



Meeting Date: 10/26/2022
Item Number: 6a
Time Estimate: 90 Minutes

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

SUBJECT: GENP-0436-2022 STUDY SESSION ON GENERAL PLAN CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND SAFETY ELEMENT UPDATE

PROJECT ADDRESS: Citywide

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FROM: Tyler Corey, Deputy Director of Community Development

RECOMMENDATION

Receive a presentation on the Workshop Draft of the General Plan Climate Adaptation and Safety Element Update, including the Draft Hazards and Vulnerability's Report, review draft vision, goals, policies and programs, and provide comments or direction as appropriate.

1.0 SUMMARY

The Safety Element of the General Plan was last updated in 2014, although it has not been comprehensively updated since 2000. In accordance with state law (Senate Bill 379: Government Code Section 65302) that requires integration of comprehensive climate adaptation and resilience strategies, the City applied and received a Sustainable Communities Grant from the California Department of Transportation. The grant work concluded in February of 2022 and provided an opportunity to investigate and develop a comprehensive approach to building resilience to climate change in the community and local transportation system. The project was called Resilient SLO and is summarized on the City's website (<https://www.slocity.org/government/department-directory/city-administration/office-of-sustainability-and-natural-resources/resilient-slo-2246>).

The updated Climate Adaptation and Safety Element is intended to satisfy several state requirements as required by legislation passed over the past several years including Senate Bill (SB) 379 (Climate Change and Resilience), SB 99 (Emergency Evacuation Routes), SB 1000 (Environmental Justice), Assembly Bill 747 (Emergency Evacuation Routes), the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Faulting Zone Act, and the National Flood Insurance Program.

Under state law, a safety element promotes protection for the community from unreasonable risks related to slope instability, seismic activity, subsidence, liquefaction, known geologic hazards, flooding, wildland and urban fires, tsunamis, seiche, dam failure, and climate change.

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The draft Climate Adaptation and Safety Element (CASE) newly integrates climate adaptation and environmental justice and updates policies and programs throughout the element.

2.0 COMMISSION'S PURVIEW

For the purposes of this study session the Planning Commission will review and provide input on the draft CASE. This meeting holds two primary roles in the Safety Element update process: 1) provide a forum for public discussion and consensus building; and 2) provide policy and program direction to staff. The input received at the meeting will be incorporated into the project materials prior to final review by the Planning Commission and City Council.

3.0 PROJECT INFORMATION

Resilient SLO

The City applied and received a Sustainable Communities Grant from the California Department of Transportation to investigate and develop a comprehensive approach to building resilience to climate change in the community and local transportation system. The Resilient SLO project included technical analysis of hazards associated with climate change, adaptation strategies to increase local resilience to anticipated impacts, and robust community engagement. The Resilient SLO project team was led by the City and included City staff and a CivicSpark Fellow, the Local Government Commission (now Civic Well), a consulting team including Ascent Environmental, CBEC Eco-Engineering, and Fehr and Peers, and faculty at Cal Poly. The project findings and adaptation strategies have been integrated into the Draft CASE update.

According to the World Meteorological Organization¹, 2021 was one of the seven hottest years on record, with all seven of those years occurring since 2015. Over that same period, San Luis Obispo has experienced historic wildfire smoke, drought, heat, and flooding. While our community is doing its part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prevent the worst-case climate disasters from happening, climate change impacts are here and will continue to increase for the foreseeable future².

The City of San Luis Obispo is updating its Safety Element of the General Plan in accordance with SB 379 to address hazards throughout the City and acknowledge the extremely disruptive impacts of a changing climate. The City can establish an equitable policy framework for managing the current and coming disruptions by adding an additional lens of climate adaptation, community resilience, and environmental justice to the City's Safety Element of the General Plan.

¹<https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/2021-one-of-seven-warmest-years-record-wmo-consolidated-data-shows>

² On August 19, 2020, Council approved the [City's Climate Action Plan for Community Recovery](#), and adopted [Resolution 11159 \(2020 Series\)](#), which includes the goal of carbon neutrality by 2035. While the City continues to reduce local emissions, it is important to recognize that warming due to anthropogenic activities from the pre-industrial period to the present will persist and continue to cause further long-term changes in the climate system

Relevant California Law

Government Code Section 65302(g) requires California cities and counties to include a Safety Element as part of their General Plan. The intent of a safety element is to reduce the potential short and long-term risk of death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from known hazards including, fires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, and landslides. Traditionally, a local government safety element would look to historic disaster indicators of the types of disasters a community might face in the future.

In response to the climate crisis, several state laws have added additional requirements for inclusion in safety elements. Pertinent legislation is summarized in the project state compliance timeline (CASE Appendix B) and is incorporated throughout the project as applicable. The primary focus of Resilient SLO stems from SB 379 and SB1000 as summarized below:

Senate Bill 379 requires jurisdictions to address climate adaptation and resiliency strategies in their safety elements.³ State requirements to address climate adaptation include preparation of: a vulnerability assessment informed by applicable federal, state, regional, and local agencies; adaptation and resilience goals and policies; and implementation measures.

SB 1000 requires jurisdictions with “disadvantaged communities” to address environmental justice in their General Plan. Jurisdictions with disadvantaged communities must address unique or compounding health risks in disadvantaged communities, promote civil engagement in the public decision-making process, and prioritize programs and improvements that address the needs of these communities. While the City does not have any State designated “disadvantaged communities”, the regional Disadvantaged Communities Assessment approved in June 2021 by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) provides a regional definition and identifies specific areas in the City that are considered disproportionately burdened based on 13 variables related to socioeconomic and population-based factors⁴.

Commitment to Equity

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is a Major City Goal in the 2021-2023 Financial Plan to ensure policies and investments are managed in accordance with environmental, social and governance practices. The City has worked to ensure equity has been included as a central focus from the beginning of the Resilient SLO work effort to inform the CASE consistent with SB 1000 provisions, including protecting local communities from disproportionate environmental harm; promoting public health and safety; elevating marginalized communities in the decision-making process; and following California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR)’s best practice guidance (CASE

³ For more information about SB 379, see:

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB379

⁴ See San Luis Obispo Council of Governments Disadvantaged Communities page: [Disadvantaged Communities | sloco](#)

Appendix F-1). The City conducted a community survey of social infrastructure using participatory Asset Mapping (CASE Appendix D).

Resilient SLO Findings Used to Inform the Draft CASE

In compliance with SB 379 the State of California has developed the California Adaptation Planning Guide⁵ (APG) as a resource for local governments engaged in adaptation and resiliency planning to address impacts of climate change. Figure 1 illustrates how the Resilient SLO Planning Process was modeled after the APG.

Figure 1: Resilient SLO Planning Process



The City has identified baseline conditions and assessed vulnerability to climate hazards, and developed strategies for adaptation, completing the first three steps of the APG planning process and has drafted the CASE for review and consideration as the final phase of the process. A description of each step is summarized below:

Step 1: Project Initiation and Baseline Assessment

The City worked with its technical consultant, Ascent Environmental, to develop the Baseline Conditions Report (CASE Appendix E). The report assesses the City's current climate-related hazards and provides a baseline for key characteristics of the community that are likely to be affected by climate change.

The City's community assets (i.e., infrastructure, functions, and populations) were assessed for their historic and current exposure to climate-related hazards. The assessment also documents social and economic conditions in recognition of the interconnectedness of all sectors and aspects of society. A community priorities survey was conducted and included in report findings (CASE Appendix B). The report includes an existing hazards assessment, provides an overview of sensitive infrastructure, populations, and functions, and summarizes key findings. Key finding topic areas include flooding, extreme heat and drought, wildfire and associated impacts, sensitive infrastructure, and vulnerable populations and community functions.

⁵ The State of California's adaptation resources are available at: <https://resilientca.org/>

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Step 2: Vulnerability Assessment and Hazards Report

The second step of the Resilient SLO project includes the comprehensive Climate Change Hazards and Vulnerabilities Report (CASE Appendix A). The report identifies and characterizes climate-related hazards and other climate effects that are anticipated to affect the City, its residents, and visitors. The report was developed using the best available information regarding climate change projections for the City and the Central Coast region, relevant information on current efforts to adapt to climate change, and best practices and guidance provided by the State and other sources specific to climate adaptation planning.

Building on the Baseline Conditions Report, impacts from climate-related hazards under historic conditions are assessed using the Cal-Adapt model to evaluate what changes in climate variables will occur over three time periods, and at what magnitude. The analysis is organized into the following four distinct hazard categories: Temperature and Extreme Heat, Long-Term Drought, Wildfire, and Precipitation and Flooding.

Though the City is exposed to other natural and human-made hazards such as seismic events or hazardous waste that are also addressed in the City's Safety Element and the County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, the report assesses hazards that are going to be affected and exacerbated by climate change, focusing specifically on how these hazards are likely to increase in frequency and severity.

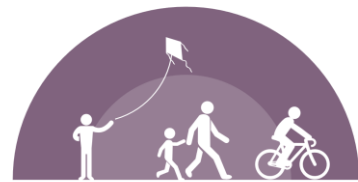
The Resilience Roundtable, a community-led advisory body that helped the City guide the approach and focus of the Resilient SLO project and the City's Safety Element update, helped identify priorities through the community outreach process. These priorities were then supplemented using hazard mitigation and emergency operation planning resources developed previously by the City and the County, and further identified with priority sensitive populations and assets. The set of sensitive populations, assets, and community functions analyzed in this step are organized into the following three general categories.



Natural Systems



Built Environment



Community Resilience

The report analyzes social vulnerability and environmental justice concerns that could place certain populations or areas at a disproportionately higher risk of climate change related impacts are assessed and mapped using data from SLOCOGs disadvantaged communities and the California Healthy Places Index that incorporates climate-resiliency metrics to describe a community's overall health. In this analysis, ranking for the combined census tracts in the City places it in the 61st percentile, meaning it has healthier community conditions than 61 percent of other California census tracts. The data within this analysis helps identify vulnerabilities in specific populations and geographic areas for each hazard discussion.

Key findings for environmental justice and vulnerable populations include:

1. High cost of living relative to household income.
2. Some neighborhoods to the east and west of South Higuera include a high percentage of elderly and disabled residents, a high percentage of residents experiencing linguistic isolation, low access to supermarkets and grocery stores, and a larger percentage of residents earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
3. The city's homeless populations are particularly vulnerable to climate related hazards with less access to resources to protect themselves during emergencies, often dwell in or near flood plains and areas with higher wildfire risk, and lower levels of access to transportation.

Climate hazards assessment and vulnerability are scored based on magnitude of risk to and potential impacts on natural systems, the built environment, and community resilience. Importantly the assessment includes the City's plans, resources and considerable work to date in the development of adaptive capacity to mitigate climate-related hazards when impacts do occur some of which are described in CASE Appendix A (Table 23).

Findings concerning changes in risk and associated impacts are included in a summary booklet (Attachment 2, Hazards and Vulnerabilities Summary Booklet) and documented in the full Climate Change Hazards and Vulnerability Report. Ultimately, projected weather extremes including long-term drought, extreme heat events, increased wildfire risk, and extreme storm events are anticipated to increase in intensity and frequency as the average global temperature increases to between 1.5 and 2°C. As a result, the City must continue to prepare and adapt for the impacts of climate change, despite future trends in local and global GHG emissions.

Step 3: Adaptation Strategy Development

Step 3 encompasses adaptation strategy and development. This allows the Development of an adaption strategies menu based upon best practices and community input and an integration guide to be used in workplans going forward to implement programs identified in the CASE.

The set of adaptation strategies respond to the impacts from climate-related hazards discussed in the Hazards and Vulnerabilities Report and works to build upon the comprehensive set of plans and initiatives the City has already undertaken to reduce risk from natural hazards that will be exacerbated by climate change. The strategies include the four main hazard categories included in the Hazards and Vulnerabilities Report. The strategy ideas are also included in a summary booklet (Attachment 3, Adaptation Strategy Options Booklet) and were used to inform the draft Climate Adaptation and Safety Element. CASE.

Climate Adaptation and Safety Element

The draft CASE updates goals, policies and programs of the existing element in accordance with state laws and the best available science, best practices and community input gained throughout the Resilient SLO project. New information concerning climate adaptation equity and environmental justice are integrated throughout the element. A new section dedicated to environmental justice is also included.

Vision and Goal Setting

The focus of the current General Plan Safety Element is to minimize injury and loss of life from natural and manmade hazards. Through connecting new state requirements and guidance for climate adaptation, regional plans and partnerships, Major City Goals, and robust community collaboration on the topic of climate resiliency, a comprehensive vision for safety *and* resiliency has been provided for consideration. The CASE Vision Statement (see below) stems from shared experiences as a community and is intended to serve as a guiding compass for the decisions made today and in the years to come for the City to adapt to and thrive despite a changing climate. The vision is founded in the understanding that the climate crisis has given the City the responsibility to prepare for the future and the opportunity to create a brighter, equitable, and more resilient future for all who live, work, and visit the city.

The City of San Luis Obispo works diligently to protect all forms of life and property. While the changing climate has impacted us in expected and unexpected ways, the priorities identified by the community and our regional partners have shaped a San Luis Obispo that is thriving, equitable, and resilient. Community members, businesses, and neighborhoods support each other through climate disruptions, and civic life is stronger than ever. Critical facilities are resilient, incorporate innovative sustainability practices, and continue to provide core community functions in a cost-effective manner. San Luis Obispo's efforts also support environmental justice, and all community members have access to services and opportunities to influence the way we adapt to climate change. The world around us is impacted, but our natural resources and our built environments are designed to provide places of refuge and buffer against these disruptive forces. Climate change is one of the biggest challenges we have ever faced, but we have risen together to be safe, healthy, and prosperous.

CASE Goals

Goals formulated to align with the Climate Adaptation and Safety Element vision are described below:



Goal 1: Public Safety

Minimize injury and loss of life, damage to public and private property, and social and economic disruptions resulting from injury, death, and property damage.



Goal 2: Community Resilience

All community members are enabled and empowered to prepare for, respond to and recover from disruptions while seizing opportunities to thrive in changing conditions.



Goal 3: City Government Resilience

The City's facilities, infrastructure, and operations are resilient, innovative, and continue to cost-effectively provide core functions and services for all community members in times of acute disaster and ongoing disruptions.



Goal 4: Environmental Justice

A diverse, equitable, and healthy community where those who are disproportionately affected by natural hazards and climate change have the resources and capacity to participate in public processes and have an active role in preparing and responding to future impacts.



Goal 5: Natural Systems

The natural environment sustains and supports ecological and community health, safety, and natural beauty, provides equitable access to nature, and can adapt and keep pace with a dynamic, changing climate.



Goal 6: Built Environment

Community buildings, public spaces and transportation systems withstand the natural hazards and escalating impacts of climate change, provide places of refuge, foster social cohesiveness, minimize injury and loss of life, and equitably protect personal and community assets.

Summary of Policies and Programs

Policies are specific statements that will guide decision-making. Policies serve as the directives to staff, design professionals, decision makers and others who will initiate or review new development projects or city programs. Some policies stand alone as directives, but others require that additional actions be taken.

The Climate Adaptation and Safety Element organizes policies into four hazard types: flooding, extreme heat, fire and earthquakes and other geologic hazards. Additionally, policies that may co-solve for multiple climate hazards simultaneously are included in a High Impact Multi-Hazard Resilience section. Policies specific to environmental justice are highlighted in a section called Equity and Environmental Justice. The final section includes policies related to city operations and emergency services. Please note that the City's General Plan includes a Water and Wastewater Element, that includes climate informed policies related to prolonged drought.

Programs are the core of the City's climate adaptation strategy. The programs translate goals and policies into actions and follow policies in each section described above. Programs are also listed in the Implementation section (Section D) of the CASE and paired with responsible departments for monitoring purposes. As with all General Plan Elements, progress on implementation is summarized annually in the General Plan Annual Report.

4.0 PUBLIC OUTREACH

The draft CASE reflects the community's vision for resilience to hazards and future disruptions. A foundational first step in Resilient SLO's outreach and engagement strategy was to create a Community Outreach Plan that identified key stakeholders and population groups; established guiding principles, goals, and triggers; and outlined strategies and tactics that ensured the project was informed by community needs, priorities, and interests.

In conjunction with each step in the project, the project team conducted robust community engagement activities to gather input on community needs and priorities, educate community members on climate risks and individual/community resiliency strategies, and involve community members. Community input has shaped development of the CASE to date, and consisted of virtual community events, online surveys, "Stories of Resilience" submissions, a Resilience Roundtable, and Working Groups. Due to Covid-19 conditions, community engagement was conducted virtually. A summary of the Public Outreach efforts is provided as Appendix D to the draft CASE.

A unique aspect of the project has been the formation of the Resilience Roundtable, a community group of local experts that provides input to staff on the City's approach to identifying climate hazards, vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies. The 14 Roundtable members were intended to represent a diversity of backgrounds and expertise areas. The Roundtable met throughout the development of the CASE and provided critical input on key project deliverables to date.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) does not apply to the recommended action of this report, because this study session is intended to provide information and involves no action by the Planning Commission and therefore does not constitute a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

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6.0 ATTACHMENTS

- A - Draft Climate Adaptation and Safety Element
- B - Hazards and Vulnerability Assessment Summary Booklet
- C - Adaptation Strategy Options Booklet