

## **3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

This section provides a brief description of the current environmental conditions in the proposed project area. The County divides land uses within all planning areas into various categories. The official maps of the County Land Use Element (LUE) show the precise locations where land use categories and combining designations are applied, and define regulations for land uses, densities and intensity of use.

### **3.1 REGIONAL SETTING**

Located along the Central Coast of California, San Luis Obispo County is bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Monterey County to the north, Kern County to the east, and Santa Barbara County to the south (refer to Figure 2.2-1). The San Luis Obispo County region is moderately urbanized, but remains as a generally low density, rural and agricultural area of California that has grown as a major tourist destination. The region includes seven incorporated cities: Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo. The seven incorporated urban areas include approximately 55% of the county's total population (2010 Census). Urban concentrations in the unincorporated portions of the county include Avila Beach, Cambria, Cayucos, Heritage Ranch, Los Osos/Baywood Park, Nipomo, Oceano, San Simeon, Santa Margarita, San Miguel, Shandon, and Templeton. All of the urban areas within San Luis Obispo County are linked to Highways 1 and 101, which are the primary transportation corridors serving the region.

Population growth in the county increased 13.6% between the years 1990 and 2000. As of January 2011, 270,966 residents live in San Luis Obispo County (California Department of Finance). This population growth has resulted in an increased demand for housing in the county. The City of San Luis Obispo is the employment, entertainment, education, and shopping center of the region both geographically and economically. Commercial and residential development has increased in the North County and Nipomo, as slower rates of growth have occurred and costs have risen in the San Luis Obispo and North Coast regions.

### **3.2 COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO**

San Luis Obispo County is divided into two major regions: 1) the Coastal Zone, established as a result of the California Coastal Act of 1976; and 2) the Inland area. Each of these two large areas is further broken down into more manageable "planning areas." The proposed ordinance amendments would affect 9 of the County's 15 planning areas. The following paragraphs describe the physical setting and land uses found within each planning area that could be affected by the program. These affected planning areas are shown in Figure 3.2-1. The proposed program would not affect the Nacimiento, Las Pilitas, Los Padres, Shandon-Carrizo, San Luis Bay Coastal, or South County Coastal planning areas

**Adelaida Planning Area.** The Adelaida planning area occupies approximately 207,978 acres (325 square miles) and encompasses the central northwest portion of the county. The area's terrain descends from the rugged, mountainous western slope of the Santa Lucia Range to



rolling farmlands in the eastern portion of the planning area. The primary land use in the area is agriculture, with steeper and more remote areas providing grazing capabilities. The Adelaida Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2003) designates lands within the planning area by land use category. The area is predominantly agricultural land uses (approximately 73%) with rural lands and public facilities each accounting for 13% of the area's land use. There are no urban or village areas in the Adelaida planning area.

**El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area.** The El Pomar-Estrella planning area covers approximately 132,000 acres (206 square miles) of rolling hills east of the Salinas River and west of the Shandon-Carrizo planning area. The planning area is characterized by its rural landscape with agricultural operations consisting mainly of vineyards in flatter areas and livestock grazing on steeper slopes. Residential rural developments are also scattered throughout the planning area. The El Pomar-Estrella Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2006) designates lands within the planning area by land use category. Agriculture is the predominant land use in the planning area (approximately 80.2%) with rural lands and residential rural making up approximately 10.4 and 9.0%, respectively. There are no urban areas in the El Pomar-Estrella planning area, but there is one village: Creston.

**Estero Planning Area.** The Estero planning area occupies approximately 42,335 acres (66 square miles) of the central coastal area of the county from Point Estero on the north to Point Buchon on the south. The planning area occupies a narrow strip along the coast north of the City of Morro Bay and south of the unincorporated community of Los Osos. The planning area includes large portions of the Morro and Little Morro Creek watersheds on the north, a portion of the Irish Hills on the south, and a portion of Cuesta College on the east. The Estero planning area consists predominantly of agricultural land uses (approximately 74%) with extensive recreational, open space and residential uses. The Estero Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2004) designates lands within the planning area by land use category. The Estero planning area encompasses the Cayucos, Los Osos, and Morro Bay urban areas. This planning area is entirely in the Coastal Zone.

**Huasna-Lopez Planning Area.** The Huasna-Lopez planning area occupies 103,673 acres (162 square miles) in the south central portion of the county. It is a predominantly agricultural (approximately 82%) and rural lands (approximately 14%) planning area that is bordered by the Los Padres National Forest to the north and east, Santa Barbara County to the south, and the range of hills (Newsom and Temattate Ridges) that separate the Huasna Valley from Nipomo Valley on the west. The Huasna-Lopez Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2007) designates land uses within the planning area. There are no urban or village areas within the Huasna-Lopez planning area.

**North Coast Planning Area.** The North Coast planning area includes approximately 167,216 acres (261 square miles) extending from the Monterey County line on the north to Point Estero on the south and inland to the main ridge of the San Lucia Mountains. The planning area includes the communities of Cambria and San Simeon as well as the Hearst Ranch, which occupies almost half of the planning area. Agriculture-designated land occupies the majority of the planning area (approximately 93%). The North Coast Land Use Element and Local Coastal Program (San Luis Obispo County, 2008) designate land use categories within the planning



area. The North Coast planning area includes the Cambria urban area and San Simeon Acres village, and is located entirely within the Coastal Zone.

**Salinas River Planning Area.** The Salinas River planning area occupies approximately 90,823 acres (142 square miles) and includes the urban communities of Paso Robles, Atascadero, Templeton, San Miguel, and Santa Margarita, and the village of Garden Farms. The Salinas River Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2006) designates land use categories within the planning area. This planning area contains predominantly agriculture and open space land use designations (approximately 74%) with some residential rural, residential suburban, and residential single-family land designations (approximately 16%).

**San Luis Bay Inland Planning Area.** The San Luis Bay Inland planning area encompasses 61,018 acres (95 square miles) in the south central coastal portion of the county, extending from and including most of Montana de Oro on the north to the Nipomo Mesa on the south. It includes the non-coastal zone portions of the Five Cities urban areas of Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Oceano and Halcyon, and Avila Beach outside the coastal zone. The San Luis Bay Inland Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2002) designates land use categories within the planning area, with agriculture (approximately 40%) and rural lands (approximately 30%) as the dominant land uses. Outside of the urban and village reserve lines, an area of residential rural and residential suburban designated land, known as the Arroyo Grande fringe, covers approximately 16 percent of the planning area. The San Luis Bay Inland planning area includes the urban area of Arroyo Grande and portions of the urban areas of Avila Beach, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, and Oceano.

**San Luis Obispo Planning Area.** The San Luis Obispo planning area includes approximately 63,630 acres (99 square miles), including the City of San Luis Obispo and surrounding unincorporated agricultural and rural lands. The planning area extends to the Los Padres National Forest on the north and east, Cuesta College and Camp San Luis Obispo to the west, and the Irish Hills and Arroyo Grande fringe to the south. As with other planning areas in the county, the San Luis Obispo planning area primarily contains agricultural and rural lands (approximately 85%). The San Luis Obispo Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2006) designates lands within the planning area by land use category. The San Luis Obispo planning area includes the urban area of San Luis Obispo and the Edna/Los Ranchos village. The San Luis Obispo urban area outside of city limits includes a large area of industrial and commercial service designated land around the county airport.

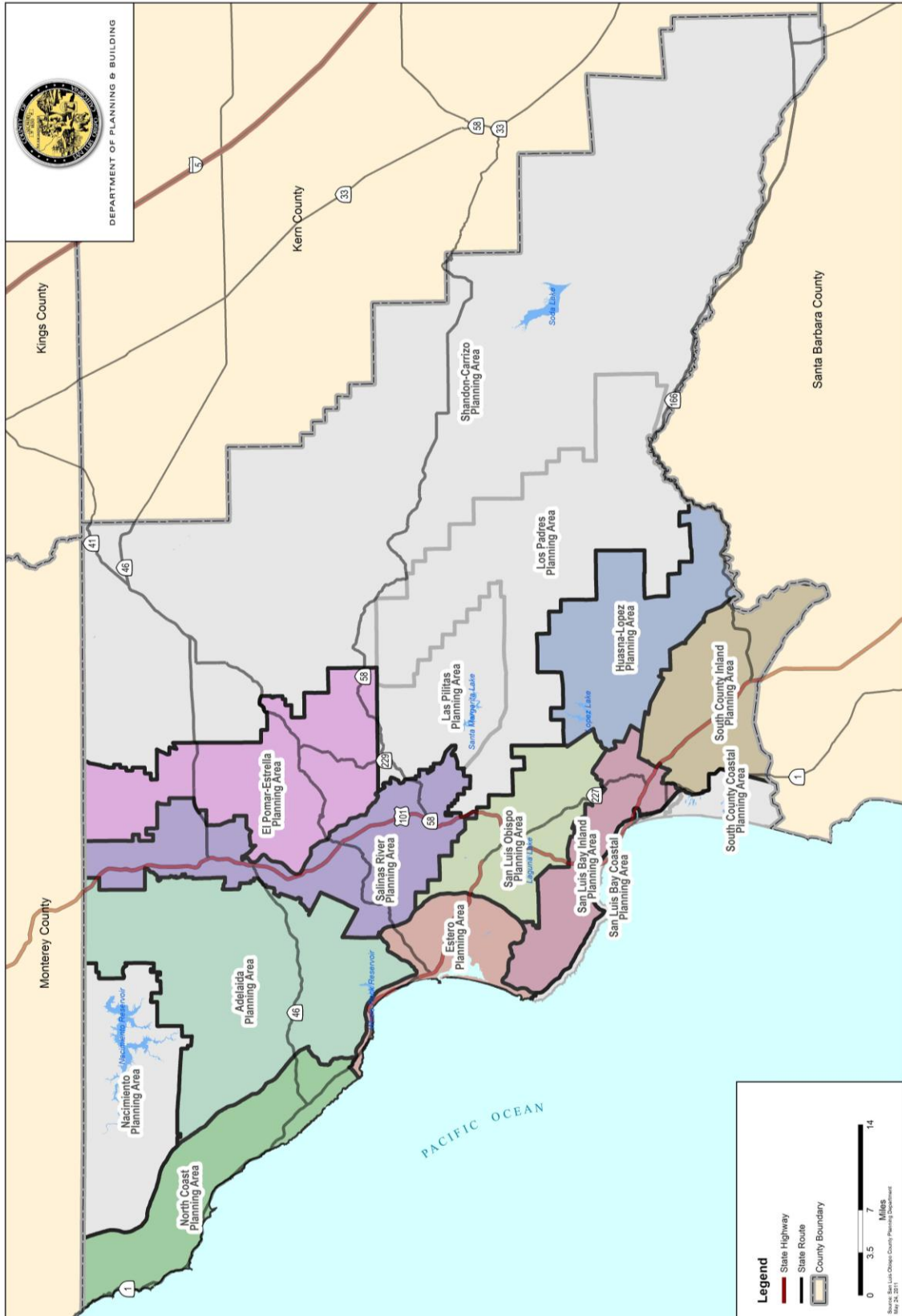
**South County Inland Planning Area.** The South County Inland planning area includes approximately 82,000 acres (128 square miles) extending from the urban boundaries of the "Five Cities" area to the north, the coastal range to the east, the Santa Maria River to the south, and the coastal zone boundary along Highway 1 and the Southern Pacific Railroad to the west. The entire Nipomo Urban Area, the five village areas of Black Lake, Palo Mesa, Los Berros, Woodlands, and Callender-Garrett, and South County rural areas are included within this planning area. The South County Inland Area Plan (San Luis Obispo County, 2007) designates land uses within the planning area outside of the coastal zone. As with much of the county, land uses within the South County Inland planning area are predominantly agricultural (approximately 59%).



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**Figure 3.2-1: Affected Planning Areas**



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### 3.3 CUMULATIVE PROJECTS SETTING

CEQA defines “cumulative impacts” as two or more individual events that, when considered together, are considerable or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project and other nearby projects. For example, traffic impacts of two nearby projects may be insignificant when analyzed separately, but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. This method of cumulative impact analysis allows an EIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects.

Section 15130 of the State CEQA Guidelines indicates that cumulative impacts shall be discussed when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone. The discussion should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.

According to the Guidelines, the following elements are necessary for an adequate discussion of significant cumulative impacts:

- *A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency, or*
- *A summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document that has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or areawide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact. Any such planning document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the Lead Agency.*
- *The discussion shall also include a summary of the expected environmental effects to be produced by those projects with specific reference to additional information stating where that information is available, and a reasonable analysis of the cumulative impacts of the relevant projects. The EIR shall examine reasonable options for mitigating or avoiding any significant cumulative effects of a proposed project.*

Cumulative impacts are discussed within each of the specific impact analysis discussions in Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. The cumulative analysis for each of the appropriate issue areas is based on either: 1) build-out estimates included in the County General Plan, or 2) a cumulative projects list provided by the County of San Luis Obispo. The specific impacts of future development projects are not known at this time. Therefore, several assumptions are used for each individual environmental issue area for determining the potential for cumulative impacts.



**Table 3.3-1: Cumulative Projects List**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Project #</b>	<b>Map #</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Development</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>County Agricultural Cluster Subdivisions</b>					
Estrella River Vineyard	SUB2006-00138	TR 2905	Estrella Road, near Paso Robles	18 residences	EIR in process
Gardner	SUB2007-00055	CO 10-0025	Orcutt Road, near San Luis Obispo	3 residences	Approved
Jack Ranch	S000323 U	TR 2429	Edna/Los Ranchos area	13 residences	EIR in process
Laetitia	SUB2003-00001	TR 2606	Laetitia Vineyard Drive, near Arroyo Grande	100+ residences	EIR in process
Smith/Cooper	SUB2003-00352	CO 04-0275	Highway 58, Carrizo Plains	6 residences	Accepted
<b>County Standard Agricultural Subdivisions</b>					
Biaggini	SUB2009-00045	TR 3023	Hwy 41, near Morro Bay	2 lots	Information Hold
Cross Canyon	SUB2008-00094	CO 09-0023	Ranchita Canyon Road, near San Miguel	6 lots	Approved
Munak	SUB2006-00206	CO 07-0057	River Road, near Paso Robles	2 lots	Approved
Porter	SUB2006-00230	CO 07-0069	Estrella Road, near Paso Robles	2 lots	Pending Hearing
Speizer	SUB2010-00031	CO 10-0085	Orcutt Road	3 lots	Information Hold
Silverado SLO Vineyards	SUB2008-00025	CO 08-0085	Branch Road, near Paso Robles	4 lots	Information Hold
<b>Large Scale Projects</b>					
Chevron Tank Farm	SUB2008-00004 LRP2008-00001	TR 2988	Tank Farm Road, near San Luis Obispo	Rezoning for master planned development	EIR in Process
Dalidio Ranch	SUB2006-00201	N/A	Madonna Road, near San Luis Obispo	35 lots (mix of uses)	Information Hold
Los Osos Sewer and Wastewater Treatment	DRC2008-00103	N/A	Los Osos	Sewer system for the community of Los Osos	Approved
LanDev LLC	SUB2006-00067	TR 2652	Nipomo CBD	112-unit assisted living, mixed use	Approved
Nipomo Center	SUB2004-00091	TR 2312	Nipomo CBD	Mixed use, 59 residences, commercial	Approved
Gray Trust	S010354 U	TR 2441	Grande Avenue, Nipomo	39 residences	Approved



Name	Project #	Map #	Location	Development	Status
Jack Ready Park	DRC2009-00062	N/A	South end of Nipomo	Community park	Approved
Shapiro	SUB2004-00169	TR 2611	Nipomo CBD	Mixed use, 51 residences, commercial	Approved
Marinai	DRC2005-00007	N/A	Nipomo CBD	71-unit hotel	Approved
Templeton Properties	SUB2008-00041	TR 2994	Main Street, Templeton	108 residences	Approved
<b>Resource Extraction / Similar Uses</b>					
Calkins/Viborg	DRC2006-00039	N/A	Estrella Road, near Paso Robles	Surface Mine	Appealed
Chicago Grade	DRC2008-00026	N/A	Homestead Road, near Atascadero	Waste-to-Energy Facility	EIR in Process
Cold Canyon	DRC2005-00170 DRC2006-00001	N/A	Highway 227, near Edna	Landfill Expansion	EIR in Process
Excelaron	DRC2009-00002	N/A	Huasna Townsite Road, near Huasna	Oilfield	EIR in Process
First Solar	DRC2008-00009	N/A	Bitterwater Road, Carrizo Plains	550 MW Solar Plant	Approved
Mainini	DRC2007-00016	N/A	Old Creek Road, near Cayucos	Expansion of Surface Mine	EIR in Process
Oster	DRC2009-00025	N/A	Calf Canyon Hwy, Santa Margarita	Surface Mine	EIR in Process
Pankey	DRC2005-00193	N/A	Indian Valley Road, near San Miguel	Surface Mine	EIR in Process
Pehl	DRC2005-00027	N/A	River Road, near San Miguel	Surface Mine	Accepted for Processing
Perozzi	DRC2005-00211	N/A	Orcutt Road, near San Luis Obispo	Greenwaste Recycling	Accepted for Processing
Sun Power	DRC2008-00097	N/A	Highway 58, Carrizo Plains	250 MW Solar Plant	Approved
Twisselman	DRC2009-00004	N/A	Carrizo Plains	Surface Mine	Approved
Twisselman	DRC2007-00073	N/A	Prefumo Canyon Road, near San Luis Obispo	Access Road for approx. 20 Certificated Parcels	Accepted for Processing
Weyrick	DRC2007-00125	N/A	Monterey Road, near Paso Robles	Surface Mine	Information Hold



Name	Project #	Map #	Location	Development	Status
<b>Wineries / Events / Tourism</b>					
Armstrong	DRC2008-00156	N/A	Peachy Canyon Road, near Paso Robles	Large Winery + Tasting + Events	Accepted for Processing
Benson	DRC2007-00198	N/A	Anderson Road, near Templeton	Expansion of Winery	Approved
Bethel Properties	DRC2008-00044	N/A	Bethel Road, near Templeton	Expansion of Tasting Room	Approved
Burbank	DRC2009-00083	N/A	El Pomar Drive, near Templeton	Winery + Tasting	Approved
Cherry	DRC2008-00158	N/A	Peachy Canyon Road, near Paso Robles	Winery + Tasting	Approved
Colmar	DRC2008-00029	N/A	Willow Creek Road, near Templeton	Expansion of Winery	Approved
Gill	DRC2009-00023	N/A	Peachy Canyon Road, near Paso Robles	Winery + Tasting	Approved
Glossner	DRC2009-00079	N/A	Booker Road, near Templeton	Small Winery	Approved
L'Aventure	DRC2009-00048	N/A	Live Oak Road, near Templeton	Winery + Tasting	Approved
Lemm	DRC2007-00176	N/A	Nacimiento Lake Drive, near Paso Robles	Temporary Events	Approved
Martinelli	DRC2007-00199	N/A	Camp 8 Road, near Creston	Winery	Approved
Rasmussen	DRC2009-00055	N/A	Harvest Ridge Way, near Paso Robles	Small Winery + Tasting	Approved
Saunders	DRC2008-00132	N/A	River Road, near San Miguel	Winery + Tasting	Approved
Schmidt	DRC2007-00197	N/A	Adelaida Road, near Templeton	Winery + Tasting + Events	Approved
Shadow Run	DRC2008-00143	N/A	La Panza Road, east of Creston	Winery	Approved
Stanton	DRC2009-00047	N/A	Las Tablas Willow Creek Road, near Templeton	Small Winery	Approved
Tackitt	DRC2009-00013	N/A	Von Dollen Road, near Paso Robles	Small Winery + Tasting	Approved
Teckman	DRC2008-00152	N/A	Vineyard Drive, near Templeton	Small Winery	Approved
Thomsen	DRC2009-00083	N/A	Fairhills Road, near Templeton	Small Winery + Tasting	Approved
Vina Robles	DRC2007-00200	N/A	Union Road, near Paso Robles	Large Winery	Approved
Waddell	DRC2008-00110	N/A	Highway 1, near Cayucos	Temporary Events	Scheduled for Hearing



Name	Project #	Map #	Location	Development	Status
<b>Other Development on Agricultural Lands</b>					
Kaminaka	LRP2004-00006	N/A	Pomeroy Road, near Nipomo	Rezone Ag Land to REC	Authorized for Processing
LA District Church	DRC2009-00016	N/A	Coyote Creek Lane, near Creston	Organizational Camp	Information Hold
Templeton CSD	LRP2007-00015	N/A	Creekside Ranch Road, Templeton	Rezone Ag Land to PF	Pending Authorization
Warren	LRP2006-00009	N/A	San Simeon Creek Road, near Cambria	Rezone Ag Land to CS	Authorized for Processing
<b>Long Range Planning / Policy Changes</b>					
Climate Action Plan	N/A	N/A	Countywide	Reduction of Greenhouse Gases	In Process
Conservation/Open Space Element	N/A	N/A	Countywide	Conservation of resources	Adopted
Events Ordinance	N/A	N/A	Countywide	Regulation of events, including events on agricultural land	Authorized for Processing
Land Use/Circulation Element Update	N/A	N/A	Countywide (outside of URL/VRL)	Long range growth and development	Authorized for Processing
San Miguel Community Plan Update	N/A	N/A	San Miguel area	Long range growth and increase in density	In Process
Green Building Ordinance	N/A	N/A	Countywide	Sustainable development	In Process
Shandon Community Plan	N/A	N/A	Shandon area	Expansion of the Shandon Urban Reserve Line; Increase in density	EIR in Process



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