



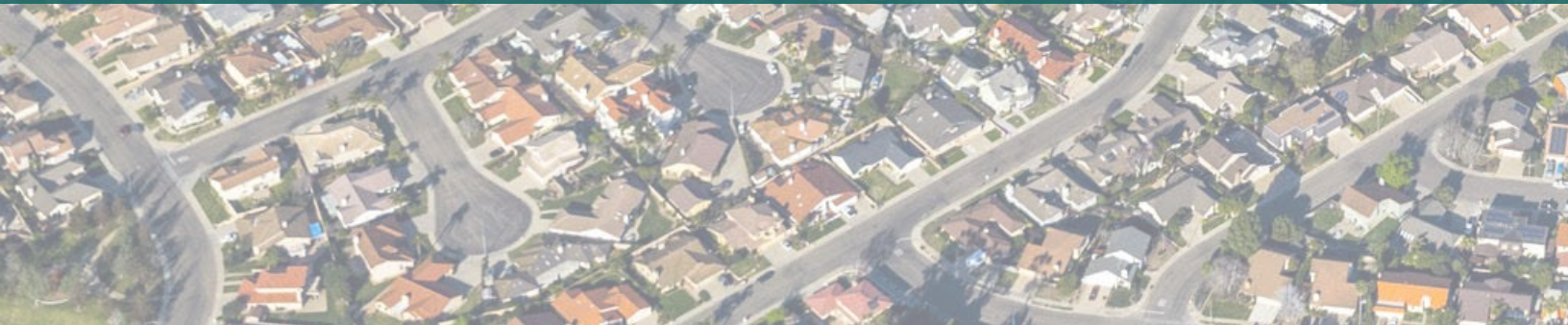
Santa Maria  
General Plan

**imagine**



# Community Safety Café

Summary Report | Prepared June 2021 | Held February 2021



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## Overview

This summary report presents themes identified during a Community Safety Café on February 22, 2021. The Café is one piece of an extensive community engagement effort for the City of Santa Maria's General Plan Update (GPU) process. Four total Cafés were held during February and March of 2021 on the following topics: Environmental Justice, Farmworker Community, Community Safety, and Housing.

Through existing conditions research in the first phase of the GPU process, several areas of Santa Maria were identified that do not fare as well as others. These areas, called "disadvantaged communities," are lower-income and may face disproportionate exposures to health hazards. Because these communities exist in Santa Maria, the City is required to complete an environmental justice planning process through implementation of Senate Bill 1000 (SB 1000 or "The Planning for Healthy Communities Act"). This bill requires the City to directly engage and solicit input on key issues from residents and stakeholders in disadvantaged communities.

The Café was designed to broadly engage in identification of health issues and priorities as well as to refine existing conditions findings across the following topic areas, as required by SB 1000: Housing, Public Facilities, Pollution Exposures, Food Access, Physical Activity and Health. The icons below represent each of these topics and are used throughout the report.



## Participants and Format

There were 15 participants in the Café. Participants were community members and farmworkers that live in the City of Santa Maria. All participants spoke Mixteco and the Café was held in Spanish with Mixteco interpretation so participants could participate in their language of choice.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Café was held via Zoom in the format of an online focus group. The Café was led by Raimi + Associates with facilitation and interpretation support from the Mixteco Indigenous Community Organizing Project (MICOP), a community organization working with residents and stakeholders from disadvantaged communities, including monolingual Mixteco farmworkers and their families. MICOP is a partner of the City of Santa Maria in the General Plan Update, ensuring that traditionally underrepresented groups, such as Mixteco residents, are proactively sought for input in shaping the future of Santa Maria. The following questions were used as discussion prompts:

- What comes to mind when you hear "community safety?"
- Are there specific areas of the city that are more affected by the community safety issues you have identified?

- Which are the most important issues to address in this area?
- What recommendations do you have for the City to address issues related to community safety?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

## Key Themes

The following key themes emerged from discussion (specific comments are included in the Appendix):



### Public Facilities

**Cleaner streets needed in low-income communities.** Families find trash, cigarettes, and drugs while walking the streets of their neighborhood.

**Too much traffic on local streets and roads leading in/out of Santa Maria. Participants see this as a problem** both on the way to and from work and school. At times when there is less traffic, speed is also a concern that threatens walkability and safety.

**More support needed from Santa Maria Police Department for Mixteco and farmworker communities.** Participants expressed concern about the safety of their families when walking around their neighborhoods and to protect their homes and property. There is also a big concern about all the drinking and smoking happening on public sidewalks and in public parks, especially where and when children are present.

**More schools and libraries would improve access to safe environments for children and young people.** Participants identified these as community resources where their children can wait for them after school.



### Health Concerns



**Children's safety is a priority for farmworkers.** All participants want to ensure the safety of their children where they live, play, and go to school. Some participants discussed threats from gangs and fears of letting young children and teenagers walk to school alone and would like more police presence to improve safety during these hours.

## Appendix: Detailed Notes from Discussion

The following list provides detailed notes from the discussion and is organized by question and by themes within each question.

### What comes to mind when you hear “community safety?”



- Police on the streets protecting our children
- No one smoking in our streets
- More safety in our neighborhoods
- Police actually arriving when we call them for help

### Are there specific areas in the city that are most affected by community safety issues?



- Near the intersection of Smith St. & Boone St.
  - There is a lot of trash
  - Robbery in homes. In my apartments, there are often many robberies. Last year they entered my home and stole important documents. The landlord told us it was not their fault. The police never arrived after we called them.
- Near Morrison St & Depot St.
  - More safety for students on their way to school. When our students walk to school, there are a lot of "gangsters" and lack of safety on the way to Santa Maria High School.
- Northeast, Santa Maria
  - We have seen dogs running on the streets and our young kids who walk to school are frightened.
- Bus Stops near W. Camino Colegio & La Vista Apartments
  - My daughter used to take the bus, but there was a person scaring the kids in that area.
  - There are people using drugs in that area and smoking near the bus stop. It scares the children who take the bus.
- Main Street
  - On our way to work, near the strawberry fields, there is a lot of traffic
  - There are only two lanes and it affects our work. We enter work at 7AM in the agricultural fields but we have to leave our homes by 5AM to get to work on time.
- Main St & Highway 166 towards Guadalupe
  - There is a lot of traffic near here on our way to work (agricultural fields) and for our kids at Bonita Elementary School.
- Oakley Elementary School/ Oakley Park & Dejoy St.
  - More security for our children from school staff.

- Depot St. walking down from Buena Vista Park to Adams Elementary School
    - My daughter walks by there for school and she is afraid. Someone scared her in that area when she was walking and now she is afraid to go back to school in person.
  - Thornburg St.
    - We use this street to walk our kids to Adams elementary school and it does not feel safe.
  - Near the Railroads
    - People are smoking and drinking
    - It does not feel safe.
    - My 14 year old daughter says it is very dangerous and she saw a "gangster" with a knife.
    - There is not enough security and no police around.
  - Miller Street
    - Our kids use this street to walk to Battles Elementary School and cars often go faster than the speed limit. There was recently a fatal accident of a young girl that is concerning.
  - Depot St: from Morrison St to Stowell St.
    - Groups of children walk to Adams school together but there is not enough room. The sidewalk is very narrow and the cars on Depot St. drive very fast.
  - Sonya Lane near Liberty Elementary School
    - There is limited security near the crosswalk for the children going to the school.
  - Santa Maria High School
    - Reinforce security personnel outside of the schools.
    - There are people smoking and drinking near the school
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## What recommendations do you have for the City to address issues related to community safety?

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- More security for students taking the bus near W. Camino Cielo and La Vista bus stop
  - Opening up an additional lane on Main St and Highway 166 to prevent traffic congestion on our way to work and school
  - Greater security near Stowell Rd. for students trying to get to Adams school? It is very dangerous for young students.
  - Enforcement of speed limit on Miller Street and assisting students on Miller St. trying to get to Battles Elementary School
  - More high schools in our city, the schools we have can be very far from where we live
  - Cameras in the schools
  - When we do have police officers present, they are not always looking after the safety of our children. They are mainly watching traffic, giving tickets, making sure
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car lights are working. Police officers should be present when students are taking the bus or crossing the street.

- Cameras on the streets
  - There is only one community center, we could benefit from more spaces like the Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center.
  - There are large trees around the city that need trimming. They pose a threat when there are strong winds.
  - Sometimes we call the police multiple times and they do not arrive.
  - A stop light or light up crosswalk near the Buena Vista Apartments crossing Morrison St. and Thornburg St. It is currently a very dangerous area for young children.
  - More schools and libraries
    - Most participants agree they use libraries frequently
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