



Santa Maria is in the process of a wide range of planning for the city's future, including the Downtown Revitalization Plan, the Active Transportation Plan and more. In particular, in 2018 the Santa Maria Planning Division began initial steps to overhaul the city's General Plan, the blueprint to all future development and growth in our city. While the Santa Maria General Plan has had minor updates in the past, it has not been completely updated in over 20 years. This has led city staff to begin the multi-year process of updating the plan and gives Santa Maria residents a unique opportunity to have a say on how they would like Santa Maria to develop and grow for decades to come.

CAUSE, who has engaged underrepresented communities in Santa Maria for many years, is working to ensure that all residents have an opportunity for their voices to be included in these long term planning projects that will have impacts on our community for years to come.

We know that often working-class and immigrant families face barriers to participation in city planning, leaving a large portion of our community out of opportunities to have their perspectives heard. CAUSE conducted an outreach effort focused on underrepresented residents, including door-knocking, public forums, and other methods to ensure public input reflects our city's population.

With this report we hope to present city policymakers with top priorities shared by local residents, so they may reference it for planning or policy purposes in the coming years.



Reaching "Hard to Reach" Residents

To accomplish the goal of talking with hundreds of "hard-to-reach" community members, CAUSE hired a team of youth interns in the summer of 2018, training them in community outreach. All six interns were bilingual and had deep roots in Santa Maria's most neglected communities. During their 6 week internship, they reached over 200 residents on the west side of Santa Maria through specially designed surveys that asked questions about 4 key areas in our community.

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Quality of Environment

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Community Surveys

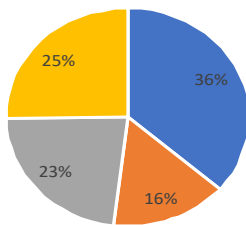
CAUSE English and Spanish surveys were carried out in door-to-door canvassing and through conversations at community events. Community members were able to vote on a specific issue within each of the 4 main topics to which they felt were most important to them. In addition to the 4 main topic discussed, the survey included an additional question about how residents would like Santa Maria to develop as it grows (last chart). The following charts were compiled from their responses.



Results

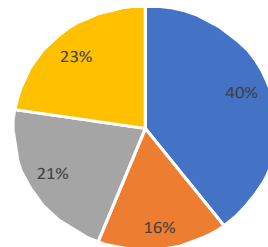
Housing

- Address Rising Rents
- Fix Older Housing
- Make it Easier to Find Apartment
- Make it Easier to Buy a Home



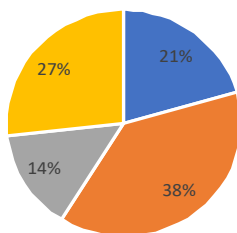
Transportation

- More Buses & Routes
- Safer Sidewalks
- More Parking
- Reduce Traffic



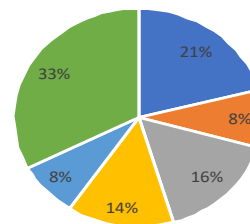
Environment

- Access to Parks
- Reduce Pesticide & Pollution Exposure
- Access to Healthy Food
- More Trees



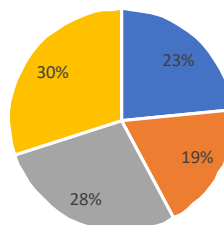
Economy

- More Local Businesses
- Revitalized Downtown
- Growing Industries
- Improve Current Industries
- Tourism
- Education & Job Training



Growth

- Grow Within City Limits
- Increase Downtown Density
- Expand City Limits
- Allow Duplexes



General Plan Community Town Hall



In addition to door-to-door canvassing, CAUSE interns along with community partners organized a city-wide town hall that hosted an additional 100 community members. In this town hall we were able to host diverse groups of community members with a trained facilitator at each table. Through the 3 hour discussion, community members were able to delve deep into discussions about some of the city's most challenging issues, including our top 4 items of discussion.

- Approximately 100 community members attended the town hall. Participants were split into 16 different tables, including tables focused on youth as well as Spanish and Mixtec speakers.
- Each table discussed all 4 main topics, beginning with key problems in our community and then discussing solutions.
- Each table selected their top 4 priorities/solutions and presented them to the whole room, writing them on flipcharts.
- Each participant then had the opportunity to walk around the room and vote on their top 3 priorities/solutions. Votes were then summarized into similar categories.
- The meeting ended with participants completing a survey designed by the Santa Maria Planning Division.

Results from Town Hall

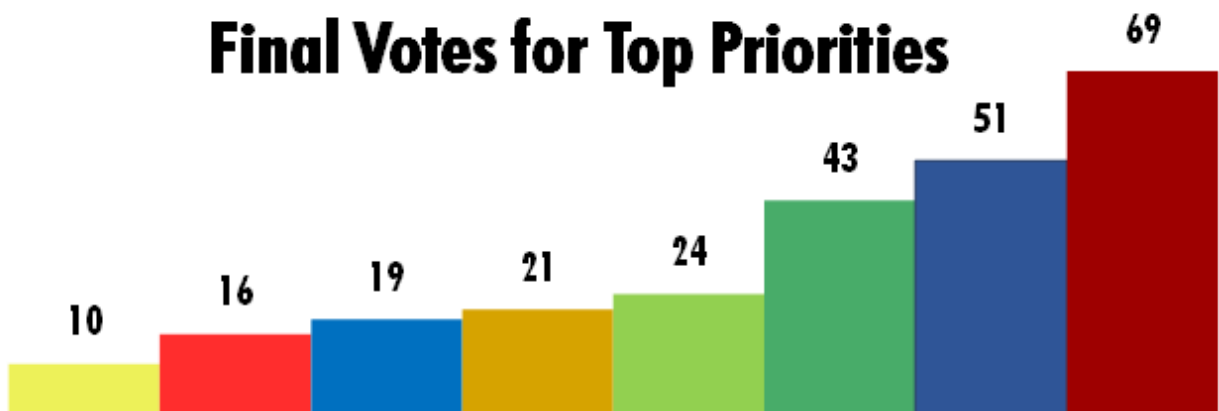
Housing

Economic Development

Transportation

Environment

Final Votes for Top Priorities



Accessible and Affordable Bus Service

Revitalize Downtown

Strengthen Renter Protections

Safer Streets for Biking and Walking

More Parks and Recreation Opportunities

Reduce Air and Water Pollution

Build Affordable and Farmworker Housing

Attract 4-Year University Opportunities

People's Report

Top Community Recommendations for Santa Maria's Future

As Santa Maria grows, the diverse voices of our community should shape our future and help city policymakers address longstanding issues like downtown revitalization and rising ones like H-2A housing.

Assessing input from surveys and the town hall, CAUSE developed recommendations for planning and development goals to address the needs and priorities expressed by residents whose voices are not often represented in public planning processes. It is our hope that this "People's Report" can help guide Santa Maria leaders address some of the greatest issues our community faces.

SB 1000

Environmental Justice Planning



After the passage of SB 1000, cities in CA need to have an Environmental Justice element in their general plans. This means that the city must "identify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities."

The city's new Environmental Justice Element should propose buffer zones to address environmental hazards from hazardous and industrial land uses next to residential neighborhoods and schools. Additionally, the city should plan for more green spaces for healthy recreational opportunities.



#1

Build a Mix of Housing for All Income Levels

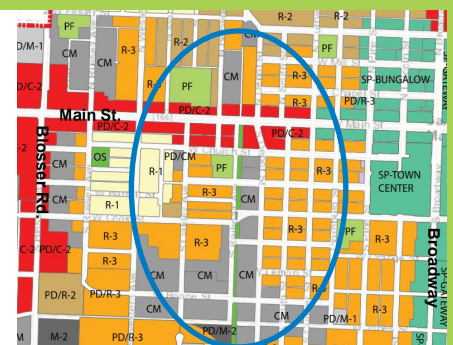
In recent years, the city has mostly permitted the development of expensive housing, which is often out of reach for Santa Maria residents, with low wages in the agriculture and service industries. The result is that Santa Maria has a higher level of rent-burden (share of households spending more than 30% of their income on rent) than notoriously unaffordable cities like San Francisco. With major new development planned for Santa Maria's future, residents want the city to ensure new housing actually meets the needs of Santa Maria families.

One of the ways community members agreed the city could address the lack of affordable housing in new development is by implementing an **Inclusionary Housing Ordinance**, requiring that 15% of new construction be affordable for low and moderate income families.

#2

Development of H2A and Other Farmworker Housing

Santa Maria's vital agriculture industry is struggling to attract workers who cannot afford the local cost of living. Santa Maria has now become the #1 city in the state for H2A temporary visa farmworkers, who require employer-provided housing. Isolated labor camps in the fields create poor living conditions for farmworkers, but the city's existing housing stock is in short supply, creating a need to develop new farmworker housing to avoid displacing existing residents.



Community members agreed the city could address this by creating a **Farmworker Housing Overlay** that would rezone underused industrial areas along the old train tracks to allow development of farmworker housing that would be more compatible with the surrounding high-density residential neighborhood.



#3

Connecting Public Transit as Santa Maria Grows

Santa Maria's new development continues to grow on the eastern edge of the city, yet lower income families and youth relying on public transit predominantly live on the west side of town. Santa Maria's bus routes are not designed to connect west Santa Maria residents to critical education and health facilities like Marian hospital, Pioneer Valley High School, Allan Hancock College and new retail employment and shopping needs on the other side of town.

The SMAT bus routes are doing a fair job at connecting the north side to the south side of town, but there is a growing need for east-to-west bus routes. Adding or redrawing bus routes to better serve residents on the west side of town would help increase access for lower income riders.

#4 Revitalize West Main Street while Retaining Existing Community

Santa Maria has a vision for revitalizing the city's center into a walkable and vibrant downtown. Repurposing large empty parking lots into a pedestrian plaza would create a gateway from West Main St. into downtown. West Main street has historically been a commercial corridor with the largest collection of small, local, immigrant-owned businesses in the city. Keeping it true to that vision would create economic opportunities for Santa Maria's diverse population.



Residents feel that creating a plaza modeled after Olvera Street in Los Angeles would be the perfect way to invest in our community's rich diversity and create economic opportunities for small businesses while greatly increasing shopping opportunities, cultural and recreational space for pedestrians.



#5

Opportunities for Expanded Higher Education Access

Santa Maria has one of the youngest populations in all of California, but at the same time, some of the lowest formal education levels in the state. Given Cal Poly's exclusive polytechnic model, local young people must travel hours to state universities that meet their higher education needs. This leaves our city as one of the largest cities isolated from the state university system. In the 21st century economy, an educated workforce is key in attracting economic development to the area or accessing existing well-paid jobs nearby such as aerospace at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Many residents expressed that one way to address this would be to designate land for an educational center such as a state university, university extension, or expansion of Allan Hancock College to develop more 4-year programs for local students.