



Siempre Soledad

General Plan 2045 Briefing Book



October 2023



Introduction

The City of Soledad is embarking on preparation of **Siempre Soledad General Plan 2045**, an update to the Soledad General Plan, the document that guides City decisions on transportation, jobs, housing, parks, shopping, services, and more.

This Briefing Book highlights the unique features of Soledad, as well as the challenges the community faces over the next several decades. It offers a snapshot of current conditions – how land is used, how people move around, how the economy works, and how municipal services support the community – and summarizes anticipated growth, major development projects, economic trends, agricultural resource opportunities, environmental justice issues, and more.

The information in this Briefing Book is intended to establish a shared understanding of these important characteristics to highlight what the community can build from and what the General Plan Update will need to address.

Soledad is strategically located in the center of one of the premier agricultural regions in California. The downtown and Front Street, desirable neighborhoods, surrounding agricultural land, proximity to Pinnacles National Park, and recent developments – such as the Soledad Marketplace, Hartnell College, and the new residential homes being built throughout the city – make Soledad a great place to live.



How is the General Plan Implemented?





Planning is not only a required function of local government in California, but also critical to keeping the City on track towards achieving the community's goals and objectives for the future. The Soledad City Council and Planning Commission are responsible for making planning decisions in the city. The General Plan is a community-driven major city planning document that guides physical growth, conservation, and community life in Soledad for a span of 20 years. Community and Economic Development Department staff at the City oversee the implementation of the General Plan, but all City departments assist with implementing the planning policies. The Monterey County Local Agency Formation Commission is charged with regulating growth in Soledad and the surrounding Sphere of Influence.

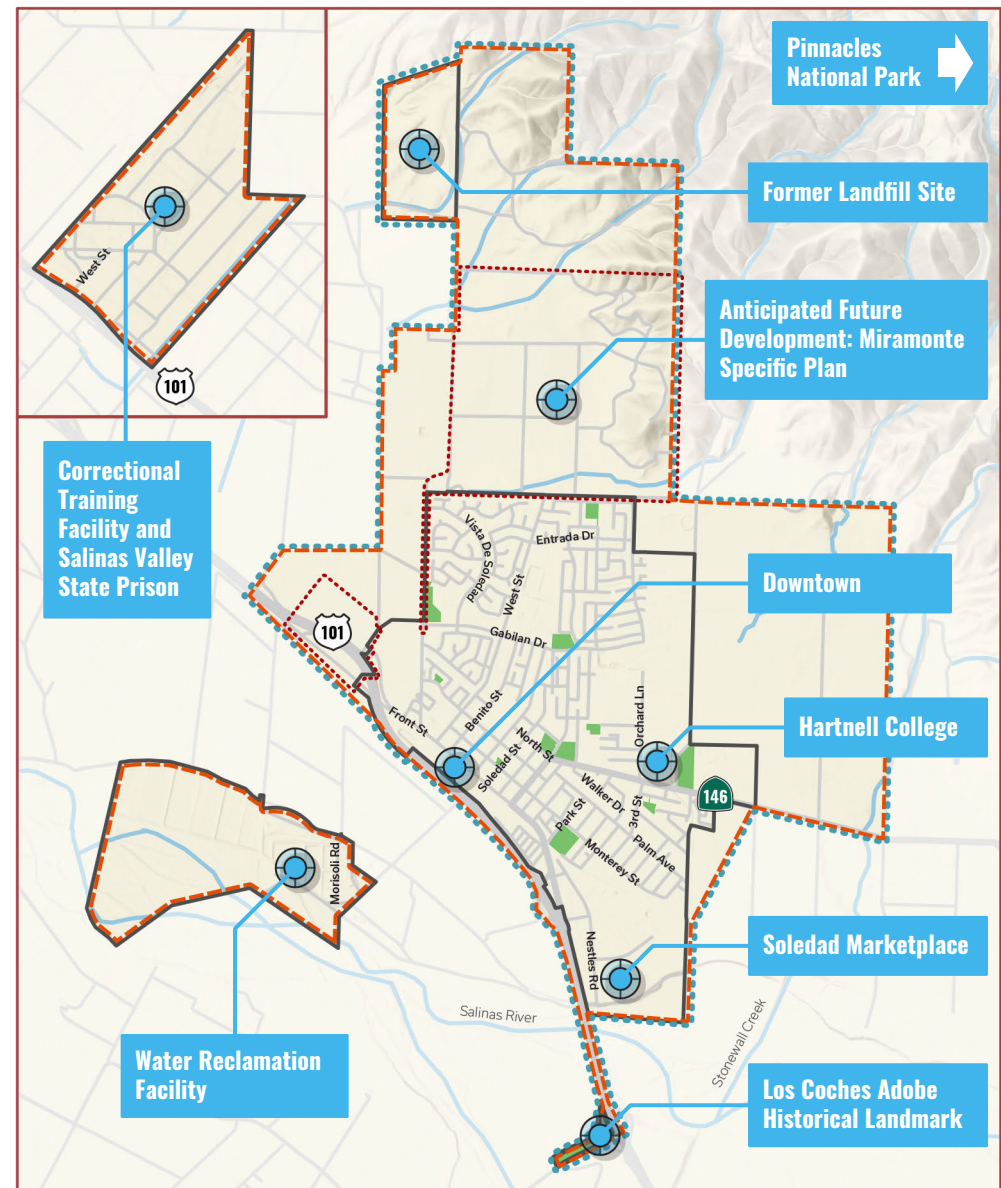
What is a General Plan?

The General Plan is a major city planning document that guides physical growth, conservation, and community life in Soledad over a span of about 20 years with goals, policies, and actions to achieve positive change in the city. The Siempre Soledad 2045 General Plan Update will help Soledad respond to the critical issues facing the community, such as the imbalance between housing and local jobs and the lack of certain types of commercial and retail uses. To help focus the General Plan on the community's most pressing issues, the City is asking community members to identify their top issues. Please visit the General Plan Update website to learn more about upcoming opportunities to share your feedback:

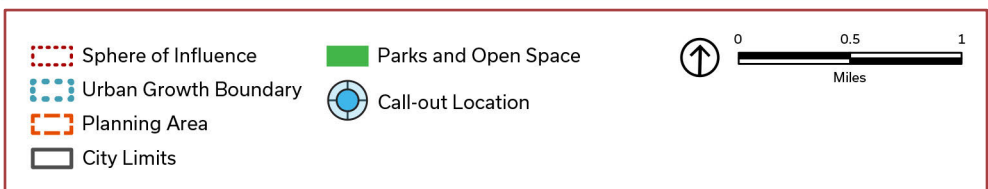
<https://soledadgeneralplan2045.com/>

There are several key boundaries that will be referenced throughout the General Plan Update; they are described and shown on the map on Page 1:

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■ **City Limit:** The area where the City of Soledad has authority over land use and other decisions.
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■ **Sphere of Influence:** Designated area of land that might be annexed into the city in the future.
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■ **Urban Growth Boundary:** A limit on urban development per a 2016 Memorandum of Agreement between the City and Monterey County, meant to preserve valuable agricultural lands surrounding Soledad.
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■ **Planning Area:** The broadest area outside Soledad where the City Council desires to influence decisions about growth and conservation.



Soledad Planning Boundaries



The Soledad Community

Soledad is a small but growing community in the heart of the Salinas Valley. Between 2010 and 2020, the population in Soledad increased more than 20 percent, a significantly higher growth rate than across the county or state during the same period. The city has a high percentage of Hispanic/Latino residents, and that population is also growing, reinforcing the continual need for inclusive City outreach in Spanish, the predominant language spoken in the community.

The average age in Soledad is about 30, younger than the average for Monterey County or the state overall. However, the proportion of older residents in Soledad is growing, signifying that services for people of all ages are essential. Education and income levels in Soledad are slightly lower than the surrounding region. The median household income in Soledad is lower than the county and state, with a significant concentration of households earning between \$25,000 and \$74,999. There is also an imbalance between the types of jobs that are available in Soledad and resident job skills. This highlights the need to diversify the mix of commercial uses to provide job opportunities for residents of all skill and education levels, as well as to provide vocational training programs.

Soledad has the highest residential density when compared to other cities in the Salinas Valley! As of 2020, the population density in the core city area was 7,835 people per square mile.



Soledad's Population Soledad has a population of 26,230 people, including the incarcerated population at the Correctional Training Facility (commonly referred to as Soledad State Prison) and the Salinas Valley State Prison. Excluding these facilities and other group quarters populations, Soledad's household population was 18,800 residents as of 2020.

Housing

Soledad is made up of mostly "family" households, each with more than one occupant.

Educational Attainment and Household Income

The average education level and household income in Soledad is slightly lower than the surrounding region. Currently, Soledad only has one school district.

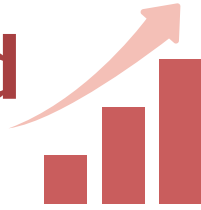
Age

The average age of Soledad residents is approximately 30 years old, which is significantly younger than the average resident in Monterey County (35) and the state of California (38).

Race and Ethnicity

Soledad has a large and growing Hispanic/Latino population, 90 percent of the non-incarcerated population identifies as Hispanic or Latino.

Existing Land Use and Future Growth

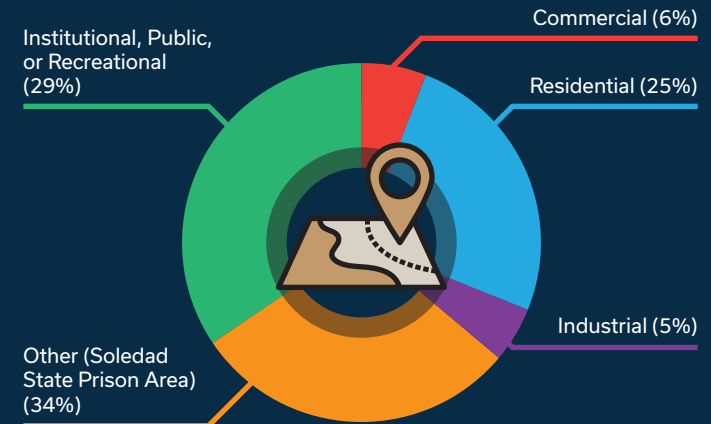


Single-family homes account for a large amount of the land in Soledad, with a smaller number of multifamily homes. Soledad has a wide range of businesses, including offices, shopping, and restaurants, plus light industrial areas. There is an imbalance between the number of employed residents and jobs in Soledad, signaling a need for new commercial businesses to help increase jobs, and services and amenities for residents. The two State correctional facilities and the Water Reclamation Facility occupy most of the land outside the historic core city area, to the north and the southwest, respectively. Residential and commercial land within the primary area of Soledad is complemented by public, institutional, and park and recreation uses. There is also a large amount of agricultural land surrounding the city.

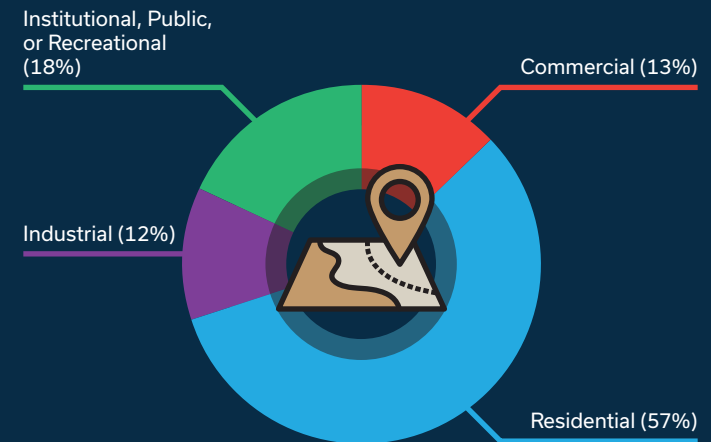
Real estate forecast indicates likely demand sufficient to absorb up to 1,765 new housing units in Soledad by 2045. This demand can likely be absorbed through new development of land within the existing City limits as well as within areas planned for annexation, such as the Miramonte project area which has capacity for 2,392 units of new residential development. Employment forecasts project modest growth for retail, office, and industrial uses over the next 20 years. Throughout the Siempre Soledad General Plan 2045 update process, the City will be asking for community ideas about where and how to accommodate any growth and also conserve resources. Potential locations for new residential development and retail, office, and industrial uses will be shown on the Land Use Map that will be an essential part of the new General Plan.

Existing Land Uses in Soledad

Includes the State Prison Area, Water Reclamation Facility, Los Coches Adobe, and the former landfill site which are located within City Limits but outside of the core city area.



Existing Land Uses in Soledad's Core City Area



Source: AMBAG place types data, 2022; PlaceWorks, 2023.



The City of Soledad's 2023-2031 Housing Element is being prepared separately to meet State requirements.

Please visit the following website to learn more:
www.soledadgeneralplan2045.com/housing-element

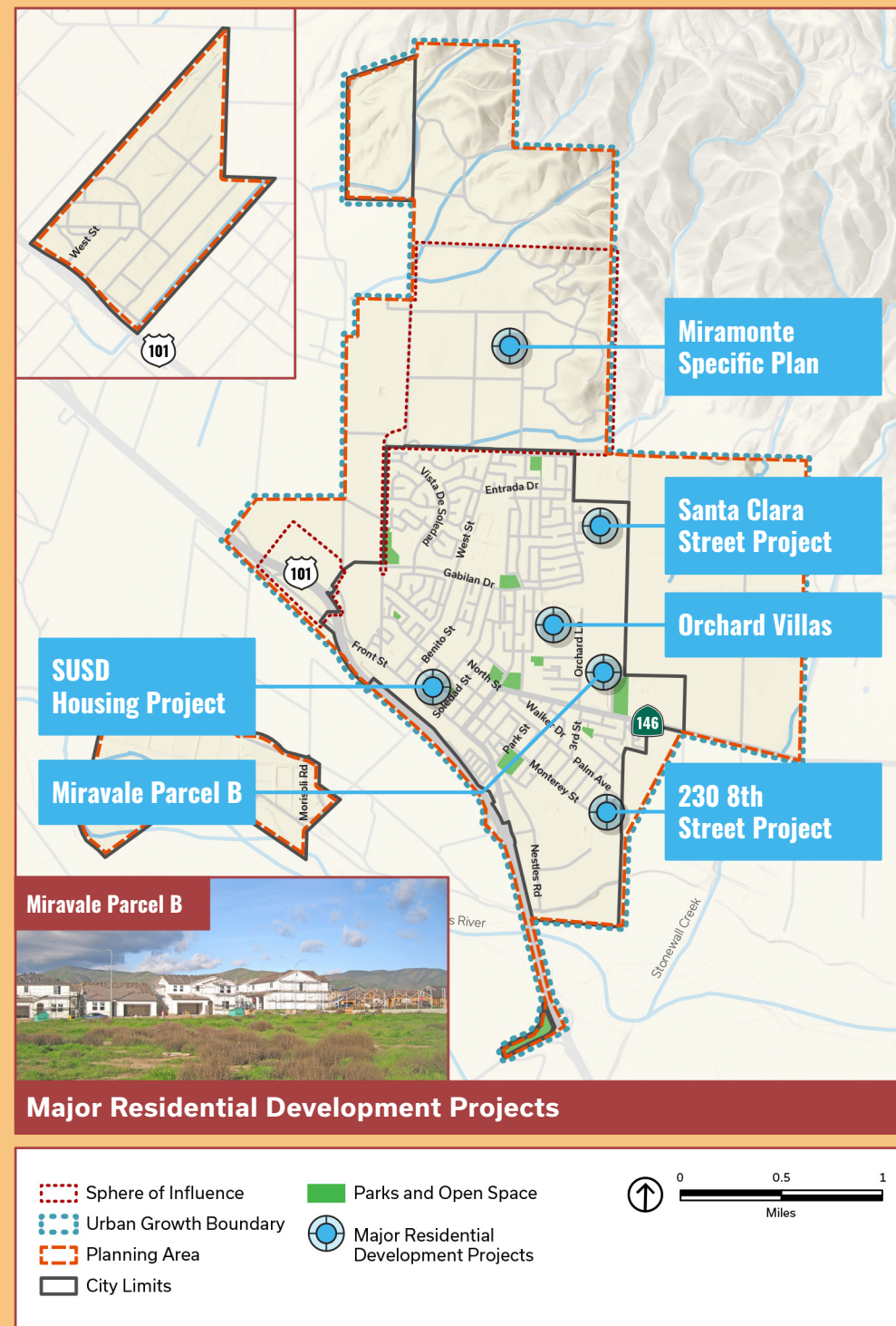
Major Development Projects



A variety of new development projects are on the horizon in Soledad. Residential projects going through the City review process include townhomes, condominiums, apartments, and single-family homes, including some affordable units, as shown in the table below. The Miramonte Specific Plan development north of the current city limit is anticipated to include 2,392 housing units and 100,000 square feet of commercial uses. The Soledad Marketplace, a new commercial center on the southern edge of the city, is also in development. A newly constructed Grocery Outlet and movie theater recently opened at Soledad Marketplace, and another four stores, totaling 74,353 square feet, are in the works. A container village planned for the west side of Front Street is expected to provide needed incubator space for new restaurants and stores, as well as adding to the vitality of downtown.

Project Name	Location	Units	Housing Type	Status
Miramonte Specific Plan	North of Soledad	2,392	Mix of unit types	Sphere of Influence Amendment and Master Plans Approved.
Orchard Villas Phases 20-23	Vintage Estates	28	Single-family residential	Tentative Map approved in 2004.
230 8th Street Project	230 8th Street	42	Apartments	Affordability agreement recorded, expected to be completed in 2024.
Miravale Parcel B	Miravale Parcel B	61	Mix of unit types	Awaiting Action by Developer.
Santa Clara Street Project	Santa Clara Street	132	Apartments and Townhomes	Affordability Agreement recorded. Not yet under construction.
SUSD Housing Project	183 Soledad Street	20	Multifamily	Awaiting Action by Developer.

Source: City of Soledad, 2023.



The Soledad Economy



The Soledad economy relies heavily on government and agriculture. Of 5,617 wage and salary jobs in the city in 2021, approximately 80 percent were in those two sectors, with retail, food service, manufacturing, and transportation and warehousing jobs comprising most of the remaining 20 percent. Government employment is driven primarily by the state correctional facilities as well as public schools, including the Hartnell College extension. Jobs in the agricultural sector increased 28 percent from 2016 to 2021, but many jobs in that sector are nearby but outside of Soledad.

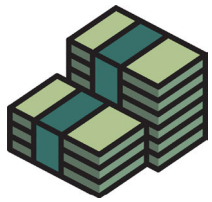
Partly because of the dispersed nature of agricultural work, only about 30 percent of employed Soledad residents work in the city. The availability of housing that matches resident preferences also appears to be a reason for both in-commuting and out-commuting. The commute travel along US 101 and economic advantages unique to Soledad—such as being the primary gateway to Pinnacles National Park—offer potential for the city to become a more prominent regional hub for retail, eating and drinking, services, and lodging. There also are opportunities for collaboration on economic development with nearby cities and the County, especially regarding agricultural processing and similar operations.



Soledad consistently experiences higher rates of unemployment than the surrounding county and state, in part due to the seasonal nature of the agriculture sector. As of 2022, unemployment rates were 10 percent in Soledad, which was 4 percent higher than Monterey County and 6 percent higher than the state.

Employment (Jobs) Per Sector (2021)

51.5%	Government
28.2%	Agriculture
6.1%	Manufacturing, utilities, transportation / warehousing, wholesale trade
4.6%	Retail trade
3.9%	Arts, entertainment, accommodation, and food services
2.5%	Education, health care, and social assistance
0.7%	Administrative / support / waste management / remediation services
0.7%	Real estate
0.6%	Finance and insurance
0.4%	Construction
0.5%	Other and unclassified
0.3%	Information, professional services, and business management



Real Estate Market Conditions

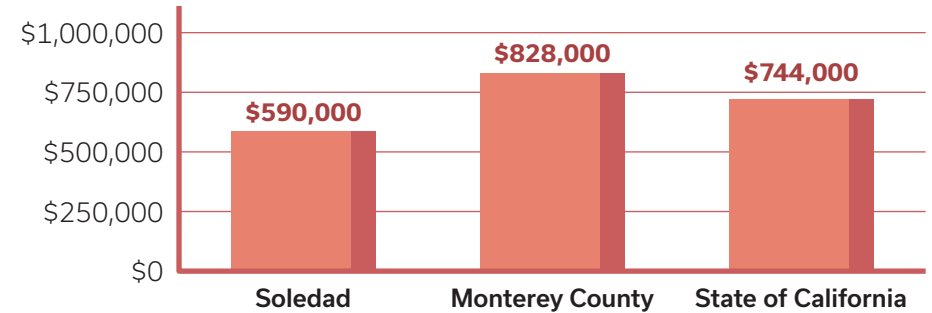
The housing market in Soledad is robust, particularly for single-family homes, with a median sale price of \$590,000, which is relatively affordable for Monterey County. However, the housing stock in Soledad does not meet the diverse needs of local households, especially multifamily rental housing for low-income individuals, seniors, and people with special needs.

The retail market in Soledad is dominated by local- and visitor-serving gasoline stations, eating and drinking establishments, and food and beverage stores. The city lacks other retail types that would likely serve resident needs, such as home furnishings and appliances and clothing stores. While Soledad faces challenges in capturing local retail spending due to many residents commuting out of the city, ongoing and planned developments like the Soledad Marketplace and Downtown Container Village will offer more opportunities for diverse types of retail development. With population growth and more retail opportunities, Soledad can position itself as a retail destination in the region.

Given Soledad’s strategic location and employment focus in agriculture and goods movement, the city could benefit from increased industrial development, such as food manufacturing and processing, to capture future demand. However, the City currently lacks the infrastructure capacity to service a large agricultural processing facility. The City could focus short-term efforts on recruiting businesses that fall within the City’s existing infrastructure capacity. Future efforts could focus on identifying the type of infrastructure upgrades needed to recruit a larger facility, if the community desires to expand the industrial sector in Soledad. Recent substantial increases in construction costs have been noted by the local development community as a barrier to building.



Median home value; single-family home (2023)



The market for office space in Soledad is small and not likely to grow significantly. Due to limited growth potential, Soledad may consider a strategy of leveraging retail and flex space development to serve anticipated office users and other small businesses looking for a combined space for their office and to provide services.

Source: AMBAG, 2022; Monterey County Assessor, 2019.
Note: Data is shown in acres.



Agricultural Resources

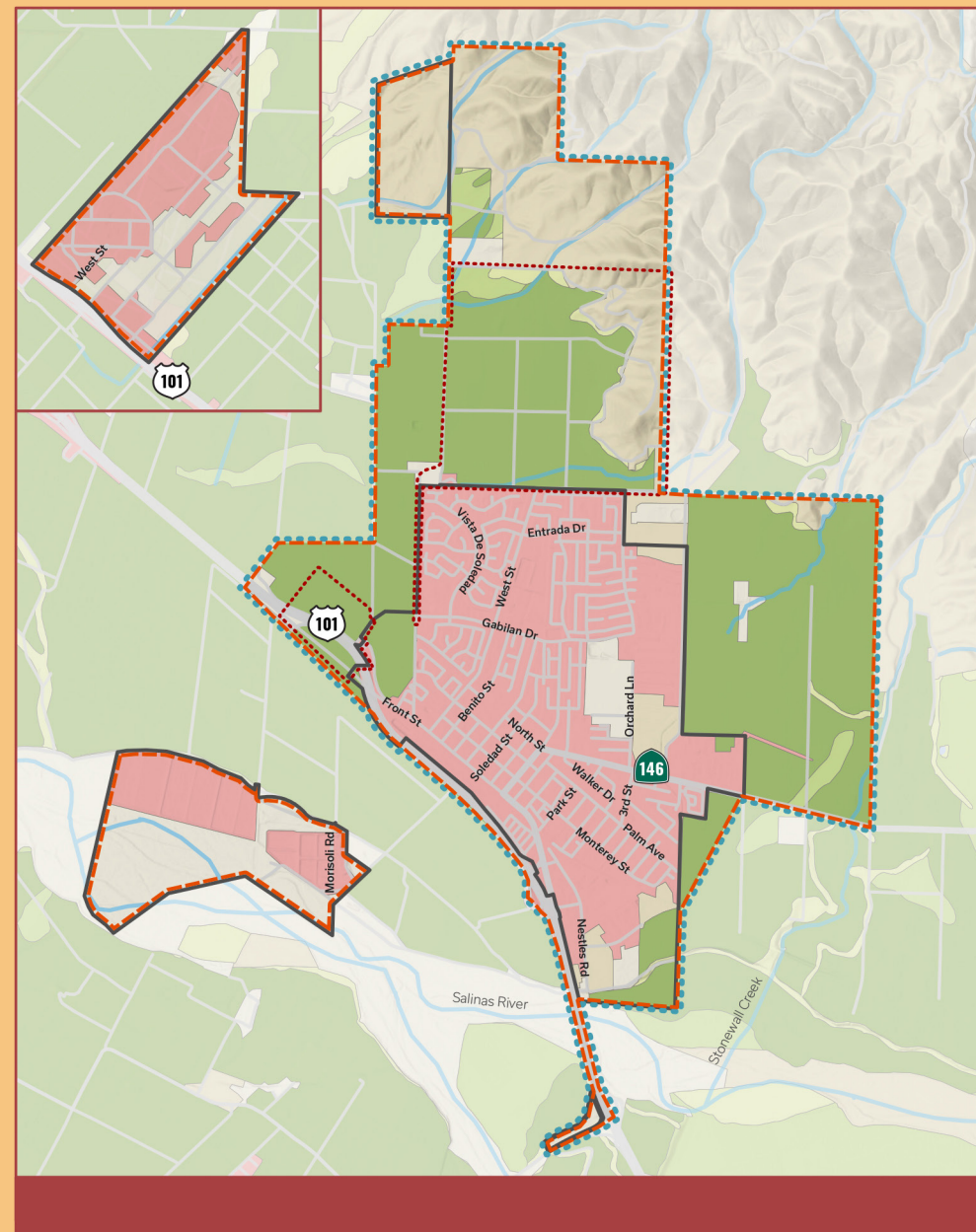
Agriculture is a major economic driver in Soledad and one of the largest industries in Monterey County, accounting for nearly 30 percent of jobs countywide and 20 percent of gross domestic product. While most land in Soledad has been developed with urban uses, much of the land surrounding the city remains in agricultural use.

The California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) classifies and rates agricultural land according to soil quality and irrigation status: prime farmland is the highest rank, then farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland, farmland of local importance, and grazing land. Approximately 1,633 acres in the Soledad Planning Area are classified as prime farmland.

The City of Soledad and Monterey County follow a memorandum of understanding to work cooperatively on planning, growth, and development issues to provide certainty regarding locations for urban development, reducing conflicts and costs for future development such as affordable housing, and providing for long-term protection of the valuable agricultural land in the region.

FMMP Classification	City Limits	SOI	Urban Growth Boundary	Planning Area
Agricultural				
Prime Farmland	103	497	1,629	1,633
Farmland of Statewide Importance	1	22	69	70
Unique Farmland	5	24	41	43
Grazing Land	224	150	850	850
Nonagricultural				
Urban and Built-Up Land	1,990	9	1,342	2,058
Other Lands	671	12	175	768
Total Acres	2,995	714	4,106	5,422

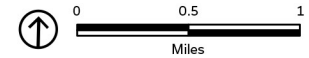
Source: California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, 2018.
Note: Data is shown in acres.



Land Classification

- Prime Farmland (P)
- Farmland of Statewide Importance (S)
- Unique Farmland (U)
- Grazing Land (G)
- Urban and Built-Up Land (D)
- Other Land (X)

- City Limits
- Planning Area
- Urban Growth Boundary
- Sphere of Influence



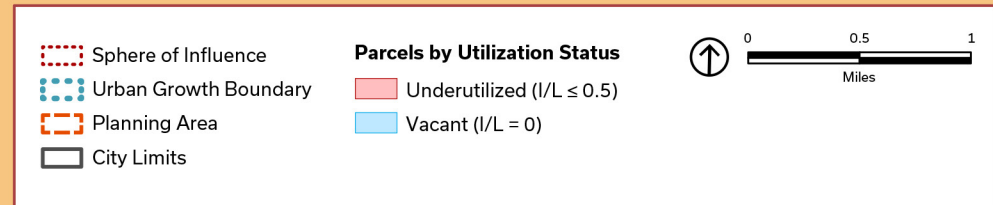
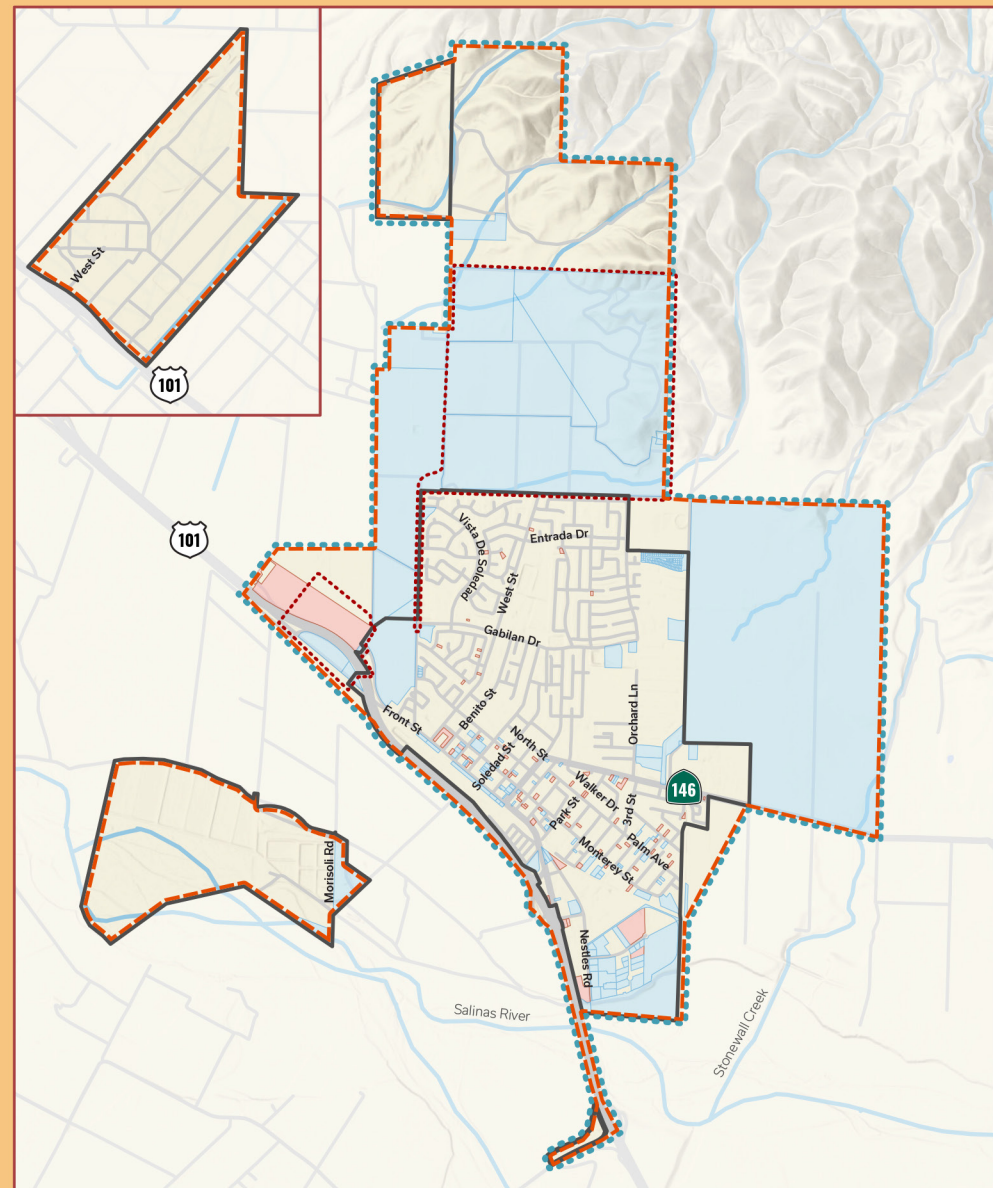


Vacant and Underutilized Land

There are approximately 1,915 acres of vacant land in the Planning Area. These vacant properties present opportunities for new development that supports a sustainable land use pattern. There are also opportunities for infill development on parcels that are considered underutilized because they have not been developed to their full potential under the City zoning ordinance.

To identify underutilized properties, an improvement-to-land (I/L) ratio for each parcel is calculated based on County Assessor data. The I/L ratio is the relationship of a property's improvement value to its land value. The underutilized land identified in the Planning Area is based on an I/L ratio of 0.5, which means, for example, that a lot worth \$100,000 and improved with a building worth less than \$50,000 is considered underutilized.

The majority of vacant and underutilized land in the Planning Area is outside the city limits. Areas outside of city limits need to undergo an annexation process before development can occur, which could be a lengthy process that may hinder new development. Although farmland outside the city is categorized as vacant or underutilized land, that does not indicate that these areas are appropriate for conversion to nonagricultural uses.



Source: AMBAG, 2022; Monterey County Assessor, 2019.
Note: Data is shown in acres.

Land Type	City Limits	Sphere of Influence	Urban Growth Boundary	Planning Area
Underutilized	27	28	75	75
Vacant	228	651	1,827	1,850
Total Acres	255	679	1,902	1,925

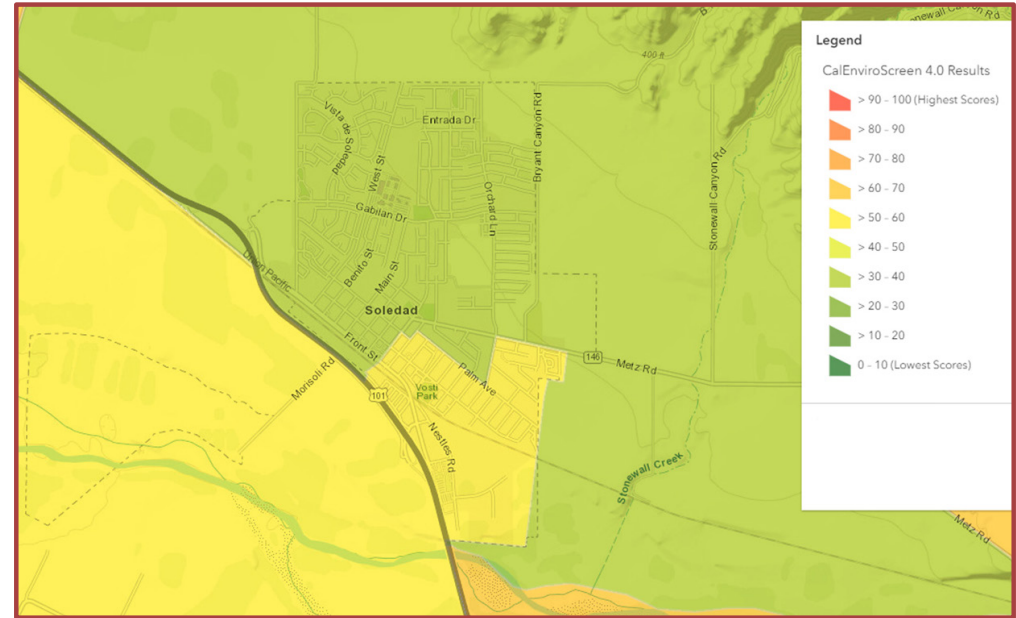
Environmental Justice

California Senate Bill 1000 (effective 2016) requires general plans to address environmental justice, which is unfair treatment and conditions in disadvantaged and historically underserved communities. SB 1000 defines a disadvantaged community as an area disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative public health effects, or areas with concentrations of low-income households and other challenging socioeconomic factors.

The State has developed a tool called CalEnviroScreen (CES) to map pollution factors, such as drinking water contaminants, lead risk from housing materials, pesticide use, and solid waste sites, as well as population characteristics such as low birth weight, educational attainment, linguistic isolation (people would are not able to speak English well or limited English-speaking households), and poverty—all of which affect some people in Soledad. Even though CES (see map to the right) does not classify any area in Soledad as “disadvantaged” (cumulative score in the 75th percentile or above), there are areas that have been historically underserved in the city.

The General Plan Update will include policies and actions that cover the following topics to address environmental justice and improve conditions in underserved communities within Soledad:

- **Pollution exposure and air quality**
- **Access to public facilities**
- **Access to fresh and healthy food**
- **Safe and sanitary housing**
- **Physical activity**
- **Community engagement in the local planning processes**



What is Environmental Justice?



“The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

- California Government Code, Section 65040.12(e)



Circulation System

Primary transportation access to Soledad is provided via US 101, which connects Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. Soledad is mostly served by a grid system of roads that connects to the regional roadway network and Pinnacles National Park as well as offering access to local destinations, employment areas, shopping centers, schools, and residential areas.

Arterial roads carry large volumes of traffic between or within urban areas and consist of freeways, expressways, and other major regional roads that control access to retail centers, industrial areas, and community facilities. Along with US 101, Metz Road, Front Street, East Street, North Street, Gabilan Drive, and Main Street are examples of arterials in Soledad. The main collector roads, which carry relatively high volumes of traffic into residential areas, include Market Street, San Vicente Road, West Street, and Oak Street. The remaining, less-trafficked roads throughout the city are classified as local roads.

Given the flat topography, relatively low traffic volumes, and compact form of Soledad, bicycling is a viable alternative to driving for both recreational and nonrecreational trips. There are several protected bike lanes in the city, and more are proposed as part of the 2018 Monterey County Active Transportation Plan.

Soledad has a well-established pedestrian network that includes sidewalks and crosswalks. Sidewalks with raised curbs and gutters are the typical style found along major arterial and collector roads, local roads, and new residential developments. Most major intersections along Front Street in the city have marked crosswalks and countdown crossing signals that can be activated by people wanting to cross the street.



Travel Patterns

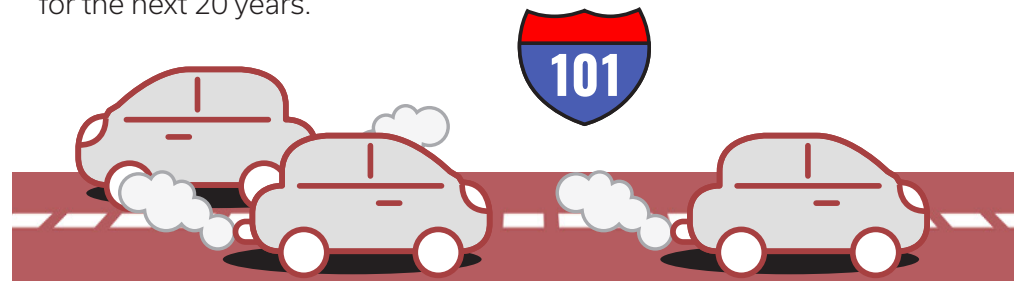
About half of the daily car trips in Soledad are internal, meaning they start and end within the city. The other half are external, meaning they begin or end outside of the city. Major destinations for external car trips include Greenfield, Salinas, Gonzales, Paso Robles, and nearby areas of Monterey County.



Commuter Mode Choice

Soledad residents commute to work in a variety of ways, but traveling via car is the most popular method. Approximately 92 percent of trips to and from Soledad are automobile trips, 7 percent are walking trips, 1 percent are bike trips, and less than 0.5 percent are transit trips.

Access to and from Soledad is primarily provided by two US 101 exits/entrances located in the north and south part of the city. Improving access to and from the city is important to consider when planning ahead for the next 20 years.





Infrastructure

Adequate infrastructure is needed to serve the needs of Soledad residents and businesses. Water is provided by the City through 46 miles of water mains and pipes from five active wells that tap the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin. By 2026, the City plans to incorporate recycled water into the water supply for irrigation, including ball fields, parks, and open space.

The City provides a wastewater collection system at the Water Reclamation Facility, which serves the historic core of Soledad, the two State correctional facilities, and Dole Food Company on Camphora-Gloria Road outside the city. The Water Reclamation Facility, in the southeast portion of the city, was upgraded and expanded in 2010 to accommodate growth of the two State correctional facilities. Disposal from the Water Reclamation Facility includes operations and maintenance of rapid infiltration basins and maintaining several miles of levees protecting the facility from flooding from the Salinas River.

Stormwater systems and facilities are necessary to drain water and prevent flooding in urban areas, for controlling erosion, and for protecting water quality. The storm drain collection system in Soledad includes streets with curbs and gutters, catch basins, storm drain pipes and covers, culverts, ditches, and channels. Soledad sits on a mild grade, with drainage generally from the northeast to the southwest towards the Salinas River. Flooding in Soledad has been caused historically by overflow from Bryant Canyon Channel and inadequate capacity of local storm drainage systems. If flooding were to occur at the Water Reclamation Facility, it could impact the City's ability to operate a wastewater collection system to serve the properties in Soledad.



The City of Soledad is continuously working to improve infrastructure to meet the needs of the community. Expected water supply projects include:

- **Connecting and expanding existing development to recycled water**
- **Phasing in new development to recycled water**
- **Improving the Soledad Street, Kidder Street, East Street, and Dixi Street pipelines**
- **Upgrading Well 7 and Well 10**
- **Constructing a new well (pending the annexation and construction at Miramonte)**

Public Safety

The City of Soledad Fire and Police Departments provide public safety services to residents and businesses in Soledad. The Mission Soledad Rural Fire Protection District serves areas around the city. The Soledad Fire Department, contracted with CalFire, and the Police Department has the ability to respond to calls for service anywhere within city limits. Emergency services in Soledad are provided by the City's Fire Department and Police Department, Monterey County Medical Services System, and the Mission Soledad Rural Fire Protection District.

There are four buildings in Soledad that are critical to emergency response: the Fire Station, City Council Chambers, the Community Center, and Soledad High School. The Fire Department plans to obtain a new fire bay apparatus that will be able to serve taller buildings, approximately 3 to 4 stories in height. While Soledad is a relatively safe community, community mental health, trash and vandalism present challenges in the community and are issues to be addressed. There is also an unhoused population in Soledad that lacks housing and social services.

The City of Soledad operates a number of programs and services to meet the needs of Soledad's community. Currently, the Police Department operates the Explorer Program and Youth Violence Prevention Program that are aimed at supporting the youth in Soledad. The Parks and Recreation Department offers recreational opportunities, sports activities, parks, and arts and culture programs for the community. The City is also collaborating with the Transportation Agency for Monterey County and other jurisdictions to prepare a safe routes to school plan that will bridge community safety personnel and residents to make sure students get to school safely.



The Soledad Fire Department has the ability to respond to calls for service anywhere within city limits in less than 5 minutes, and the Police Department can usually respond in 3 to 5 minutes, depending on traffic.

The nationwide structured fire response times are generally less than 5 minutes and several studies have established that responding to a police call in under 5 minutes increases the chances of making an arrest.

The City is in the process of updating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The plan will provide a roadmap for parks and recreation facilities' development and improvements, address maintenance and operations, and guide ongoing programming and decision-making.

To learn more visit: www.soledadparksandrecplan.com/

Implications for the Siempre Soledad General Plan 2045

Future Land Use - How people use land in Soledad helps **define the city's character**.

The General Plan land use and zoning maps establish a plan for future land uses in Soledad, which may differ in some places from how the land is used today to achieve community goals, such as a **balance between jobs and housing and diversifying the economy**.

Economy and Jobs - Although **unemployment** levels in Soledad are higher than elsewhere in the state, there is potential for job growth and attracting visitors through city-focused efforts and **collaboration with regional partners**. Opportunities include circulation and promotion efforts related to people traveling through Soledad along Highway 101 and to Pinnacles National Park, development of **agricultural processing** facilities and jobs, and development of more commercial, retail and industrial uses.

Gathering Spaces - The Soledad community seeks gathering spaces that are **comfortable and welcoming** to the whole community, **protect against the elements** like sun and wind, and provide **engaging, culturally rich and family-friendly** activities.

Opportunities for Infill - The City and community need to continue working together to identify and facilitate opportunities for infill development, particularly in the **Downtown**.

Safety and Services - The City of Soledad is committed to providing a **high quality of life** for all of its residents. Community services and infrastructure that affect the day-to-day lives of Soledad residents include **police and fire protection** services and innovative and **sustainable water and wastewater treatment** provided by the City.

Circulation and Land Use - Soledad is primarily composed of **single-family** homes and there is a substantial level of **cross-commuting**, with most of Soledad's working residents working outside of the city, signaling a need for nonresidential uses that could provide **employment opportunities** and services for residents.

We want to hear from you! Visit soledadgeneralplan2045.com and sign up for our mailing list to receive notification of community events and other outreach opportunities throughout the General Plan Update process.



Siempre Soledad General Plan 2045 will address:

- The vision for Soledad in 2045 and guiding values to get us there.
- Future use and development of land.
- Housing choices and affordability.
- How and where we walk, bike, take transit, drive, and park.
- Local businesses and jobs.
- Access to parks and recreation.
- Public art and historic district preservation.
- Natural and human caused hazards and a changing climate.
- Energy and water conservation and efficiency, green infrastructure, and active transportation.



