

Attachment B



Fire Department

"Serving the community since 1926"

HEADQUARTERS
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Operations

Kelly Hubbard
OEM Director

Jennie Brunick
Deputy Director
Chief Financial Officer

March 3, 2025

Michael Prater, Executive Officer
Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission

**RE: 24-08 Richard's Ranch – Annexation to City of Santa Maria by
Resolution of Application**

Dear Mr. Prater,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Richard's Ranch – Annexation to the City of Santa Maria by Resolution of Application. The Santa Barbara County Fire Department offers (SBCFD) the following comments.

The City of Santa Maria's Resolution No. 2024-143, Section 4 proposes a reorganization detaching four parcels (PARCELS) from the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District. The completed proposal justification questionnaire asserts "Logical Extension of Services," "Infrastructure Efficiency" and "Service Feasibility" which advance the objective of public interest. In terms of fire protection, service delivery and public safety, the Santa Barbara County Fire Department maintains keeping the PARCELS within the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District in terms of "Logical Extension of Services," "Infrastructure Efficiency" and "Service Feasibility" to be the optimal decision due to the proximity of current and planned resources and capabilities.

As SBCFD noted in submitted comments to the DEIR for the Richards Ranch Annexation Project (DEIR) (Attachment A), these parcels are currently served by SBCFD Station 21 (1.5 miles away) and SBCFD Station 26 (2.5 miles away). The two closest Santa Maria City Fire Department (SMFD) fire stations are Station 4 (2.75 miles away) and Station 2 (3.4 miles away). Both fire departments recently completed Standards of Cover (SOC) studies in 2021. The SBCFD SOC identified the proposed project area as being within the NFPA-recommended 4:00-minute first-due response time from SBCFD Fire Station 21. Conversely, the SMFD SOC shows the project area to be outside the 4:00-minute first-due response time from any current SMFD fire station.

Also noted in the DEIR, SBCFD is currently designing Fire Station 25 on Union Valley Parkway, 0.4 miles away from the PARCELS proposed for annexation. SBCFD currently has sufficient staffing within the department to staff Fire Station 25 in terms of personnel and equipment today. Taking facilities, including potential temporary modular working and living accommodations into consideration, SBCFD could respond from a temporary facility from our 4.6-acre parcel on Union Valley Parkway sometime within the next 8 to 14 months.

On a typical structure fire response within the County, four apparatus (Engines and/or Trucks) respond on the initial alarm. When SBCFD Station 25 is completed and staffed, three of the four apparatus responding to an incident on the PARCELS would be SBCFD apparatus. One engine or truck would be responding from SMFD. In addition, once SBCFD Station 25 is staffed or completed, a fire engine staffed with a paramedic with Advance Life Support (ALS) capabilities would be responding from Station 25 due to its proximity to all EMS calls for service. If a concurrent, second call for EMS service was requested within the PARCELS, SBCFD Station 21 would respond due to its proximity. Station 21 would also deliver ALS/Paramedic service to the PARCELS. A visual representation is included in this comment letter as Attachment B.

While the Council Agenda Report attached to Santa Maria City's annexation application indicates service to the PARCELS would be provided by "additional staffing" from SMFD Station 6 (2.5 miles away), SBCFD remains the closest resource and currently provides a higher level of care. In the scenario where SMFD Station 6 and SBCFD Station 25 were staffed, SBCFD would provide 75% of the initial responding apparatus to a structure fire. On EMS calls for service, SBCFD Stations 25 and 21 would be assigned before SMFD Station 6 due to proximity to the PARCELS. Additionally, SBCFD provides a higher level of care as an ALS/Paramedic provider within the County versus the current Basic Life Support (BLS) service provided by SMFD.

Due to the proximity of SBCFD's current and future planned resources within the geographic area; and the subsequent commitment for SBCFD emergency response, it is the view of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department that keeping the PARCELS within the Santa Barbara County Fire District far better serves the public interest in terms of "Logical Extension of Services," "Infrastructure Efficiency" and "Service Feasibility." Moreover, removing the PARCELS from the Santa Barbara County Fire District creates a budgetary deficit for SBCFD and removes a mechanism, via AB 1600 (Grow Mitigation) fees from SBCFD to purchase, maintain and repair SBCFD equipment and apparatus. Intensifying the use of the PARCELS to add 95 single family homes, 400 multiple-family dwellings and over 16 commercial dwellings will add to the local call volume, including calls for Fire, EMS and traffic related service. By eliminating SBCFD's tax assessment from the PARCELS and the AB 1600 mechanism financially burdens SBCFD and the taxpayers remaining within SBCFD's Fire District with unreimbursed personnel, equipment and repair costs related to SBCFD response to the PARCELS.

If the LAFCO Board approves the City of Santa Maria's Application for Annexation, SBCFD recommends an alternative approach which LAFCO has utilized previously. The Santa Barbara County Fire Department recommends that any approved annexation keep the PARCELS within the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District. As noted in the DEIR, there are many instances of this arrangement throughout California, including within Santa Barbara County. In a specific annexation action, while Santa Barbara City jurisdiction extended around the Santa Barbara Airport and the adjacent commercial district north of Hollister Avenue, LAFCO left the annexed parcels within the jurisdiction of the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District given the existing presence of SBCFD Fire Stations and associated resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this annexation application and urge the LAFCO Board to keep the PARCELS within the jurisdiction of the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, 805-681-5500.

In the interest of life and safety,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Fred Tan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fred Tan
Division Chief/Fire Marshal
Santa Barbara County Fire Department

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: SBCFD Richards Ranch DEIR Comment Letter
Attachment B: Map – Richards Ranch Response Analysis



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Deputy Fire Chief
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Anthony Stornetta
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Operations

January 23, 2023

Dana Eady
Planning Division Manager
Community Development Department
City of Santa Maria
110 South Pine Street, Room 101
Santa Maria, CA 93458

RE: Richards Ranch Annexation to the City of Santa Maria Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Dear Ms. Eady:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the DEIR for the Richards Ranch Annexation Project. The Santa Barbara County Fire Department offers (SBCFD) the following comments.

The proposed annexation would remove four parcels from the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District. These parcels are currently served by SBCFD Fire Station 21, located at 335 Union Avenue in Orcutt (1.5 miles away), and SBCFD Fire Station 26, located at 1600 Tiffany Park Court, Orcutt (3 miles away). The two closest Santa Maria City Fire Department (SMFD) fire stations are Fire Station 4 (3 miles away) and Fire Station 2 (3.4 miles away). Both fire departments recently completed Standards of Cover (SOC) studies in 2021. The SBCFD SOC identified the proposed project area as being within the NFPA-recommended 4:00-minute first-due response time from SBCFD Fire Station 21. Conversely, the SMFD SOC shows the project area to be outside the 4:00-minute first-due response time from any SMFD fire station.

The SBCFD SOC identified the need for a third fire station in the north end of the Orcutt community to reduce response times and provide adequate staffing for incidents requiring a multi-company response (structure fires, wildland fires, etc.). SBCFD has purchased a 4.6-acre lot on Union Valley Parkway, 0.4 miles east of the proposed annexation project. This lot is intended to be the site of the proposed SBCFD Fire Station 25. This proposed station will provide significantly reduced response times to both the proposed project area and the unincorporated neighborhoods to the north between Hwy 101 and Hwy 135. The addition of Fire Station 25 is the highest-priority fire station addition project for SBCFD. Furthermore, an Initial CEQA review has been completed for the site, and a public workshop for the surrounding neighborhoods. There is broad support for the new station.

Serving the cities of Buellton, Goleta, and Solvang, and the Communities of Casmalia, Cuyama, Gaviota, Hope Ranch, Los Alamos, Los Olivos, Mission Canyon, Mission Hills, Orcutt, Santa Maria, Sisquoc, and Vandenberg Village

The SMFD SOC did not identify a need to locate a future SMFD fire station any closer to the proposed project site and assumed fire protection service in this area would continue to be provided by SBCFD.

As of 2022, all SBCFD engine companies are now staffed with paramedics and provide Advanced Life Support (ALS), in contrast to SMFD engine companies staffed with EMT's that provide Basic Life Support (BLS). Stations 21 and 26 provide this expanded level of service to the proposed project site's location and Station 25 once built and staffed.

The SBCFD recommended in the comment provided for the NOP that the proposed project EIR refer to both the SBCFD SOC and the SMFD SOC documents when analyzing impacts on Public Safety. In discussions with City Planning Staff and the SMFD Fire Chief, we stressed the need to analyze response travel times to the project site from existing SMFD and SBCFD fire stations. In both SOC documents, the proposed project site is well outside the recommended 4-minute initial response unit travel time for both SMFD Station 4 and SMFD station 2. Conversely, SBCFD Station 21 is within the 4-minute response time currently. Once operational, Station 25 will provide significantly improved response time to the project site over all other existing fire stations, including SMFD Station 6, which is currently only staffed to provide ARFF service to the Santa Maria Airport. In those discussions, it was made clear by SMFD that there were no plans at the time to build additional SMFD fire stations in the south end of the city and no plans to staff Station 6 with an engine company. The SMFD SOC assumed that SBCFD would continue to provide coverage to the far south portion of Santa Maria City, given the need for SBCFD to provide response coverage to the unincorporated Orcutt triangle area north of Union Valley Parkway. In contrast, the SMFD did recommend additional response unit staffing at SMFD Station 2, given the current call load and anticipated new development in that area.

The proposed annexation would remove four parcels from the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District that are currently providing property tax revenue into the Fire District. The assessed value of these parcels would be expected to increase significantly were any development to occur. The proposed removal of four parcels will substantially impact the SBCFD's ability to build and staff the proposed Fire Station 25. As noted above, Station 25 will provide both ALS service and markedly improved response times to the proposed project site and the surrounding community inside and outside the Santa Maria City limit. Should the SBCFD be unable to fund the construction and staffing of the proposed Fire Station 25, this would represent a significant negative impact on public safety.

At this time the SBCFD does not believe the proposed annexation to be in the best interest of the residents and property owners of the unincorporated Orcutt community. As an alternative, SBCFD recommends that any annexation proposal keep the current parcels within the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District. There are many instances of this arrangement throughout California, including within Santa Barbara County. Santa Barbara City jurisdiction extends around the Santa Barbara Airport and the adjacent commercial district north of Hollister Avenue. Santa Barbara City elected to keep this area in the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District given the existing presence of SBCFD fire stations and resources. Keeping the proposed

annexation area within the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District would ensure that fiscal resources are optimized to support staffing Fire Station 25.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this proposed project. As always, if you have any questions or require further information, please call me at 805-681-5554 or 805-681-5523

In the interest of life and fire safety,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RH', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rob Heckman
Deputy Fire Chief
Santa Barbara County Fire Department



Richards Ranch Reorganization

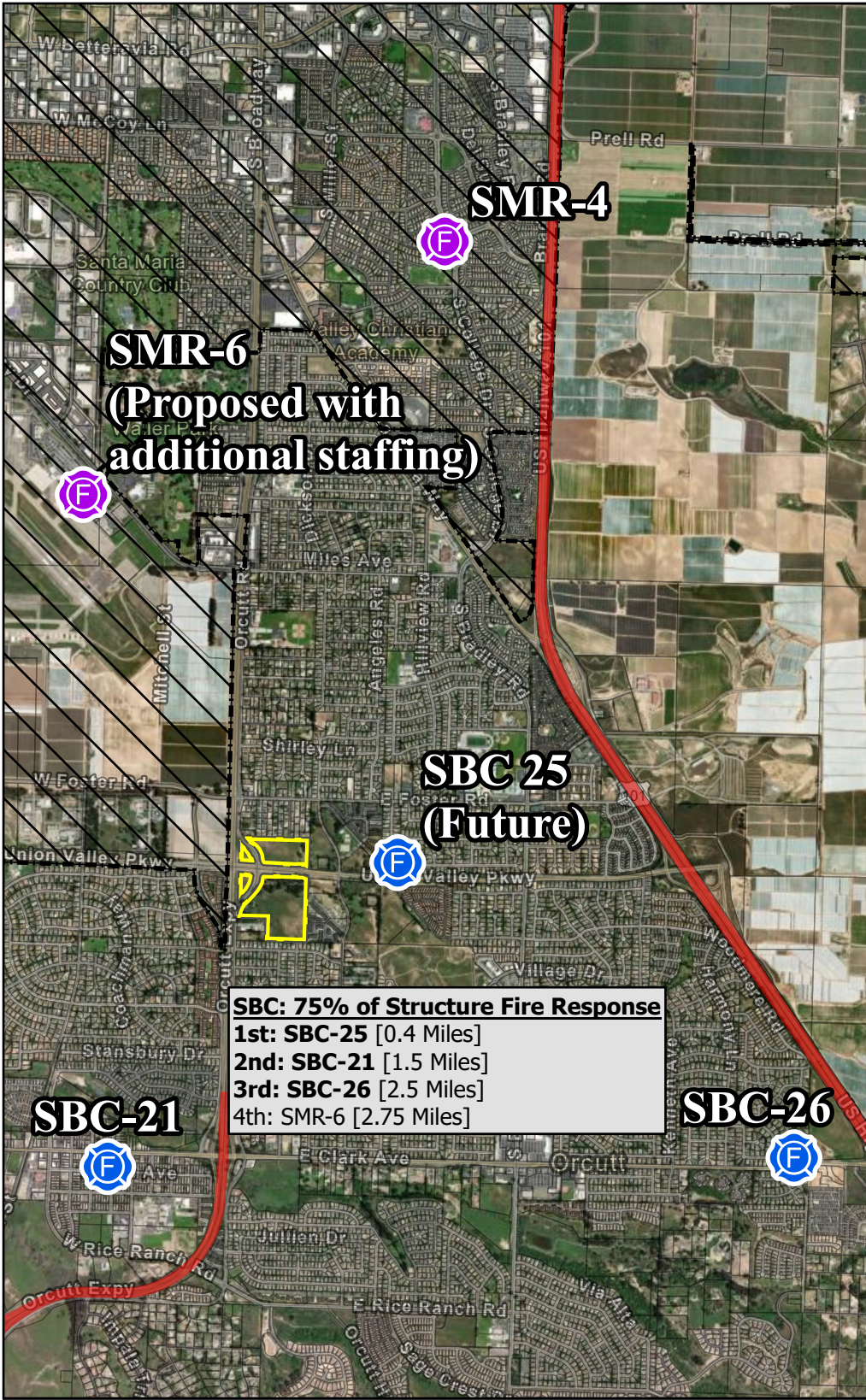


Current Closest Stations



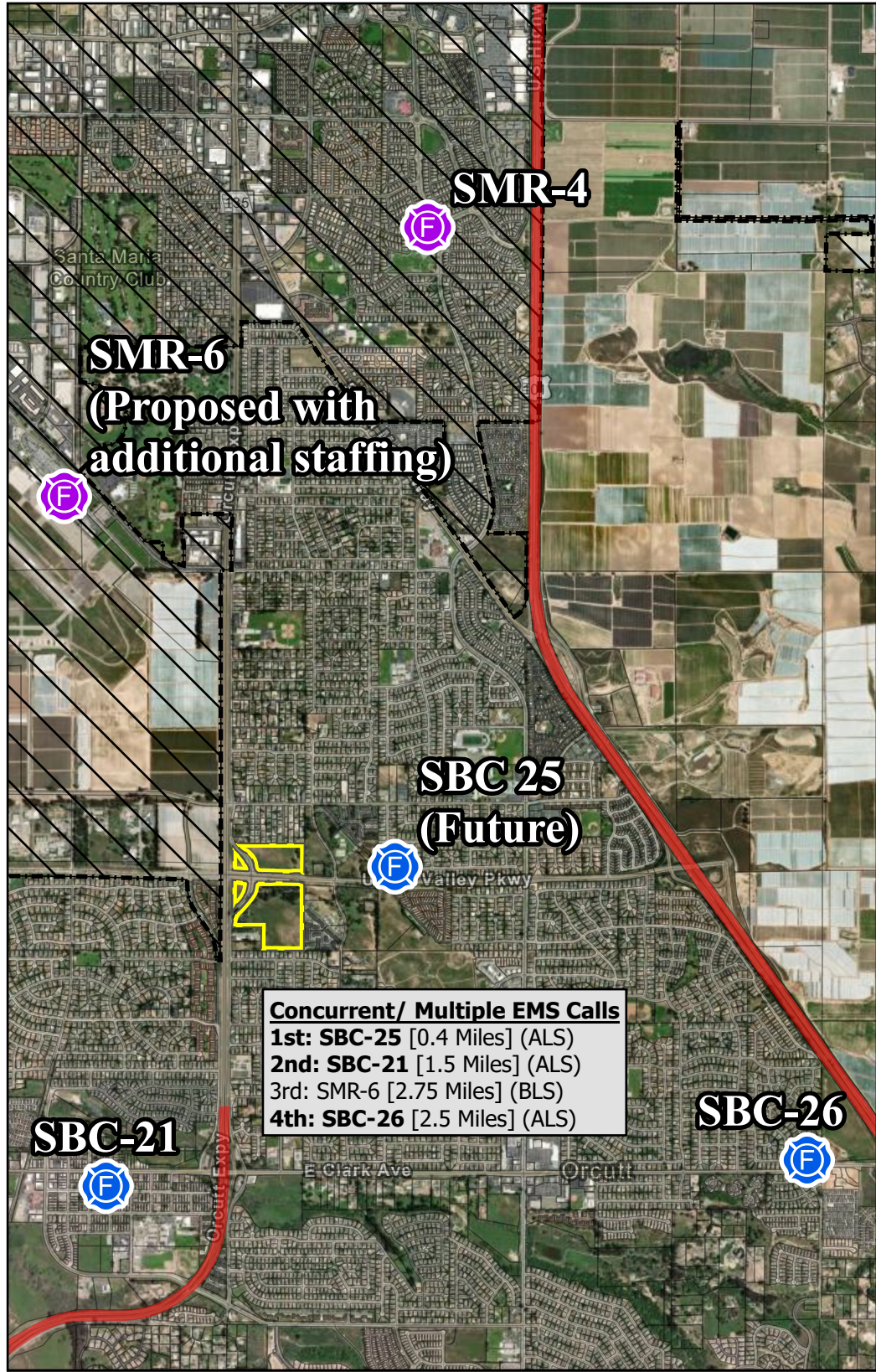
- ★ Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC 25 (Future)
- Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC-21
- Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC-26
- Santa Maria City Fire Department, SMR-4
- Richards Ranch Annex
- ▬ City Boundary
- ▬ Assessor Parcels

Future Richard's Ranch Fire Response



- Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC 25 (Future)
- Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC-21
- Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC-26
- Santa Maria City Fire Department, SMR-6
- Richards Ranch Annex
- ▬ City Boundary
- ▬ Assessor Parcels

Future Richard's Ranch EMS Response



- Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC 25 (Future)
- Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC-21
- Santa Barbara County Fire Department, SBC-26
- Santa Maria City Fire Department, SMR-6
- Richards Ranch Annex
- ▬ City Boundary
- ▬ Assessor Parcels