



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE SAFETY ELEMENT

November 3, 2016

Downtown Library – Community Meeting Room
270 Forest Avenue, First Floor
Palo Alto, CA 94301
1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

TITLE: Safety Element Subcommittee Discussion
FROM: Elena Lee, Interim Planning Manager,
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Background

This will be the second subcommittee meeting on the Safety Element.

As explained at the September 27th Safety and Sustainability subcommittee joint meeting, the Safety Element policy framework was introduced to the two subcommittees having already undergone extensive development. This early development was based on:

- City Council direction to create the new Element;
- Recent State legislation;
- Related City initiatives and studies;
- PTC input;
- Staff comments; and
- EIR mitigation measures.

The [Staff Report](#) (link provided) to the September 27th meeting contains extensive background information on the Safety Element, including prior revisions and relevant studies and efforts.

Members of the subcommittees reorganized and refined the policy framework at the September 27th meeting and the refined Safety policy framework was presented to the full CAC on October 18th. Members of the full CAC expressed support for and agreement with the work of the subcommittees and offered some suggestions for refinement. The attached policy framework reflects the input of the full CAC at the October 18th meeting, as well as input from numerous City staff experts from relevant departments.

What to Expect at the Meeting

At the outset of the meeting, time will be given over to public comment from members of the community. Speakers will be allowed up to three minutes to share their thoughts on issues addressed in the Safety Element. Time limits are necessary to ensure that there is an opportunity for members of the public to express their opinions, while also ensuring that the subcommittee can complete the agenda set out for the meeting.

As noted at past meetings, the Safety Element is critical and contains a number of topics of great interest to CAC members and the community. At this second, and possibly final, meeting on the Element, we suggest that the two subcommittees take advantage of the progress that has been made by the subcommittees and full CAC, and move through an ordered, detailed discussion of each Goal of the Safety Element, focusing on revisions made in response to the CAC:

Goal S-1: Community Safety

Goal S-2: Natural Hazards

Goal S-3: Human Caused Threats

Goal S-4: Infrastructure

Goal S-5: Emergency Management

Policy Framework Changes and Issues

The attached Safety policy framework reflects the input of the October 18th meeting of the CAC and City staff recommendations.

The major changes under each goal are listed below.

Goal S-1: Community Safety

- Approaches to community and neighborhood safety were diversified with new policies and programs. Examples include
 - Program S1.1.3 calling for the planning of an annual community safety fair, which would act as a venue for education, awareness and trade demonstrations.
 - Program S1.3.2 to increase the availability of local housing to first responders, based on a federal Housing and Urban Development program. Note that the adopted Housing Element includes policies and programs targeting housing for seniors and individuals with special needs (e.g disabilities, youth aging out of the foster system, single parents) but does not include specific policies and programs targeting first responders (or any other profession).
 - Policy S1.4/Program S1.4.1, which support the use of real-time data and metrics to boost city and neighborhood safety.

- Program S1.6.2, which calls for the initiation of a PAPD body camera program, was added to the framework. The wording of the program was developed in close consultation with a PAPD Officer. PAPD is already moving towards broader use of body cameras but stressed the importance of providing for flexibility in the face of rapidly evolving legislation and adaptability to advances in relevant technology.
- Some CAC members voiced support for incentives to encourage individual households and small businesses to take appropriate emergency preparation measures, such as providing reduced-cost emergency water, rations and supplies to promote adequate emergency kits.
- A CAC member suggested adding a policy to address bullying; this topic is addressed in the Community Services Element. Program C1.18.2 is to “Develop programs and activities for teens that strengthen leadership skills, encourage a culture of community service, inclusiveness, tolerance and acceptance of others.”
- A CAC member proposed a new program: “To minimize floods in areas with high groundwater levels, avoid removal of water retaining soils due to underground construction.” However, this program was not added as it could be interpreted as prohibiting any type of excavation, including for underground parking, affordable/senior housing, or other desired types of development. In addition, a CAC member proposed a new policy to prohibit basements of over one story in the R-1 zone. The draft Land Use Element includes a program to study the impacts of basements and consider additional regulations. The proposed policy prohibiting basements over one story in R-1 was not added, as the City’s Public Works Department is currently in the process of reviewing procedures for basement construction and other excavations and is preparing a report to take to Council, tentatively before the end of 2016, to seek Council direction. Because this effort is already underway, the policy frameworks for both Natural Environment and Safety include programs to continue to study this important issue and formulate specific policies and regulations, rather than establishing policies and regulations now in advance of the conclusion of the Public Works study and Council deliberations. Note that the City does already prohibit basements in flood hazard zones; a policy has been added to the Safety Element reiterating this existing City policy.

Goal S-2: Natural Hazards

- Policy S2.5 and Program S2.5.1 which promotes structurally sound buildings and seismic retrofits, have been strengthened by focusing on those structures that have the greatest potential to impact the community and local livelihood in the event of structural failure due to a seismic event.
- Post-disaster communications at the neighborhood level, previously unaddressed, have been strengthened by new Program S2.6.4, which encourages homeowners and business to install traditional land-lines for redundancy with internet-based systems.
- Flood hazards policy has been diversified with an increase in the number of phenomena that would require expansion of flood zones (Program S2.7.3).

- Efforts to provide 100-year flood protection, highlighted in Program S2.7.4, have been qualified to ensure that they are environmentally -sensitive as well as effective.
- A CAC member suggested adding requirements about ingress and egress of basements in floods or other emergencies; adequate emergency access is already required by City regulations and the State building code, so this policy was not added.
- Members of the CAC pointed out that the much of the policy under Water Supply and Safety targeted water conservation in times of high demand, and that this policy may be more effective as part of an expanded Drought section. Therefore, in Policy S2.11, “supply” has been added alongside “management” in terms of water resiliency.
- CAC members suggested that additional policies and programs to address drought should be added. Policies and programs that support a reliable long-term water supply are located in the Infrastructure section under Goal S-4, and policies and programs that address the City’s preparation for and response to the effects of climate change are in the Natural Environment Element under Goal N-8. In addition, the City’s Urban Water Management Plan includes a 4-stage drought response plan.
- The former policy calling for review of the Stanford Fire Services Contract has been generalized and expanded. It now calls for the development of a long term PAFD funding plan based on reviews of all existing contracts and costs.
- References to the Office of Emergency Services (OES) were added to relevant policies and programs in this section, in addition to references to the Palo Alto Police Department.
- A policy and program regarding preparation for and response to terrorist attacks was moved from Goal S-5, Emergency Management, to Goal S-1, Community Safety, based on feedback from OES staff.
- Also based on OES input, the wording of the program regarding community warning systems was revised to be more general and not refer to the Santa Clara County notification system specifically.

Goal S-3: Human Caused Threats

- CAC members suggested adding a reference to the CPI (Communication & Power Industries) site and the City’s adopted amortization ordinance applying to that site. Given the detailed regulation of the site in the ordinance, and the fact that the Comp Plan is generally intended to have broad applicability rather than site-specific policies and programs, a specific reference to CPI by name has not been added. However, Program S3.1.2 (previous Program N-47) has been revised to add that that the City will “... regulate the commercial use of hazardous materials that may present a risk of offsite health, safety, and welfare effects.” This language is taken directly from the City Council resolution adopting the CPI amortization ordinance. See [[link](#)]
- Program S3.1.3, calling for protocols to reduce truck related spills on local roadways, was added.
- Policy S3.6, which recognizes smoking as a human-caused threat, and highlights the City’s support of smoking bans, was added.

Goal S-4: Infrastructure

- Policy S4.1 was added as an opener to the section. It calls for safety to be included as a primary consideration in the overall design of Palo Alto's infrastructure.
- Members of the CAC identified groundwater as a major component of water supply and potential point of vulnerability. As such, Policy S4.5 and an accompanying program were added to the Water Supply and Safety section. These call for the regulation of groundwater usage through metering and responsible use.
- Program S4.14.3 regarding composting was revised to clarify that the City currently does include food waste in its composting program.
- New Program S4.17.1 introduces the concept of extended producer responsibility for solid waste byproducts of manufacturing, shipping, and packaging.
- Policy S4.18, Previous Policy -36, has been revised to include Styrofoam (expanded polystyrene) and acknowledge the City's 2016 expansion of its Plastic Foam Ordinance.
- Policy S4.19 and accompanying programs, which target citywide accessibility to state-of-art telecommunications, were revised to encompass the overall quality of telecommunications service in Palo Alto.
- Former Program N-23 was deleted based on City staff input. State legislation passed since the Comp Plan was adopted has established that water rates can be based only on cost of service, not on other goals such as conservation or efficiency.

Goal S-5: Emergency Management

- Program S5.2.2 was added to this section. It supports the establishment of mutually-beneficial cooperative agreements between Palo Alto's police and fire departments and those of neighboring cities.

Next Steps

The Safety Element policy framework will be revised in response to subcommittee comments and will be brought forward to the full CAC in the packet for the November 15 meeting.

Attachment

A: Safety Element Policy Framework (tracked)