Housing Element Update

Initial Study – Negative Declaration

prepared by

City of Santa Clarita
Community Development Department
23920 Valencia Boulevard, Suite 302
Santa Clarita, California 91355
Contact: James Chow, Senior Planner

prepared with the assistance of

Rincon Consultants, Inc.
706 South Hill Street, Suite 1200
Los Angeles, California 90014

December 2021

RINCON CONSULTANTS, INC.
Environmental Scientists | Planners | Engineers
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1. Project Title

City of Santa Clarita Housing Element Update

2. Lead Agency Name and Address

City of Santa Clarita
Community Development Department
23920 Valencia Boulevard, Suite 302
Santa Clarita, California 91355

3. Contact Person and Phone Number

James Chow, Senior Planner
661-255-4330

4. Project Location

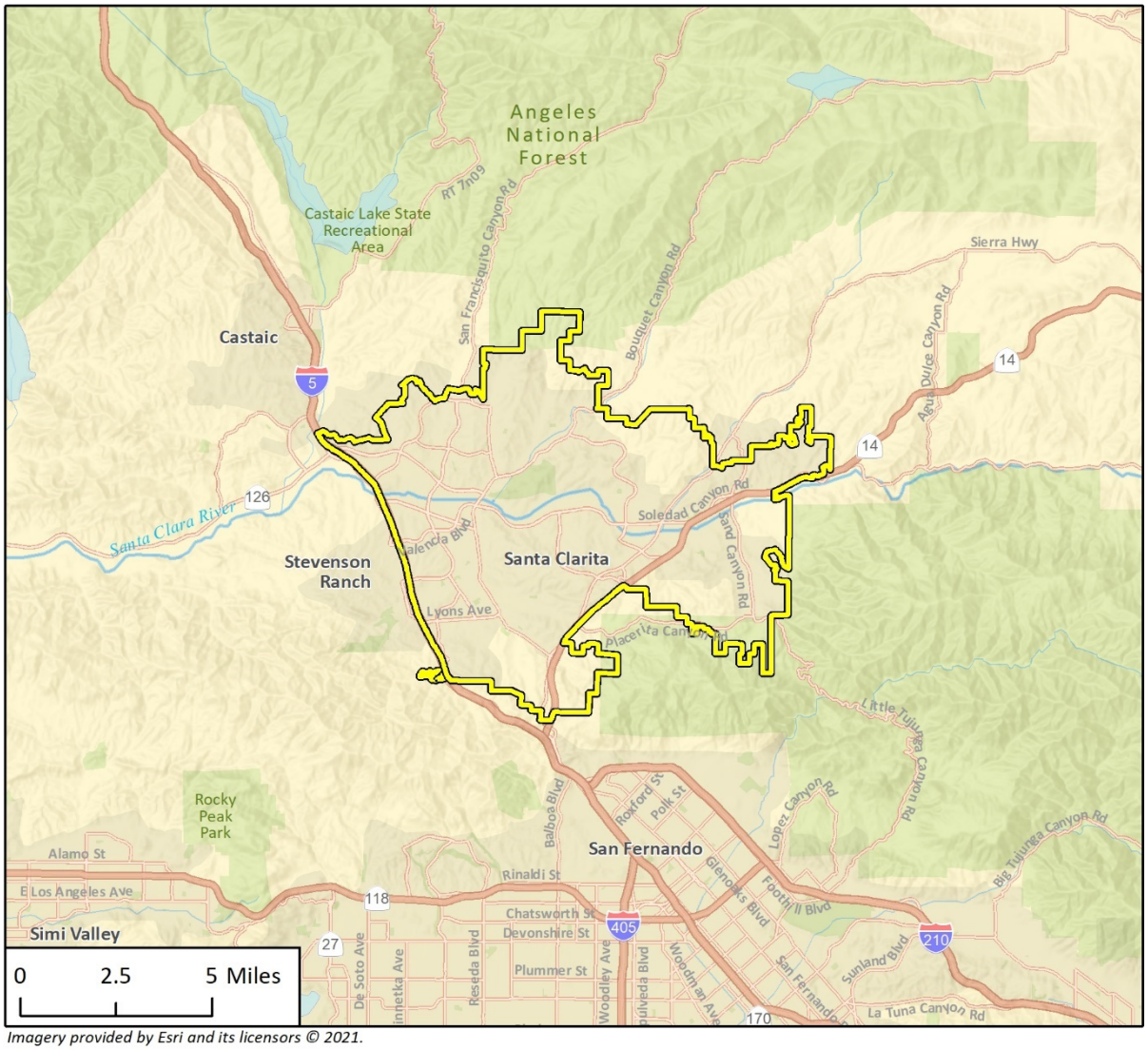
Santa Clarita is located in southern California in the northern portion of Los Angeles County, near the convergence of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, approximately 35 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles (Figure 1). The city is framed by three mountain ranges, the Sierra Pelona Mountains, Santa Susana Mountains, and San Gabriel Mountains. Since incorporation, 40 areas positioned adjacent to the city have been annexed, adding a total of 31.09 square miles to the city. The city and the Plan Area is shown in Figure 2.

The city is located within the Santa Clarita Valley, which includes incorporated and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. To achieve greater cooperation between the County of Los Angeles and the City and as a part of the One Valley One Vision joint effort between the City and the County to update the General Plan for the Santa Clarita Valley planning area, the 2011 Santa Clarita General Plan and the County Areawide Plan, encompasses the entire Santa Clarita Valley. This Plan Area is bounded on the west by the Ventura County line, to the north by the Los Padres and Angeles National Forest, to the east by the Angeles National Forest, and to the south by the major ridgeline separating the Santa Clarita Valley from the San Fernando Valley. This area covers in unincorporated communities of Stevenson Ranch, Castaic, Val Verde, Agua Dulce, Westridge, and Newhall Ranch. These unincorporated areas together with the City of Santa Clarita form the Plan Area, as show in the One Valley One Vision General Plan.

5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address

City of Santa Clarita
Community Development Department
23920 Valencia Boulevard, Suite 302
Santa Clarita, California 91355

Figure 1 Regional Location



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City of Santa Clarita Plan Area

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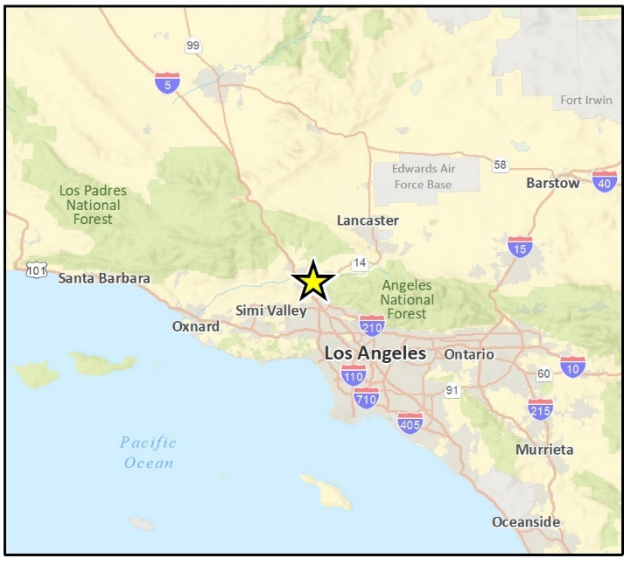

Figure 2 Plan Area

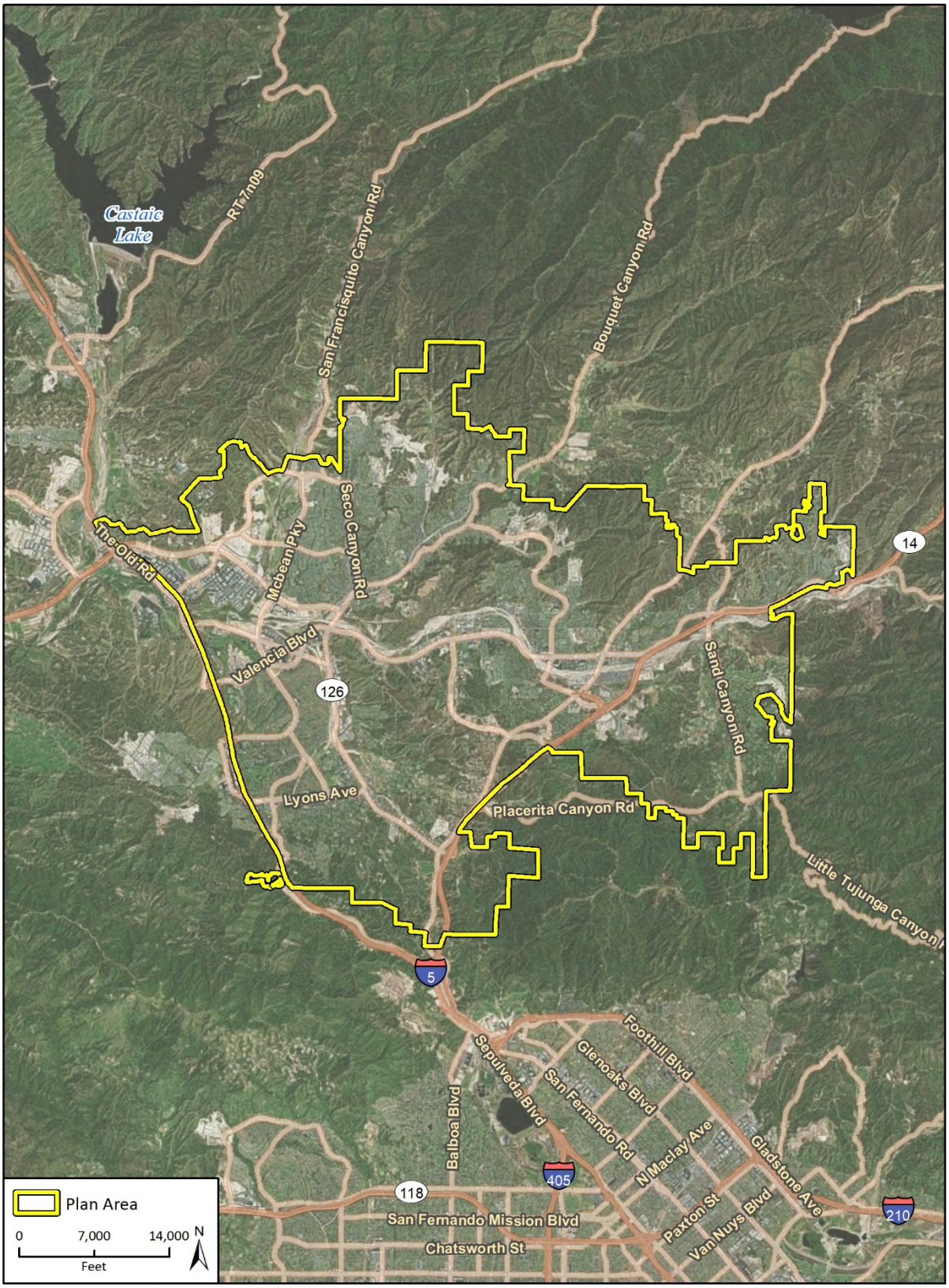

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Fig 2 Plan Area Updated

6. Description of Project

The project, herein referred to as the "Housing Element Update," would amend the City of Santa Clarita General Plan by replacing the current Housing Element with the proposed 2021-2029 Housing Element and update the Safety Element of the General Plan to reflect recent changes in State law. The City's General Plan, One Valley One Vision, was last updated in June 2011 and program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan was completed in May 2011. The fifth cycle Housing Element was approved in October 2013 and outlines the City's housing goals from 2014 through 2021. The General Plan and environmental documents are available for download on the City of Santa Clarita, Community Development Planning Division website.[1]

7. Project Characteristics

Housing Element

State law requires that housing elements be updated every eight years (California Government Code Sections 65580 to 65589.8). The 2021-2029 Housing Element identifies sites adequate to accommodate a variety of housing types for all income levels and needs of special population groups defined under State law (California Government Code Section 65583), analyzes governmental constraints to housing maintenance, improvement, and development, addresses conservation and improvement of the condition of existing affordable housing stock, and outlines policies that promote housing opportunities for all persons. The project involves an update to the City of Santa Clarita Housing Element as part of the sixth cycle planning period, which spans from 2021 through 2029.

The update to the Housing Element will bring it into compliance with state legislation passed since the adoption of the General Plan in 2011 and the 2013 Housing Element and with the current Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG's) Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). On March 4, 2021, the SCAG Regional Council adopted the sixth Cycle Final RHNA, which includes a "fair share" allocation for meeting regional housing needs for each community in the SCAG region.

The 2021-2029 Housing Element includes the following components, as required by State law.

- An assessment of the city's population, household, and housing stock characteristics, existing and future housing needs by household types, and special needs populations (Sections 1.1 – 1.10).
- An analysis of resources and constraints related to housing production and preservation, including governmental regulations, infrastructure requirements and market conditions such as land, construction, and labor costs as well as restricted financing availability (Sections 1.11 – 1.13).
- Identification of the City's quantified objectives for the 2021-2029 RHNA and inventory of sites determined to be suitable for housing (Sections 3.1 – 3.5).
- Opportunities for conservation in residential development: State housing element law requires cities to identify opportunities for energy conservation in residential development (Sections 3.6 – 3.8.

[1] https://www.santa-clarita.com/city-hall/departments/community-development/planning

- Review of the 2013-2021 Housing Element to identify progress and evaluate the effectiveness of previous policies and programs (Sections 1.14 – 1.15).
- A housing plan to address the City's identified housing needs, including housing goals, policies, and programs to facilitate the 2021 Housing Element Update (6th Cycle) (Sections 2.1 – 2.2).

The draft Housing Element Update establishes objectives, policies, and programs to assist the City in achieving state-mandated housing goals. No formal land use changes or physical development are proposed at this time and future land use and zoning changes would not be required to meet the City's RHNA allocation.

Regional Housing Needs Allocation and Required Buffer

The Housing Element Update must address the City's fair share of the regional housing need and specific state statutory requirements and must reflect the vision and priorities of the local community. As of March 2021, SCAG determined a final RHNA allocation of 10,031 units for the City, of which 5,131 must be affordable to lower-income households.

The RHNA reflects the California Department of Housing and Community Development's (HCD) determination of the projected housing needs in a region, broken down by income level. Table 1 shows the RHNA for income groups in Santa Clarita during the 2021-2029 planning period, as determined by SCAG.

Table 1 2021-2029 Regional Housing Need Allocation

Income Group	Santa Clarita Unit Needs	Percentage of Units
Very low (≤50% AMI)	3,397	34%
Low (>50-80% AMI)	1,734	17%
Moderate (>80-120% AMI)	1,672	17%
Above Moderate (>120% AMI)	3,228	32%
Total	**10,031**	**100%**

AMI = Area Median Income (established annually by the Department of Housing and Urban Development)
Source: SCAG 2020

HCD requires local jurisdictions to identify enough future housing sites inventory to not only cover the jurisdiction's 6th Cycle RHNA, but to also provide for an additional buffer capacity above the RHNA because the "No Net Loss" Law (Government Code Section 65863) requires maintenance of sufficient sites to meet the RHNA for all income levels throughout the planning period. The recommendation from HCD is to adopt a housing sites inventory with a buffer of at least 15 percent over the allocated RHNA. The City has identified sufficient suitable sites to accommodate its entire RHNA through existing sites under existing zoning. Of the City's 10,031-unit RHNA obligation, 265 lower-, 36 moderate-, and 9,234 above moderate-income units would be accounted for by planned and approved units and through ADU development. After those units are credited towards each respective RHNA income category, a total of 6,502 units are needed to accommodate the City's RHNA including 3,321 units affordable at the very-low and extremely low-income levels and 1,545 units affordable at the low-income level. The City has identified suitable sites to realistically accommodate an additional 9,845 units under current zoning, with an approximately 25 percent buffer for the very-low and low-income categories and a 47 percent buffer for the moderate-income

category. More than 50 percent of the City's low-income RHNA obligation would be met on vacant sites.

Accessory Dwelling Units

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a secondary dwelling unit located on a residentially zoned property that has an existing single-family or multi-family residence. Due to their small square footage, ADUs can provide affordable housing options for family members, friends, students, the elderly, in-home health care providers, the disabled, and others. The City used SCAG's Regional ADU Affordability Analysis survey, which includes pre-certified affordability assumptions for ADUs for the SCAG region, and assumes the City's annual average number of ADUs permitted, to determine the number of ADUs reasonably expected to develop in the City during the planning period.. These numbers are credited towards Santa Clarita's RHNA. ADUs included in the Housing Element Update are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Assumed Affordability for Housing Element Update ADUs

Income Category	Number of ADUs
Extremely Low	76
Very Low	
Low	136
Moderate	36
Above Moderate	152
Total	**400**

ADU = accessory dwelling unit

Source: Housing Element Update, Table 9

Planned and Approved Projects

Housing units approved, permitted, or in receipt of a certificate of occupancy as of June 30, 2021, can be credited towards meeting the City's latest RHNA. These units can count towards the RHNA based on affordability and unit count provided it can be demonstrated that the units can be built within the planning period of October 2021 through October 2029. Table 10 of the Housing Element includes approved and pending projects that are credited towards meeting the City's RHNA. The majority of these sites are already entitled and ten sites are pending. After accounting for units planned and approved as of June 30, 2021, and anticipated ADUs, there is a remaining need of 6,502 units. This total includes 4,866 lower-income and 1,636 moderate-income units.

Vacant and Underutilized Sites

Jurisdictions are required by law to identify sufficient adequate sites of suitable land within its boundaries to meet its RHNA. These sites can include vacant sites zoned for residential use, vacant sites that allow residential development, and underutilized sites that are capable of being redeveloped to increase the number of residential units. A total of 6,502 residential units can be accommodated on vacant and non-vacant sites in the city based on residential densities and floor area ratio standards per existing land use designations and zoning districts. The sites are located in zoning districts that accommodate densities between 18 to 50 dwelling units per acre. Table 11, and Figures 12 and 13 in the draft Housing Element Update show the vacant parcels that are currently zoned to allow residential development and the realistic capacity for number of units.

Safety Element

Approved in 2019, Assembly Bill (AB) 747 requires each jurisdiction to review and update as necessary the Safety Element of its General Plan to identify evacuation routes and capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios. This information must be included by January 1, 2022, or upon approval of the next update to the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Also approved in 2019, Senate Bill (SB) 99 requires jurisdictions, upon the next revision of the Housing Element on or after January 1, 2020, to review and update the safety element to include information identifying residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes. The proposed Safety Element Update addresses the requirements of these bills.

Proposed areas of the Safety Element to be updated include fire hazards, stormwater management, and emergency response and preparedness, especially as they relate to the City's projected climate change exposure and vulnerability. The Safety Element would be updated to ensure alignment with other City plans such as the City of Santa Clarita 2015 Hazards Mitigation Plan, 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan,[2] and addressing new state requirements pertaining to climate change, wildfire risk, and evacuation routes for residential neighborhoods.

8. Environmental Review

The City of Santa Clarita circulated the Draft EIR for the One Valley One Vision (OVOV) General Plan from September 2010 to February 2011 that analyzed the General Plan for potential environmental impacts (State Clearinghouse No. 2008071133). The General Plan included an update to the Housing Element, which was updated again in 2013, and adopted by City Council in 2013. The OVOV EIR discussed the potential environmental impacts associated with future development allowed under the OVOV General Plan and included an analysis of the estimated "build out" of the city through the horizon year 2030.

The EIR estimated new development for residential, commercial, office, industrial, open space, and other uses throughout the city. The EIR analysis found that impacts under most issue areas would be less than significant or could be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. Exceptions were as follows:

- Air Quality Impact 3.3 related to construction and operational emissions from General Plan buildout
- Global Climate Change Impact 3.4 related to construction and operational greenhouse gas emissions from General Plan buildout
- Agricultural Resources Impact 3.5 from exposure of future residents to nuisances associated with agricultural operations
- Biological Resources Impact 3.7 from loss of special status species and wildlife movement opportunities
- Utilities and Infrastructure Impact 3.17 from a shortfall in landfill capacity for solid waste
- Noise Impact 3.18 from construction and operational noise associated with General Plan Buildout

[2] The City prepared the 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan concurrently with the Safety Element of the General Plan for document consistency. This Initial Study- Negative Declaration (IS-ND) does not analyze impacts of the 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is considered a separate project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

For the impacts listed above no additional policies or feasible mitigation were available to reduce impacts under these issue areas. Environmental impacts were assessed for the Housing Element Update as part of the One Valley, One Vision General Plan EIR. This initial study evaluates future development of the current RHNA allocation of 10,031 dwelling units throughout Santa Clarita as facilitated by the 2021 Housing Element and implementation of the Safety Element. The approach is a programmatic analysis of potential development rather than a detailed analysis of project sites. Where possible, the analysis tiers off the existing General Plan EIR where existing regulatory and environmental conditions remain the same. Where the regulatory environment has changed since the General Plan EIR was adopted in 2011, a more detailed analysis is provided.

9. Discretionary Action

Implementation of the 2021 Housing Element would require the following discretionary actions by the City of Santa Clarita Planning Commission and/or City Council:

- Approval of the 2021-2029 Housing Element
- Approval of the Safety Element
- Adoption of the Initial Study-Negative Declaration (IS-ND) prepared for the 2021-2029 Housing Element

10. Location of Prior Environmental Document(s)

A copy of the One Valley, One Vision General Plan EIR is available online at the City of Santa Clarita, Planning Department webpage: https://www.santa-clarita.com/city-hall/departments/community-development/planning/environmental-impact-reports-completed

11. Have California Native American Tribes Traditionally and Culturally Affiliated with the Project Area Requested Consultation Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1?

The City initiated the tribal consultation process, as required under Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21080.3.1 and consistent with AB 52 and SB 18. The City mailed consultation letters on May 24, 2021 according to SB 18 and AB 52 to contacts identified by the Native American Heritage Commission and to Native American tribes that requested the City of Santa Clarita notify them of projects subject to AB 52 or SB 18. Under AB 52, Native American tribes have 30 days to respond and request further project information and formal consultation, and under SB 18 Native American tribes have 90 days to respond requesting consultation. On June 2, 2021, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (FTBMI) requested consultation on the project. To date consultation is still ongoing.

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

This project would potentially affect the environmental factors checked below, involving at least one impact that is "Potentially Significant" or "Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

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

Determination

Based on this initial evaluation:

■ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions to the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "less than significant with mitigation incorporated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect (1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and (2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potential significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Signature	December 16, 2021 Date
James Chow Printed Name	Senior Planner Title

Environmental Checklist

1 Aesthetics

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:				
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. In 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 a 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?	☐	☐	☐	■
d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	■

Scenic views generally refer to visual access to, or the visibility of, a particular natural or man-made visual resource from a given vantage point or corridor. Focal views focus on a particular object, scene, setting, or feature of visual interest. Panoramic views, or vistas, provide visual access to a large geographic area, for which the field of view can be wide and extend into the distance. Panoramic views are usually associated with vantage points looking out over urban or natural areas that provide a geographic orientation and view not commonly available. Examples of panoramic views might include an urban skyline, a valley, a mountain range, the ocean, or other water bodies. Santa Clarita is generally bounded by three mountain ranges, the Sierra Pelona Mountains, Santa Susana Mountains, and San Gabriel Mountains that provide views surrounding the city. The most notable body of water is the Santa Clara River that runs east to west through the city.

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

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

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 a 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?

d. Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?

Scenic corridors consist of land visible from the highway right-of-way and are comprised primarily of natural features and landforms. When a city or county nominates an eligible scenic highway for official designation, it must identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway. Scenic corridors are defined as corridors that possesses highly scenic and natural features, as viewed from the highway. Topography, vegetation, viewing distance, and/or jurisdictional lines determine the corridor boundaries. Under the "Corridor Protection Program," a city must adopt ordinances, zoning, and/or planning policies that are designed to protect the scenic quality of an officially designated corridor. According to the State Scenic Highway system map, Interstate 5 (I-5) from Interstate 210 (I-210) near Tunnel Station/Route 126 near Castaic is eligible to be designated a State Scenic Highway. The City's Circulation Element also states that although SR 14 runs through the city, it is not considered a Scenic Highway.

Furthermore, the City of Santa Clarita Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan has established several regulatory requirements for the preservation of aesthetic resources. The following goals, objectives, and policies in the City's Conservation and Open Space Element within the General Plan would protect canyons, ridgelines, and natural hillsides from future development:

Goal CO 2: Conserve the Santa Clarita Valley's hillsides, canyons, ridgelines, soils, and minerals, which provide the physical setting for the natural and built environments.

Goal CO 6: Preservation of scenic features that keep the Santa Clarita Valley beautiful and enhance quality of life, community identity, and property values.

Objective CO 6.1: Protect the scenic character of local topographic features.

Policy CO 6.1.1: Protect scenic canyons, as described in Part I of this element, from overdevelopment and environmental degradation.

Policy CO 6.1.2: Preserve significant ridgelines, as shown on the Exhibit CO-7, as a scenic backdrop throughout the community by maintaining natural grades and vegetation.

Policy CO 6.1.3: Protect the scenic quality of unique geologic features throughout the planning area, such as Vasquez Rocks, by including these features within park and open space land, where possible.

Objective CO 6.2: Protect the scenic character of view corridors.

Policy CO 6.2.1: Where feasible, encourage development proposals to have varied building heights to maintain view corridor sight lines.

Objective CO 6.3: Protect the scenic character of major water bodies.

Policy CO 6.3.1: Support the efforts of Los Angeles County to protect the shores of Castaic Lake to preserve its scenic quality from development.

Objective CO 6.5: Maintain the scenic character of designated routes, gateways, and vista points along roadways.

Policy CO 6.5.1: In approving new development projects, consider scenic views at major entry points to the Santa Clarita Valley, including gateways located at the Newhall Pass along Lake Hughes Road, Route 126, Bouquet Canyon Road, Sierra Highway, State Route 14, and other locations as deemed appropriate by the reviewing authority.

Policy CO 6.5.2: Establish scenic routes in appropriate locations as determined by the reviewing agency, and adopt guidelines for these routes to maintain their scenic character.

New development accommodated by the Housing Element Update would be reviewed for consistency with regulations related to aesthetics, light, and glare contained in the Title 17 (Zoning Code) of the City's Municipal Code, which incorporate extensive design guidelines for single-family and multi-family residential development. Section 17.57.020 of the Santa Clarita Municipal Code (SCMC) requires all lighting and electrical devices to be operated so that they do not disturb nearby receptors. This requires all light sources to be directed downward and shielded from nearby streets and properties. Chapters 17.51 through 17.57 of the SCMC also emphasizes that to maintain the City's aesthetics, project plans must be consistent with the City's Community Character and Design Guidelines, which include guidelines for *Design Trends and Urban Form, Community Character, Single-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Commercial, Mixed-Use, and Industrial and Business Park.* The Design Guidelines include site planning and design, site grading, varied building design and architecture, articulation, colors and finish materials, project entry design treatment, parking lots, driveways and garage, garage doors, equipment screening, requirements for open space, landscaping, lighting intensity and fixture design, and security.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update will not result in impacts to scenic vistas. Future development projects would be subject to development plan review where potential aesthetic impacts would be minimized. Development proposals for individual projects would be subject to adopted development guidelines, including standards that govern visual quality and community design. Compliance with the General Plan policies and Community Character and Design Guidelines in the SCMC ensures that future projects are sensitive to the surrounding environment and visually compatible with existing neighborhoods. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to scenic vistas, scenic highways, visual character, and light and glare and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

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2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)); timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526); or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	■
d. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	■
e. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	■

The City of Santa Clarita is surrounded by three mountain ranges composed of the Sierra Pelona Mountains, Santa Susana Mountains, and San Gabriel Mountains. The Angeles National Forest is located north and east of the city. The Santa Clarita General Plan does not recognize any timberland zones within the city (City of Santa Clarita 2011). The California Department of Conservation (DOC) maintains information related to mapping and monitoring of farmland and farmland subject to Williamson Act contract. The 2017 *California Department of Conservation Williamson Act Contract, Division of Land Resource Protection* map does not depict any Williamson Act Contract lands present in the City of Santa Clarita. The most recent 2018 DOC, California Important Farmland Finder maps show that there is no active farmland in the City of Santa Clarita. The city consists of Urban and Built-Up Land, Nonagricultural or Natural Vegetation, and Other Land (DOC 2018).

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

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

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document and there is no active Farmland in the city, the Housing Element Update would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), or conflict with existing zoning and existing Williamson Act contracts, and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

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

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

"Forest land" is defined in PRC Section 12220(g) pursuant to the California Forest Legacy Program Act of 2007 as land that can support 10 percent or more native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.

There is no land in the City of Santa Clarita designated as forest land, or timberland zoned as Timberland Production. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, or timberland zoned Timberland Production, and no impact would occur.

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 land in the City of Santa Clarita designated as forest land, or timberland zoned as Timberland Production. Additionally, there is no land designated as Farmland (DOC 2018). The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document the Housing Element Update would not result in 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, and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

3 Air Quality

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	■	☐
b. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment 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?	☐	☐	☐	■

The city lies within a transitional microclimatic zone located between two climatic types, termed "valley marginal" and "high desert." This climate classification results in warm dry summers with daytime temperatures ranging between 70 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit (°F), whereas winters are recorded to be temperate, semi-moist, and sunny with daytime temperatures ranging from 40 to 65°F. The city's wind flow patterns consist of diurnal and drainage winds. The city's topography and climate can cause a higher risk of wildland fires which in result would cause lower Air Quality Index (AQI) score due to possible rising smog and smoke levels. The summer and fall months are the most crucial seasons with highest susceptibility to fires due to the Santa Ana Winds moving into the region (City of Santa Clarita 2010).

The Safety Element Update highlights that maximum fine particle levels persisted in the "hazardous" range of the AQI in 2020 for weeks in several areas of the State which includes the South Coast Air Basin (SCAB), in which the city is located.

The federal and State Clean Air Acts (CAA) mandate the control and reduction of certain air pollutants. Under these laws, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) have established the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and the California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) for "criteria pollutants" and other pollutants. Some pollutants are emitted directly from a source (e.g., vehicle tailpipe, an exhaust stack of a factory, etc.) into the atmosphere, including carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds (VOC)/reactive organic gases (ROG), nitrogen oxides (NO_X), particulate matter with diameters of ten microns or less (PM_{10}) and 2.5 microns or less ($PM_{2.5}$), sulfur dioxide, and lead. Other pollutants are created indirectly through chemical reactions in the atmosphere, such as ozone, which is created by atmospheric chemical and photochemical reactions primarily between VOC and NO_X. Secondary pollutants include oxidants, ozone, and sulfate and nitrate particulates (smog).

The City of Santa Clarita is in the SCAB. The SCAB is bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean, and on the north and east by the San Gabriel, San Bernardino, and San Jacinto mountains. The SCAB is under the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). The SCAQMD is responsible for development of the regional Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP), which is a comprehensive program for compliance with all federal and State air quality planning requirements including CAAQS and NAAQS. The most recently adopted AQMP is the 2016 AQMP (SCAQMD 2017).

Depending on whether the standards are met or exceeded, the Basin is classified as being in "attainment" or "nonattainment." Under State law, air districts are required to prepare a plan for air quality improvement for pollutants for which the district is in non-compliance. The SCAQMD is in non-attainment for the federal standards for ozone and $PM_{2.5}$ and the State standards for ozone, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ (SCAQMD 2016). The Basin is designated unclassifiable or in attainment for all other federal and State standards. The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15064.7) provide that, when available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make determinations of significance. These thresholds are designed such that a project that would not exceed the adopted thresholds would not have an individually or cumulatively significant impact on the Basin's air quality. This analysis conforms to the methodologies recommended in the SCAQMD's *CEQA Air Quality Handbook* (1993) and supplemental guidance provided by the SCAQMD, including recommended thresholds for emissions associated with both construction and operation of the project (SCAQMD 2017).

Table 3 presents the significance thresholds for construction and operational-related criteria air pollutant and precursor emissions for individual projects. These represent the levels at which a project's individual emissions of criteria air pollutants or precursors would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to the Basin's existing air quality conditions.

Table 3 SCAQMD Thresholds of Significance

Construction Thresholds	Operational Thresholds
75 pounds per day of ROG	55 pounds per day of ROG
100 pounds per day of NO_X	55 pounds per day of NO_X
550 pounds per day of CO	550 pounds per day of CO
150 pounds per day of SO_X	150 pounds per day of SO_X
150 pounds per day of PM_{10}	150 pounds per day of PM_{10}
55 pounds per day of $PM_{2.5}$	55 pounds per day of $PM_{2.5}$

Notes: ROG = reactive organic gases; NO_X = nitrogen oxides; CO = carbon monoxide; SO_x = sulfur oxides
Source: SCAQMD 2015

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

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?

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

A project may be inconsistent with the AQMP if it would generate population, housing, or employment growth exceeding forecasts used in the development of the AQMP. The 2016 AQMP, the most recent AQMP adopted by the SCAQMD, incorporates local general plans and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) socioeconomic forecast projections of regional

population, housing and employment growth. The Housing Element Update would not increase development potential above that already allowed under the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code. The Housing Element Update would bring the forecasts for the City's General Plan, the SCAG RTP/SCS, and SCAQMD's AQMP into consistency since the RTP/SCS and AQMP will be updated to reflect new forecasts for each city in the region.

Additionally, City's Conservation and Open Space Element contains the following policies that focus on documentation, maintenance, preservation, conservation, and enhancement of air quality:

Goal CO 7: Clean air to protect human health and support healthy ecosystems.

Objective CO 7.1: Reduce air pollution from mobile sources.

- **Policy CO 7.1.1:** Through the mixed land use patterns and multi-modal circulation policies set forth in the Land Use and Circulation Elements, limit air pollution from transportation sources.
- **Policy CO 7.1.2:** Support the use of alternative fuel vehicles.
- **Policy CO 7.1.3:** Support alternative travel modes and new technologies, including infrastructure to support alternative fuel vehicles, as they become commercially available.

Objective CO 7.2: Apply guidelines to protect sensitive receptors from sources of air pollution as developed by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), where appropriate.

- **Policy CO 7.2.1:** Ensure adequate spacing of sensitive land uses from the following sources of air pollution: high traffic freeways and roads; distribution centers; truck stops; chrome plating facilities; dry cleaners using perchloroethylene; and large gas stations, as recommended by CARB.

Objective CO 7.3: Coordinate with other agencies to plan for and implement programs for improving air quality in the South Coast Air Basin.

- **Policy CO 7.3.1:** Coordinate with local, regional, state, and federal agencies to develop and implement regional air quality policies and programs.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle.

However, construction activities such as the operation of construction vehicles and equipment over unpaved areas, grading, trenching, and disturbance of stockpiled soils have the potential to generate fugitive dust (PM_{10}) through the exposure of soil to wind erosion and dust entrainment. In addition, exhaust emissions associated with heavy construction equipment would potentially degrade air quality. However, new development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be subject to compliance with applicable SCAQMD rules, including Rule 401 (Visible Emissions), Rule 402 (Nuisance), Rule 403 (Fugitive Dust), and Rule 1113 (Architectural Coatings) to reduce emissions, dust, and volatile organic compounds during project construction.

Long-term emissions associated with operational impacts would include emissions from vehicle trips, natural gas and electricity use, landscape maintenance equipment, and consumer products and architectural coating associated with development within the city. Operational impacts would be addressed by General Plan objectives, and policies, such as Objective CO 7.1 to reduce air pollutants from mobile sources and Objective CO 7.2 which would require future development under the Housing Element Update to adhere to guidelines that protect sensitive receivers from air

pollution. Operational impacts would be addressed by General Plan policies and other regulations and standards that govern air quality in Santa Clarita.

Therefore, the adoption of the Housing Element Update would not conflict with emissions forecasts in the AQMP, obstruct implementation of the AQMP, 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, or expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. The Housing Element Update would not increase development potential above that already allowed under the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

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

The occurrence and severity of potential odor impacts depends on a number of factors, including the nature, frequency, and intensity of the source; the wind speeds and direction; and the sensitivity of the receiving location, each contribute to the intensity of the impact. Although offensive odors seldom cause physical harm, they can be annoying and cause distress among the public and generate citizen complaints.

SCAQMD's *CEQA Air Quality Handbook* (1993) identifies land uses associated with odor complaints as agricultural uses, wastewater treatment plants, chemical and food processing plants, composting, refineries, landfills, dairies, and fiberglass molding. Residential uses are not identified as a major source or odors by SCAQMD. The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Future projects accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be required to comply with local and State regulations, such as SCAQMD Rule 402, which regulates nuisance odors during project construction. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

4 Biological Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
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?	☐	☐	☐	■

"Endangered" species are those considered in imminent danger of extinction due their limited numbers. "Threatened" species refers to those likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future, primarily on a local scale. "Sensitive" species are those that are naturally rare or have been locally depleted or put at risk by human activities. Although the perpetuation of these species is not apparently significantly threatened, they are considered vulnerable and may be candidates for future listing.

The Santa Clarita planning area encompasses the Santa Clara River Valley, the east extension of the Santa Susana Mountains, the western reaches of the San Gabriel Mountains, and the southern slopes of the Sierra Pelona range. Due to the range of ecosystems found in this geographic setting, the planning area contains a wide variety of natural vegetation types. According to the Santa Clarita General Plan, approximately 49 percent (237 square miles) of the planning area is located within National Forest lands. Predominant vegetation within National Forest lands include mixed chaparral with hardwood and conifer forests at higher elevations, and riparian vegetation along stream channels. Much of the undeveloped portions of the Valley floor are vegetated with coastal scrub interspersed with annual grasslands. Around and east of Agua Dulce, desert scrub components and scattered junipers are found. Wildlife within the planning area is also diverse. River channels and open upland areas of the planning area provide habitat for movement and foraging, as does the adjacent National Forest land. Species of bats, rodents, rabbits, weasels, badgers, skunks, raccoons, fox, bobcat, black bear, and coyote are known to inhabit canyons throughout the planning area. Various habitats within the planning area also support bird diversity for resident, migratory, and seasonal species. Numerous species of raptors, sparrow, quail, hummingbirds, swallows, larks, and owls have been identified, along with such federal and State special status species as Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), and least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*). The flycatcher typically occupies the unincorporated County portion of the planning area near Castaic Creek just west of the city boundary, while the vireo is found in local riparian habitats.

Amphibians and reptiles are abundant and relatively diverse within certain portions of the planning area. Snakes, toads, frogs, lizards, and salamanders are primarily found along the Santa Clara River and its tributaries, as well as other riparian areas (City of Santa Clarita 2011). The unarmored threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*), a federal and State-listed endangered species, has also been identified in the planning area. As one of the last free-flowing natural riparian systems left in southern California, the Santa Clara River supports a diversity of organisms by providing breeding sites, traveling routes, and other resources for wildlife. Protection of the watershed for habitat preservation is a key conservation goal.

The City of Santa Clarita's Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance (Section 17.51.040 of the SCMC) requires the preservation of all healthy oak trees, including scrub oaks, within the city, unless compelling reasons justify the cutting, pruning, encroachment, and/or removal of such trees. Additionally, the Ordinance states that no person shall cut, prune, remove, relocate, endanger, damage, or encroach into the protected zone of any oak on any public or private property within the city except in accordance with the conditions of a valid oak tree permit issued by the City. This generally applies to trees that are six inches or more in circumference (two inches in diameter).

Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Program

Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) are officially designated areas within Los Angeles County with irreplaceable biological resources. The SEA Program objective is to conserve genetic and physical diversity within Los Angeles County by designating biological resource areas that are capable of sustaining themselves into the future. SEAs are defined as ecologically important land and water

systems that are valuable as plant or animal communities, often important to the preservation of threatened or endangered species, and conservation of biological diversity in the county. The SEA overlay, along with the SEA conditional use permit process, are referred to as the SEA Program, which allows the County to implement its biotic resource goals through land use regulations and biological resource assessments. Within the Santa Clarita Valley, the General Plan has designated the following SEAs:

- Cruzan Mesa Vernal Pools SEA
- Santa Clara River SEA
- Santa Felicia SEA
- Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills SEA
- Valley Oaks Savannah

Open Space Acquisition Plan

The City of Santa Clarita Open Space Acquisition Plan (OSAP) represents the City's ongoing efforts to preserve and protect open space in the Santa Clarita Valley (City of Santa Clarita 2020). Through the creation of a systematic and objective mechanism for evaluating open space, the Plan would:

- Assist in the creation of a "green belt" surrounding the City of Santa Clarita to improve and expand wildlife habitat and corridors.
- Provide a framework for the City to evaluate, acquire, and maintain the most beneficial parcels within and surrounding the City of Santa Clarita for preservation as open space.

In July 2007, City of Santa Clarita property owners voted in favor of establishing an Open Space Preservation District. A special assessment paid by city property owners will allow the City to purchase land that could otherwise be developed. The Open Space Preservation District assists the City in preserving natural lands, retaining wildlife corridors, and completing the city's greenbelt buffer.

a. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Sensitive biological resources are those habitats or species that have been recognized by federal, State, and/or local agencies as being endangered, threatened, rare, or in decline throughout all or part of their historical distribution. According to the Santa Clarita General Plan numerous sensitive plant and animal species and communities have been identified within the General Plan area, especially within National Forest lands. Sensitive communities include southern coast live oak woodlands, valley oak woodland, southern mixed riparian, southern riparian scrub, sycamore alder riparian woodland, and southern willow scrub. Vernal pools have also been identified on Cruzan Mesa, in Plum Canyon, and within Fair Oaks Ranch. The federally endangered least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher depend on nesting and foraging habitat provided by vegetation communities within the General Plan area. Riparian habitats along the Santa Clara River, Soledad Canyon, Bouquet Canyon, and San Francisquito Canyon support the endangered unarmored threespine stickleback. Habitat for the following sensitive species is known to occur within the General Plan or in forest lands adjacent to the planning area, which should be protected from adverse impacts of development (City of Santa Clarita 2010):

- Gnatcatcher, coastal California (*Polioptila californica californica*);
- Frog, California red-legged (*Rana aurora draytonii*);
- Toad, arroyo (arroyo southwestern) (*Bufo californicus microscaphus*);
- Barberry, Nevin's (*Berberis nevinii*);
- Stickleback, unarmored threespine (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*);
- Flycatcher, southwestern willow (*Empidonax trailli extimus*)

The Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan contains the following applicable goals, objectives, and policies that focus on the documentation, maintenance, preservation, conservation and enhancement of biological resources:

Goal CO 3: Conservation of biological resources and ecosystems, including sensitive habitats and species.

Objective CO 3.1: In review of development plans and projects, encourage conservation of existing natural areas and restoration of damaged natural vegetation to provide for habitat and biodiversity.

Policy CO 3.1.1: On the Land Use Map and through the development review process, concentrate development into previously developed or urban areas to promote infill development and prevent sprawl and habitat loss, to the extent feasible.

Policy CO 3.1.2: Avoid designating or approving new development that will adversely impact wetlands, floodplains, threatened or endangered species and habitat, and water bodies supporting fish or recreational uses, and establish an adequate buffer area as deemed appropriate through site specific review.

Policy CO 3.1.3: On previously undeveloped sites ("greenfields"), identify biological resources and incorporate habitat preservation measures into the site plan, where appropriate. (This policy will generally not apply to urban infill sites, except as otherwise determined by the reviewing agency).

Policy CO 3.1.4: For new development on sites with degraded habitat, include habitat restoration measures as part of the project development plan, where appropriate.

Policy CO 3.1.5: Promote the use of site-appropriate native or adapted plant materials, and prohibit use of invasive or noxious plant species in landscape designs.

Policy CO 3.1.6: On development sites, preserve and enhance natural site elements including existing water bodies, soil conditions, ecosystems, trees, vegetation and habitat, to the extent feasible.

Policy CO 3.1.7: Limit the use of turf-grass on development sites and promote the use of native or adapted plantings to promote biodiversity and natural habitat.

Policy CO 3.1.8: On development sites, require tree planting to provide habitat and shade to reduce the heat island effect caused by pavement and buildings.

Policy CO 3.1.9: During construction, ensure preservation of habitat and trees designated to be protected through use of fencing and other means as appropriate, so as to prevent damage by grading, soil compaction, pollution, erosion or other adverse construction impacts.

Policy CO 3.1.10: To the extent feasible, encourage the use of open space to promote biodiversity.

Policy CO 3.1.11: Promote use of pervious materials or porous concrete on sidewalks to allow for planted area infiltration, allow oxygen to reach tree roots (preventing sidewalk lift-up from roots seeking oxygen), and mitigate tree sidewalk conflicts, in order to maintain a healthy mature urban forest.

Objective CO 3.2: Identify and protect areas which have exceptional biological resource value due to a specific type of vegetation, habitat, ecosystem, or location.

Policy CO 3.2.1: Protect wetlands from development impacts, with the goal of achieving no net loss (or functional reduction) of jurisdictional wetlands within the planning area.

Policy CO 3.2.2: Ensure that development is located and designed to protect oak, and other significant indigenous woodlands.

Policy CO 3.2.3: Ensure protection of any endangered or threatened species or habitat, in conformance with State and federal laws.

Policy CO 3.2.4: Protect biological resources in the designated Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) through the siting and design of development which is highly compatible with the SEA resources. Specific development standards shall be identified to control the types of land use, density, building location and size, roadways and other infrastructure, landscape, drainage, and other elements to assure the protection of the critical and important plant and animal habitats of each SEA. In general, the principle shall be to minimize the intrusion and impacts of development in these areas with sufficient controls to adequately protect the resources.

Objective CO 3.3: Protect significant wildlife corridors from encroachment by development that would hinder or obstruct wildlife movement.

Policy CO 3.3.5: Encourage connection of natural open space areas in site design, to allow for wildlife movement.

Objective CO 3.4: Ensure that development in the Santa Clarita Valley does not adversely impact habitat within the adjacent National Forest lands.

Policy CO 3.4.1: Coordinate with the United States Forest Service on discretionary development projects that may have impacts on the National Forest.

Policy CO 3.4.2: Consider principles of forest management in land use decisions for projects adjacent to the National Forest, including limiting the use of invasive species, discouraging off-road vehicle use, maintaining fuel modification zones and fire access roads, and other measures as appropriate, in accordance with the goals set forth in the Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan.

Policy CO 3.4.3: On the Land Use Map, maintain low density rural residential and open space uses adjacent to forest land, and protect the urban-forest interface area from overdevelopment.

Policy CO 3.4.4: Participate as a stakeholder in planning efforts by the United States Forest Service for land uses within the National Forest, providing input as appropriate.

Objective CO 3.5: Maintain, enhance, and manage the urban forest throughout developed portions of the Santa Clarita Valley to provide habitat, reduce energy consumption, and create a more livable environment.

Policy CO 3.5.2: Where appropriate, promote planting of trees that are native or climactically appropriate to the surrounding environment, emphasizing oaks, sycamores, maple, walnut, and other native species in order to enhance habitat, and discouraging the use of introduced species such as eucalyptus, pepper trees, and palms except as ornamental landscape features.

Policy CO 3.5.3: Pursuant to the requirements of the zoning ordinance, protect heritage oak trees that, due to their size and condition, are deemed to have exceptional value to the community.

Objective CO 3.6: Minimize impacts of human activity and the built environment on natural plant and wildlife communities.

Policy CO 3.6.1: Minimize light trespass, sky-glow, glare, and other adverse impacts on the nocturnal ecosystem by limiting exterior lighting to the level needed for safety and comfort; reduce unnecessary lighting for landscaping and architectural purposes, and encourage reduction of lighting levels during nonbusiness nighttime hours.

Policy CO 3.6.2: Reduce impervious surfaces and provide more natural vegetation to enhance microclimates and provide habitat. In implementing this policy, consider the following design concepts:

- Consideration of reduced parking requirements, where supported by a parking study and/or through shared use of parking areas;
- Increased use of vegetated areas around parking lot perimeters; such areas should be designed as bioswales or as otherwise determined appropriate to allow surface water infiltration;
- Use of connected open space areas as drainage infiltration areas in lieu of curbed landscape islands, minimizing the separation of natural and landscaped areas into isolated “islands;”
- Breaking up large expanses of paving with natural landscaped areas planted with shade trees to reduce the heat island effect, along with shrubs and groundcover to provide diverse vegetation for habitat.

Policy CO 3.6.3: Restrict use of unauthorized off-road vehicles within sensitive habitat areas through signage, fencing, or other means as appropriate.

Policy CO 3.6.4: Provide public information and support with demonstration sites at City facilities on gardening and landscaping techniques to reduce spread of invasive species and pollution from pesticides and fertilizers that threaten natural ecosystems.

Policy CO 3.6.5: Ensure revegetation of graded areas and slopes adjacent to natural open space areas with native plants (consistent with fire prevention requirements).

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in

impacts to candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Future development projects accommodated by the Housing Element Update would be subject to development plan review to determine potential concerns related to candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations based on site-specific locations and development design. Future development would also be required to comply with local and State regulations related to sensitive species. Therefore, the adoption of the Housing Element Update itself would not result in impacts to candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

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, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Plant communities are considered sensitive biological resources if they have limited distributions, high wildlife value, include sensitive species, or are particularly susceptible to disturbance. Sensitive habitats communities within the General Plan area include southern California threespine stickleback stream, Riversidian alluvial fan sage scrub, southern coast live oak riparian forest, southern cottonwood willow riparian forest, southern mixed riparian forest, southern riparian forest, southern riparian scrub, southern sycamore alder riparian woodland, southern willow scrub, California walnut woodland, valley oak woodland, mainland cherry forest, and vernal pools (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

Reasonably anticipated development resulting from the Housing Element would be subject to policies within the 2011 Santa Clarita General Plan, as listed under *Item a*. Specifically, General Plan Policy CO 10.1.2 that protects the Santa Clara River corridor and its major tributaries and Policy CO 10.1.2 b. that requires development on properties adjacent to, but outside of the defined primary river corridor to be designed to protect water quality, plants, and habitat. Additionally, as listed under *Item a*, Policies CO 3.1.1 and 3.1.6 emphasize that new development would be concentrated in urban infill areas to prevent urban sprawl and natural elements should be preserved on vacant sites where feasible (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts to any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural communities in the city or adjacent areas. All development would be required to comply with federal and State regulations, in addition to the policies within the Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan, as discussed above. Future development projects accommodated by the Housing Element Update would also be subject to development plan review, pursuant to policies in the General Plan, such as Objective CO 3.1 and Policy CO 3.1.1, to determine potential concerns related to riparian habitats or other sensitive natural communities. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not have a substantial adverse effect on riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

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?

As previously discussed, the Santa Clara River corridor and its major tributaries create wetlands throughout the General Plan area. Additionally, federally protected wetlands outside of the primary river corridor may be impacted by development through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means (City of Santa Clarita 2010). According to the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory, the city contains wetlands in the form of Riverine habitats as well as Freshwater Forested/Shrub wetland habitats (USFWS 2021).

The City's General Plan contains policies focused on avoidance and minimization of impacts to wetlands as follows:

Policy CO 3.2.1: Protect wetlands from development impacts, with the goal of achieving no net loss (or functional reduction) of jurisdictional wetlands within the planning area.

Policy CO 3.1.2: Avoid designating or approving new development that will adversely impact wetlands, floodplains, threatened or endangered species and habitat, and water bodies supporting fish or recreational uses, and establish an adequate buffer area as deemed appropriate through site specific review.

Policy CO 10.1.3: Through dedications and acquisitions, obtain open space needed to preserve and protect wildlife corridors and habitat, which may include land within SEA's, wetlands, woodlands, water bodies, and areas with threatened or endangered flora and fauna.

The Housing Element, in and of itself, does not propose any specific development. Any development that results from the implementation of the Housing Element Update would be subject to Santa Clarita General Plan polices, such as Policy CO 3.2.1 to protect wetlands from development impacts. Therefore, the Housing Element would have no impact 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.

NO IMPACT

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?

Wildlife corridors are generally defined as connections between habitat patches that allow for physical and genetic exchange between otherwise isolated animal populations. Such linkages may serve a local purpose, such as between foraging and denning areas, or they may be regional in nature, allowing movement across the landscape. Some habitat linkages may serve as migration corridors, wherein animals periodically move away from an area and then subsequently return. Examples of barriers or impediments to movement include housing and other urban development, roads, fencing, unsuitable habitat, or open areas with little vegetative cover. Regional and local wildlife movements are expected to be concentrated near topographic features that allow convenient passage, including roads, drainages, and ridgelines.

Santa Clarita has been converted from open space to residential, commercial, and recreational uses, resulting in habitat fragmentation. However, the San Gabriel–Castaic Connection links two units of

the Angeles National Forest. The San Gabriel–Castaic Connection linkage is the only connection between these two core habitat areas and provides for the exchange of individuals and genetic information between populations in the Castaic and San Gabriel Mountains that may otherwise become isolated (City of Santa Clarita 2010). General Plan Objectives 3.1 through 3.6, and 10.1, listed above under *Items a* through *c*, aim to preserve biological resource within the city thought the concentration of development in previously disturbed areas, preventing sprawl and habitat loss, requiring that natural areas be adequately buffered from development, and natural site elements be preserved.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts to 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. All future development would require project-specific developmental review to determine compliance with the City's habitat conservation regulations, federal and State regulations, and the policies within the Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan, as listed above. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not 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 and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

e. Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

According to Los Angeles County's Department of Regional Planning (DRP) SEA Program there are five designated SEA locations in the Santa Clarita Valley: Cruzan Mesa Vernal Pools SEA, Santa Clara River SEA, Santa Felicia SEA, Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills SEA and Valley Oaks Savannah. Among the five, the Santa Clara River SEA and the San Francisquito Canyon SEA traverses the city limits and provides habitat and biological resources for endangered species such as the unarmored threespine stickleback (City of Santa Clarita 2010). Development in SEAs is severely limited as the designation serves to ensure the continued protection and preservation of species and habitats within the SEAs. General Plan Policy LU 7.8.2 aims to protect all designated SEAs from incompatible development (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

The City of Santa Clarita's Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance requires the preservation of all healthy oak trees, including scrub oaks, within the city, unless compelling reasons justify the cutting, pruning, encroachment, and/or removal of such trees. Additionally, the Ordinance states that no person shall cut, prune, remove, relocate, endanger, damage, or encroach into the protected zone of any oak on any public or private property within the city except in accordance with the conditions of a valid oak tree permit issued by the City. This generally applies to trees that are six inches or more in circumference (two inches in diameter).

The Housing Element in and of itself does not propose the development of any specific site, rather it facilitates housing within the city. As a policy document the Housing Element Update would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan. Any future development that results from the implementation of the Housing Element Update would be

subject to all local, State and federal regulations, such as the City's tree preservation ordinance and General Plan Policy LU 7.8.2.

NO 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?

The city is not part of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan. The city does contain SEAs as described above in *Item e,* which designates areas where planning and development should be sensitive to resources and habitats.

The Housing Element in and of itself does not propose the development of any specific site, rather it facilitates housing within the city. As a policy document the housing element would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan. Any future development that results from the implementation of the Housing Element Update would be subject to all local, State, and federal regulations.

NO IMPACT

5 Cultural Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☐	☐	■

CEQA requires that a lead agency determine whether a project could have a significant effect on historical resources (PRC, Section 21084.1), unique archaeological resources (PRC Section 21083.2 [g]), and tribal cultural resources (PRC Section 21074 [a][1][A]-[B]). A historical resource is a resource listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) (Section 21084.1), a resource included in a local register of historical resources (Section 15064.5[a][2]), or any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant (Section 15064.5[a][3]).

Impacts to significant cultural resources that affect the characteristics of any resource that qualify it for the NRHP or adversely alter the significance of a resource listed in or eligible for listing in the CRHR are considered a significant effect on the environment. These impacts could result from physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of a historical resource would be materially impaired (CEQA Guidelines Section 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 or eligibility for inclusion in the CRHR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5[b][2][A]).

a. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

b. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?

The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society and the CRHR list 20 historical properties, sites, and landmarks in the City of Santa Clarita and the surrounding area (City of Santa Clarita 2010). Of these 20 sites, one site is on the CRHR, four are State Points of Historical Interest, one is a State Historic Landmark, and 14 are City Points of Historical Interest (City of Santa Clarita 2011, NPS 2020, OHP 2021).

A literature search prepared for the City's General Plan indicated that almost 70 Native American archeological sites have been identified near the Santa Clara River within the General Plan area. The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) identified three sites of Native American cultural significance near the river including CA-LAN-361, CA-LAN-366, and CA-LAN-367. The General Plan also listed dozens of significant historical properties, sites, and landmarks, of which one is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and 13 are recognized by the State of California (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

Goals, objectives, and policies put forth in the City's General Plan are intended to protect cultural resources. The Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan contains the following applicable goals, objectives, and policies that focus on the protection and preservation of archaeological and historic sites within the city:

Goal CO 5: Protection of historical and culturally significant resources that contribute to community identity and a sense of history.

Objective CO 5.1: Protect sites identified as having local, state, or national significance as a cultural or historical resource.

Policy CO 5.1.1: For sites identified on the Cultural and Historical Resources Map (Exhibit CO-6), review appropriate documentation prior to issuance of any permits for grading, demolition, alteration, and/or new development, to avoid significant adverse impacts. Such documentation may include cultural resource reports, environmental impact reports, or other information as determined to be adequate by the reviewing authority.

Objective CO 5.3: Encourage conservation and preservation of Native American cultural places, including prehistoric, archaeological, cultural, spiritual, and ceremonial sites on both public and private lands, throughout all stages of the planning and development process.

Policy CO 5.3.2: For any proposed development project that may have a potential impact on Native American cultural resources, provide notification to California Native American tribes on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission that have traditional lands within the City's jurisdiction, and consider the input received prior to a discretionary decision.

Policy CO 5.3.3: Review and consider a cultural resources study for any new grading or development in areas identified as having a high potential for Native American resources, and incorporate recommendations into the project approval as appropriate to mitigate impacts to cultural resources.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but puts forth goals and policies that regulate various aspects of new housing development in Santa Clarita. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not create adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5 or cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an or archaeological resource. Future development under the Housing Element Update would be required to comply with federal, State, and local regulations and the policies in the City's General Plan. Therefore, the adoption of the Housing Element Update would not result in changes to historical or archeological resources and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

c. Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

The disposition of human remains is governed by Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and PRC Sections 5097.94 and 5097.98 and falls within the jurisdiction of the NAHC. If human remains are discovered, the County Coroner must be notified within 48 hours and there should be no further disturbance to the site where the remains were found. If the remains are determined by the coroner to be Native American, the coroner is responsible for contacting the NAHC within 24 hours. The NAHC, pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98, will immediately notify those persons it believes to be most likely descended from the deceased Native Americans so they can inspect the burial site and make recommendations for treatment of the remains and associated grave goods.

The Housing Element Update does not propose the development of any specific sites, and any future development would be subject to developmental review and required to adhere to the City's policies and goals designed to reduce impacts to historic and cultural resources. The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries. Individual projects are not proposed as part of the Housing Element Update. New development accommodated by the Housing Element Update would be subject to federal, State, and local regulations and policies in the City's General Plan. Projects would be required to comply with CEQA Guidelines Section 15000 et seq. which set procedures for notifying the County Coroner and NAHC for identification and treatment of human remains if they are discovered during construction. Therefore, the adoption of the Housing Element Update would not disturb any human remains and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

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6 Energy

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☐	■

Environmental Setting

California is one of the lowest per capita energy users in the United States, ranked 48th in among states, due to its energy efficiency programs and mild climate. In 2019, California consumed 662 million barrels of petroleum, 2,144 billion cubic feet of natural gas, and one million short tons of coal in 2018 (United States Energy Information Administration [EIA] 2021a). The single largest end-use sector for energy consumption in California is transportation (39.4 percent), followed by industrial (23.1 percent), commercial (18.8 percent), and residential (18.7 percent) (EIA 2021b).

Most of California's electricity is generated in state with approximately 28 percent imported from the Northwest and Southwest in 2019; however, the State relies on out-of-state natural gas imports for nearly 90 percent of its supply (California Energy Commission [CEC] 2021a and 2021b). In addition, approximately 32 percent of California's electricity supply comes from renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar photovoltaic, geothermal, and biomass (CEC 2021a). In 2018, Senate Bill 100 accelerated the State's Renewable Portfolio Standards Program, codified in the Public Utilities Act, by requiring electricity providers to increase procurement from eligible renewable energy and zero-carbon resources to 33 percent of total retail sales by 2020, 60 percent by 2030, and 100 percent by 2045.

To reduce statewide vehicle emissions, California requires all motorists to use California Reformulated Gasoline, which is sourced almost exclusively from in-state refineries. Gasoline is the most used transportation fuel in California with 14.0 billion gallons sold in 2020 and is used by light duty cars, pickup trucks, sport utility vehicles, and aviation (California Department of Tax and Fee Administration 2021). Diesel is the second most used fuel in California with 4.2 billion gallons sold in 2015 and is used primarily by heavy duty-trucks, delivery vehicles, buses, trains, ships, boats and barges, farm equipment, and heavy-duty construction and military vehicles (CEC 2016).

Energy consumption is directly related to environmental quality in that the consumption of nonrenewable energy resources releases criteria air pollutant and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into the atmosphere. The environmental impacts of air pollutant and GHG emissions associated with

the project's energy consumption are discussed in detail in Section 3, *Air Quality*, and Section 8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, respectively.

Electricity services in the City are provided by SoCal Edison, and natural gas services are provided by Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas). Projects that are proposed under the Housing Element Update would be required to undergo project-specific evaluation to quantify specific impacts to energy consumption, which would occur during the permitting process for that project. As the criteria needed to assess these impacts is only available to the City upon submittal of a specific project proposal, any quantitative analysis would be speculative at this time. All projects would be required to conform to local, State, and federal regulations governing energy consumption reduction.

The California Green Building Standards Code sets targets for energy efficiency; water consumption; dual plumbing systems for potable and recyclable water; diversion of construction waste from landfills; and use of environmentally sensitive materials in construction and design, including ecofriendly flooring, carpeting, paint, coatings, thermal insulation, and acoustical wall and ceiling panels. Furthermore, the California Energy Code provides energy conservation standards for all new and renovated commercial and residential buildings constructed in California. All new developments in California must adhere to the requirements of the California Green Building Standards Code and the California Energy Code.

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

Reasonably foreseeable development under the Housing Element Update would consume energy during construction and operation using petroleum fuel, natural gas, and electricity, as further addressed below.

Construction

Energy use during construction associated with reasonably foreseeable development under the Housing Element Update would be in the form of fuel consumption (e.g., gasoline and diesel fuel) to operate heavy equipment, light-duty vehicles, machinery, and generators for lighting. In addition, temporary grid power may also be provided to construction trailers or electric construction equipment. Energy use during the construction of individual projects would be temporary in nature, and equipment used would be typical of construction projects in the region. In addition, construction contractors would be required to demonstrate compliance with applicable CARB regulations that restrict the idling of heavy-duty diesel motor vehicles and govern the accelerated retrofitting, repowering, or replacement of heavy-duty diesel on- and off-road equipment.

Construction activities associated with reasonably foreseeable development under the Housing Element Update would be required to utilize fuel-efficient equipment consistent with State and federal regulations and would comply with State measures to reduce the inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy. In addition, individual projects would be required to comply with the City's Construction and Demolition (C&D) Ordinance (05-09) to divert 65 percent of construction and demolition debris (City of Santa Clarita 2021). Developers would be required to complete a Construction and Demolition Materials Management Plan (CDMMP) for projects pursuant to SCMC Section 15.46.300.

These practices would result in efficient use of energy during construction of future development under the Housing Element Update. Therefore, future construction activities associated with reasonably foreseeable development under the Housing Element Update would not result in potentially significant environmental effects due to the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy. No impact would occur.

Operation

Long-term operation of new projects developed in accordance with the Housing Element Update would require permanent grid connections for electricity and natural gas service to power internal and exterior building lighting, and heating and cooling systems. The Housing Element Update would prioritize development in non-vacant parcels of Santa Clarita already served by energy providers, and development on vacant parcels would similarly to be served by existing energy providers. Electricity services in the city are provided by SoCal Edison and natural gas services are provided by SoCalGas to residents and businesses in the city.

Reasonably foreseeable development under Housing Element Update would be subject to the energy conservation requirements of the California Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6 of the California Code of Regulations, California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings) and the California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen, Title 24, Part 11 of the California Code of Regulations). The California Energy Code provides energy conservation standards for all new and renovated residential buildings constructed in California. This Code applies to the building envelope, space-conditioning systems, and water-heating and lighting systems of buildings and appliances and provides guidance on construction techniques to maximize energy conservation. Minimum efficiency standards are given for a variety of building elements, including appliances; water and space heating and cooling equipment; and insulation for doors, pipes, walls, and ceilings. The Code emphasizes saving energy at peak periods and seasons and improving the quality of installation of energy efficiency measures. CALGreen sets targets for energy efficiency; water consumption; dual plumbing systems for potable and recyclable water; diversion of construction waste from landfills; and use of environmentally sensitive materials in construction and design, including ecofriendly flooring, carpeting, paint, coatings, thermal insulation, and acoustical wall and ceiling panels. Furthermore, the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Conservation and Open Space Element both contain goals, objectives and policies to support ongoing efforts to conserve energy, as discussed in *item b* below.

The Housing Element Update would prioritize future development projects close to transit areas and existing commercial/retail, recreational, and institutional land uses, which would reduce trip distances and encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking. These factors would minimize the potential of the projects envisioned under the Housing Element Update to result in the wasteful or unnecessary consumption of vehicle fuels. In addition, since the Housing Element Update is a policy document, it would not result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation. No impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

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

The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan contains the following applicable goals, objectives, and policies that establish regulatory requirements for the conservation of energy and environmentally responsible development:

Goal LU 7: Environmentally responsible development through site planning, building design, waste reduction, and responsible stewardship of resources.

Objective LU 7.1: Achieve greater energy efficiency in building and site design.

- **Policy LU 7.1.1:** Require shade trees within parking lots and adjacent to buildings to reduce the heat island effect, in consideration of Fire Department fuel modification restrictions.
- **Policy LU 7.1.2:** Promote the use of solar panels and renewable energy sources in all projects.
- **Policy LU 7.1.3:** Encourage development of energy-efficient buildings, and discourage construction of new buildings for which energy efficiency cannot be demonstrated.

The Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan contains the following applicable objectives and policies that ensure energy efficient measures be implemented in new development:

Goal CO 8: Development designed to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy and natural resource consumption, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Objective CO 8.3: Encourage the following green building and sustainable development practices on private development projects, to the extent reasonable and feasible.

- **Policy CO 8.3.1:** Evaluate site plans proposed for new development based on energy efficiency pursuant to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards for New Construction and Neighborhood Development, including the following: a) location efficiency; b) environmental preservation; c) compact, complete, and connected neighborhoods; and d) resource efficiency, including use of recycled materials and water.
- **Policy CO 8.3.2:** Promote construction of energy efficient buildings through requirements for LEED certification or through comparable alternative requirements as adopted by local ordinance.
- **Policy CO 8.3.4:** Encourage new residential development to include on-site solar photovoltaic systems, or pre-wiring, in at least 50% of the residential units, in concert with other significant energy conservation efforts.
- **Policy CO 8.3.6:** Require new development to use passive solar heating and cooling techniques in building design and construction, which may include but are not limited to building orientation, clerestory windows, skylights, placement and type of windows, overhangs to shade doors and windows, and use of light colored roofs, shade trees, and paving materials.
- **Policy CO 8.3.7:** Encourage the use of trees and landscaping to reduce heating and cooling energy loads, through shading of buildings and parking lots.

Policy CO 8.3.8: Encourage energy-conserving heating and cooling systems and appliances, and energy-efficiency in windows and insulation, in all new construction.

Policy CO 8.3.9: Limit excessive lighting levels, and encourage a reduction of lighting when businesses are closed to a level required for security.

Policy CO 8.3.10: Provide incentives and technical assistance for installation of energy-efficient improvements in existing and new buildings.

Policy CO 8.3.11: Consider allowing carbon off-sets for large development projects, if appropriate, which may include funding off-site projects or purchase of credits for other forms of mitigation, provided that any such mitigation shall be measurable and enforceable.

Policy CO 8.3.12: Reduce extensive heat gain from paved surfaces through development standards wherever feasible.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Future development accommodated by the Housing Element Update would be subject to the energy conservation requirements of the California Energy Code, the California Green Building Standards Code, and local policies. Therefore, there would be no impacts.

NO IMPACT

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7 Geology and Soils

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
1. 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?	☐	☐	■	☐
2. Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	■	☐
3. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	■	☐
4. Landslides?	☐	☐	■	☐
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	☐	☐	☐	■
d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	■	☐
e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	☐	☐	☐	■
f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	■

California is divided geologically into several physiographic or geomorphic provinces, including the Sierra Nevada range, the Central (Great) Valley, the Transverse Ranges, the Coast Ranges, and others. The Transverse Range includes Ventura County and portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties. Locally, the Transverse Ranges are characterized by east-west trending mountains and faults. Major basins and ranges in the Transverse Ranges include the Ventura basin and the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains. The City of Santa Clarita is located in a highly active earthquake region of southern California and thus is subject to various seismic and geologic hazards, including ground shaking, surface rupture, and landslides. An Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault hazard zone has been established along the traces of the San Gabriel Fault within the General Plan area, running northwest to southeast (City of Clarita 2010). The California Building Code (CBC), the California Residential Code (CRC), and the City's General Plan and Santa Clarita Municipal Code incorporate policies and measures to safeguard life, health, property and public welfare from geologic hazards.

a.1. Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving 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?

a.2. Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving strong seismic ground shaking?

The city contains and is in the vicinity of several active fault zones, such as the San Gabriel Fault Zone which traverses the city from northwest to southeast. Ground shaking from earthquakes could result in the damage of buildings or the loss, injury, or death of people. However, the Safety Element Update includes goals, objectives, and policies that would reduce impacts from earthquakes and ground shaking by restricting land use type and development intensity in areas subject to fault rupture, landslides, and liquefaction. Additionally, goals and policies in the Safety Element Update require soils and geotechnical reports for new construction in areas with potential geological hazards and enforcement of seismic design and building techniques in local building codes.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to geologic hazards. Development proposals for individual projects accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be subject to adopted development guidelines and required to adhere to CBC requirements, policies in the Safety Element Update, and other applicable standards and regulations. Pursuant to objective and policies of the Safety Element Update, all new development in areas subject to geological hazards would be regulated, and would require soils and geotechnical reports as well as implement requirements of the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act. The Housing Element Update would not increase development potential above that already allowed under the General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

a.3. Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

a.4. Would the project directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving landslides?

Liquefaction is a phenomenon in which loose, saturated, relatively cohesionless soil deposits lose shear strength during strong ground motions. Liquefaction factors include intensity and duration of ground motion, gradation characteristics of the subsurface soils, in-situ stress conditions, and the depth to groundwater. Liquefaction is typified by a loss of shear strength in the liquefied soil layers due to rapid increases in pore water pressure generated by earthquake accelerations.

Liquefaction has been observed to occur in soft, poorly graded granular materials (such as loose sands) where the water table is high. Areas in the Planning Area underlain by unconsolidated alluvium, such as along the Santa Clara River and tributary washes, may be prone to liquefaction (City of Santa Clarita 2010). According to the California Department of Conservation (DOC) Earthquake Zones of Required Investigation Map, portions of the city are at risk of seismically induced liquefaction (DOC 2021).

The General Plan area contains areas susceptible to landslides and liquefaction that may occur in the event of ground shaking. Pursuant to SCMC Section 17.51.020, the City has adopted a Hillside Development Ordinance which regulates development on hillside areas through development standards on grading design, architecture, building height, building style, fencing, landscape design, and contour construction and wall materials, in order to decrease the potential for property loss, injury, or death resulting from landslides. Furthermore, the Safety Element Update contains Seismic Design Requirements which would enforce structural requirements of the Building Code as well as sound engineering and geotechnical practices for proposed new development. Finally, policies in the Safety Element Update would warrant the review of new development by analyzing existing conditions and requirements for safe building practices in order to reduce impacts from seismic hazards (City of Santa Clarita 2021).

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to liquefaction or landslides. Development proposals for individual projects accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be subject to adopted development guidelines and required to adhere to CBC requirements, policies in the Safety Element Update, and other applicable standards and regulations. Additionally, Title 17 of the SCMC requires soil and geotechnical investigations for grading or new construction in areas with a potential for landslides. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

b. Would the project result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

The city is subject to erosion, runoff, and sedimentation. Climate, topography, soil and rock types and vegetation are key factors to erosion, runoff, and sedimentation processes. Human activities such as agricultural or land development accelerate natural erosion. Development that creates impermeable surfaces increases the potential for flooding and sedimentation downstream. The most developed part of the city occurs on alluvial fans that are still receiving sediments from the mountains, while future developments are proposed within the city's upland areas.

The General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element contains the following applicable goal, objective, and policies designed to reduce impacts on soil erosion and the loss of topsoil:

Goal CO 2: Conserve the Santa Clarita Valley's hillsides, canyons, ridgelines, soils, and minerals, which provide the physical setting for the natural and built environments.

Objective CO 2.1: Control soil erosion, waterway sedimentation, and airborne dust generation, and maintain the fertility of topsoil.

Policy CO 2.1.1: Review soil erosion and sedimentation control plans for development-related grading activities, where appropriate, to ensure mitigation of potential erosion by water and air.

Policy CO 2.1.2: Promote conservation of topsoil on development sites by stockpiling for later reuse, where feasible.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil. Future development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be subject to development plan review to determine potential concerns related to geologic hazards based on site-specific locations and development design. Development proposals for individual projects would be subject to adopted development guidelines and would be required to comply with CBC Chapter 70 standards, which are designed to ensure implementation of appropriate measures during grading and construction to control erosion and storm water pollution. Future development shall also be subject to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Construction Permit process, which would require development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to outline best management practices (BMPs) for controlling erosion, sediment release, and otherwise reduce the potential for discharge of pollutants from construction into stormwater.

Compliance with existing regulations would reduce the risk of soil erosion from potential construction activities. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil, and no impact would occur.

NO 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?

Impacts related to landslides and liquefaction are addressed under *Items a.3.* and *a.4.*; therefore, this discussion focuses on impacts related to unstable soils as a result of lateral spreading, subsidence, or collapse. Lateral spreading occurs as a result of liquefaction; accordingly, liquefaction-prone areas would also be susceptible to lateral spreading. Subsidence occurs at great depths below the surface when subsurface pressure is reduced by the withdrawal of fluids (e.g., groundwater, natural gas, or oil) resulting in sinking of the ground. Expansive soils swell with increases in moisture content and shrink with decreases in moisture content. These soils usually contain high clay content. Expansive soils can cause foundations, basement walls and floors to crack, causing substantial structural damage. As such, structural failure due to expansive soils near the ground surface is a potential hazard.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not, in and of itself, result in impacts related to lateral spreading, subsidence, or collapse. All future development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be required to comply with the CBC's minimum standards for structural design and site development. The CBC provides standards for excavation, grading, and earthwork construction; fills and embankments; expansive soils; foundation investigations; and liquefaction potential and soils strength loss. Therefore, CBC-required incorporation of soil treatment programs (replacement, grouting, compaction, drainage control, etc.) in the excavation and construction plans can achieve an acceptable degree of soil stability to address site-specific soil conditions. In addition, all future development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would adhere to Title 17 of the SCMC that requires soils and geotechnical investigations for grading or new construction in areas with a potential for subsidence activity. Adherence to these requirements would achieve accepted safety standards relative to unstable geologic units or soils. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts associated with unstable geologic units or soil and no impact would occur

NO 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?

Soils that volumetrically increase (swell) or expand when exposed to water and contract when dry (shrink) are considered expansive soils. A soil's potential to shrink and swell depends on the amount and types of clay in the soil. Highly expansive soils can cause structural damage to foundations and roads without proper structural engineering and are generally less suitable or desirable for development than non-expansive soils because of the necessity for detailed geologic investigations and costlier grading applications. Generally, the potential for soils to exhibit expansive properties occur in low-lying areas, especially near river channels. As stated in the General Plan EIR, certain bedrock and soils within the General Plan area contain sufficient clay content; thus, have the potential for shrink/swell (City of Santa Clarita 2010). Pursuant to policies in the Safety Element Update, all new construction in areas with potential geological hazards would be required to complete soils and geotechnical reports and incorporate recommendations from the reports to site design in order to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to expansive soils. Future projects accommodated by the Housing Element Update would be required to adhere to the CBC and City regulations to prevent substantial direct or indirect risks from expansive soils. Impacts would be less than significant.

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 wastewater?

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to septic tanks.

Development accommodated under the Housing Element Update is anticipated to be connected to the municipal waste disposal system. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not 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 wastewater and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

f. Would the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

Paleontological resources, or fossils, are the evidence of once-living organisms preserved in the rock record. They include both the fossilized remains of ancient plants and animals and the traces thereof (e.g., trackways, imprints, burrows, etc.). Paleontological resources are not found in "soil" but are contained within the geologic deposits or bedrock that underlies the soil layer. Most of the potential paleontological resources in Santa Clarita are located within the city's hilly terrain. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts to paleontological resources or unique geologic features. Future development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be subject to development plan review to determine potential concerns related to paleontological resources or unique geologic features based on site-specific locations and development design. Therefore, the adoption of the Housing Element Update would not directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site, or unique geologic feature and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	■	☐
b. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	■	☐

Environmental Setting

Gases that absorb and re-emit infrared radiation in the atmosphere are called greenhouse gases (GHGs). The gases that are widely seen as the principal contributors to human-induced climate change include carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), nitrous oxides (N_2O), fluorinated gases such as hydrofluorocarbons and perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride. Water vapor is excluded from the list of GHGs because it is short-lived in the atmosphere and its atmospheric concentrations are largely determined by natural processes, such as oceanic evaporation. GHGs are emitted by both natural processes and human activities. Of these gases, CO_2 and CH_4 are emitted in the greatest quantities from human activities. Emissions of CO_2 are largely by-products of fossil fuel combustion, and CH_4 results from off-gassing associated with agricultural practices and landfills. Different types of GHGs have varying global warming potentials (GWPs), which are the potential of a gas or aerosol to trap heat in the atmosphere over a specified timescale (generally 100 years). Because GHGs absorb different amounts of heat, a common reference gas (CO_2) is used to relate the amount of heat absorbed to the amount of the GHG emissions, referred to as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e), and is the amount of a GHG emitted multiplied by its GWP. CO_2 has a 100-year GWP of one. By contrast, CH_4 has a GWP of 28, meaning its global warming effect is 28 times greater than that of CO_2 on a molecule per molecule basis (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] 2014a).[3]

The accumulation of GHGs in the atmosphere regulates Earth's temperature. Without the natural heat-trapping effect of GHGs, the Earth's surface would be about 33 degrees Celsius (°C) cooler. However, emissions from human activities, particularly the consumption of fossil fuels for electricity production and transportation, have elevated the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere beyond the level of naturally occurring concentrations.

The City's General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element contains actions and additional programs and policies to address climate change and to comply with State direction to respond to the issue of GHG emissions. The actions, programs, and policies are directed at promoting mixed use

[3] The IPCC's (2014a) *Fifth Assessment Report* determined that methane has a GWP of 28. However, modeling of GHG emissions was completed using the California Emissions Estimator Model version 2016.3.2, which uses a GWP of 25 for methane, consistent with the IPCC's (2007) *Fourth Assessment Report*.

designations, developing a connected multi-modal transportation system, preserving trees and open space, and ensuring the construction of energy efficient green buildings.

The City also adopted its Climate Action Plan (CAP) as a component under the General Plan in 2012 that measures the amount of GHG emissions generated in the City and develops strategies to reduce emissions in the future, pursuant to the State's AB 32 GHG emission reduction mandate. The CAP contains five sections: emissions inventory, emission forecasts, public outreach, mitigation plan, and monitoring plan. Policies and strategies within the CAP include measures in transportation, land use, energy conservation, water conservation, and vegetation (City of Santa Clarita 2012). The CAP committed the City to reduce community-wide GHG emissions by four percent below 2005 levels by 2020 consistent with AB 32 and the related Climate Change Scoping Plan. Because the CAP was only qualified under CEQA until August 2020, this plan is no longer applicable, however is discussed for informational purposes. Since the Housing Element Update would not change any underlying General Plan land use or zoning designations and would not change any development standards that govern intensity or density, the Housing Element Update would be consistent with the City's CAP.

Regulatory Framework

In response to climate change, California implemented AB 32, the "California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006." AB 32 required the reduction of statewide GHG emissions to 1990 emissions levels (essentially a 15 percent reduction below 2005 emission levels) by 2020 and the adoption of rules and regulations to achieve the maximum technologically feasible and cost-effective GHG emissions reductions. On September 8, 2016, the Governor signed SB 32 into law, extending AB 32 by requiring the State to further reduce GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 (the other provisions of AB 32 remain unchanged). On December 14, 2017, 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 the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, and implementation of recently adopted policies and legislation, such as SB 1383 (aimed at reducing short-lived climate pollutants including methane, hydrofluorocarbon gases, and anthropogenic black carbon) and SB 100 (discussed further below). The 2017 Scoping Plan also puts an increased emphasis on innovation, adoption of existing technology, and strategic investment to support its strategies. As with the 2013 Scoping Plan Update, the 2017 Scoping Plan does not provide project-level thresholds for land use development. Instead, it recommends local governments adopt policies and locally-appropriate quantitative thresholds consistent with a statewide per capita goal of six metric tons (MT) of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO_2e) by 2030 and two MT of CO_2e by 2050 (CARB 2017).

Other relevant State laws and regulations include:

- **SB 375:** The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375), signed in August 2008, enhances the state's ability to reach AB 32 goals by directing the CARB to develop regional GHG emission reduction targets to be achieved from passenger vehicles by 2020 and 2035. Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to adopt a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which allocates land uses in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). On March 22, 2018, CARB adopted updated regional targets for reducing GHG emissions from 2005 levels by 2020 and 2035.
- **SB 100:** Adopted on September 10, 2018, SB 100 supports the reduction of GHG emissions from the electricity sector by accelerating the state's Renewables Portfolio Standard Program. SB 100

requires electricity providers to increase procurement from eligible renewable energy resources to 33 percent of total retail sales by 2020, 60 percent by 2030, and 100 percent by 2045.

- **California Building Standards Code (California Code of Regulations Title 24):** The California Building Standards Code consists of a compilation of several distinct standards and codes related to building construction including plumbing, electrical, interior acoustics, energy efficiency, and handicap accessibility for persons with physical and sensory disabilities. The current iteration is the 2019 Title 24 standards. Part 6 is the Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which establishes energy-efficiency standards for residential and non-residential buildings in order to reduce California's energy demand. Part 12 is the California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen), which includes mandatory minimum environmental performance standards for all ground-up new construction of residential and non-residential structures.

a. Would the project generate GHG emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

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

GHG emissions are pollutants subject to local control by SCAQMD. In April 2008, to provide guidance to local lead agencies on determining the significance of GHG emissions identified in CEQA documents, the SCAQMD convened a GHG CEQA Significance Threshold Working Group. The goal of the working group was to develop and reach consensus on acceptable CEQA significance thresholds for GHG emissions that may be utilized on an interim basis until CARB (or some other State agency) develops guidance on assessing the significance of GHG emissions under CEQA. The most recent proposal issued in September 2010 included a screening threshold of 3,000 $MTCO_2e$/year for all non-industrial projects (SCAQMD 2010).

The City's General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element contains several regulatory requirements related to energy consumption and GHG emissions. The following applicable goals, objectives, and policies would promote efficient, sustainable, and environmentally appropriate energy systems:

Goal CO 8: Development designed to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy and natural resource consumption, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Objective CO 8.1: Comply with the requirements of State law, including AB 32, SB 375 and implementing regulations, to reach targeted reductions of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Policy CO 8.1.3: Revise codes and ordinances as needed to address energy conservation, including but not limited to the following:

1. Strengthen building codes for new construction and renovation to achieve a higher level of energy efficiency, with a goal of exceeding energy efficiency beyond that required by Title 24;
2. Adopt a Green Building Program to encourage green building practices and materials, along with appropriate ordinances and incentives;
3. Require orientation of buildings to maximize passive solar heating during cool seasons, avoid solar heat gain during hot periods, enhance natural ventilation, promote effective use of daylight, and optimize opportunities for on-site solar generation;

4. Encourage mitigation of the "heat island" effect through use of cool roofs, light-colored paving, and shading to reduce energy consumption for air conditioning.

Objective CO 8.3: Encourage the following green building and sustainable development practices on private development projects, to the extent reasonable and feasible.

Policy CO 8.3.1: Evaluate site plans proposed for new development based on energy efficiency pursuant to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards for New Construction and Neighborhood Development, including the following: a) location efficiency; b) environmental preservation; c) compact, complete, and connected neighborhoods; and d) resource efficiency, including use of recycled materials and water.

Policy CO 8.3.2: Promote construction of energy efficient buildings through requirements for LEED certification or through comparable alternative requirements as adopted by local ordinance.

Policy CO 8.3.3: Promote energy efficiency and water conservation upgrades to existing non-residential buildings at the time of major remodel or additions.

Policy CO 8.3.4: Encourage new residential development to include on-site solar photovoltaic systems, or pre-wiring, in at least 50% of the residential units, in concert with other significant energy conservation efforts.

Policy CO 8.3.6: Require new development to use passive solar heating and cooling techniques in building design and construction, which may include but are not limited to building orientation, clerestory windows, skylights, placement and type of windows, overhangs to shade doors and windows, and use of light colored roofs, shade trees, and paving materials.

Policy CO 8.3.7: Encourage the use of trees and landscaping to reduce heating and cooling energy loads, through shading of buildings and parking lots.

Policy CO 8.3.8: Encourage energy-conserving heating and cooling systems and appliances, and energy-efficiency in windows and insulation, in all new construction.

Policy CO 8.3.9: Limit excessive lighting levels, and encourage a reduction of lighting when businesses are closed to a level required for security.

Policy CO 8.3.10: Provide incentives and technical assistance for installation of energy-efficient improvements in existing and new buildings.

Policy CO 8.3.11: Consider allowing carbon off-sets for large development projects, if appropriate, which may include funding off-site projects or purchase of credits for other forms of mitigation, provided that any such mitigation shall be measurable and enforceable.

Policy CO 8.3.12: Reduce extensive heat gain from paved surfaces through development standards wherever feasible.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts to energy consumption, GHG emissions, or climate change. Future development would require development review to evaluate potential concerns related to GHG emissions. Development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be consistent with SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS, since the Housing Element would prioritize transit-oriented development and thereby

reduce VMT and GHG emissions; promote balanced jobs and housing and thereby increase regional economic prosperity; and ensure access to services and thereby support healthy and equitable communities. This would support the SCAG goals of enhancing mobility, accessibility, and reducing GHG emissions and improving air quality. Furthermore, Santa Clarita's Unified Development Code ensures fair housing choices by promoting the provision of a range of housing types, which would support goals within the SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (SCAG 2020).

Development proposals for individual projects would be subject to adopted development guidelines, including standards that govern the emissions of GHGs. Additionally, the City would require individual projects to comply with the latest Title 24 Green Building Code and Building Efficiency Energy Standards which reduce energy use from lighting, water-efficient faucets and toilets, and water efficient landscaping and irrigation. Development would obtain electrical power from SoCal Edison, which expects to source 50 percent renewable energy by 2030, up from 40 percent in 2021, in order to comply with Senate Bill 350's targeted renewable portfolio standards (RPS). The Housing Element Update would not generate GHG emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment and would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions. The Housing Element Update would not increase development potential above that already allowed under the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code and GHG impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

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9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	■
d. Be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	■
e. For a project located in an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	■
f. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	■
g. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	■	☐

Hazardous Materials

Hazardous materials include any substance or combination of substances which, because of quantity, concentration, or characteristics, may cause or significantly contribute to an increase in death or serious injury, or pose substantial hazards to humans and/or the environment. These materials may include pesticides, herbicides, toxic metals and chemicals, liquefied natural gas, explosives, volatile chemicals, and nuclear fuels.

The management of hazardous materials and hazardous wastes is regulated at federal, State, and local levels, including through programs administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA); agencies within the California Environmental Protection Agency, such as the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC); federal and State occupational safety agencies; and the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA), which for Santa Clarita is the Los Angeles County Fire Department Health Hazardous Materials Division. There are three County fire stations that handle hazardous materials incidents (known as Haz Mat Stations); Station 76 serves the Santa Clarita Valley (City of Santa Clarita 2011). The transport of hazardous materials and explosives through the City on State highways and freeways is regulated by the California Department of Transportation.

As a department of the California Environmental Protection Agency, 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. The DTSC regulates hazardous waste in California primarily under the authority of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the California Health and Safety Code. The DTSC also administers the California Hazardous Waste Control Law to regulate hazardous wastes. 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.

California Government Code Section 65302(g) mandates that the general plan of a community address safety issues, including but not limited to hazardous materials. Responsibility for regulating and monitoring the management, disposal, labeling, and use of toxic and hazardous materials lies with a variety of federal, State, and local agencies, including the USEPA, the California Office of Health Planning and Development, and the Los Angeles County Department of Health. Assembly Bill 2948 (AB 2948, Chapter 1504, Statutes of 1986), commonly known as the Tanner Bill, authorizes counties to prepare Hazardous Waste Management Plans (HWMP) in response to the need for safe management of hazardous materials and waste products.

The Los Angeles County HWMP was adopted in 1988 and identifies the types and amounts of wastes generated in the County and establishes programs for managing these wastes (Los Angeles Department of Public Works 1988). To comply with Health and Safety Code Section 25135, the Los Angeles County HWMP assures that adequate treatment and disposal capacity is available to manage the hazardous wastes generated within the jurisdiction, and addresses issues related to manufacture and use of hazardous waste. The HWMP provides direction for the proper management of all hazardous waste in the County and 38 contract cities, including Santa Clarita. The HWMP includes data on hazardous waste generation, existing treatment facilities, household and other small generator waste, and siting criteria for hazardous waste management facilities. Any such facility is required to consider protection of residents, surface and groundwater quality, air quality, environmentally sensitive areas, structural stability, safe transportation routes, social and economic goals.

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) GeoTracker website identifies Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (LUST) cleanup sites; Cleanup Program Sites, formerly known as Spills, Leaks, Investigations, and Cleanups sites; military sites; land disposal sites, or landfills; permitted underground storage tank sites; Waste Discharge Requirement sites; Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program sites; and DTSC cleanup and hazardous waste permit sites.

Emergency Preparedness

The City of Santa Clarita and County of Los Angeles both implement programs to facilitate emergency preparedness. As required by State law, both the County and City have adopted the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) for managing response to multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional emergencies, and to facilitate communications and coordination among all levels of government and affected agencies (City of Santa Clarita 2010). In addition, the County has an Operational Area Emergency Response Plan (ERP), which describes the planned response to emergencies associated with natural and man-made disasters and technological incidents. Both plans provide an overview of operational concepts, identify components of the County's and City's Emergency Management Organization within the Standardized Emergency Management System, and describe the overall responsibilities of the federal, State, and local agencies for protecting life and property and assuring the overall well-being of the population (City of Santa Clarita 2010).

In addition to the SEMS plan, in 2004 the City adopted a five-year Natural Hazard Mitigation Action Plan as a collaborative effort between City staff and citizens, public agencies, non-profit organizations, the private sector, and regional and State agencies. The plan provides a list of activities that may assist the City in reducing risk and preventing loss from natural hazard events, including earthquakes, floods, hazardous material spills, landslides and earth movement, severe weather, and wildland fires. The plan contains a five-year action matrix based on the following mission statement: "To promote sound public policy designed to protect citizens, critical facilities, infrastructure, private property, and the environment from natural hazards. This can be achieved by increasing public awareness, documenting the resources for risk reduction and loss-prevention, and identifying activities to guide the City toward building a safer, more sustainable community." The Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan also identifies all critical facilities and infrastructure and establishes goals to increase emergency response and enhance recovery.

a. Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

Any use of potentially hazardous materials during construction of future development as a result of the implementation of the Housing Element Update would be required to comply with all local, State, and federal regulations regarding the handling of potentially hazardous materials. Likewise, the transport, use, and storage of hazardous materials during any future construction would be required to comply with all applicable State and federal laws, such as the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the California Hazardous Material Management Act, and California Code of Regulations Title 22. Further, development within the city would be guided by the Los Angeles County HWMP.

The addition of new residential housing under the Housing Element Update would involve the development of land that is currently vacant or has existing residential or commercial/industrial land use. The potential for future residents and employees within the Planning Area to encounter accidental exposure from hazardous materials would increase with this expected buildout. However, the Santa Clarita General Plan contains the following objectives, polices and goals to

protect residents and employees from increased exposure of hazardous materials (City of Santa Clarita 2011):

Goal S 4: Protection of public safety and property from hazardous materials.

Objective S 4.1: Identify sites that are contaminated with chemicals and other hazardous materials and promote clean-up efforts.

- **Policy S 4.1.1:** Continue to support clean-up efforts and re-use plans for the Whittaker-Bermite property.
- **Policy S 4.1.2:** Coordinate with other agencies to address contamination of soil and groundwater from hazardous materials on various sites, and require that contamination be cleaned up to the satisfaction of the City and other responsible agencies prior to issuance of any permits for new development.

Objective S 4.2: Cooperate with other agencies to ensure proper handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials.

- **Policy S 4.2.1:** On the Land Use Map, restrict the areas in which activities that use or generate large amounts of hazardous materials may locate, to minimize impacts to residents and other sensitive receptors in the event of a hazardous materials incident.
- **Policy S 4.2.2:** Through the development review process, ensure that any new development proposed in the vicinity of a use that stores or generates large amounts of hazardous materials provides adequate design features, setbacks, and buffers to mitigate impacts to sensitive receptors in the event of a hazardous materials incident.
- **Policy S 4.2.3:** Require businesses to verify procedures for storage, use, and disposal of hazardous materials.
- **Policy S 4.2.4**: Cooperate with other agencies to hold regular events to promote safe disposal of small amounts of household hazardous waste, including ewaste, by Santa Clarita Valley residents.

The City's Safety Element Update would address hazards associated with new residential development facilitated by the Housing Element Update. The Safety Element Update ensures alignment with the City of Santa Clarita 2015 Hazards Mitigation Plan and Draft 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan[4], and includes policies to address routine transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials.

Furthermore, housing is not a land use typically associated with the use, transportation, storage, or generation of significant quantities of hazardous materials. Operation of new housing developed under the Housing Element Update would likely involve an incremental increase in the use of common household hazardous materials, such as cleaning and degreasing solvents, fertilizers, pesticides, and other materials used in regular property and landscaping maintenance. Use of these materials would be subject to compliance with existing regulations, standards, and guidelines established by the federal, State, and local agencies related to storage, use, and disposal of hazardous materials. In addition, potential for hazardous impacts for future projects implemented under the Housing Element Update will be evaluated on a project by project basis. Therefore, upon compliance with all applicable local, State, and federal laws and regulations relating to

[4] The City is drafting the 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan concurrently with the Safe Element of the General Plan for document consistency. This IS-ND does not analyze impacts of the 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is considered a separate project under CEQA.

environmental protection and the management of hazardous materials, there would be no impact associated with the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials during construction and operation of development projects under the Housing Element Update.

NO IMPACT

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?

As previously discussed, the transport, use, and storage of hazardous materials during the construction of future housing under the Housing Element Update would be conducted in accordance with all applicable State and federal laws, such as the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the California Hazardous Material Management Act, and California Code of Regulations Title 22.

There is the potential for future construction to involve the demolition or alteration of structures that may contain asbestos and/or lead-based paint (LBP), which could pose hazards to receptors at adjacent land uses. Furthermore, because the Housing Element Update would emphasize development on infill sites within urban areas, there is the potential for future development to occur on project sites where hazardous materials were once used or stored and have the potential to contain contaminated soils, the disturbance of which could pose hazards to receptors at adjacent land uses.

However, the Los Angeles County HWMP deals with foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. According to the General Plan EIR, Santa Clarita adopted a Household Hazardous Waste Element in 1991 that is focused on solid waste management throughout the City, whereas the Los Angeles County HWMP is more comprehensive and focuses on the management of hazardous wastes throughout the County (City of Santa Clarita 2010). In addition, Santa Clarita General Plan Policy S 4.1.2 states that the City will coordinate with other agencies to address contamination of soil and groundwater from hazardous materials on various sites and require that contamination be cleaned up to the satisfaction of the City and other responsible agencies prior to issuance of any permits for new development (City of Santa Clarita 2011). The Safety Element Update includes policies relevant to upset and accident conditions that involve the release of hazardous materials. Further, the Housing Element is a policy document and in and of itself does not propose any specific sites for development and therefore would have no impact on foreseeable or accidental release of hazardous materials.

NO IMPACT

c. Would the project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?

Santa Clarita currently has five school districts that serve the planning area. Local public-school districts provide 55 schools including 37 elementary schools, seven junior high schools, 10 high schools, and one charter school (City of Santa Clarita 2010). As discussed above, implementation of the Housing Element Update would not involve the use or transport of large quantities of hazardous materials. The Housing Element in and of itself does not propose any specific sites for development and therefore has no impact on existing or proposed schools. Further, the Housing Element is a

policy document and in and of itself does not propose any specific sites for development and therefore would have no impact on schools.

NO IMPACT

d. Would the project be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous material 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 of May 2020, there were 22 sites in the planning area on which clean-up was either on-going or completed (City of Santa Clarita 2020). Of these, the most significant in terms of area and potential for redevelopment is the Whittaker-Bermite property, a 996-acre site previously used for explosive and flare manufacture (City of Santa Clarita 2011). Today the site is largely vacant and soil clean-up of perchlorate and other chemicals released by previous industrial users has been completed, while groundwater clean-up is ongoing. The DTSC is responsible for overseeing the soil and groundwater remediation activities at the site.

Implementation of the Housing Element Update may involve the alteration, intensification, and redistribution of land uses. Future development under the proposed project could occur on hazardous materials sites. Residential construction under the Housing Element Update could lead to a significant hazard to the public or environment by exposing future residents to potential contamination if not properly identified. However, as previously discussed General Plan Policy S 4.1.2 states that the City will coordinate with other agencies to address contamination of soil and groundwater from hazardous materials on various sites and require that contamination be cleaned up to the satisfaction of the City and other responsible agencies prior to issuance of any permits for new development (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

The Housing Element in and of itself does not propose any specific sites for development and therefore does not impact any sites listed on hazardous material sites pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. In addition, any future development under the Housing Element Update would be subject to an individual CEQA review prosses.

NO IMPACT

e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

The City of Santa Clarita is not located within an airport land use plan, or within two miles of a public or private airstrip. The closest airport is the Agua Dulce Airpark located approximately 14 miles northeast of the city. The airport is privately owned but is open to the public. The airport has a single 4,600-foot-long runway and serves general aviation aircraft only (City of Santa Clarita 2011). There are many noise restrictions in place for flight operations, including prohibiting night operations at the airport. If aircrafts depart to the north on Runway 4, they are to avoid flying over the homes 2,000 feet northeast of the end of the runway (City of Santa Clarita 2011). Finally, touch-and-go practices are not allowed at the airport. A 65 CNEL noise contour has been generated for the airport by the County of Los Angeles and is included in the Technical Appendix of the City's General Plan (City of Santa Clarita 2011). The noise contour barely extends past the runway and does not impact any existing residences. Within the city there is one heliport, the Henry Mayo Newhall

Hospital Heliport, that is used for medical emergency transport. The Housing Element Update would not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the city.

NO IMPACT

f. Would the project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Construction activities associated with reasonably foreseeable new development under the Housing Element Update could interfere with adopted emergency response or evacuation plans as a result of temporary construction activities within rights-of-way, due to temporary construction barricades or other obstructions that could impede emergency access. However, temporary construction barricades or other obstructions that could impede emergency access would be subject to the City's permitting process. If construction occurs within the public right-of-way an encroachment permit would be required, which requires a traffic control plan subject to City review and approval. Development and implementation of these plans for all construction activity would minimize potential impacts associated with the impairment or physically interference with adopted emergency response or evacuation procedures.

In addition, increased housing development density in accordance with the Housing Element Update could result in additional traffic on area roadways. However, the goals, objectives, and policies of the City's ERP and the Los Angeles County Operational Area ERP provide guidance during unique situations requiring an unusual or extraordinary emergency response. Implementation of the ERP would involve coordination with all the facilities and personnel of County government, along with the jurisdictional resources of the cities and special districts within the County, into an efficient organization capable of responding to any emergency using a SEMS, mutual aid and other appropriate response procedures.

As part of standard development procedures, plans would be submitted for review and approval to ensure that all new development has adequate emergency access and escape routes in compliance with existing City regulations. Furthermore, the Housing Element Update would not introduce any features or policies that would preclude implementation of or alter these policies or procedures, and the Safety Element Update includes goals, objectives, and policies to strengthen existing policies or procedures. For example, the Safety Element Update calls for protection of public safety and property from hazardous materials through the identification of sites that are contaminated with chemicals and other hazardous materials, promotion of clean-up efforts and cooperation with multiple agencies to ensure proper handing, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials. The Housing Element is a policy document and in and of itself does not propose any specific sites for development and therefore would have no impacts related to emergency response plans and emergency evacuation plans.

NO 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 further discussed in Section 20, *Wildfire,* Santa Clarita is a highly urbanized city that does not contain any State Responsibility Areas (SRA) within the city's boundaries. According to CalFIRE, the city does contain Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) for wildland fires (CalFIRE 2020). Reasonably foreseeable housing developed under the Housing Element Update would be required to be constructed according to the Uniform Building Code requirements for fire protection and

would be subject to review and approval by the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD). In addition, the Safety Element Update includes goals, objectives, and policies that support emergency planning by calling for the implementation of disaster response and recovery plans and procedures and minimization of wildfire impacts. The Housing Element Update would not increase development potential above that already allowed under the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

10 Hydrology and Water Quality

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☐	■	☐
b. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
(i) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	☐	☐	■	☐
(ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;	☐	☐	■	☐
(iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	■	☐
(iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	■	☐
d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	■
e. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☐	■

Water Supply and Quality

The City Santa Clarita is within the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), which is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the water quality control plan for the Los Angeles Region. Santa Clarita is serviced by the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (SCV Water), which consists of three water divisions further explained in Section 19, Utilities. The primary sources of water in the City includes groundwater pumped from the aquifers in the East Subbasin, supplemented by imported water from the State Water Project (SWP). The most southerly reservoir on the West Branch of the SWP California Aqueduct is Castaic Lake. SCV Water receives water from Castaic Lake and distributes it to the local purveyors, including Santa Clarita, following treatment.

Surface Water

The Santa Clara River is the primary surface water feature in Santa Clarita and the longest free-flowing river in southern California. The river is also one of the few remaining in the area still in a relatively natural state. From its headwaters in the San Gabriel Mountains to its terminus at the Pacific Ocean, the Santa Clara River flows approximately 84 miles. Principal tributaries to the upper Santa Clara River include creeks located in Mint, Bouquet, San Francisquito, Castaic, Oak Spring, and Sand Canyons. The principal tributaries of the South Fork of the river, which drains in a northerly direction toward its confluence with the main course of the river, include Placerita Creek, Newhall Creek, and Pico Creek (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

Castaic Lake is a 324,000 acre-foot storage facility created by an earth-filled dam across Castaic Creek. The reservoir serves as the West Branch Terminus of the California Aqueduct. In addition to its SWP functions, the lake is operated to conserve local floodwaters for use in water recharge of underlying groundwater basins. Castaic Lagoon is located directly south and downstream of Castaic Dam, and was created by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to provide recreational opportunities. The Lagoon has a surface area of 197 acres and a capacity of 5,701-acre feet. Elderberry Forebay is also a part of the Castaic Reservoir system, and is an enclosed section of Castaic Lake (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

Groundwater

Santa Clarita consists of three major groundwater basins underlying the region are the Santa Clara River Valley Groundwater Basin, East Subbasin (East Subbasin) and the Acton Valley Groundwater Basin. The East Subbasin encompasses the upper Santa Clara River Valley and is comprised of two aquifer systems, the Alluvium (also referred to as the Alluvial Aquifer), and the Saugus Formation. The Alluvial Aquifer generally underlies the Santa Clara River and its tributaries, and the Saugus Formation underlies nearly the entire Upper Santa Clara River area. Groundwater in the East Basin generally flows from east to west, following the movement of the Santa Clara River. The East Subbasin is the sole source of local groundwater for urban water supply in the Valley (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

Flooding

The Santa Clarita Valley contains many natural streams and creeks that function as storm drain channels, conveying surface water runoff into the Santa Clara River. From its headwaters in the San Gabriel Mountains to its mouth at the Pacific Ocean, the Santa Clara River drains a watershed of 1,643 square miles, approximately 80 miles in length and about 25 miles in width. Ninety percent of

the watershed consists of mountainous terrain; the remaining portion is a mix of valley floor, floodplain, and coastal plain. Within the headwater areas of the Santa Clarita Valley, discharge during rainfall events tends to be rapid due to the steep terrain. High intensity rainfalls, in combination with alluvial soils, sparse vegetation, erosion, and steep gradients, can result in significant debris-laden flash floods (City of Santa Clarita).

a. Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

c.(i) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

c.(ii) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?

c.(iii) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner that would create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

c.(iv) Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would impede or redirect flood flows?

Construction of potential development accommodated under the Housing Element Update could potentially impact surface or ground water quality due to erosion resulting from exposed soils and the generation of water pollutants, including trash, construction materials, and equipment fluids. However, SCMC Chapter 10.04 requires owners or developers to implement stormwater pollution control requirements for construction activities. In addition, regulations under the Federal Clean Water Act require compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) storm water permit for projects disturbing more than one acre during construction. Operators of a construction site would be responsible for preparing and implementing a SWPPP that outlines project specific BMPs to control erosion, sediment release, and otherwise reduce the potential for discharge of pollutants in stormwater. Typical BMPs include covering stockpiled soils, installation of silt fences and erosion control blankets, and proper handling and disposal of wastes. Compliance with these regulatory requirements would minimize impacts to water quality during the construction of future projects under the Housing Element Update. Additionally, the SCMC Chapter 15.50, *Storm Drainage Utility Enterprise Fund,* states that the City has established a special fund within the City's fiscal system due to the City's storm drainage system being designated a utility in order to improve water quality and control runoff, meeting the requirements of the NPDES.

Additionally, the SCMC Section 10.24.070, Construction Activity Stormwater Measures, requires compliance with regulations governing State Construction Activity Stormwater Permits. The SCMC also states that:

> Each person applying for a grading or building permit for any project for which compliance with regulations governing State Construction Activity Stormwater Permits is not required shall

submit to the City for information, and shall implement a grading and construction activity runoff control program adequate to accomplish all of the following:

1. Retain on site the sediments generated on or brought to the project site, using treatment control or structural BMPs;
2. Retain construction-related materials and wastes, spills and residues at the project site and prevent discharges to streets, drainage facilities, the MS4, receiving waters or adjacent properties;
3. Contain non-stormwater runoff from equipment and vehicle washing at the project site; and
4. Control erosion from slopes and channels through use of effective BMPs, such as limitation of grading during the wet season, inspection of graded areas during rain events; planting and maintenance of vegetation on slopes, if any, and covering any slopes susceptible to erosion.

The Safety Element Update in accordance with the Conservation and Open Space Element acknowledges that limiting the use of impermeable surface area on development sites is a way to maximize flood control and drainage facilities. Objectives in the Safety Element Update would require flood plan protection, adequate drainage and flood control, and flood safety measures for new development. In addition, the Conservation and Open Space Element acknowledges that Low Impact Development (LID) techniques would reduce impacts to drainage and flood control systems from increased flows generated by new development and provide for recharge of local groundwater aquifers.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts that violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality. Future development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be subject to compliance with existing regulations, standards, and guidelines established by the federal, state, and local agencies in addition to the goals and policies in the General Plan, SCMC, and the Conservation and Open Space Element and Safety Element Update related to water quality. The Housing Element Update would not introduce any features that would preclude implementation of or alter these policies and procedures in any way. Additionally, any by-right development would also be required to comply with zoning and land use regulations, which include design and development standards that would ensure water quality would not be impacted. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements; generate a substantial increase in runoff that would result in substantial erosion, siltation, flooding on- or off-site; or increase polluted runoff. Impacts would be less than significant.

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 primary sources of water in the city include groundwater pumped from the aquifers in the East Subbasin, supplemented by imported water from the SWP including the Castaic Lake California Aqueduct (City of Santa Clarita 2011). According to the SCV Water's 2021 Water Supply Reliability Plan: Appendix C, *Groundwater Treatment Implementation Plan*, half of the SCV Water's demand

are met with groundwater from Alluvial and Saugus formations in the Santa Clara River Valley East Sub-basin (SCVWA 2021).

The General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element has established the following policies in order to protect ground water:

Policy CO 1.6.2: Use Geographic Information Systems, modeling, and other tools to indicate the locations of natural systems such as groundwater recharge areas, floodplain and floodway areas, oak tree woodlands, Significant Ecological Areas, and plant and animal species habitat.

Policy CO 2.3.5: Promote remediation and restoration of mined land to a condition that supports beneficial uses, which may include but are not limited to recreational open space, habitat enhancement, groundwater recharge, or urban development.

Policy CO-4.1.9: Support the development of additional facilities to store or bank stormwater, particularly on lands located outside the groundwater recharge areas that are depicted on Exhibit CO-3b.

Policy CO 4.2.4: Protect areas with substantial potential for groundwater recharge as depicted on Exhibit CO-3b, and promote recharge of groundwater basins throughout the watershed (excluding the river bed) to assure water quality and quantity. The greatest consideration should be given to the Alluvial Aquifer and Saugus Aquifer groundwater recharge areas, followed by groundwater recharge areas for other groundwater basins that are designated by the State of California.

Policy CO 4.3.3: Provide flexibility for design standards for street width, sidewalk width, parking, and other impervious surfaces when it can be shown that such reductions will not have negative impacts and will provide the benefits of stormwater retention, groundwater infiltration, reduction of heat islands, enhancement of habitat and biodiversity, saving of significant trees or planting of new trees, or other environmental benefit.

Policy CO 4.4.2: Support the cooperative efforts of property owners and appropriate agencies to eliminate perchlorate contamination on the Whittaker-Bermite property and eliminate the use of any industrial chemicals or wastes in a manner that threatens groundwater quality.

Policy CO 4.4.4: Promote the extension of sanitary sewers for all urban uses and densities, to protect groundwater quality, where feasible.

Policy CO 10.1.9: Preserve forested areas, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and corridors, wetlands, watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, and other open space that provides natural carbon sequestration benefits.

Future development to be accommodated by the Housing Element Update could increase demand for water by increasing residential density, but residential growth under the Housing Element Update was anticipated as part of the Upper Santa Clara River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (UWMP) demand forecast. Over time the rate of decrease in agricultural land use and related amount of water supply is anticipated to decrease, with an anticipated amount of water needed for municipal water supply. According to the UWMP the local aquifer is intended to remain within sustainable ranges (CLWA 2016). Additionally, the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency

has projected population growth analysis which estimates the projected growth at an average annual rate of approximately 1.3 percent per year over the 30-year planning period to 2050 (SCVA 2020).

Future development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would increase the amount of impervious surface in the city. However, the Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not, in and of itself, result in impacts that would substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge that would impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin. Additionally, future development would implement appropriate construction BMPs and comply with the Conservation and Open Space Element, the City's Safety Element, and the SCMC. There would be no impact to groundwater supplies or regeneration.

NO IMPACT

d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the project risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

The proposed Safety Element Update states that the City has prepared an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) which addresses the response to emergency situations associated with natural disasters, technological incidents, and national security emergencies. In addition to the EOP, the City also upholds the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) which provides an analysis of potential hazards to assist the City in reducing risk and preventing loss from natural hazard events, including floods and mitigation strategies:

> "The plan describes existing mitigation strategies and includes a matrix for mitigation actions and priorities over the next five years in order to best "promote sound public policy regarding natural and man-made hazards," with the plan's goals in order of priority to protect life and property, enhance natural systems, augment emergency services, encourage partnerships and implementation, and promote public awareness" (Safety Element 2021)

The City's Conservation and Open Space Element includes the potential subjugation to flooding, slope failure, seiche, or other hazards. In addition, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped most of the flood risk areas within the United States as part of the National Flood Insurance Program. Most communities with a one percent chance of a flood occurring in any given year have the floodplains depicted on a Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). The Conservation and Open Space includes methods of maximizing the use of existing flood control and drainage facilities. One of these being limiting the use of impermeable surface areas on development sites. The General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element contains the following goals, objectives, and policies that focus on flood hazards and hydrology:

Goal CO.1: A balance between the social and economic needs of Santa Clarita Valley residents and protection of the natural environment, so that these needs can be met in the present and in the future.

Objective CO 1.1: Protect the capacity of the natural "green" infrastructure to absorb and break down pollutants, cleanse air and water, and prevent flood and storm damage.

Policy CO 1.6.2: Use Geographic Information Systems, modeling, and other tools to indicate the locations of natural systems such as groundwater recharge areas,

floodplain and floodway areas, oak tree woodlands, Significant Ecological Areas, and plant and animal species habitat.

Policy CO 3.1.2: Avoid designating or approving new development that will adversely impact wetlands, floodplains, threatened or endangered species and habitat, and water bodies supporting fish or recreational uses, and establish an adequate buffer area as deemed appropriate through site specific review.

Policy CO 9.1.4: Explore and implement opportunities to share facilities with school districts, utility easements, flood control facilities, and other land uses, where feasible.

Policy CO 9.2.7: Explore joint use opportunities to combine trail systems with utility easements, flood control facilities, open spaces, or other uses, where feasible.

Policy CO 10.1.6: Delineate open space uses within hazardous areas to protect public health and safety, which may include areas subject to seismic rupture, flooding, wildfires, or unsafe levels of noise or air pollution.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not, in and of itself, result in impacts regarding flood hazards. Development accommodated by the Housing Element Update would be reviewed for consistency with federal, State, and local requirements to limit flood hazards, including release of pollutants. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not result in the release of pollutants due to project inundation and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

e. Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

USEPA has delegated responsibility for implementation of portions of the Clean Water Act, including water quality control planning, to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCB). The SWRCB establishes statewide policies and regulations for implementing water quality control programs. The RWQCBs develop and implement Water Quality Control Plans (Basin Plans) that consider regional beneficial uses, water quality characteristics, and water quality problems (City of Santa Clarita 2011).

The Los Angeles RWQCB, is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the water quality control plan for the Los Angeles Region. A Water Quality Control Plan for the Santa Clara River Basin was adopted by the Los Angeles Water Board on March 3, 1975. The RWQCB also adopted a Basin Plan for the Coastal Watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties in 2014. The Basin Plan identifies beneficial uses supported by key water surface drainages and contains numerical objectives for designated groundwater basins, such as the Santa Clara River Valley East Groundwater Basin (RWQCB 2014).

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. Potential water quality and groundwater impacts associated with the Housing Element Update are

analyzed above under *Impacts a.* and *b.* The Housing Element Update would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. There would be no impact.

NO IMPACT

11 Land Use and Planning

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☐	■

The City's Zoning Map implements seven broad land use designations: urban residential, non-urban residential, commercial, open space, mixed use, industrial, and public/institutional (City of Santa Clarita*).* More specific types of land uses are delineated further under each broad land use. In addition to these land use designations, the City has developed seven specific plans to establish land use policies. Specific plans for Fair Oaks Ranch, Porta Bella, Old Town Newhall, Vista Canyon, Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital, MetroWalk, North Valencia I, and North Valencia II each have unique land use designations and zoning categories.

a. Would the project physically divide an established community?

Implementation of the Housing Element Update would prioritize the development of new housing on infill and appropriately zoned vacant sites within areas of the city. Reasonably foreseeable development under the Housing Element Update would encourage development near public transportation, schools, retail, and other services and would not involve the construction of new roads, railroads, or other features that may physically divide established communities in the city. Goals, policies, and objectives under the Housing Element Update would put a greater emphasis on preventing displacement and promoting housing stability to maintain and preserve the quality of the city's existing neighborhoods. The Housing Element is a policy document and in and of itself does not propose any specific sites for development and therefore has no impact on dividing an established community. Consequently, the Housing Element Update would not impact the physical division of an established community.

NO 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?

The Housing Element Update examines the city's housing needs, as they exist today, and projects future housing needs. This Housing Element Update focuses on addressing the city's housing needs by providing objectives and policies associated with fair housing, the prevention of displacement, and promoting housing stability. The Housing Element Update includes actions the City is undertaking to achieve its housing RHNA targets and also would implement SCAG's land use goals

and policies by encouraging new development in areas with access to transit and services, thus minimizing vehicle trips and GHG emissions.

Upon its adoption by the City, the Housing Element Update would serve as a comprehensive statement of the City's housing policies and as a specific guide for program actions to be taken in support of those policies

This Housing Element Update is strictly a policy document that encourages housing development in infill areas and on appropriately zoned vacant sites. Adoption of the Housing Element Update would not grant entitlements for any project and future development proposals that are intended to assist in meeting the City's projected housing need would be reviewed by the City for consistency with all adopted local and State laws, regulations, standards, and policies. Furthermore, the Housing Element Update would not change the Land Use Element and therefore would not increase development potential above that already allowed under the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code. Impacts related to conflicts with land use plans, policies, or regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect would have no impact.

NO IMPACT

12 Mineral Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	■

According to the Santa Clarita General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element the planning area contains extensive aggregate mineral resources. Approximately 19,000 acres in the planning area are designated by the State as MRZ-2, or areas of prime importance due to known economic mineral deposits (City of Santa Clarita 2011). Sand and gravel resources are primarily concentrated along waterways, including the Santa Clara River, the South Fork of the Santa Clara River, Castaic Creek, and east of Sand Canyon Road. A significant deposit of construction-grade aggregate extends approximately 15 miles from Agua Dulce Creek in the east, to the Ventura County line on the west.

As of 2003 there were about 525 acres of land in the planning area used for mineral extraction of sand, gravel, and rock. There were 14 permits for surface mining activities filed with the County. Aggregate mining sites within the city are located in Canyon Country, Mint Canyon, and Soledad Canyon (City of Santa Clarita 2011). The General Plan contains policies to protect California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act areas from incompatible development, while ensuring that extraction and reclamation activities are compatible with other development and that adverse environmental impacts are mitigated. The Santa Clarita Valley also contains other mineral resources which have been extracted historically, including gold, natural gas, and oil. Many older mines and oil wells have been abandoned, although several oil and natural gas wells are still in production.

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?

b. Would the project result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?

The conservation and Open Space Element of the Santa Clarita contains the following objectives and policies regarding mineral resources:

Objective CO 2.3: Conserve areas with significant mineral resources and provide for extraction and processing of such resources in accordance with applicable laws and land use policies.

Policy CO 2.3.1: Identify areas with significant mineral resources that are available for extraction through appropriate zoning or overlay designations.

Policy CO 2.3.2: Consider appropriate buffers near mineral resource areas that are planned for extraction, to provide for land use compatibility and prevent the encroachment of incompatible land uses.

Policy CO 2.3.3: Through the review process for any mining or mineral extraction proposal, ensure mitigation of impacts from mining and processing of materials on adjacent uses or on the community, including but not limited to air and water pollution, traffic and circulation, noise, and land use incompatibility.

Policy CO 2.3.4: Ensure that mineral extraction sites are maintained in a safe and secure manner after cessation of extraction activities, which may include the regulated decommissioning of wells, clean-up of any contaminated soils or materials, closing of mine openings, or other measures as deemed appropriate by the agencies having jurisdiction.

Policy CO 2.3.5: Promote remediation and restoration of mined land to a condition that supports beneficial uses, which may include but are not limited to recreational open space, habitat enhancement, groundwater recharge, or urban development.

The Housing Element Update does not propose the development of a specified area, rather identifies areas for potential development. The Housing Element Update would prioritize new housing development on infill sites in urban areas of the city. Reasonably foreseeable new development would likely primarily occur in areas with existing commercial and residential areas, which are generally not compatible with mineral extraction. It is not anticipated that new development under the Housing Element Update would occur on lands presently in use for mineral extraction. The proposed project in and of itself would not result in the loss of availability of a known valuable mineral resource to the region, nor to a mineral resource recovery site. Further, the Housing Element is a policy document and in and of itself does not propose any specific sites for development and therefore would have no impact on mineral resources.

NO IMPACT

13 Noise

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in:				
a. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	■

Noise

Environmental noise levels typically fluctuate over time, and different types of noise descriptors are used to account for this variability. The unit of measurement used to describe a noise level is the decibel (dB). Decibels are measured on a logarithmic scale that quantifies sound intensity. A doubling of the energy of a noise source, such as a doubling of traffic volume, would increase the noise level by 3 dB; similarly, dividing the energy in half would result in a decrease of 3 dB. Noise sensitive land uses generally include residences, hospitals, schools, churches, libraries, and parks.

Groundborne Vibration

Typical outdoor sources of perceptible groundborne vibration are construction equipment, steel-wheeled trains, and traffic on rough roads. The primary concern from vibration is that it can be intrusive and annoying to building occupants and vibration-sensitive land uses. Vibration amplitudes are usually expressed in peak particle velocity (PPV) or root mean square (RMS) vibration velocity. The PPV and RMS velocity are normally described in inches per second (in./sec.). PPV is defined as the maximum instantaneous positive or negative peak of a vibration signal. A PPV of 0.035 is considered barely noticeable while a PPV of 2.00 is considered severe (Caltrans 2020). Vibration sensitive receivers, which are similar to noise-sensitive receivers, include residences and institutional uses, such as hospitals, schools, and churches. However, vibration-sensitive receivers also include buildings where vibrations may interfere with vibration-sensitive equipment that is

affected by vibration levels that may be well below those associated with human annoyance (e.g., recording studies or medical facilities with sensitive equipment).

Descriptors

The impact of noise is not a function of loudness alone. The time of day when noise occurs, and the duration of the noise are also important. In addition, most noise that lasts for more than a few seconds is variable in its intensity. Consequently, a variety of noise descriptors has been developed. The noise descriptors used for this analysis is the community noise equivalent level (CNEL).

- The L_{eq} is defined as the single steady A-weighted level that is equivalent to the same amount of energy as that contained in the actual fluctuating levels over a period. Typically, L_{eq} is equivalent to a one-hour period, even when measured for shorter durations as the noise level of a 10- to 30-minute period would be the same as the hour if the noise source is relatively steady. L_{max} is the highest Root Mean Squared (RMS) sound pressure level within the sampling period, and L_{min} is the lowest RMS sound pressure level within the measuring period (Crocker 2007).
- The CNEL is a 24-hour equivalent sound level with an additional 5 dBA penalty to noise occurring in the evening hours, between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. and an additional 10 dBA penalty to noise occurring during the night, between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., to account for the added sensitivity of humans to noise during these hours (Caltrans 2013). Quiet suburban areas typically have a CNEL in the range of 40 to 50 dBA, while areas near arterial streets are in the 50 to 70+ CNEL range (FTA 2018).

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?

b. Would the project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

The Noise Element of the City's General Plan contains the following goals and policies related to noise conditions within the city:

Goal N 1.0: A healthy and safe noise environment for Santa Clarita Valley residents, employees, and visitors.

Policy N 1.1.1: Use the Noise and Land Use Compatibility Guidelines contained on Exhibit N-8, which are consistent with State guidelines, as a policy basis for decisions on land use and development proposals related to noise.

Policy N 1.1.2: Continue to implement the adopted Noise Ordinance and other applicable code provisions, consistent with state and federal standards, which establish noise impact thresholds for noise abatement and attenuation, in order to reduce potential health hazards associated with high noise levels.

Policy N 1.1.3: Include consideration of potential noise impacts in land use planning and development review decisions.

Policy N 1.1.4: Control noise sources adjacent to residential, recreational, and community facilities, and those land uses classified as noise sensitive.

Policy N 1.1.5: Monitor and update data and information regarding current and projected noise levels in the planning area.

Policy N 1.1.6: Provide development review comments on projects proposed by other agencies and special districts that may generate noise impacts affecting land uses within the Santa Clarita Valley, including any freeway and high-speed rail projects.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Future development projects would be subject to development plan review to determine potential concerns related to noise based on site-specific locations and development design. As required in SCMC Section 17.51.035, Noise Standards, future development projects would be required to comply with the City's noise standards and design requirements to ensure indoor noise attenuation standards are achieved. Additionally, SCMC Section 11.44.080, Special Noise Sources – Construction and Building, requires that construction within 300 feet of a residentially zoned property can only occur between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The Housing Element Update is a policy document and as such does not propose specific development projects, but facilitates density needed to accommodate the 6th cycle RHNA. Because specific projects are not known at this time, the City cannot assess the specific impacts of development in quantitative terms. All housing development proposals would be subject to the General Plan policies listed above, standard conditions of approval, and project-specific environmental review. Furthermore, because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not, in and of itself, result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise or vibration levels in the city.

NO IMPACT

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?

The Agua Dulce Airport is located in the northeast quadrant of the Santa Clarita Valley, in a rural populated area under the jurisdiction of the County of Los Angeles approximately 14 miles northeast of the City of Santa Clarita. The airport is privately owned but is open to the public. The airport has a single 4,600-foot-long runway and serves general aviation aircraft only (City of Santa Clarita 2011). There are many noise restrictions in place for flight operations, including prohibiting night operations at the airport. If aircrafts depart to the north on Runway 4, they are to avoid flying over the homes 2,000 feet northeast of the end of the runway (City of Santa Clarita 2011). Finally, touch-and-go practices are not allowed at the airport. A 65 CNEL noise contour has been generated for the airport by the County of Los Angeles and is included in the Technical Appendix of the City's General Plan (City of Santa Clarita 2011). The noise contour barely extends past the runway and does not impact any existing residences. Within the city there is one heliport, Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital Heliport, that is used for medical emergency transport.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts involving airport safety. Future development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would include project-specific developmental review to evaluate potential concerns regarding excessive noise from airports. Therefore, the adoption of the Housing Element Update

itself would not expose people to excessive noise for people residing or working near an airport and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

14 Population and Housing

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (e.g., by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (e.g., through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	■	☐
b. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	■

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)?

The City of Santa Clarita had an estimated a population of 228,673 residents as of April 2020 (United States Census 2020). Pursuant to federal and State law, SCAG serves as a Council of Governments, a Regional Transportation Planning Agency, and the metropolitan planning organization for Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura, and Imperial Counties. SCAG is responsible for preparing the RTP/SCS and RHNA in coordination with other State and local agencies. These documents include population, employment, and housing projections for the region and its 15 subregions. SCAG estimates that the City's population will reach 243,100 in 2030 and 258,800 in 2045 (adjusted to 285,555 assuming three persons per household) (SCAG 2020). The OVOV General Plan assumes buildout of the Land Use Policy Map would result in a total population of 275,000 residents within the City's planning area.

The Housing Element Update would emphasize the creation of new residential units within urban infill areas and appropriately zoned vacant sites in Santa Clarita, which could increase development density throughout the city. The Housing Element Update could potentially accommodate up to 9,845 housing units. If all of the units were built, it could result in up to 29,240 new residents if all units were fully occupied by the estimated household size (2.97 persons per household, DOF 2020). Not all units would accommodate this household size, but 29,240 additional residents over existing conditions associated with full buildout of the Housing Element Update is the conservative estimate upon which this analysis is based. This number of new residents could bring the 2030 population in Santa Clarita to 257,913, a number consistent with SCAG's and the General Plan's population growth projections. The Housing Element Update in and of itself does not develop residential units because it is a plan. The Housing Element assumes that up to 9,845 residential units could be developed. The Housing Element Update is a policy document and as such does not propose specific development projects, but facilitates density needed to accommodate the 6th cycle RHNA. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not, in and of itself, induce substantial unplanned

population growth in an area. The Housing Element Update emphasizes the creation of new housing units within urban infill areas of the city, which could increase development density throughout the city. As discussed in the *Project Description*, the Housing Element Update provides the capacity to meet the City's RHNA, therefore, the Housing Element Update would be consistent with State requirements for the RHNA. In addition, the Housing Element Update would not increase development potential above that already allowed under the General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code. The Housing Element Update would bring the forecasts for the City's General Plan and the RTP/SCS into consistency since the RTP/SCS will be updated to reflect new forecasts for each city in the region. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area 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 Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing. The project would not involve any changes in land use designations or zoning or allowed density of any parcel. The Housing Element Update would accommodate potential future residential development that meets the City's RHNA, including housing for low-income households. Implementation of the Housing Element Update would increase access to housing to meet housing needs in the city. Any potential displacement that would occur is required by Section 7261(a) of the California Government Code to proactively provide relocation assistance advisory services to all persons displaced. Therefore, the adoption of the Housing Element Update would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

15 Public Services

		Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
a.	Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the 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:				
	1 Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	■
	2 Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	■
	3 Schools?	☐	☐	☐	■
	4 Parks?	☐	☐	☐	■
	5 Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	■

Park facilities are addressed in *Impact 16, Recreation*.

The City of Santa Clarita contracts with the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD) for fire protection services. The Santa Clarita Valley is currently served by 15 LACFD fire stations, eleven of which are found within the city. In 2020, the LACFD was staffed by 4,775 personnel and responded to 379,517 calls for service; 81 percent of these were medical emergencies. The LACFD has additional resources available to provide back-up services to the city as needed, including additional engine companies, truck companies, paramedic squads, hazardous material squads, firefighting helicopters, other fire camps, and a variety of specialty equipment.

Police protection services for Santa Clarita are provided by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff Department's service area covers 656 square miles, including both city and county areas and portions of the Angeles National Forest. The Sheriff's Department oversees general law and traffic enforcement within the City, while the California Highway Patrol (CHP) has jurisdiction over traffic on State highways and in unincorporated county areas (Safety Element 2021).

The city includes five school districts: William S. Hart Union High School District; Saugus Union Elementary School District; Newhall Elementary School District; Sulphur Springs Union Elementary School District; and Castaic Union School District. The City also provides access to private education institutions and higher education facilities, such as the College of the Canyons Community College (OVOV 3.15).

The Santa Clarita Public Library operates three Public Libraries which include the Canyon Country Jo Anne Darcy Library, Old Town Newhall Library, and the Valencia Branch (City of Santa Clarita).

a.1. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered fire protection facilities, or the need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives?

a.2. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered police protection facilities, or the need for new or physically altered police protection facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives?

a.3. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered schools, or the need for new or physically altered schools, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios or other performance objectives?

a.4. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered parks, or the need for new or physically altered parks, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios or other performance objectives?

a.5. Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of other new or physically altered public facilities, or the need for other new or physically altered public facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives?

The Safety Element Update includes several goals and policies to further reduce impacts associated with public services. Specifically, policies in the Safety Element Update require planned emergency response, adequate emergency access, new fire stations throughout the city as needed, and cooperation with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to expand facility space in Santa Clarita Valley to meet projected law enforcement needs.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not, in and of itself, result in impacts related to public facilities and services. The Safety Element Update also addresses the safety planning needs for the City though implementing policies and objectives to address such needs, such as expansion of police and fire facilities to meet projected demands.

Future development would require project-specific development review to evaluate potential concerns related to public services. Development proposals for individual projects would be subject to adopted development guidelines, including standards that govern public facilities, services, and adequate fire and public safety protections. Public services would be funded through the payment of development fees or project specific mitigation, as appropriate and in accordance with Section 65995(h) of the California Government Code (Senate Bill 50, August 27, 1998). The City funds school construction through a statewide bond measure and development impact fees. Likewise, libraries are also funded through development impact fees, assessed by the City.

Development fees that would fund public services facilities ensure that impacts from population growth are mitigated prior to potential substantial induced growth. Facilities planning is conducted by the City on an ongoing basis to assess needs to maintain adequate service ratios and response times, as required by the City's Safety Element. Additionally, as part of the annual General Plan review process, implementation of the Safety Element Update requires an annual review of the Safety Element, along with other General Plan elements, to determine compliance, and the filing of a report with the California Office of Planning and Research and Department of Community Development pursuant to Government Code Section 65400(a) (2). Therefore, Housing Element Update would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered public facilities and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

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16 Recreation

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
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?	☐	☐	☐	■
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?	☐	☐	☐	■

The City's Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department operates 35 parks totaling approximately 399 acres and ranging in area from about 0.5 to 120 acres, which provide a wide range of recreational facilities (City of Santa Clarita). The City abides by the State's Quimby Act (Government Code 66477), which allows local agencies to collect impact fees from residential subdividers to finance development of new parks to serve residents. Section 17.51.010 of the SCMC allows developers to dedicate and build parks to serve residents of a new development, or to pay in-lieu fees to the City for parkland acquisition and development. The City's park fee ordinance requires dedication or payment of in-lieu fees for a minimum of three acres of parkland for each 1,000 residents. However, the City's General Plan standard calls for parks to be provided at a ratio of five acres per 1,000 residents. There were approximately 1.5 to 2 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents in the city as of 2021, with 399 acres of developed park space and hundreds of acres of passive park land (City of Santa Clarita).

The city includes 25 neighborhood parks, 9 community parks, and 1 regional park. These parks include amenities such as art galleries, ball diamonds, basketball courts, BBQ areas, child play areas, community rooms, disc golf courses, dog parks, fitness zones, food stands, horseshoe pits, kitchen facilities, lighted areas, multi-purpose fields, open turf play areas, pickle ball areas, picnic tables, public restrooms, racquetball courts, rental spaces, sand volleyball courts, skate parks, sports fields, swimming pools, and tennis courts.

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?

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?

The City's Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan has established the following goals and policies for the maintenance and development of parks and parkland facilities:

Goal CO 9: Equitable distribution of park, recreational, and trail facilities to serve all areas and demographic needs of existing and future residents.

Objective CO 9.1: Develop new parklands throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, with priority given to locations that are not now adequately served, and encompassing a diversity of park types and functions (including passive and active areas) in consideration of the recreational needs of residents to be served by each park, based on the following guidelines:

Policy CO 9.1.1: Common park standards shall be developed and applied throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, consistent with community character objectives, with a goal of five acres of parkland per 1,000 population.

Policy CO 9.1.2: A range of parkland types, sizes, and uses shall be provided to accommodate recreational and leisure activities.

Policy CO 9.1.3: Provide local and community parks within a reasonable distance of residential neighborhoods.

Policy CO 9.1.4: Explore and implement opportunities to share facilities with school districts, utility easements, flood control facilities, and other land uses, where feasible.

Policy CO 9.1.5: Promote development of more playfields for youth and adult sports activities, in conjunction with tournament facilities, where needed.

Policy CO 9.1.6: Continue to upgrade and expand existing facilities to enhance service to residents, including extension of hours through lighted facilities, where appropriate.

Policy CO 9.1.7: Establish appropriate segments of the Santa Clara River as a recreational focal point, encouraging a beneficial mix of passive and active recreational uses with natural ecosystems by providing buffers for sensitive habitat.

Policy CO 9.1.8: Make available easily accessible park and recreation facilities throughout the Santa Clarita Valley.

Policy CO 9.1.9: Ensure that new development projects provide a fair share towards park and recreational facilities, phased to meet needs of residents as dwelling units become occupied, pursuant to the Quimby Act (California Government Code Section 66477) and local ordinances as applicable.

Policy CO 9.1.10: Where appropriate, use flexible planning and zoning tools to obtain adequate park and open space land, including but not limited to specific plans, development agreements, clustering, and transfer of development rights.

Policy CO 9.1.11: Locate and design parks to address potential adverse impacts on adjacent development from noise, lights, flying balls, traffic, special events, and other operational activities and uses.

Policy CO 9.1.12: Establish minimum design standards for both public and private parks to provide for public safety and welfare through lighting, access, crime prevention through design, equipment, visibility, and other aspects of design.

Policy CO 9.1.13: Provide passive areas for natural habitat, meditation, birdwatching, and similar activities in parks, where feasible and appropriate, including meditation gardens, wildflower and butterfly gardens, botanic gardens, and similar features.

Policy CO 9.1.14: Ensure adequate park maintenance, and encourage programs for volunteers to assist in maintaining local parks, where feasible and appropriate.

Policy CO 9.1.15: Provide a wide variety of recreational programs geared to all ages and abilities, including passive, active, educational, and cultural programs.

Objective CO 9.2: Recognize that trails are an important recreational asset that, when integrated with transportation systems, contribute to mobility throughout the Santa Clarita Valley.

Policy CO 9.2.1: Plan for a continuous and unified multi-use (equestrian, bicycling and pedestrian/hiking) trail network for a variety of users, to be developed with common standards, in order to unify Santa Clarita Valley communities and connect with County, regional, State trails and Federal such as the Pacific Crest Trail.

Policy CO 9.2.2: Provide trail connections between paseos, bike routes, schools, parks, community services, streets and neighborhoods.

Policy CO 9.2.3: Use the Santa Clara River as a major recreational focal point for development of an integrated system of bikeways and trails, while protecting sensitive ecological areas.

Policy CO 9.2.4: Ensure that new development projects provide trail connections to local and regional trail systems, where appropriate.

Policy CO 9.2.5: Promote the expansion of multi-use trails within rural areas of the Santa Clarita Valley.

Policy CO 9.2.6: Provide trails to scenic vistas and viewpoints.

Policy CO 9.2.7: Explore joint use opportunities to combine trail systems with utility easements, flood control facilities, open spaces, or other uses, where feasible.

Policy CO 9.2.8: Ensure that trails are designed to protect habitat, ecosystems, and water quality.

Policy CO 9.2.9: Pursue funding for trail maintenance and encourage volunteer participation in trail maintenance programs, where appropriate.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to recreational facilities. Development proposals for individual projects would be subject to adopted development guidelines, including standards that govern recreational facilities. Additionally, Chapter 17.51.010 (E) of Santa Carita Municipal Code requires a parkland dedication or in-lieu fee for any new residential development. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not increase the use of existing recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

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17 Transportation

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible use (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	■
d. Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	■	☐

The City's General Plan Circulation Element identifies the existing transportation conditions in the city. Existing and future roadways are included in the City's General Plan Circulation Element. The city is served by the City of Santa Clarita Transit including local routes, commuter routes and stations linking routes throughout the Santa Clarita Valley. The City's current Circulation Element includes an inventory of existing bicycle and pedestrian trails. Additional information on conditions, recommendations, and programs regarding bike and pedestrian trails are also provided in the City of Santa Clarita 2020 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, adopted September 2020.

In 2018, CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3 was finalized to help determine the significance of transportation impacts. Beginning on July 1, 2020, level of service (roadway congestion) is no longer an acceptable metric for analyzing transportation impacts under CEQA. Instead, jurisdictions must adopt vehicle miles traveled (VMT) thresholds to analyze impacts related to the number of automobile trips and miles traveled.

a. Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

b. Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

c. Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible use (e.g., farm equipment)?

The City of Santa Clarita Circulation Element has established several regulatory requirements for the development of transportation facilities:

Goal C 1.0: An inter-connected network of circulation facilities that integrates all travel modes, provides viable alternatives to automobile use, and conforms with regional plans.

Policy C 1.1.1: Reduce dependence on the automobile, particularly single-occupancy vehicle use, by providing safe and convenient access to transit, bikeways, and walkways.

Policy C 1.1.2: Promote expansion of alternative transportation options to increase accessibility to all demographic and economic groups throughout the community, including mobility-impaired persons, senior citizens, low-income persons, and youth.

Policy C 1.1.3: Work with local and regional agencies and employers to promote an integrated, seamless transportation system that meets access needs, including local and regional bus service, dial-a-ride, taxis, rail, van pools, carpools, bus pools, bicycling, walking, and automobiles.

Policy C 1.1.4: Promote public health through provision of safe, pleasant, and accessible walkways, bikeways, and multi-purpose trail systems for residents.

Policy C 1.1.5: Plan for efficient links between circulation systems at appropriate locations, including but not limited to bus-rail connections and pedestrian-bus connections.

Policy C 1.1.6: Provide adequate facilities for multi-modal travel, including but not limited to bicycle parking and storage, expanded park-and-ride lots, and adequate station and transfer facilities in appropriate locations.

Policy C 1.1.7: Consider the safety and convenience of the traveling public, including pedestrians and cyclists, in design and development of all transportation systems.

Policy C 1.1.8: Acquire and/or reserve adequate right-of-way in transportation corridors to accommodate multiple travel modes, including bus turnouts, bus rapid transit (BRT), bikeways, walkways, and linkages to trail systems.

Policy C 1.1.9: Incorporate funding for all modes of transportation in the capital improvement program, and seek funding from all available sources for multimodal system development.

Policy C 1.1.10: Provide for flexibility in the transportation system to accommodate new technology as it becomes available, in order to reduce trips by vehicles using fossil fuels where feasible and appropriate.

Policy C 1.1.11: Promote use of multi-modal facilities by providing adequate and attractive way-finding programs directing users to transit stations, park-and ride lots, bicycle storage, and other facilities.

Policy C 1.1.12: Implement recommendations of the City's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan to expand opportunities for alternative travel modes.

Policy C 1.1.13: Design new activity centers and improve existing activity centers to prioritize walking, bicycling and circulator transit for internal circulation of person-travel.

Goal C 4.0: Rail service to meet regional and inter-regional needs for convenient, cost-effective travel alternatives, which are fully integrated into the Valley's circulation systems and land use patterns.

Policy C 4.1.1: Develop permanent Metrolink facilities with an expanded bus transfer station and additional park-and-ride spaces at the Via Princessa station, or other alternative location as deemed appropriate to meet the travel needs of residents on the Valley's east side.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts related to consistency with adopted transportation and emergency evacuation plans, transportation facilities, safety, and VMT. Future development accommodated by the Housing Element Update would be reviewed on a project-specific level for potential transportation-related concerns. Individual projects would be required to adhere to federal, State, and local policies and regulations including those included in the General Plan, as listed above.

Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b); or substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible use; and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

d. Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

The Santa Clarita General Plan Circulation lists several policies as with the main goal of a safe and efficient transportation system as listed below:

Goal C 2.0: A unified and well-maintained network of streets and highways which provides safe and efficient movement of people and goods between neighborhoods, districts, and regional centers, while maintaining community character.

Policy C 2.5.1: Maintain a current evacuation plan as part of emergency response planning.

Policy C 2.5.2: Ensure that new development is provided with adequate emergency and/or secondary access for purposes of evacuation and emergency response; require two points of ingress and egress for every subdivision or phase thereof, except as otherwise approved for small subdivisions where physical constraints preclude a second access point.

Policy C 2.5.3: Require provision of visible street name signs and addresses on all development to aid in emergency.

Policy C 1.1.4: Provide directional signage to Interstate 5 and State Route 14 at key intersections in the Valley, to assist emergency evacuation operations.

Additionally, all applicable City policies and review processes related to hazards and emergency access (as described in Section 9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*) would continue to apply to future development carried out subsequent to adoption of the Housing Element.

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current

RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not, in and of itself, result in inadequate emergency access.

Development accommodated by the Housing Element Update would be subject to federal, State, and local regulations and standards, including General Plan goals and policies, that govern transportation and emergency access. Future development proposals will be reviewed for consistency with the City's existing and planned circulation network; and ensure that the construction of new features will not impede emergency access. Proposed improvements to off-site and on-site circulation systems would also be reviewed by the City prior to project construction. These review processes would evaluate the design of future projects' emergency access schematics, which would minimize the potential for the creation of inadequate emergency access. Additionally, the Safety Element Update would require two points of emergency access for neighborhoods. Therefore, the Housing Element would not result in inadequate emergency access and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

18 Tribal Cultural Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in a Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, or cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
a. 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)?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. 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.	☐	☐	☐	■

AB 52 was enacted in 2015 and expanded CEQA by defining a new resource category, "tribal cultural resources." AB 52 established 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 Section 21084.2). It further stated that the lead agency shall establish measures to avoid impacts that would alter the significant characteristics of a tribal cultural resource, when feasible (PRC Section 21084.3).

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 PRC 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 PRC Section 5024.1.

In applying these criteria, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

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 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.

California Government Code Section 65352.3 (adopted in 2004 pursuant to the requirements of SB 18 [SB 18]) requires local governments to contact, refer plans to, and consult with tribal organizations prior to making a 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."

a. *Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 that is 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)?*

b. *Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource as defined in Public Resources Code 21074 that is a resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1?*

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts to tribal cultural resources.

Consistent with AB 52 and SB 18, the City must consult with traditionally and culturally affiliated Native American tribes to determine if the Housing Element Update would result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource. The City mailed consultation letters on May 24, 2021 according to SB 18 and AB 52 to contacts identified by the Native American Heritage Commission and that requested that the City of Santa Clarita notify them of projects subject to AB 52 or SB 18. Under AB 52, Native American tribes have 30 days to respond and request further project information and formal consultation, and under SB 18 Native American tribes have 90 days to respond requesting consultation. On June 2, 2021 the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (FTBMI) requested consultation on the project. To date consultation is still ongoing.

Development proposals for individual projects would be subject to adopted development guidelines, including standards that govern archaeological resources as described in *Impact 5, Cultural Resources*, and disposition of human remains as governed by Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and PRC Sections 5097.94 and 5097.98. Based on the consultation efforts and the regulations and standards the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts to tribal cultural resources and no impact would occur.

NO IMPACT

19 Utilities and Service Systems

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	■
d. Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☐	■
e. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	■

The City of Santa Clarita is currently served by the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (SCV Water). SCV Water is made up of three water divisions: Newhall Water Division (NWD), Santa Clarita Water Division (SCWD) and Valencia Water Division (VWD). Cable, internet, and telephone services are widely available throughout the community through Viasat, AT&T, DirecTV, Spectrum, or other providers. Electricity is provided by SoCal Edison while SoCal Gas Company provides natural gas to the city.

a. Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

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?

c. Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

The Santa Clarita General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element and Land Use Element lists several policies as with the main goal of maintaining utilities, sufficient water supply, and proper wastewater treatment and operations:

Goal CO 1.0: A balance between the social and economic needs of Santa Clarita Valley residents and protection of the natural environment, so that these needs can be met in the present and in the future.

Policy CO 1.1.1: In making land use decisions, consider the complex, dynamic, and interrelated ways that natural and human systems interact, such as the interactions between energy demand, water demand, air quality and water quality, and waste management.

Goal CO 4.0: An adequate supply of clean water to meet the needs of present and future residents and businesses, balanced with the needs of natural ecosystems.

Policy CO 4.2.5: Participate and cooperate with other agencies to complete, adopt, and implements an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan to build a diversified portfolio of water supply, water quality, and resource stewardship priorities for the Santa Clarita Valley.

Goal LU 9.0: Adequate public facilities and services, provided in a timely manner and in appropriate locations to serve existing and future residents and businesses.

Policy LU 9.1.1: Ensure construction of adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of new development prior to occupancy.

Policy LU 9.1.2: Coordinate review of development projects with other agencies and special districts providing utilities and other services.

Policy LU 9.1.3: Protect major utility transmission corridors, pumping stations, reservoirs, booster stations, and other similar facilities from encroachment by incompatible uses, while allowing non-intrusive uses such as plant nurseries, greenbelts and recreational trails.

Policy LU 9.1.4: Develop and apply compatible standards within City and County areas for design and maintenance of utility infrastructure, in consideration of the character of each community.

Policy LU 9.1.5: Work with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to expand law enforcement facilities to meet the needs of the Santa Clarita Valley's growing population.

Policy LU 9.1.6: Coordinate with appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure that landfill expansion needs are met while minimizing adverse impacts to Valley residents.

Future development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be concentrated in urban areas that are served by existing utilities infrastructure, including potable water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, electrical power, natural gas, and telecommunications facilities. Development proposals for individual projects would be subject to adopted development guidelines, including standards that govern utility services. Any impacts identified for an individual project would be addressed through the project approval process, including development review specific to any impacts determined to be potential for that project.

Water Supply

Castaic Lake is a 324,000 acre-foot storage facility created by an earth-filled dam across Castaic Creek. The reservoir serves as the West Branch Terminus of the California Aqueduct. In addition to its SWP functions, the lake is operated to conserve local floodwaters for use in water recharge of underlying groundwater basins. Castaic Lagoon is located directly south and downstream of Castaic Dam. The Lagoon has a surface area of 197 acres and a capacity of 5,701 acre feet. Elderberry Forebay is also a part of the Castaic Reservoir system, and is an enclosed section of Castaic Lake (General Plan 2011).

SCV Water is made up of three divisions with separate but interconnected distribution systems: NWD, SCWD, and VWD. These districts combined provide water to nearly the entire City of Santa Clarita and unincorporated portions of Los Angeles County. SCV Water also serves LACWWD 36 whose service areas include the Hasley Canyon and Val Verde communities in the Los Angeles County unincorporated area. SCV Water is responsible for providing water to utility customers as well as resource planning for long-term reliable water supply.

The 2020 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) discusses water resources available to SCV Water through 2050 (Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency [SCV Water] 2021). SCV Water's existing water resources include imported supplies, local groundwater, recycled water, and water from existing groundwater banking programs. Although it is difficult to assess projected water demand that would result from the Statewide effort to increase housing production, several safeguards still exist to ensure water supply for new projects. State law requires that the local water purveyor prepare a water supply assessment for larger subdivisions to ensure adequate long-term water supply for single-year and multi-year drought conditions prior to issuance of a building permit. Concurrent with the 2020 UWMP, SCV Water also updated its Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) that outlines SCV Water's action plan for a drought or water shortage and specifies opportunities to reduce demands. SCV Water has also created a Water Use Efficiency Strategic Plan, conservation measures, and public education and outreach plans to address water demand security.

According to the 2021 Water Reliability Plan Update (WRP), SCV Water's total existing water supplies usage sits at 66,630 acre feet per year (AFY) (SCV Water 2021: 4-1). This amount is lower than the projection in the 2015 UWMP of 68,900 AFY and 2019 Santa Clarita Valley Water Report projection of 82,000 AFY (SCV 2015: 2-6, SCV Water 2020: ES-4). However, the 2019 Santa Clarita Valley Water Report suggests that SCV Water had up to 92,893 AFY available supplies for 2020 (SCV Water 2020: ES-4). The updated 2020 version of the UWMP and WRP both provide projections for water, showing increases in total water supply every five years between 2020 and 2050. Existing and projected supplies consist of existing groundwater, recycled water, imported water, and existing banking and exchange programs. At the beginning of 2020, a total of 9,013 AFY of carryover supplies

were available. A total 3,036 AFY of those supplies were delivered, and the rest was saved for carryover into 2021. The 2019 Santa Clarity Valley Report also showed that the total additional dry year supplies were 164,465 AFY aggregated from the amounts for several banking and exchange programs (SCV Water 2020: 4-52).

The Housing Element Update is a policy document and as such does not propose specific development projects, but facilitates density needed to accommodate the 6th cycle RHNA. New development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would require water for a variety of activities such as landscaping, controlling fugitive dust, and providing potable water to workers during construction and residents of the future development. As new housing development occurs incrementally throughout the city, upgrades to water conveyance facilities may be required. The precise location and connection would need to be determined at the time development is proposed. Should any new connections or upgrades be required, such upgrades would be subject to subsequent developmental review. Any future line size modifications or connections would be designed in accordance with applicable provisions of Chapter 15.16 of the SCMC, Design and Construction, and to the satisfaction of the City Engineer and subject to the policies listed above. No impact would occur.

Stormwater

New development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would likely include stormwater infrastructure to meet new demand. The Housing Element Update is a policy document and as such does not propose specific development projects, but facilitates density needed to accommodate the 6th cycle RHNA. Future residential development in conformance with the Housing Element Update would be subject to the policies listed above and evaluated to determine adequacy of utility infrastructure as part of the standard city development review process and no impact would occur.

Wastewater Generation

SCV Water's source of supply for current and planned recycled water consists of flows from the Valencia Water Reclamation Plant, Saugus Water Reclamation Plant (Saugus WRP) and planned Newhall Ranch Water Reclamation Plant (Newhall WRP) as well as the Vista Canyon Ranch Water Factory (Vista Canyon RWF). The Saugus WRP and Valencia WRP are both operated by the Santa Clarita Valley Sanitation District of Los Angeles (SCVSD).

According to the updated Recycled Water Master Plan (RWMP) and Urban Water Master Plan (UWMP), the City found few deficiencies in the existing and projected wastewater treatment facilities. Both the RWMP and UWMP identified increases in wastewater demand due to population growth and have planned facilities to provide for the City based on those projections. The Valencia WRP has a capacity of 21.6 million gallons per day (mgd) and the Saugus WRP has a capacity of 6.5 mgd (Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County [LACSD] 2016). The planned Newhall WRP and Vista Canyon RWF have expected capacities of 3.75 mgd and 392,000 gpd (Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County [LACSD] 2016).

The Housing Element Update is a policy document and as such does not propose specific development projects, but facilitates density needed to accommodate the 6th cycle RHNA. Wastewater treatment would be provided by existing and planned infrastructure within the city. Project development would be required to comply with the regulations to maintain wastewater capacity in the city. Future residential development accommodated under the Housing Element Update would be evaluated to determine adequacy of utility infrastructure as part of the standard

city development review process. The Housing Element Update would not result in impacts to wastewater and no impact would occur.

Electricity, Natural Gas, and Telecommunications

Electricity is currently provided by SoCal Edison and natural gas service is provided by SoCalGas. Telecommunications services would be provided by AT&T, Viasat, or other providers, at the discretion of future tenants. The Housing Element Update is a policy document and as such does not propose specific development projects, but facilitates density needed to accommodate the 6th cycle RHNA. Telecommunications are generally available in the project area, and facility upgrades would not likely be necessary. Future residential development in conformance with the Housing Element Update would be evaluated to determine adequacy of utility infrastructure as part of the standard City development review process and no impact would occur.

NO 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?

e. Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

The purpose of the Housing Element Update is to comply with State housing element law requiring that the City show it has adequate land designated to accommodate the existing and projected housing needs reflected in the City's RHNA, which is based on the regional population forecasts. The RHNA does not encourage or promote growth, but rather requires communities to address the projected growth and accommodate its fair share of the regional housing needs to accommodate the forecasted growth. The General Plan Land Use Element chapter offers a goal and the following policies to manage solid waste:

Goal LU 9.0: Adequate public facilities and services, provided in a timely manner and in appropriate locations to serve existing and future residents and businesses.

Policy LU 9.1.1: Ensure construction of adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of new development prior to occupancy.

Policy LU 9.1.6: Coordinate with appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure that landfill expansion needs are met while minimizing adverse impacts to Valley residents.

Policy LU 9.1.7: Provide for location of additional waste transfer stations and other facilities to promote recycling and reuse of materials within Industrial designations on the Land Use Map, subject to applicable zoning requirements.

The Housing Element Update is a policy document and as such does not propose specific development projects, but facilitates density needed to accommodate the 6th cycle RHNA. Because specific projects are not known at this time, the City cannot assess the specific impacts from solid waste. Currently, the three landfills that serve the city have remaining capacity (City of Santa Clarita Climate Action Plan [CAP] 2012). In total, the City of Santa Clarita has access to 17 landfills throughout the County but the majority of solid waste is sent to the Chiquita Canyon Sanitary Landfill, the Antelope Valley Public Landfill, and the Puente Hills Landfill No. 6 (City of Santa Clarita CAP 2012). All housing development proposals will be subject to the policies listed above, the

standard conditions of approval, and project-specific environmental review. Furthermore, proposals are subject to development standards and conditions of approval as part of the permitting process, including environmental review. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not 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 and there would be no impact.

NO IMPACT

20 Wildfire

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:				
a. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	■	☐
b. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	☐	☐	☐	■
c. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	☐	☐	☐	■
d. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslopes or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☐	■

The City of Santa Clarita contracts with the LACFD for fire protection. Santa Clarita is a highly urbanized city that does not contain any state responsibility areas (SRA) within the City's boundaries. However, the City contains Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) for wildland fires within the City's boundaries (CalFIRE 2020). Approximately, 80 to 90 percent of the General Plan planning area is located in a VHFHSZ (City of Santa Clarita 2011). Areas within the Santa Clarita Valley subject to wildland fire danger include portions of Newhall and Canyon Country, Sand Canyon, Pico Canyon, Placerita Canyon, Hasley Canyon, White's Canyon, Bouquet Canyon, and all areas along the interface between urban development and natural vegetation in hillside areas.

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?

As discussed in Section 20, *Wildfire*, construction activities associated with reasonably foreseeable new development under the Housing Element Update could interfere with adopted emergency

response or evacuation plans as a result of temporary construction activities within rights-of-way. However, temporary construction barricades or other obstructions that could impede emergency access would be subject to the City's permitting process, which requires a traffic control plan for encroachment on a public right-of-way, subject to City review and approval. Implementation of these plans would ensure that future development under the proposed project would not impair or physically interfere with adopted emergency response or evacuation procedures.

Increased housing development density under the Housing Element Update could result in additional traffic within area roadways. However, following the 2003 wildfires, Santa Clarita put into place emergency response procedures to reduce losses through better notification, evacuation procedures, and quick action by the State and federal governments to declare an emergency and provide suppression support (City of Santa Clarita 2011). The Safety Element Update also includes policies to support emergency response to wildfires in order to protect public safety infrastructure and property from fires, support the needs of fire protection in urban and wildland interface settings, maintain acceptable emergency response times, and prioritize fire safe development. Local fire response resources include those of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, the Fire Services mutual aid system, the California Division of Forestry, and the United States Forest Service.

In addition, in cooperation with the County, the City implements compatible policies for wildland fire safety, including but not limited to fuel reduction and defensible space, building materials and design, emergency access and evacuation routes, and fire flow requirements, to protect the public from wildfires. The following objectives, polices and goals in the Santa Clarita General Plan are aimed at protecting residents from wildfire (City of Santa Clarita 2011):

Goal S 3: Protection of public safety and property from fires.

Objective S 3.1 Provide adequate fire protection infrastructure to maintain acceptable service levels as established by the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

- **Policy S 3.1.1:** Coordinate on planning for new fire stations to meet current and projected needs.
- **Policy S 3.1.2:** Program adequate funding for capital fire protection costs, and explore all feasible funding options to meet facility needs.
- **Policy S 3.1.3:** Require adequate fire flow as a condition of approval for all new development, which may include installation of additional reservoir capacity and/or distribution facilities.

Objective S 3.2: Provide for the specialized needs of fire protection services in both urban and wildland interface areas.

- **Policy S 3.2.1:** Identify areas of the Santa Clarita Valley that are prone to wildland fire hazards, and address these areas in fire safety plans.
- **Policy S 3.2.2:** Enforce standards for maintaining defensible space around structures through clearing of dry brush and vegetation.
- **Policy S 3.2.3:** Establish landscape guidelines for fire-prone areas with recommended plant materials, and provide this information to builders and members of the public.
- **Policy S 3.2.4:** Require sprinkler systems, fire resistant building materials, and other construction measures deemed necessary to prevent loss of life and property from wildland fires.

Policy S 3.2.5: Ensure adequate secondary and emergency access for fire apparatus, which includes minimum requirements for road width, surface material, grade, and staging areas.

Policy S 3.2.6: For areas adjacent to the National Forest, cooperate with the United States Forest Service regarding land use and development issues.

Policy S 3.2.7: Continue to provide information and training to the public on fire safety in wildland interface areas.

Objective S 3.3: Maintain acceptable emergency response times throughout the planning area.

Policy S 3.3.1: Plan for fire response times of five minutes in urban areas, eight minutes in suburban areas, and 12 minutes in rural areas.

Policy S 3.3.2: Require the installation and maintenance of street name signs on all new development.

Policy S 3.3.3: Require the posting of address numbers on all homes and businesses that are clearly visible from adjacent streets. Safety City of Sant

Furthermore, LACFD has adopted programs directed at wildland fire prevention, including adoption of the State Fire Code standards for new development in hazardous fire areas. The City of Santa Clarita and LACFD would be responsible for ensuring that future development does not impair adopted emergency response or evacuation plans. As part of standard development procedures, future housing development plans would be submitted for review and approval to ensure that all new development has adequate emergency access and escape routes in compliance with existing City regulations. Impacts to emergency response to wildfire would thus 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?

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?

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 downslopes or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

The Santa Clarita Valley planning area is susceptible to wildland fires because of its hilly terrain, dry weather conditions, and native vegetation. Steep slopes allow for the quick spread of flames during fires and pose difficulty for fire suppression due to access problems for firefighting equipment. However, Santa Clarita is in a mutual aid agreement covering federal forest lands. Responsibility for non-structure fires within the National Forest belongs to the United States Forest Service and local fire response resources include those of the LACFD, the Fire Services mutual aid system, and the California Division of Forestry. Suppression efforts can involve fire equipment, heavy construction equipment, and air fire bombardment aircraft, in addition to hand crews (City of Santa Clarita 2011). LACFD operates 10 fire suppression camps assigned to the Air and Wildland Division, that have

access to use of water-dropping helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, as deemed appropriate that would be able to assist in the event of a wildfire in sloped areas.

As previously discussed, LACFD has adopted the State Fire Code standards for new development in hazardous fire areas. Fire prevention requirements include provision of access roads, adequate road width, and clearance of brush around structures located in hillside areas. In addition, proof of adequate water supply for fire flow is required within a designated distance for new construction in fire hazard areas.

The Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team responds to post-fire conditions in the city. BAER is a group of specialists in fields such as hydrology, soil sciences and wildlife management who evaluate damage to habitat areas from fires, and from firebreaks which may have been constructed to contain fires by cutting and clearing vegetation with earthmovers. In order to prevent erosion and re-establish vegetation consistent with native plant communities, appropriate planting and other management techniques must occur as soon as possible after a fire is extinguished. In addition, recovery from emergency incidents and minimization of economic and social disruption is the focus of General Plan Safety Element Goal S 7 and Objective S 7.2. Policies S 7.2.1 through 7.2.4 promote agency cooperation in planning for temporary shelters, expedited plan check, permitting and inspection programs to aid in the rebuilding of damaged structures; proper record-keeping procedures for obtaining reimbursement from state and federal agencies, and the purchasing of disaster and recovery supplies locally to assist local businesses in their recovery efforts. The Safety Element Update includes goals, objectives, and policies that support emergency planning by calling for the implementation of disaster response and recovery plans and procedures and minimization of economic and social disruption.

Further, the majority of funding for fire services is obtained through property taxes. A special tax goes towards essential fire suppression and emergency medical services. The special tax is billed on the Joint Consolidated Annual Tax Bill under Detail of Taxes Due, Direct Assessments (City of Santa Clarita 2010). Any new homeowners that would relocate to Santa Clarita due to development facilitated by the Housing Element Update would be subject to this tax.

Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but puts forth goals and policies that regulate various aspects of new housing development in Santa Clarita. Because it is a policy document, the 2021 Housing Element Update would not, in and of itself, have a significant impact on wildfire safety. Further, the Housing Element is a policy document and in and of itself does not propose any specific sites for development nor does it increase development potential beyond allowable amounts in the General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code. Therefore there would be no impact on exacerbated fire risks.

NO IMPACT

21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Does the project:				
a. Have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☐	☐	■
b. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	☐	☐	■	☐
c. Have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☐	■

a. Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment. Adopting the Housing Element Update would not have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species. In addition, the Housing

Element Update would not have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or sensitive natural community.

Through the City's development review process, future development projects would be evaluated for potential direct and indirect impacts on biological and cultural resources. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory and no impacts would occur.

NO IMPACT

b. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable. In addition, through the City's development review process, future development projects would be evaluated for potential cumulative impacts and for consistency with all applicable policies of the City's General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Municipal Code. Through this development review process, potential cumulative impacts to various natural and human-made resources would be evaluated. The Housing Element Update would not increase development potential above that already allowed under the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code. The Housing Element Update would not have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable and impacts would be less than significant.

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

c. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

The Housing Element Update, in and of itself, does not propose specific projects but sets forth goals and policies that promulgate new housing development in Santa Clarita consistent with the current RHNA cycle. Because it is a policy document, the Housing Element Update would not have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. Through the City's development review process, future residential development projects would be evaluated for potential direct and indirect impacts on human beings. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly and no impacts would occur.

NO IMPACT

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List of Preparers

Rincon Consultants, Inc. prepared this IS-ND under contract to the City of Santa Clarita. Persons involved in data gathering analysis, project management, and quality control are listed below.

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CITY OF SANTA CLARITA
NEGATIVE DECLARATION

[X] Proposed [ ] Final

MASTER CASE NO: Master Case 21-088

PERMIT/PROJECT: General Plan Amendment 21-001, Initial Study 21-009

APPLICANT: City of Santa Clarita, Community Development Department
23920 Valencia Blvd, Suite 302
Santa Clarita, CA 91355

LOCATION OF THE PROJECT: Citywide

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT: The City of Santa Clarita (City) is preparing an update to the General Plan Housing Element. State law requires that housing elements be updated every eight years (California Government Code Sections 65580 to 65589.8). The 2021-2029 Housing Element identifies sites adequate to accommodate a variety of housing types for all income levels and needs of special population groups defined under state law (California Government Code Section 65583); analyzes governmental constraints to housing maintenance, improvement, and development; addresses conservation and improvement of the condition of existing affordable housing stock; and outlines policies that promote housing opportunities for all persons. The project involves an update to the City of Santa Clarita Housing Element as part of the sixth-cycle planning period, which spans from 2021 through 2029. The project also includes an update to the General Plan Safety Element, which is required by state law to be updated upon the next revision of the Housing Element. Areas of the Safety Element to be updated include fire hazards, stormwater management, and emergency response and preparedness, particularly as they relate to the City's projected climate change exposure and vulnerability. The Safety Element would be updated to ensure alignment with the recently adopted 2021 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Based on the information contained in the Initial Study prepared for this project, and pursuant to the requirements of Section 15070 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City of Santa Clarita

[X] City Council [ ] Planning Commission [ ] Director of Community Development

finds that the project as proposed or revised will have no significant effect upon the environment, and that a Negative Declaration shall be adopted pursuant to Section 15070 of CEQA.

Mitigation measures for this project
[X] Are Not Required [ ] Are Attached [ ] Are Not Attached

Jason Crawford
PLANNING MANAGER

Prepared/Approved by: _____ James Chow, Senior Planner
(Signature) (Name/Title)

Public Review Period From December 16, 2021 To January 18, 2022.
Public Notice Given On December 16, 2021

[X] Legal Advertisement [ ] Posting of Properties [X] Written Notice

CERTIFICATION DATE: