplete a valuable natural resource in the plan area.

General Plan 2050's goals, policies, and actions would serve as program-level mitigation for impacts related to the conversion of agricultural and open space lands to non-agricultural uses. However, farmland conversion would still occur, and these impacts would be considered significant and unavoidable.

7.2 Irreversible Impacts

Section 15126.2(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR must identify any irreversible impacts, also referred to as irreversible environmental changes, which may be caused by a proposed project, including current or future commitments to using nonrenewable resources, and secondary, or growth-inducing, impacts that commit future generations to similar uses. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) states that significant irreversible environmental changes associated with a proposed project may include the following:

- uses of non-renewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project which may be irreversible because a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely;
- primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement that provides access to a previously inaccessible area) that commit future generations to similar uses; and
- irreversible damage, which may result from environmental accidents associated with the project.

Watsonville General Plan 2050 accounts for increased growth within the plan area through 2050. The City-level growth projections exceed those established by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Government's Draft 2026 Regional Growth Forecast. Population growth is anticipated to increase the use of non-renewable energy sources, as more vehicles and expanded infrastructure may require increased consumption of gasoline and diesel power. However, General Plan 2050 implementation would establish guidelines for efficient energy usage for current and planned development, and along with the implementation of federal and state regulation and policies, is likely to result in reduction of per capita energy usage. The plan would place an emphasis on infill development that reduces energy consumption for transportation and promote the preservation of open space and agricultural lands. Additionally, the plan commits to a shift towards renewable energy sources, aiming to offset the projected increase in fossil fuel usage. By following the goals, policies, and actions outlined in General

Plan 2050, the commitments to using non-renewable resources are reduced. In addition, implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the commitment of limited, renewable resources such as lumber and water, and would irretrievably commit nonrenewable resources for the construction and maintenance of buildings, infrastructure, and roadways. These non-renewable resources include mined materials such as sand, gravel, steel, lead, copper, and other metals.

Therefore, these impacts would not be considered irreversible.

As mentioned above, Watsonville General Plan 2050 and its associated growth would convert existing farmland to non-agricultural uses. This conversion would commit current agricultural and open spaces lands to non-agricultural uses, which would be maintained by future generations. Once developed, it is impractical and fiscally infeasible to return this land to its agricultural uses. Therefore, the conversion of farmland is considered an irreversible impact.

General Plan 2050 is not anticipated to result in irreversible damage related to environmental accidents. The outlined goals, policies, and actions would promote the safe storage and handling of potentially hazardous materials, and permanent harm from the release of hazardous materials is not expected.

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8 ALTERNATIVES

8.1 Requirements for the Consideration of Alternatives

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 requires the consideration of a range of reasonable alternatives to the project that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project.

> *The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that considers only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The alternatives are limited to those that would avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of the project.*

The CEQA Guidelines further require that the discussion focus on alternatives capable of eliminating significant adverse impacts of the project or reducing them to a less-than-significant level. In addition to mandating consideration of the no project alternative, CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6[e]) emphasize the selection of a reasonable range of feasible alternatives and adequate assessment, which allows decision-makers to use a comparative analysis. CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6[a]) states:

> *An EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would 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. An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project. Rather, it must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation. An EIR is not required to consider alternatives which are infeasible. The lead agency is responsible for selecting a range of project alternatives for examination and must publicly disclose its reasoning for selecting those alternatives. There is no ironclad rule governing the nature or scope of the alternatives to be discussed other than the rule of reason. (Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors [1990] 52 Cal.3d 553 and Laurel Heights Improvement Association v. Regents of the University of California [1988] 47 Cal.3d 376).*

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines 15126.6, this EIR contains a comparative impact assessment of alternatives to the project. The primary purpose of this assessment is to provide decision makers and the public with a reasonable number of feasible project alternatives that could attain most of the basic project objectives while avoiding or reducing any of the project's significant adverse environmental effects. The Lead Agency may make an initial determination of which alternatives are feasible and merit in-depth consideration, and which are infeasible (see CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[f][3]). Alternatives may be rejected from detailed consideration in the EIR if they fail to meet project objectives, are infeasible, or do not reduce or avoid any significant environmental effects.

8.1.1 Project Objectives

General Plan 2050 is intended to function as a policy document to guide land use decisions through the plan horizon year of 2050. According to State law, General Plans are required to cover seven topics: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. For cities where low income and minority populations (disadvantaged communities) have been identified an environmental justice topic or element is required. Jurisdictions may address these topics across different chapters, or elements, of their general plan, and include any other topic that is relevant to planning its future. General Plan 2050 will include the State required topics plus community character as part of the land use element, air

quality as part of the land use, circulation, conservation and safety elements, a public facilities and services element, and an airport element.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15124, the EIR must identify the objectives of a proposed project. The objectives of General Plan 2050 are as follows:

1. Implement the General Plan's guiding principles that provide the foundation for the City's vision and direct the General Plan's goals, policies, actions:

    - **Small Town Character.** Protect Watsonville's agricultural and architectural heritage, ensuring that all new development and public improvements contribute to a "sense of place" rooted in Watsonville's unique climate, topography, history, and cultural traditions. Leverage public investments and guide private actions to preserve and enhance Watsonville's pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, activate its corridors, revitalize a vibrant downtown, and ensure a safe, comfortable, human-scale public realm of beautiful streets, parks, plazas and open spaces.

    - **Housing for All.** Encourage a range of housing opportunities for existing residents, with a broad range of residence types, sizes, neighborhood contexts, prices, and rents that are consistent with existing needs and demographic forecasts for Watsonville and surrounding region, and the evolving needs of a diverse community.

    - **Local Amenities and Services.** Plan for and encourage a growing array of businesses and facilities that meet residents' needs and wants for goods, services, entertainment, and recreation within Watsonville and located conveniently near neighborhoods.

    - **Mobility for All.** Create and maintain safe streets that accommodate a full range of transportation modes including pedestrians, cars, bicycles, micro-mobility devices, and buses. Provide wide sidewalks, frequent, safe and strategically located crosswalks, and a robust bike network to enable safe and comfortable all-mode access to parks, schools, bus stops, and planned passenger rail. Integrate land uses and transportation by introducing higher-density and mixed-use development along bus transit routes and in areas surrounding the planned Watsonville passenger rail station.

    - **Human Scale Streetscape and Public Realm.** Plan for, leverage public investments, and guide private investment to implement a complete, seamless network of human-scale streets and comfortable green open spaces as the framework of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, active corridors, and a vibrant downtown. Safe, comfortable, and useful public places for people are the goal throughout all of Watsonville's existing urbanized and new growth areas.

    - **Vibrant Downtown.** Building on the recently adopted Downtown Specific Plan, prioritize available public resources and guide market forces to revitalize Downtown Watsonville, strengthening the array of cultural and retail destinations, broadening available housing options, and ensuring pedestrian-friendly streets and urban environments.

    - **Open Space and Conservation.** Encourage development patterns that protect and are compatible with the agricultural lands and natural habitats surrounding the City. Encourage

protection of ecologically valuable, and scenic open lands, while providing appropriate recreational access for the enjoyment of these amenities by Watsonville's residents and visitors.

- **Focused Infill.** Encourage new multi-family and mixed-use development in Downtown and along Watsonville's corridors—particularly North Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue—that leverages the value of public investments in bus transit and planned passenger rail service and provides easy access to retail and services for residents within the corridor and in surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Employment Opportunity.** Foster a prosperous and robust economy through policies and actions that recognize the skills and needs of Watsonville's workforce, while devising strategies that coordinate economic trends and the professional aspirations of Watsonville's youth with business development, business recruitment, education, and skill development programs. Policies and public investments should help support agriculture-related business and protect environmental assets, while supporting and encouraging the growth of visitor-, research-, light industrial-, and service-related enterprises
- **Community Health.** Promote a healthy community by supporting healthy, active lifestyles ensuring safe, inviting, and comfortable walking and biking environments throughout town; incorporating active recreational and exercise opportunities into Watsonville's parks and open space network; maintaining and expanding Watsonville's trail network; and carefully managing the creeks, sloughs, river and other open spaces surrounding Watsonville from natural hazards, including flooding and wildfires.
- **Diversity and Equity.** Facilitate social and economic diversity within Watsonville by: providing a variety of housing types accommodating a broad range of household incomes; making streets safer for all members of our community, whether pedestrian, cyclist, or motorist and irrespective of age, income or physical capabilities; improving all-mode access to transit, parks, and recreational facilitates, guiding the distribution of land uses in a manner that brings the necessities of daily life within easy reach of all residents, reduces exposure to noise, pollution, and hazardous materials, and enables all members of the community to have a voice in municipal planning and administration processes.
- **Resilient and Green.** Be a responsible steward of Watsonville's natural resources. With an eye on the needs of future generations, pursue energy and water efficiency, greater use of sustainable materials, and enhanced resilience to nature hazards (flooding, wildfires, drought, and rising sea level) exacerbated by climate change.

2. Update the City's environmental baseline conditions to the year 2050.
3. Update the general plan development projections for the year 2050, including projections for dwelling units and employment.
4. Conform with Section 21000 et. seq. of CEQA, which requires that environmental impacts be addressed and mitigated.

5. Prepare and certify a proposed general plan EIR (Program EIR) that will serve as a first-tier environmental document, consistent with the requirement of Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines.
6. Address changed conditions since the adoption of Watsonville 2005 General Plan in 1994.
7. Provide a basis for informative decisions when considering the development associated with implementation of proposed general plan.
8. Provide a legally defensible environmental foundation upon which decisions may be evaluated and justified.

8.1.1.1 General Plan Vision

General Plan 2050 outlines goals, policies, and actions—developed with significant community input—that guide the City's future growth while maintaining its small-town character. General Plan 2050 focuses on several key areas, including revitalizing Downtown and major corridors; introducing diverse housing options (both single-family and multi-family); supporting new employment and revenue-generating businesses; and preserving the natural open spaces, especially the sloughs.

Key initiatives include enhancing Watsonville's existing neighborhoods by promoting infill development and facilitating Accessory Dwelling Units while providing safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists; implementing the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan to transform Downtown into a vibrant and active city center with diverse uses and housing options; and evolving key corridors, such as North Freedom Boulevard and East Lake Avenue, into pedestrian- and transit-friendly environments; and rerouting truck traffic around the City.

Watsonville's employment districts will continue to support local businesses, with a focus on enhancing industrial areas and attracting new industries, such as research and development and agritourism. Watsonville Municipal Airport will remain a central part of the City's identity and economy. Future potential annexations of the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, and Area C new growth areas will accommodate new neighborhoods with a mix of housing options, parks, and community amenities. Lastly, the Highway 1 Gateway will introduce new employment uses and function as a key entry point to Watsonville that provides regional retail, hospitality, and recreation opportunities that will generate sales tax revenue to support the City's infrastructure and services.

In addition, General Plan 2050 prioritizes preserving Watsonville's small-town character; providing a wide variety of housing choices; enabling safe, walkable streets; and bringing more sales and hotel tax revenue into the City to maintain the road network, parks, trails recreational offerings, and community services.

Infill growth within the City Limits – primarily multi-family and mixed-use development – will be focused along the East Lake Avenue and Freedom Boulevard corridors and within Downtown Watsonville, which is governed by the recently adopted Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan per Ordinance no. 1457-23 and as amended by Ordinance no. 1482-25. New growth beyond existing City limits would be accommodated in the Buena Vista (Area A), Atkinson Lane (Area B), Area C, and the Highway 1 Gateway area. Growth within Buena Vista and Area C would consist of single-family and multi-family housing and small mixed-use neighborhood centers and may offer a significant number of new home ownership opportunities. Growth within the Highway 1 Gateway would consist of employment, regional retail, community recreation, and visitor-serving uses. New development within Atkinson Lane and the

majority of Buena Vista, which are already within the Urban Limit Line (ULL), would require annexation into the City of Watsonville. New development within the planning area beyond the ULL – the parcels within the northeastern portion of Buena Vista toward Freedom Boulevard, within all of Area C, and within the majority of the Highway 1 Gateway – would require approval via a Citywide initiative or referendum and subsequent annexation. If a Citywide initiative or referendum does not result in approval, these parcels will not be eligible for possible annexations and development until 2040.

To address runway visibility constraints created by existing hangars as identified by the FAA, the Watsonville Municipal Airport Master Plan proposes shortening the length of Runway 9-27 from 3,998 feet to 2,408 feet. To further enable aviation activities at the Airport, including jet aircraft, the main runway (2-20) is anticipated to be lengthened from 4,501 to 5,181 feet. However, General Plan 2050 itself does not mandate or initiate modifications to the main runway or crosswind runway. These are solely decisions being considered by the City Council and airport authorities, and General Plan 2050 is designed to account for possible future scenarios without directly causing or influencing such an outcome.

8.1.2 Potentially Significant Impacts

Environmental analysis of the proposed plan concluded that implementation may result in the following combination of impact levels: less than significant, less than significant with mitigation, and significant and unavoidable. A summarized list of the potential impacts is provided below.

8.1.2.1 Impacts Less than Significant with Mitigation

Impacts that are less than significant with mitigation are more fully described in their respective sections of **Chapter 4, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation**. Mitigation measures may be found in the various sections of **Chapter 4**, as well as in **Table ES-1, Executive Summary Matrix**. The impacts that would be potentially significant, but less than significant with mitigation include the following:

- **Biological Resources**: Impacts to habitat within the plan area which could affect special-status species.
- **Geology and Soils:** Construction of future development could lead to the unanticipated discovery of paleontological resources.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** Implementation of the plan could accommodate development on or near hazardous materials sites pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. However, compliance with applicable regulations and implementation of mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant.
- **Noise and Vibration:** Construction and operation of future development could generate noise levels that exceed applicable standards. Future development could also result in project-specific noise from construction equipment, mechanical equipment, amplified sound, or other noise sources, resulting in a potentially significant impact.
- **Tribal Cultural Resources**: Loss or disturbance to tribal cultural resources.

8.1.2.2 Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

As discussed in **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**, implementation of General Plan 2050 would result in significant and unavoidable impacts to agricultural resources. Development and growth

accommodated under General Plan 2050 could result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance within the plan area. Although the goals and policies included in General Plan 2050 and **Mitigation Measure AG-1** would reduce impacts relating to these resources, they would not fully avoid or reduce the impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, impacts to agricultural resources would remain significant and unavoidable.

As discussed in **Section 4.3, Air Quality**, construction and operational emissions from future development could exceed applicable air quality thresholds, including those established by the Monterey Bay Air Resource District (MBARD) Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP). The construction and operational emissions related to individual projects under General Plan 2050 would not exceed the thresholds established by MBARD. However, it cannot be accurately and certainly be determined whether the collective emissions of these projects would be below regulatory thresholds. Future warehouse, industrial, or other uses could also expose sensitive receptors to toxic air contaminants from truck traffic, diesel equipment, emergency generators, or stationary sources. Although the goals and policies included in General Plan 2050 and **Mitigation Measures AQ-1** through **AQ-3** would reduce impacts to these resources, they would not fully avoid or reduce the impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, impacts to air quality would remain significant and unavoidable.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AQ-1** and **AQ-2**, in addition to applicable regulatory State measures and MBARD rules related to reducing construction and operational-related emissions, would reduce criteria air pollutant emissions from construction and operational-related activities to the extent feasible and may result in reducing construction and operational-related regional air quality impacts of subsequent individual projects to less than significant levels. However, it is unknown if these reductions would reduce all General Plan 2050 projects' construction and operational emissions to below regulatory thresholds. Additionally, there are no feasible mitigation measures available to reduce population and be consistent with MBARD's AQMP, since population increase over regional forecasts is used as the threshold of significance. Given the objectives of General Plan 2050, unless and until MBARD's 2017 AQMP is updated, impacts related to conflicts with the MBARD AQMP would remain. As a result, this impact is considered in the EIR to be significant and unavoidable.

As discussed in **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources,** future development associated with General Plan 2050 could result in loss or disturbance of historical and/or archaeological resources in the plan area. Although the goals and policies included in General Plan 2050 and **Mitigation Measures CUL-1(a)** through **CUL-4** would reduce impacts to these resources, they would not fully avoid or reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, impacts to cultural resources would remain significant and unavoidable.

As discussed in **Section 4.8, Greenhouse Gas Emissions**, construction emissions from future development could exceed greenhouse gas emissions thresholds. Although the goals and policies included in General Plan 2050 and **Mitigation Measure GHG-1** would reduce impacts to these resources, they would not fully avoid or reduce the impacts to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, impacts to greenhouse gas emissions would remain significant and unavoidable.

As discussed in **Section 4.13, Noise**, due to the potential for proximity of operational noise sources to sensitive uses, operational noise impacts could result in a permanent substantial increase in noise levels above ambient conditions resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact. While **Mitigation Measure NOI-2** and actions from General Plan 2050 would reduce the noise impacts resulting in increases in ambient noise for certain individual projects to a less-than-significant level, the impacts may not be fully mitigated for all the projects within the City. Therefore, impacts from ambient increases in noise levels from permanent operations would remain significant and unavoidable.

8.1.3 No Project Alternative

CEQA Guidelines require that the alternatives be compared to the project's environmental impacts and that the "no project" alternative be considered (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[d][e]). Section 15126.6(d)(e)(1) states:

> *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 decision makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. The no project alternative analysis is not the baseline for determining whether the proposed project's environmental impacts may be significant, unless it is identical to the existing environmental setting analysis which does establish that baseline.*

The purpose of describing and analyzing a no project alternative is to allow decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving the project with the impacts of not approving the project.

8.2 Alternatives to General Plan 2050

8.2.1 Alternatives Considered but Rejected

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c) recommends that an EIR identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons for their rejection. With respect to the feasibility of potential alternatives to a project, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(t)(l) states the following:

> *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, and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site.*

In determining an appropriate range of project alternatives to be evaluated in this EIR, a number of possible alternatives were initially considered and then rejected. Key constraints considered as reasons for rejecting possible alternatives include prime agricultural land, flood hazards, and expansion into the coastal zone. The following alternatives were considered but rejected from further analysis, consistent with Section 15126.6(c) of the CEQA Guidelines:

- Expansion of the SOI into the Coastal Zone: Expansion and development within the Coastal Zone west of the city limits would require extensive coordination, complex technical reviews and permitting with the California Coastal Commission and other Federal and State agencies that have jurisdiction over coastal resources.
- Expansion into Area D due to flooding constraints: Area D is located entirely within the 100-year floodplain, meaning that any development occurring in this area would be subject to high probability of annual flooding (FEMA, 2026).
- Expansion into all of Area G due to agricultural and biological resources constraints and being located outside the SOI: The majority of Area G west of the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area is located outside the SOI and consists of undeveloped farmland located within the 100-year floodplain and subject to the Coastal Zone. This area contains a large portion of land designated as Prime Farmland, Grazing Land, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland. This area is also a hotbed for biological resources due to the nearby sloughs.

- Closure of the Watsonville Airport: The closure of the Watsonville Municipal Airport would eliminate the Airport's impact on surrounding land uses but may result in loss of services and mobility options that the Airport provides. Additionally, the closure of the Airport is a complex and lengthy process that would take many years to complete.

8.2.2 Alternatives Selected for Further Analysis

Five alternatives to General Plan 2050 were considered based on the analysis performed to identify the environmental effects of the proposed plan. Since General Plan 2050 was prepared with the intent to be a self-mitigating document, project alternatives focused on amending growth areas to address commenter concerns. The alternatives analyzed in this EIR include the following:

- Alternative 1: No Project
- Alternative 2: No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)
- Alternative 3: No Expansion of Area B
- Alternative 4: No Expansion of Area C
- Alternative 5: No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway

The following section discusses the alternatives evaluated in this EIR and the comparative environmental effects of each.

8.2.2.1 Alternative 1: No Project

Description

Under Alternative 1, the City would continue to implement the adopted General Plan and no changes would be made to address the requirements of State law. Since adoption of the existing General Plan, State legislation has been passed requiring the City to address new safety and circulation requirements in the General Plan and to address greenhouse gas emissions. The General Plan goals, policies, and actions, as well as the Place Type Map, would not be updated with new growth areas and proposed ULL.

Alternative 1 would result in the continuation of existing conditions. New growth would be allowed as envisioned under the existing General Plan, with land uses required to be consistent with the existing General Plan Land Use Map as shown on **Figure 2-5** in **Chapter 2, Project Description**.

The City would still need to comply with the California Department of Transportation, Aeronautics Division Land Use Planning Handbook as it relates to safety zones in and around the Watsonville Municipal Airport.

Environmental Analysis

The No Project Alternative would not update the text of the 2005 General Plan to reflect new growth areas, the proposed ULL, incorporate the draft Watsonville Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP), or development contemplated under General Plan 2050. Development would continue to occur consistent with the existing 2005 General Plan. The significant and unavoidable impact associated with implementation of the 2005 General Plan, related to agricultural resources, air quality, cultural resources, greenhouse gas, and noise would continue to occur as buildout of the 2005 General Plan proceeds. In addition, impacts that were found to be less than significant with mitigation, including

impacts related to land use, transportation, public services, utilities, water supply and water quality, recreation, scenic resources, biological resources, flooding and drainage, geology, soils, seismicity, and hazardous materials, would continue to occur with continued implementation of 2005 General Plan.

General Plan 2050 would not change the established land use designations from the 2005 General Plan within the existing city limits; therefore, impacts associated with General Plan 2050 and the No Project Alternative would be similar, as both would allow continued implementation of the land uses currently permitted under the 2005 General Plan. However, the place types proposed under General Plan 2050 would not be implemented under the No Project Alternative, which would reduce land use impacts associated with the conversion of agricultural resources since Area C and the Highway 1 Gateway would not be developed. Both General Plan 2050 and the No Project Alternative, with continued implementation of the 2005 General Plan, would result in significant and unavoidable impacts to agricultural resources.

This alternative would result in reduced impacts to land use and land use plans as there would be no additional growth areas and place types in growth areas, which would result in updated zoning within the existing city limits. The City would not pursue an infill development strategy and development patterns would continue under present conditions and the remaining residential, commercial and industrial land would eventually be developed. Some redevelopment of existing land uses would also likely occur.

Transportation impacts would be less than those of the project as there would be fewer vehicular trips due to the reduced amount of new growth. Some of the proposed roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements described in General Plan 2050 would have to be constructed to accommodate additional traffic associated with new development in the new growth planning areas. The No Project Alternative would not allow for implementation of Complete Streets network, which would result in continued gaps in connectivity within the existing city limits.

The conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses would be less than that of General Plan 2050, since Area C, the Highway 1 Gateway, and the portion of Buena Vista located outside the existing ULL, which consist almost entirely of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, would not be developed under the No Project Alternative. However, Atkinson Lane and Beuna Vista, as envisioned to develop per the 2005 General Plan, would still result in the conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance.

The No Project Alternative would not allow the mixed-use Place Types along the city's corridors, the placemaking Place Types within the new growth areas, nor the commercial, retail, and visitor-serving Place Types within the Highway 1 Gateway, and accordingly would develop the same as proposed under the 2005 General Plan (consistent with the requirements of Measure Q).

Because less proposed new housing units would be constructed as compared to the proposed general plan, the number of new residents served by the City of Watsonville would be reduced. This would reduce the net water demand that the City would be required to serve, and thereby reduce impacts to groundwater supplies and future water demand.

Due to the reduced population and employment, the impact of public services, particularly on schools, parks, fire and police protection and wastewater treatment facilities would be reduced. Because development would still occur but reduced, impacts to storm drainage facilities would be less than proposed General Plan 2050.

Air quality and greenhouse gas emissions impacts would be reduced as a result of fewer vehicle trips associated with concentrated infill development within the existing city limits. Noise impacts would also be reduced given the reduced infill development but would remain significant and unavoidable due to implementation of the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan. Further, impacts to noise and hazards associated with the development adjacent to the Watsonville Municipal Airport would be similar to the proposed general plan as new development would occur in the Buena Vista Area, consistent with the requirements of Measure U.

Impacts to visual resources would be greater than the proposed general plan as many of the policies associated with preservation of the rural character and scenic qualities would not be implemented.

Feasibility of No Project Alternative

The No Project Alternative is feasible to implement because it would consist of continued development under the existing 2005 General Plan.

Relationship of No Project Alternative to Project Objectives

Under the No Project Alternative, the City would not adopt General Plan 2050 and would continue to rely on the existing 2005 General Plan. As a result, the No Project Alternative would not fully satisfy the intent of California Government Code Section 65300, which requires cities and counties to maintain a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the jurisdiction. Because the No Project Alternative would not update the City's long-term planning framework to reflect current conditions, future growth needs, updated policy, or land use planning considerations, it would not meet this objective to the same extent as the proposed General Plan 2050 would.

The City would not be able to adopt the new goals, policies, and actions that were based on new planning factors established for General Plan 2050. The City would also not be able to accommodate the growth projections for General Plan 2050 for dwelling units and employment (See **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**).

By pursuing this alternative, the City would not be able to certify a proposed general plan that would serve as a first-tier environmental document, consistent with the requirements of Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines. While subsequent development would be required to conform with CEQA, there would not be the ability to address programmatic issues that are commonly associated with a general plan revision.

This No Project Alternative would not promote growth, development, and connectivity. It could also promote more development sprawl outside of the City, as new residents to the area would be forced to look for alternative options for housing and essential commodities.

In addition to failing to meet the above-discussed the project objectives, the No Project Alternative would also not adopt the ALUCP, and the City would thus not fulfill its legal obligations under the state law to incorporate the State of California's Airport Land Use Handbook standards into the City's General Plan, as the County of Santa Cruz Superior Court has ruled that the City is obligated to do, including in the Court's most recent ruling in *Watsonville Pilots Association v. City of Watsonville*, Case No.: 21CV02343. Thus, the No Project Alternative would leave the City potentially vulnerable to future legal actions with regards to its obligations to incorporate requisite standards governing the review of land use decisions near the Airport, and constrain the City's authority to approve such projects.

8.2.2.2 Alternative 2: No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)

Description

Under the No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista) Alternative, the City boundary would not expand into the existing ULL and the proposed expansion of the ULL in the Buena Vista Area would not be included as part of General Plan 2050. Future development would instead be accommodated through infill and redevelopment opportunities in underutilized areas and within other new growth areas (see **Figure 2-3** in **Chapter 2, Project Description** for proposed ULL and areas of new growth). Because areas outside the City boundaries in the Buena Vista area would not be designated for new growth, this alternative would reduce the overall development capacity of the plan compared to the proposed General Plan 2050.

Environmental Analysis

Alternative 2 would result in a reduction in impacts to Farmland Monitoring and Mapping Program (FMMP) farmland, including swaths of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland, as this comprises a substantial portion of the Buena Vista new growth area (see **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**). However, this reduction would not change the impact conclusions in **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources,** as there are Prime Farmlands and Farmlands of Statewide Importance that would be converted to non-agricultural uses in the Atkinson Lane, Area C, and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas.

With implementation of Alternative 2, impacts related to air quality and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would be reduced because the lower development intensity would generate fewer vehicle trips, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and decrease associated operational emissions. However, these reductions would not be sufficient to change the impact conclusions presented in **Section 4.3, Air Quality** and **Section 4.8, Greenhouse Gases Emissions.** Alternative 2 would also remain consistent with the City's local climate and sustainability planning documents, including the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan.

The Buena Vista new growth area includes swaths of riparian habitat, coast live oak woodland habitat, seasonal wetlands, eucalyptus grove, and California annual grassland habitat; Alternative 2 would reduce impacts to these sensitive habitats. Impacts to seasonal wetlands would be eliminated under Alternative 2, as this habitat type only exists in the Buena Vista growth area. Alternative 2 would substantially reduce impacts to riparian habitat, coast live oak woodland habitat, and eucalyptus groves under General Plan 2050. However, these habitats exist throughout the plan area, both within the city limits and in new growth areas. The reduction in impacts to sensitive habitats would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**.

Alternative 2 would reduce potential impacts to special-status species, such as Santa Cruz tarplant, Santa Cruz Long-toed Salamander, as well as potentially suitable habitat for the California Red-legged Frog (CRLF) and burrowing owl, and foraging habitat for three bat species (see **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**). However, these species, potentially suitable habitats, and foraging habitats are known to occur in other locations throughout the plan area. Therefore, the reduction in impacts associated with Alternative 2 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**.

Impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources under Alternative 2 would remain the same as those identified in **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources** and **Section 4.18, Tribal Cultural Resources**. Although Alternative 2 would eliminate planned growth in the Buena Vista area, no resources within that area have been identified as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, removing

development from the Buena Vista area would not avoid or substantially reduce an identified impact to a known historical resource. Development within the remaining growth areas could still disturb previously unknown historical, archaeological, cultural, or tribal cultural resources, as well as human remains. These areas would remain subject to the same General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions intended to avoid or reduce impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources, and applicable mitigation measures would continue to address the potential discovery of such resources. Accordingly, Alternative 2 would not change the level of significance identified for the proposed plan.

The Buena Vista area may be susceptible to erosion and expansive soils, with erosion potential varying depending on slope conditions. Under Alternative 2, impacts associated with development in areas containing expansive soils or unstable geologic conditions would be reduced due to the removal of this growth area. However, the level of other geologic and seismic hazards would remain within the plan area, including earthquake fault rupture, strong ground shaking, ground failure, and landslides. See **Section 4.7, Geology and Soils,** for a discussion of the hazards that would affect the remaining growth areas under Alternative 2.

The western portion of the Plan Area is designated as Moderate and High FHSZs within the LRA. Alternative 2 would reduce impacts related to Moderate and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) as designated by Santa Cruz County (see **Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials,** and **Section 4.20, Wildfire**). However, there are no Very High FHSZ in the Buena Vista new growth area, and future housing proposed in Buena Vista would not be located in a Very High FHSZ. Furthermore, the plan area designates Moderate and High FHSZ in other portions of the plan area, so Alternative 2 would not eliminate risks related to FHSZ. Therefore, Alternative 2 would not substantially reduce risks related to wildfire, and the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials,** and **Section 4.20, Wildfire,** would not be changed.

Excluding the Buena Vista growth area would reduce the amount of impervious surface to be added to the plan area, which would reduce impacts to existing drainage patterns, peak flows, and water volumes discharged during storm events (see **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**). However, additional impervious surfaces are planned to be added throughout the plan area, including new growth areas. Therefore, Alternative 2 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**.

Alternative 2 would eliminate planned neighborhood growth in the Buena Vista new growth area, reducing impacts related to land conversion and potential land use conflicts (see **Section 4.11, Land Use and Planning**). Much of the land within the Buena Vista new growth area is currently designated as agricultural land, and General Plan 2050 would convert some of this land to non-agricultural uses. A portion of the Buena Vista new growth area is presently within an Airport Safety Zone, so agricultural land uses would be preserved and residential development would be limited. However, land conversion and potential conflicts with place type and zoning designations are anticipated to occur in new growth areas beyond Buena Vista. Alternative 2 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.11, Land Use and Planning**.

Noise impacts would be reduced under Alternative 2 because no growth would occur in the Buena Vista area. Eliminating planned development in this area would avoid the introduction of new sensitive noise receptors near the Airport and would reduce construction, traffic, and other operational noise associated with development. However, these reductions would not change the level of significance identified for the proposed plan because development within the remaining growth areas would continue to expose sensitive receptors to noise and generate construction and operational noise

impacts. See **Section 4.13, Noise**, for a discussion of the noise impacts that would occur within the remaining plan area under Alternative 2.

Excluding the planned growth in this area would reduce the availability of land for planned housing availability and projected population growth (see **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**). However, the majority of planned housing developments would continue to be infill in the City's downtown area, so Alternative 2 would not substantially reduce anticipated population and housing growth. Therefore, the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.14, Population and Housing,** would not change.

Alternative 2 would reduce impacts on public services, including police and fire protection, public schools, libraries, and parks and recreational facilities. Eliminating planned growth in the Buena Vista area would reduce the number of new residents and employees and, consequently, decrease demand for emergency response, school capacity, library services, and parks and recreational facilities. However, these reductions would not change the level of significance identified for the proposed plan because growth within the remaining plan area would continue to increase demand for public services and facilities. See **Section 4.15, Public Services**, for further discussion of impacts on public services within the remaining growth areas under Alternative 2.

Alternative 2 would reduce the need for parks and recreational spaces in the Buena Vista area, reducing overall impacts related to recreation (see **Section 4.16, Recreation**). However, expanded parks, trail systems, and recreational spaces would be implemented throughout General Plan 2050 area to support the growing population. Therefore, the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.16, Recreation,** would not change under Alternative 2.

Reduced development in the Buena Vista area would also reduce usage of the local transportation network, reducing potential impacts to traffic and transportation (see **Section 4.17, Transportation**). However, transportation improvements are planned throughout the entire plan area and would largely be implemented as planned. Therefore, the impact conclusion in **Section 4.17, Transportation,** would not change under Alternative 2.

The need for new or expanded water, wastewater, sewer, and power distribution lines and infrastructure would also be reduced, minimizing impacts related to utilities (see **Section 4.19, Utilities**). However, the population growth anticipated with General Plan 2050 would still present a need for expanded utility services over time. Therefore, Alternative 2 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.19, Utilities**.

Feasibility of Alternative 2

Alternative 2 is feasible to implement because it would consist of General Plan 2050 with the removal of the Buena Vista area within the plan area

Relationship of Alternative 2 to Project Objectives

Under Alternative 2, the City would adopt General Plan 2050 but would not include development in the Buena Vista area. As a result, the City would not be able to meet its objective of Housing for All as a large portion of the 500-acre Buena Vista area is slated for housing including single-family small lots and estate homes and for-sale housing. As described above, the City would still be able to accommodate the growth projections for General Plan2050 for dwelling units and employment (See **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**) as housing would still be provided in other areas slated for development under General Plan 2050. However, the elimination of the Buena Vista growth area would not meet this

objective to the same extent as the proposed General Plan 2050 because it would not be able to provide the full range of housing units planned for.

Additionally, removal of the Buena Vista area from General Plan 2050 would also remove the neighborhood parks planned for development in that area. As the plan area is already deficient on park and recreation space, as detailed in **Section 4.16, Recreation**, the removal of this area would be in conflict with the Local Amenities and Services, Open Space and Conservation, and Community Health objectives which all aim to provide Watsonville residents ample parks and recreational opportunities.

8.2.2.3 Alternative 3: No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)

Description

Under the No Expansion of Area B Alternative, the Atkinson Lane new growth area would not be considered for future annexation into the city limits. Future growth would instead be accommodated within the downtown area and other growth areas, including through infill and redevelopment opportunities in underutilized areas (see **Figure 2-3** in **Chapter 2, Project Description** for proposed ULL and areas of new growth). Because areas outside the city boundaries in the Atkinson Lane area would not be designated for new growth, this alternative would reduce the overall development capacity of the plan compared to the proposed General Plan 2050.

Environmental Analysis

Alternative 3 would result in a reduction in impacts to FMMP-designated farmland, specifically Prime Farmland, as this comprises the majority of this new growth area (see **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**). While much of Area C has already been developed, some portions have been designated for use as agricultural buffers as a component of the Pippin II housing project. Under General Plan 2050, some of the land currently designated for buffers has the potential to be converted to non-agricultural uses. Thus, Alternative 3 would reduce the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. Impacts to Farmland of Statewide Importance would also be slightly reduced. However, this reduction would not change the impact conclusions in **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources,** as there are Prime Farmlands, Farmlands of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmlands that would be converted to non-agricultural uses in the Buena Vista, Area C, and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas.

With implementation of Alternative 3, impacts related to air quality and GHG emissions would be reduced because the lower development intensity would generate fewer vehicle trips, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and decrease associated operational emissions. However, these reductions would not be sufficient to change the impact conclusions presented in **Section 4.3, Air Quality** and **Section 4.8, Greenhouse Gases Emissions.** Alternative 3 would also remain consistent with the City's local climate and sustainability planning documents, including the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan.

Alternative 3 would reduce impacts to riparian woodland habitat, seasonal aquatic habitat, freshwater marsh habitats, potentially suitable CRLF habitat, and foraging habitat for three bat species (see **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**). Seasonal aquatic habitat occurs only within the Atkinson Lane new growth area. However, riparian woodlands, freshwater marsh habitats, potentially suitable habitat for CRLF, and foraging habitat for bats occur throughout the plan area. Additionally, sensitive habitats in Acrea C are designated for preservation as Natural Open Space and would remain undeveloped under General Plan

2050. Therefore, the reduction in impacts to sensitive habitats and special-status species would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**.

Impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources under Alternative 3 would remain the same as those identified in **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources** and **Section 4.18, Tribal Cultural Resources**. Although Alternative 3 would eliminate planned growth in the Atkinson Lane area, no resources within that area have been identified as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, removing development from the Atkinson Lane area would not avoid or substantially reduce an identified impact to a known historical resource. Development within the remaining growth areas could still disturb previously unknown historical, archaeological, cultural, or tribal cultural resources, as well as human remains. These areas would remain subject to the same General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions intended to avoid or reduce impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources, and applicable mitigation measures would continue to address the potential discovery of such resources. Accordingly, Alternative 3 would not change the level of significance identified for the proposed plan.

Under Alternative 3, eliminating the Atkinson Lane new growth area would not substantially reduce geology and soils impacts because development within the remaining growth areas would continue to be exposed to geologic and seismic hazards, including fault rupture, strong ground shaking, ground failure, and landslides. Although removing planned development from the Atkinson Lane area would reduce the amount of development potentially exposed to these hazards, it would not avoid the hazards affecting the remaining plan area or change the overall level of significance. Therefore, geology and soils impacts under Alternative 3 would remain the same as those identified for General Plan 2050. See **Section 4.7, Geology and Soils**, for further discussion of the hazards that would affect the remaining growth areas under Alternative 3.

The Atkinson Lane new growth area does not contain LRA- or SRA-designated FHSZ. However, Moderate and High FHSZ in the LRA are designated in other portions of the plan area. Alternative 3 would not substantially reduce risks related to wildfire, and the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials,** and **Section 4.20, Wildfire,** would not be changed.

Impervious surface area would be added throughout the Atkinson Lane new growth area due to expanded development (**Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**). However, additional impervious surfaces are planned to be added throughout the plan area, including new growth areas. Therefore, Alternative 3 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**.

Alternative 3 would eliminate planned neighborhood growth in the Atkinson Lane new growth area, reducing impacts related to land conversion and potential conflicts with land use and zoning designations (see **Section 4.11, Land Use and Planning**). However, land conversion and potential conflicts with place type and zoning designations are anticipated to occur in new growth areas beyond the Atkinson Lane area. Alternative 3 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.11, Land Use and Planning**.

Noise impacts would be reduced under Alternative 3 because no growth would occur in the Atkinson Lane area. Transportation noise is the primary source of noise affecting this area, and eliminating planned development would avoid the introduction of new sensitive receptors and reduce traffic volumes and transportation-related noise associated with that growth. However, development within the remaining plan area would continue to generate construction, traffic, and other operational noise and could expose sensitive receptors to elevated noise levels. The remaining plan area would also continue to be subject to General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions, as well as applicable mitigation

measures, intended to reduce noise impacts. Therefore, although noise impacts would be reduced under Alternative 3, the level of significance identified for the proposed plan would remain unchanged. See **Section 4.13, Noise**, for further discussion of noise impacts within the remaining plan area under Alternative 3.

Excluding the planned growth in the Atkinson Lane area would also reduce planned housing availability increases and population growth within the plan area (see **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**). However, the majority of planned housing development would continue to be infill in the City's downtown area, so Alternative 3 would not substantially reduce anticipated population and housing growth. Therefore, the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.14, Population and Housing,** would not change.

Alternative 3 would reduce impacts on public services, including police and fire protection, public schools, libraries, and parks and recreational facilities. Eliminating planned growth in the Atkinson Lane area would reduce the number of new residents and employees and, consequently, decrease demand for emergency response, school capacity, library services, and parks and recreational facilities. However, these reductions would not change the level of significance identified for the proposed plan because growth within the remaining plan area would continue to increase demand for public services and facilities. See **Section 4.15, Public Services**, for further discussion of impacts on public services within the remaining growth areas under Alternative 3.

Alternative 3 would reduce the need for parks and recreational spaces in the Atkinson Lane area, reducing overall impacts related to recreation (see **Section 4.16, Recreation**). However, expanded parks, trail systems, and recreational spaces would be implemented throughout General Plan 2050 area to support the growing population. Therefore, the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.16, Recreation,** would not change under Alternative 3.

Reduced development in the Atkinson Lane area would also reduce usage of the local transportation network, reducing potential impacts to traffic and transportation (see **Section 4.17, Transportation**). However, transportation improvements are planned throughout the entire plan area and would largely be implemented as planned. Therefore, the impact conclusion in **Section 4.17, Transportation,** would not change under Alternative 3.

The need for new or expanded water, wastewater, sewer, and power distribution lines and infrastructure would also be reduced, minimizing impacts related to utilities (see **Section 4.19, Utilities**). However, the population growth anticipated with General Plan 2050 would still present a need for expanded utility services over time. Therefore, Alternative 3 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.19, Utilities**.

Feasibility of Alternative 3

Alternative 3 is feasible to implement because it would consist of General Plan 2050 with the removal of Area B within the plan area.

Relationship of Alternative 3 to Project Objectives

Under Alternative 3, the City would adopt General Plan 2050 but would not include development in the Atkinson Lane area. One-third of the Atkinson Lane area is currently developed, and the remaining two-thirds of the 64-acre area is slated for broad range of housing types, including new for-sale, single-family housing and townhouses. As a result, the City would not be able to meet its objective of Housing for All

under Alternative 3. The City would not be able to accommodate the growth projections for General Plan 2050 for dwelling units and employment (see **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**). While housing would still be provided in other areas slated for development under General Plan 2050, it would not meet this objective to the same extent as the proposed General Plan 2050.

8.2.2.4 Alternative 4: No Expansion of Area C

Description

Under the No Expansion of the Area C Alternative, the city boundary and the proposed expansion of the ULL in Area C would not be included as part of General Plan 2050. Future development would instead be accommodated through infill and redevelopment opportunities in underutilized areas and within the existing ULL and other growth areas (see **Figure 2-3** in **Chapter 2, Project Description** for proposed ULL and areas of new growth). Because areas outside the city boundaries in Area C would not be identified for expanding the ULL and designated for new growth, this alternative would reduce the overall development capacity of the plan compared to the proposed General Plan 2050.

Environmental Analysis

Alternative 4 would result in a reduction in impacts to FMMP-designated farmland, specifically Prime Farmland, as this comprises the majority of this new growth area (see **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**). However, this reduction would not change the impact conclusions in **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources,** as there are Prime Farmlands, Farmlands of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmlands that would be converted to non-agricultural uses in the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, and Highway 1 Gateway new growth areas.

With implementation of Alternative 4, impacts related to air quality and GHG emissions would be reduced because the lower development intensity would generate fewer vehicle trips, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and decrease associated operational emissions. However, these reductions would not be sufficient to change the impact conclusions presented in **Section 4.3, Air Quality** and **Section 4.8, Greenhouse Gases Emissions.** Alternative 4 would also remain consistent with the City's local climate and sustainability planning documents, including the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan.

Alternative 4 would reduce impacts related to foraging habitats for bat species and riparian habitat along Corralitos Creek and near a freshwater marsh (see **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**). However, sensitive habitats would be preserved as Natural Open Space and would remain undeveloped under General Plan 2050. Additionally, riparian and foraging habitats are known to occur in other locations throughout the plan area. Therefore, the reduction in impacts associated with Alternative 4 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**.

Impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources under Alternative 4 would remain the same as those identified in **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources** and **Section 4.18, Tribal Cultural Resources**. Although Alternative 4 would eliminate planned growth in Area C, no resources within that area have been identified as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, removing development from Area C would not avoid or substantially reduce an identified impact to a known historical resource. Development within the remaining growth areas could still disturb previously unknown historical, archaeological, cultural, or tribal cultural resources, as well as human remains. These areas would remain subject to the same General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions intended to avoid or reduce impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources, and applicable mitigation measures

would continue to address the potential discovery of such resources. Accordingly, Alternative 4 would not change the level of significance identified for the proposed plan.

Under Alternative 4, eliminating the Area C growth area would not substantially reduce geology and soils impacts because development within the remaining growth areas would continue to be exposed to geologic and seismic hazards, including fault rupture, strong ground shaking, ground failure, and landslides. Although removing planned development from the Area C area would reduce the amount of development potentially exposed to these hazards, it would not avoid the hazards affecting the remaining plan area or change the overall level of significance. Therefore, impacts under Alternative 4 would remain the same as those identified for General Plan 2050. See **Section 4.7, Geology and Soils,** for a discussion of the hazards that would affect the remaining growth areas under Alternative 4.

There are no LRA- or SRA-designated FHSZ in the Area C new growth area. However, Moderate and High FHSZ in the LRA are designated in other portions of the plan area. Alternative 4 would not substantially reduce risks related to wildfire, and the level of impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials,** and **Section 4.20, Wildfire,** would not be changed.

The Area C Alternative would reduce the amount of impervious surface to be added to the plan area, which would reduce impacts to existing drainage patterns, peak flows, and water volumes discharged during storm events (see **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**). However, additional impervious surfaces are planned to be added throughout the plan area, including new growth areas. Therefore, Alternative 4 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**.

Land conversion and potential conflicts with place type and zoning designations are anticipated to occur in new growth areas beyond Area C. Alternative 4 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.11, Land Use and Planning**.

Noise impacts would be reduced under Alternative 4 because no growth would occur in Area C. Transportation noise is the primary source of noise affecting this area, and eliminating planned development would avoid the introduction of new sensitive receptors and reduce traffic volumes and transportation-related noise associated with that growth. However, development within the remaining plan area would continue to generate construction, traffic, and other operational noise and could expose sensitive receptors to elevated noise levels. The remaining plan area would also continue to be subject to General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions, as well as applicable mitigation measures, intended to reduce noise impacts. Although noise impacts would be reduced under Alternative 4, the level of significance identified for the proposed plan would remain unchanged. See **Section 4.13, Noise**, for further discussion of noise impacts within the remaining plan area under Alternative 4.

Alternative 4 would result in a reduction in planned housing construction and focused population growth in this area (see **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**). However, most of the planned housing developments would continue to be in-fill in the City's downtown area, so Alternative 4 would not substantially reduce anticipated population and housing growth. Therefore, the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.14, Population and Housing,** would not change.

Alternative 4 would reduce impacts on public services, including police and fire protection, public schools, libraries, and parks and recreational facilities. Eliminating planned growth in Area C would reduce the number of new residents and employees and, consequently, decrease demand for emergency response, school capacity, library services, and parks and recreational facilities. However, these reductions would not change the level of significance identified for the proposed plan because growth within the remaining plan area would continue to increase demand for public services and

facilities. See **Section 4.15, Public Services**, for further discussion of impacts on public services within the remaining growth areas under Alternative 4.

Alternative 4 would reduce the need for parks and recreational spaces in Area C, reducing overall impacts related to recreation (see **Section 4.16, Recreation**). However, expanded parks, trail systems, and recreational spaces would be implemented throughout General Plan 2050 area to support the growing population. Therefore, the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.16, Recreation,** would not change under Alternative 4.

Reduced development in Area C would also reduce usage of the local transportation network, reducing potential impacts to traffic and transportation (see **Section 4.17, Transportation**). However, transportation improvements are planned throughout the entire plan area and would largely be implemented as planned. Therefore, the impact conclusion in **Section 4.17, Transportation,** would not change under Alternative 4.

The need for new or expanded water, wastewater, sewer, and power distribution lines and infrastructure would also be reduced, minimizing impacts related to utilities (see **Section 4.19, Utilities**). However, the population growth anticipated with General Plan 2050 would still present a need for expanded utility services over time. Therefore, Alternative 4 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.19, Utilities**.

Feasibility of Alternative 4

Alternative 4 is feasible to implement because it would consist of General Plan 2050 with the removal of Area C within the plan area.

Relationship of Alternative 4 to Project Objectives

Under Alternative 4, the City would adopt General Plan 2050 but would not include development in the Area C area. As a result, the City would not be able to meet its objective of Housing for All as much of the 250-acre Area C is slated for broad range of housing types, including new for-sale, single-family housing, townhouses, and multi-family housing. The City would not be able to accommodate the growth projections for General Plan 2050 for dwelling units and employment (see **Section 4.14, Population and Housing**). While housing would still be provided in other areas slated for development under General Plan 2050, it would not meet this objective to the same extent as the proposed General Plan 2050.

Additionally, removal of Area C from General Plan 2050 would also remove the neighborhood parks planned for development in that area. As the plan area is already deficient on park and recreation space, as detailed in **Section 4.16, Recreation**, the removal of this area would be in conflict with the Local Amenities and Services, Open Space and Conservation, and Community Health objectives which all aim to provide Watsonville residents ample parks and recreational opportunities.

8.2.2.5 Alternative 5: No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway

Description

Under the No Expansion of the Highway 1 Gateway Alternative, the city boundary would not expand and the proposed expansion of the ULL would not be included as part of General Plan 2050. Future development would instead be accommodated through infill and redevelopment opportunities in underutilized areas within the existing ULL and other growth areas (see **Figure 2-3** in **Chapter 2, Project**

Description for proposed ULL and areas of new growth). Because areas outside the city boundaries in the Highway 1 Gateway area would not be identified for expanding the ULL and designated for new growth, this alternative would reduce the overall development capacity of the plan compared to the proposed General Plan 2050.

Environmental Analysis

Alternative 5 would result in a reduction in impacts to FMMP-designated farmland, specifically Prime Farmland and a small portion of Farmland of Statewide Importance (see **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources**). There is a Williamson Act contract for Prime Agricultural land within the Highway 1 Gateway area. Alternative 5 would eliminate potential impacts to Williamson Act contracts within the plan area. However, the removal of a Williamson Act contract would not change the impact conclusions in **Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources,** as Alternative 5 would still impact County-designated Commercial Agriculture land throughout the plan area. Additionally, there are Prime Farmlands, Farmlands of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmlands that would be converted to non-agricultural uses in the Buena Vista, Atkinson Lane, and Area C new growth areas.

With implementation of Alternative 5, impacts related to air quality and GHG emissions would be reduced because the lower development intensity would generate fewer vehicle trips, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and decrease associated operational emissions. However, these reductions would not be sufficient to change the impact conclusions presented in **Section 4.3, Air Quality** and **Section 4.8, Greenhouse Gases Emissions.** Alternative 5 would also remain consistent with the City's local climate and sustainability planning documents, including the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan.

Alternative 5 would reduce impacts to potentially suitable habitat for burrowing owls (see **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**). However, potentially suitable habitat for burrowing owls is known to occur in other locations throughout the plan area. Therefore, the reduction in impacts associated with Alternative 5 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.4, Biological Resources**.

Impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources under Alternative 5 would be reduced compared to General Plan 2050 because eliminating development in the Highway 1 Gateway area would avoid potential impacts to one historical resource that is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. However, development within the remaining growth areas could still affect other identified resources or result in the discovery and disturbance of previously unknown historical, archaeological, cultural, or tribal cultural resources, as well as human remains. The remaining growth areas would continue to be subject to General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions intended to avoid or reduce impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources. Applicable mitigation measures would also be implemented to address impacts to identified resources and the inadvertent discovery of previously unknown resources or human remains. Therefore, although Alternative 5 would reduce impacts by avoiding the eligible historical resource in the Highway 1 Gateway area, it would not change the overall level of significance identified for General Plan 2050. See **Section 4.5, Cultural Resources**, and **Section 4.18, Tribal Cultural Resources**, for further discussion.

Under Alternative 5, the removal of the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area would not substantially reduce geology and soils impacts because development within the remaining growth areas would continue to be exposed to geologic and seismic hazards, including fault rupture, strong ground shaking, ground failure, and landslides. Although removing planned development from the Highway 1 Gateway area would reduce the amount of development potentially exposed to these hazards, it would not avoid the hazards affecting the remaining plan area or change the overall level of significance. Therefore,

impacts under Alternative 5 would remain the same as those identified for General Plan 2050. See **Section 4.7, Geology and Soils,** for a discussion of the hazards that would affect the remaining growth areas under Alternative 5.

Excluding the Highway 1 Gateway growth area would reduce the amount of impervious surface to be added to the plan area, which would reduce impacts to existing drainage patterns, peak flows, and water volumes discharged during storm events (see **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**). However, additional impervious surfaces are planned to be added throughout the plan area, including new growth areas. Therefore, Alternative 5 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.10, Hydrology and Water Quality**.

Under Alternative 5, there would not be a need to establish the new Gateway Commercial place type designation (see **Section 4.11, Land Use and Planning**). However, land conversion and potential conflicts with place type and zoning designations are anticipated to occur in new growth areas beyond the Highway 1 Gateway area. Alternative 5 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.11, Land Use and Planning**.

Noise impacts would be reduced under Alternative 5 because no growth would occur in the Highway 1 Gateway area. Transportation noise is the primary source of noise affecting this area, and eliminating planned development would avoid the introduction of new sensitive receptors and reduce traffic volumes and transportation-related noise associated with that growth. However, development within the remaining plan area would continue to generate construction, traffic, and other operational noise and could expose sensitive receptors to elevated noise levels. The remaining plan area would also continue to be subject to General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions, as well as applicable mitigation measures, intended to reduce noise impacts. Although noise impacts would be reduced under Alternative 5, the level of significance identified for the proposed plan would remain unchanged. See **Section 4.13, Noise**, for further discussion of noise impacts within the remaining plan area under Alternative 5.

Alternative 5 would reduce impacts on public services, including police and fire protection, public schools, libraries, and parks and recreational facilities. Eliminating planned growth in the Highway 1 Gateway area would reduce the number of new employees and, consequently, decrease demand for emergency response, school capacity, library services, and parks and recreational facilities. However, these reductions would not change the level of significance identified for the proposed plan because growth within the remaining plan area would continue to increase demand for public services and facilities. See **Section 4.15, Public Services**, for further discussion of impacts on public services within the remaining growth areas under Alternative 5.

Alternative 5 would reduce the need for parks and recreational spaces in the Highway 1 Gateway area, reducing overall impacts related to recreation (see **Section 4.16, Recreation**). However, expanded parks, trail systems, and recreational spaces would be implemented throughout General Plan 2050 area to support the growing population. Therefore, the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.16, Recreation,** would not change under Alternative 5.

Reduced development in this area would also reduce usage of the local transportation network, reducing potential impacts to traffic and transportation (see **Section 4.17, Transportation**). However, transportation improvements are planned throughout the entire plan area and would largely be implemented as planned. Therefore, the impact conclusion in **Section 4.17, Transportation,** would not change under Alternative 5.

The need for new or expanded water, wastewater, sewer, and power distribution lines and infrastructure would also be reduced, minimizing impacts related to utilities (see **Section 4.19, Utilities**). However, the population growth anticipated with General Plan 2050 would still present a need for expanded utility services over time. Therefore, Alternative 5 would not change the impact conclusions discussed in **Section 4.19, Utilities**.

Feasibility of Alternative 5

Alternative 5 is feasible to implement because it would consist of General Plan 2050 with the removal of the Highway 1 Gateway new growth area within the plan area.

Relationship of Alternative 5 to Project Objectives

Under Alternative 5, the City would adopt General Plan 2050 but would not include development in the Highway 1 Gateway area. As a result, the City would not be able to meet its objective of Local Amenities and Services as much of the 260-acre Highway 1 Gateway area is slated for a mix of regional- and visitor-serving retail, light industrial, office, restaurant, hotel, and entertainment/attraction uses. The City would not be able to accommodate the growth projections for General Plan 2050 for employment (see **Section 4.14 Population and Housing**). While employment may still be provided in other areas slated for development under General Plan 2050, it would not meet this objective to the same extent as the proposed General Plan 2050.

8.2.3 Environmental Superior Alternative

CEQA requires the identification of an Environmentally Superior Alternative. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2) states that if the No Project Alternative is the Environmentally Superior Alternative, then the EIR shall also identify an Environmentally Superior Alternative among the other alternatives. In general, the environmentally superior alternative is the alternative that would be expected to generate the least amount of significant impacts. Identification of the environmentally superior alternative is an informational procedure and the alternative selected may not be the alternative that best meets Project objectives. The proposed Project under consideration cannot be identified as the Environmentally Superior Alternative. As shown in **Table 8-1**, the No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista) Alternative would have the fewest environmental impacts as compared to the other four alternatives and would therefore be considered the environmentally superior alternative.

Table 8-1 Comparison of Environmental Impacts of Project Alternatives to General Plan 2050

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Aesthetics						
Effect on a scenic vista	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change
Degrade visual character or quality of public views	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact More Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
New source of light and glare	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact More Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Agriculture and Foresty Resources						
Conversion of Farmland	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts
Conflict with existing zoning	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Other changes that could result in the conversion of farmland	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts
Air Quality						
Conflict with implementation of applicable air quality plans	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts
Increase in criteria pollutant	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts
Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts
Emissions leading to odors	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Biological Resources						
Impacts to special status species	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts
Effects to riparian habitat	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts
Impacts to wetlands	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts
Impede the movement of migratory species	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts
Conflict with policies protecting biological resources	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Cultural Resources						
Impact historic resources	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts
Impact archaeological resources	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change	Significant and Unavoidable Impact No Change
Disturb human remains	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation No Change	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation No Change	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation No Change	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation No Change	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation No Change
Energy						
Result in wasteful consumption of energy	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Obstruct a plan for renewable energy	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Geology and Soils						
Rupture an earthquake fault, seismic ground shaking, liquefaction, or landslides	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Result in soil erosion or loss of topsoil	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Result in landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Be located on expansive soils	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Support the use of septic tanks	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Impact paleontological resources	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts
Greenhouse Gas Emissions						
Generate greenhouse gas emissions	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts
Hazards and Hazardous Materials						
Create a hazard though transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Create a hazard through release of hazardous materials	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Hazardous materials near schools	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Be located on a hazardous materials site	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts
Be located within proximity to an airport	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change
Impair an emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change
Expose people or structures to wildfire	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Hydrology and Water Quality						
Degrade Water Quality	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Decrease groundwater supplies	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Result in erosion	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Increase stormwater runoff	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Exceed the capacity of stormwater drainage	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Impede or redirect flood flows	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Risk release of pollutants in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Conflict with a water quality control plan	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Land Use						
Divide an established community	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Conflict with a land use plan, policy, or regulation	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Noise						
Increase in ambient noise levels	Significant and Unavoidable Impact	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts	Significant and Unavoidable Impact Fewer Impacts
Generate groundborne noise or vibration	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Expose people to airport noise	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change
Population and Housing						
Induce unplanned growth	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Displace people or housing	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Public Services						
Result in impacts to fire protection	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Result in impacts to police protection	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Result in impacts to schools	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Result in impacts to other public facilities	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Recreation						
Increase use of existing parks	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Require construction or expansion or recreational facilities	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Transportation						
Conflict with a plan or policy	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Increase hazards due to a geometric design feature	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Result in inadequate emergency access	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Tribal Cultural Resources						
Impact a tribal cultural resource listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts
Impact a tribal cultural resource considered significant to a California Native	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
American tribe						
Utilities						
Require the relocation or construction of new or expanded water or wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Have sufficient water supplies	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Result in inadequate capacity of a wastewater treatment provider	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

Environmental Impact	General Plan 2050	Alternative 1 No Project Alternative	Alternative 2 No Expansion of Area A (Buena Vista)	Alternative 3 No Expansion of Area B (Atkinson Lane)	Alternative 4 No Expansion of Area C	Alternative 5 No Expansion of Highway 1 Gateway
Generate solid waste	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Comply with regulations related to solid waste	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Wildfire						
Impair an emergency response plan	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts
Exacerbate wildfire risk	Less than Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact No Change	Less than Significant Impact Fewer Impacts

9 LEAD AGENCY AND CONSULTANTS

The Watsonville General Plan 2050 EIR was prepared by the City of Watsonville, the lead agency under CEQA, with the assistance of several consulting firms. Consultant staff involved in the preparation of the EIR are listed below.

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10 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
3CE	Central Coast Community Energy
AB	Assembly Bill
ABAG	Association of Bay Area Governments
ACC II	Advanced Clean Cars Phase II
ACF	Advanced Clean Fleets
ACMs	Asbestos Containing Materials
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADT	Average Daily Traffic
ADU	Accessory Dwelling Unit
AERMOD	air quality dispersion model
AF	acre-feet
AFFH	Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing
AFY	acre-feet per year
ALAN	artificial light at night
ALP	Airport Layout Plan
ALUCP	Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan
AMBAG	Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments
AMP	Airport Master Plan
APN	Assessor’s Parcel Number
AQMP	Air Quality Management Plan

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
AST	Aboveground Storage Tank
ATCM	Air toxics control measures
BACT	Best Available Control Technology
BAU	Business as Usual
Bcf	billion cubic feet
BERD	Built Environment Resources Directory
BMPs	Best Management Practices
BOF	Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Btu	British Thermal Unit
BUG	Backlight, Uplight, and Glare
C&D	construction and demolition
CAAP	Climate Action and Adaptation Plan
CAAQS	California Ambient Air Quality Standards
CAFE	Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CAL/OSHA	California Occupational Safety Health Program
CalARP	California Accidental Release Prevention
CalEEMod	California Emissions Estimator Model
CalEnviroScreen	California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool
CalEPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
CalGEM	California Geologic Energy Management Division

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
CalGreen	California Green Building Standards Code
Cal-IPC	California Invasive Plant Council
CalRecycle	California Department of Resource Recycling and Recovery
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CARE	Community Air Risk Evaluation
CBC	California Building Standards Code
CC&Rs	Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions
CCA	Community Choice Aggregation
CCAA	California Clean Air Act
CCC	California Coastal Conservancy
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDDD	Construction and Demolition Diversion Deposit Program
CDE	California Department of Education
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CDWR	California Department of Water Resources
CEC	California Energy Commission
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CESA	California Endangered Species Act

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
CFC	California Fire Code
CFGC	California Fish and Game Code
CFP	Corralitos Filter Plant
CFR	Federal Code of Regulations
CGC	California Government Code
CGP	Construction General Permit
CH_4	Methane
CHRIS	California Historical Resources Information System
CIP	Capital Improvement Program
City	City of Watsonville
CMP	Congestion Management Program
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNEL	Community Noise Equivalent Level
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO	carbon monoxide
CO_2	carbon dioxide
CO_2e	Carbon Dioxide Equivalent
COG	Council of Governments
County	Santa Cruz County
CPUC	California Public Utilities Commission
CRHR	California Register of Historical Resources

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
CUPA	Certified Uniform Program Agency
CWA	Clean Water Act
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
dB	Decibels
dBA	A-weighted sound level
DBH	Diameter at breast height
DFFP	Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles
DNL	Day-Night Level
DOC	California Department of Conservation
DOGGR	Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources
DOT	Department of Transportation
DPM	Diesel Particulate Matter
DPR	Department of Pesticide Regulations
DPS	distinct population segment
DTSC	California Department of Toxic Substances Control
du	dwelling unit
DWSP	Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan
EBMUD	East Bay Municipal Utility District
EERS	energy efficiency resource standards
EIN	Equipment Identification Number

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EM-OS	Environmental Management Open Space
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
EP	Environmental professional
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPCRA	Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESHA	Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area
ESLs	Environmental Screening Levels
ESU	Evolutionarily Significant Unit
EV	electric vehicle
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAR	Floor Area Ratio
FCAA	Federal Clean Air Act
FCAAA	Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990
FEHA	Fair Employment and Housing Act
FEIR	Final Environmental Impact Report
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FESA	Federal Endangered Species Act

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
FHA	Federal Housing Administration
FHSZ	Fire Hazard Severity Zone
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FIP	Federal Implementation Plan
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Maps
FLP	Forest Legacy Program
FMMP	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
FRAP	Fire and Resource Assessment Program
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
General Plan 2050	Watsonville General Plan 2050
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GHGRS	Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy
GPD	gallons per day
GSI Plan	Green Stormwater Infrastructure Plan
GSU22	Groundwater Sustainability Update 2022
GW	gigawatt
GWh	gigawatt hours
GWP	global-warming potential
Habitat Plan	Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan
HABS	Historic American Buildings Survey

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
HAPs	Hazardous Air Pollutants
HCD	California Department of Housing and Community Development
HCFCs	hydrochlorofluorocarbons
HFCs	hydrofluorocarbons
HHW	household hazardous material
HI	Hazard Index
HMMP	Hazardous Materials Management Plan
HRA	health risk assessment
HRI	Historic Resources Inventory
HSC	Health and Safety Code
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
HVAC	heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
I&R	Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc.
IADZ	Inner Approach/Departure Zone
IEPR	Integrated Energy Policy Report
Inventory	Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation system
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISO	Independent System Operator
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers
ITZ	Inner Turning Zone

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
IWMP	Integrated Waste Management Plan
KWVI	Watsonville Municipal Airport
LAFCO	Local Agency Formation Commission
LBP	Lead-based paint
LCFS	low carbon fuel standards
LCI	Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
LCP	Local Coastal Program
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
L_{eq}	Equivalent continuous sound level
LESA	California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment
LHMP	Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
LID	Low Impact Development
LOS	Levels of Service
LRA	local responsibility areas
LSAA	Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement
LT	Long-term
LTA	Local Transportation Analysis
LUST	leaking underground storage tank
MBARD	Monterey Bay Area Resources District
MBCP	Monterey Bay Community Power
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
MEI	Maximally Exposed Individual
METRO	Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District
mg/kg	milligrams per kilogram
mgd	million gallons per day
MJHMP	Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan
mL/L/hour	milliliters per liter per hour
MLD	Most Likely Descendant
MMBtu	millions of Btu
MMcf/d	million cubic feet per day
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
MMT	million metric tons
mpg	miles per gallon
mph	miles per hour
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MRP	Municipal Regional Stormwater NPDES Permit
MRZ	Mineral Resource Zone
MS4	municipal separate storm sewer systems
MSAT	Mobile Source Air Toxics
MST	Monterey Salinas Transit
MT	million therms
MTC	Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
MUTCD	Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices
MW	megawatt
MWELO	Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance
MWh	Megawatt hours
N_2O	nitrous oxide
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAC	Noise abatement criteria
NAGPRA	Native American Graves and Repatriation Act
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NCCAB	North Central Coast Air Basin
NECPA	National Energy Conservation Policy Act
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Act
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NFP	National Fire Plan
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NO_2	nitrogen dioxide
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
NOD	Notice of Determination
NOP	Notice of Preparation
NOx	oxides of nitrogen
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWIC	Northwest Information Center
O_3	ozone
OA	Operational Area
OADZ	Outer Approach/Departure Zone
OCPs	Organochlorine Pesticides
OEHHA	Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
OES	Office of Emergency Services
OHP	Office of Historic Preservation
OPR	Governor's Office of Planning and Research (predecessor to LCI)
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health
PAZ	Precision Approach Zone
Pb	lead
PBCE	Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
pCi/L	picocuries per liter
PCRs	post-construction stormwater requirements
PDO	Parkland Dedication Ordinance

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
PE	Professional Engineer
PeMS	Performance Measurement System
PFCs	perfluorocarbons
PG	Professional Geologist
PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric
PIO	Park Impact Ordinance
plan area	2050 General Plan area
PM	suspended particulate matter
PM_{10}	respirable particulate matter
$PM_{2.5}$	fine particulate matter
Porter-Cologne	Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act
PPV	peak particle velocity
PQS	Professional Qualification Standards
PRC	Public Resources Code
PVBMP	Pajaro Valley Basin Management Plan
PVFPD	Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District
PVUSD	Pajaro Valley Unified School District
PVWMA	Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency
RCD	Resource Conservation District of Santa Cuz
RCIS	Regional Conservation Investment Strategy
RCNM	Roadway Construction Noise Model

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
Residential Design Guidelines	Watsonville Livable Community Residential Design Guidelines
RHNA	Regional Housing Need Allocation
RHSP	Rural Highways Safety Plan
RMP	Risk Management Plan
RMS	Root Mean Square
ROG	Reactive Organic Gases
RPS	Renewable Portfolio Standard
RPZ	Runway Protection Zone
RTC	Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
RTP	regional transportation plan
RTPA	regional transportation planning agency
RWF	recycled water facility
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SARA	Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act
SB	Senate Bill
SCCEHD	Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division
SCCGIS	Santa Cruz County GISWeb
SCCRTC	Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission
SCH	State Clearinghouse
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategies

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
SDWA	Safe Drinking Water Act
SEMS	Standard Emergency Management System
SEP	State Emergency Plan
SF_6	sulfur hexafluoride
SGMA	Sustainable Groundwater Management Act
SHMP	State Hazard Mitigation Plan
SIP	State Implement Plan
SLF	Sacred Lands Files
SMARA	Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975
SMP	Site Management Plan
SO_2	sulfur dioxide
SOI	Sphere of Influence
SOIS	U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards
SR	State Route
SRA	state responsibility area
ST	Short-term
Stafford Act	Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
STC	Sound Transmission Class
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
SZ	Sideline Zone

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
TAC	toxic air contaminants
TAMC	Transportation Agency for Monterey County
TAR	Transportation Analysis Report
TAZ	traffic analysis zone
TCR	Tribal Cultural Resources
TDM	Transportation Demand Management
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
TPZ	Traffic Pattern Zone
U.S.	United States
UCERF	Uniform California Earthquake Rupture Forecast
UGB	Urban Growth Boundary
ULL	Urban Limit Line
ULSD	Ultra-low Sulfur Diesel
UPRR	Union Pacific Railroad
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
UST	underground storage tank
UWMP	Urban Water Management Plan

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
UWP	Urban Water Management Plan
V/C	Volume-to-Capacity Ratio
VCP	Vitrified Clay Pipe
VdB	Vibration Decibels
VHFHSZ	Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone
VISTA 2030 Plan	"Vision to Action" Plan
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
VMT Policy	Analyzing Vehicle Miles Traveled for CEQA Compliance: SB 743 Implementation Guidelines for the City of Watsonville
VOCs	Volatile Organic Compounds
VTA	Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
WELO	water efficient landscape ordinance
WFD	Watsonville Fire Department
WMC	Watsonville Municipal Code
WOUS	Waters of the United States
WPD	Watsonville Police Department
WQS	water quality standards
WSA	Water Supply Assessment
WUI	Wildland-Urban Interface
WVI	Watsonville Municipal Airport
ZEPRT	Zero Emission Passenger Rail & Trail
ZEV	Zero Emission Vehicle

Acronym or Abbreviation	Definition
ZNE	Zero Net Carbon Emissions

11 REFERENCES

11.0 Executive Summary

Watsonville, City of. 2014. *Resolution No. 137-14(CM)*. Available at: https://www.watsonville.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4640/CM-Reso-137-14?bidId. Accessed June 1, 2026.

11.1 Project Description

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11.2 Environmental Setting

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11.3 Aesthetics

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