

## REPORT TO GENERAL PLAN 2040 STEERING COMMITTEE

**Subject: Discussion of Resilience Element and Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agenda Item 5.B addresses the 2040 General Plan Resilience Element, which will replace the “Safety” Element of General Plan 2020. The purpose of this Agenda Item is to solicit Committee member feedback on safety issues and discuss how the City can integrate public safety into the General Plan--not only in the Resilience Element, but as a cross-cutting theme that shapes other chapters of the Plan (Land Use, Transportation, Health/Equity, etc.). A matrix evaluating the policies in the existing Safety Element has been included as an attachment to the report (Attachment 3).

### REPORT

#### Background

The Government Code requires that every California general plan include a “Safety” Element. According to State law, the Element must address:

*“the protection of the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the effects of seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, tsunami, seiche, and dam failure; slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence; liquefaction; and other seismic hazards... and other geologic hazards known to the legislative body; flooding; and wildland and urban fires. The safety element shall include mapping of known seismic and other geologic hazards. It shall also address evacuation routes, military installations, peakload water supply requirements, and minimum road widths and clearances around structures, as those items relate to identified fire and geologic hazards. “*

In 2009, the Government Code was amended to add specific Safety Element requirements related to flood risks, including detailed maps of flood hazards and policies to minimize flood risks and reduce flooding potential for public facilities. In 2012, another amendment (SB 1241) required the Safety Element to include maps of fire hazard severity zones and policies to protect the community from wildfire, locate public facilities out of very high fire hazard areas, and provide adequate access and water for emergency response and fire suppression.

In 2015, SB 379 required that the Safety Element be updated to address climate adaptation and resiliency, including policies based on a vulnerability assessment that identifies the risks that climate change poses to the community. The Safety Element now must evaluate existing and planned development in at-risk areas and include measures to avoid or minimize climate change impacts, reduce

impacts to infrastructure, and enhance the ability of natural systems (such as wetlands) to mitigate climate hazards.

Many of these requirements overlap those related to Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs). LHMPs have been required since 2000 to qualify for disaster preparedness and recovery grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The plans must be updated every five years to maintain eligibility for grants and they must be certified by FEMA. San Rafael's most recent LHMP was adopted in November 2017. One of the core recommendations of the most recent LHMP was that it be integrated into the Safety Element of the General Plan. This would achieve compliance with AB 2140, which was adopted in 2006 to require that California cities and counties align their General Plans with their hazard mitigation programs.

The City is now pursuing two complementary objectives:

- First, to bring General Plan Safety Element goals, policies, and programs into alignment with the recently adopted Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Second, to ensure that the issues addressed in the LHMP shape the other parts of the General Plan—especially the Land Use and Transportation Elements. Information about environmental hazards such as earthquakes, wildfires, and sea level rise should be integral to decisions about how and where San Rafael grows and evolves in the future.

### **What's in the Safety Element Now?**

The General Plan 2020 Safety Element can be reviewed [here](#). The Element begins with a general discussion of safety hazards, and presents the goal of being a safe community with excellent police, fire, and paramedic services. The text then includes sections on:

- Geologic and Seismic Safety Hazards, including landslides, mudslides, and earthquakes
- Hazardous Materials, including contaminated soils, hazmat transportation, and the management and disposal of hazardous materials handled by local businesses
- Flood Control, Subsidence, and Erosion Hazards
- Public Safety and Emergency Response, including wildfire safety and disaster preparedness

Each of these sections includes policies and implementation programs. There are 40 policies in total, accompanied by 54 implementation programs. The Element also includes maps of geologic data, regional fault line locations, and flood hazard areas.

Attachment 3 to this agenda packet is a matrix of goals, policies and actions in the General Plan 2020 Safety Element. The matrix includes a column for Committee members to record their thoughts or ideas about the policies, programs, and staff recommendations. Staff will consider this input as we revise the policies and programs, and add new content.

## Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) Highlights

As noted above, staff intends to reframe the Safety Element as a “Resilience Element” that meets new Government Code requirements and closely tracks the recently adopted LHMP. At the next meeting, a presentation on the LHMP will be provided by the City’s Emergency Services Manager. The document may be reviewed in its entirety [here](#). Whereas the General Plan Safety Element is 20 pages long, the LHMP is over 450 pages. The document presents a much more detailed analysis of hazards than the Safety Element and includes many operational recommendations. The LHMP is organized and formatted to meet federal funding requirements.

As we update the Safety/Resilience Element of General Plan 2040, the intent is not to repeat the LHMP or expand the General Plan to this level of detail. The LHMP will continue to exist as a free-standing document. Our objective is to ensure that the Safety Element accurately and consistently reflects the data and priorities expressed by the LHMP.

The LHMP includes the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Community Profile
3. Description of the Planning Process
4. A 250-page Risk Assessment, which profiles 16 different types of natural hazards and assesses San Rafael’s vulnerability to climate change, sea level rise, drought, earthquake (including ground shaking and liquefaction), floods, landslides and mudslides, levee failure, extreme heat, storms, tsunamis, and wildfires. This section also assesses the City’s capacity to respond to these threats.
5. Mitigation Strategy, including goals and objectives, plus specific programs to be implemented to make San Rafael more resilient.
6. Confirmation that the Plan has been adopted
7. Implementation and maintenance program

The LHMP does not address hazardous materials—that is covered by other plans and programs that are generally managed by the County of Marin. It also does not include the emergency management plan for the City, which is a separate document covering responsibilities and actions to be taken before, during, and after an emergency. The primary purpose of the LHMP is to reduce risks (and expenses) related to natural disasters. Many natural disasters are predictable, and much of the damage they cause can be alleviated through good planning. The General Plan is an important tool to reduce long-term risks to people and property, as it addresses the location and character of future development.

The goals and objectives of the LHMP are stated below:

**GOAL 1: Minimize risk and vulnerability of the City of San Rafael to the impacts of natural hazards, and protect lives and reduce damages and losses to property, public health, economy, and the environment.**

**Objectives:**

- Protect life and reduce exposure and hazard losses to City residents, businesses, vulnerable populations, and visitors.
- Increase community resiliency to the impacts of natural hazards and promote sustainable growth.
- Protect and enhance quality of life in the City.
- Assure long term protection and resiliency of existing and future redevelopment from natural hazards.
- Protect critical facilities from natural hazards and minimize interruption of essential infrastructure, utilities, and services.
- Plan for and prioritize measures to respond to and address potential short- and long- term hazard impacts associated with climate change.

**GOAL 2: Enhance public outreach, awareness, education, and preparedness for all hazards to minimize hazard related losses**

**Objectives:**

- Engage the community in disaster awareness and prevention education to reduce the risk and vulnerability of natural hazard impacts on quality of life.
- Improve the communities' understanding of natural hazards and how to effectively be prepared and take action to mitigate the impacts of hazard events.
- Develop and target outreach and education for each hazard type and risk area.
- Support and encourage public responsibility.
- Enhance public outreach programs to target vulnerable populations, including multi-language communications.

**GOAL 3: Improve City's resiliency and capabilities to mitigate losses and to be prepared for, respond to, and recover from a disaster event.**

**Objectives:**

- Take a proactive approach to identifying and mitigating hazards.
- Maintain current service levels.
- Continued enhancements to community capabilities, leveraging new technologies to reduce losses and save lives.
- Provide protection and increase safety for City employees and first responders from hazards.

**GOAL 4: Maintain FEMA Eligibility/Position Jurisdictions for Grant Funding**

**Objectives:**

- Maintain good standing with FEMA and State hazard mitigation programs, regulations and requirements
- Develop an overall mitigation funding strategy to prioritize and pursue mitigation projects, including identification and tracking of federal, state, and local grant programs and funding mechanisms

To achieve these goals, the LHMP includes a 49-point mitigation action program. Each action program includes a description, a cost estimate, a priority ranking, a responsible agency (and partners), and a list of benefits. The actions include community engagement measures, future plans and studies, operational measures such as tree maintenance, and specific capital projects such as pump station replacement.

Some of the actions have very modest costs, while others will cost millions of dollars. The most costly improvements are those that address sea level rise, including raising the elevation of roadways and critical infrastructure, and improving levees and flood control systems.

### **Key Discussion Topics for Steering Committee Consideration**

Steering Committee discussion should focus on the following topics:

- How can we make San Rafael a safer and more resilient city? What should our top priorities be?
- Are there policies in the existing General Plan you feel need to be revised? Are there new policies or action programs that should be added?
- How should natural hazards shape our future land use and transportation choices? How will environmental hazards affect the way we grow?
- Are there lessons learned from the recent wildfires that should inform our planning and priorities?

## **ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment 3** to the agenda packet includes an evaluation of the Safety Element of the existing policies and programs in General Plan 2020.

The Local Hazard Mitigation Plan can be accessed at:

<https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/documents/approved-local-hazard-mitigation-plan/>