

FACT SHEET

Safety Element 2021 Targeted Update – Background and Summary of Amendments

Introduction

The City of Los Angeles is preparing a targeted update to the General Plan Safety Element in coordination with the Housing Element 2021-2029 Update, scheduled for adoption in late 2021. This document provides a background on why the Safety Element is being updated, a summary of the updates being made to the Safety Element, and FAQs with links to resources and information.

Background

California State law requires that each city prepare and adopt a general plan, which is a local government’s blueprint for meeting the community’s long-term vision for the future. The safety element is one of the nine State-mandated elements of the general plan. General plan elements are generally composed of background and technical information, goal and policies, and implementation programs describing action items for the future.¹

Recent State of California legislation requires that the City of Los Angeles’ Safety Element be reviewed and updated as necessary alongside the City’s [Housing Element 2021-2029 update](#). The existing



City of Los Angeles, 1996 Safety Element

¹ A goal is a statement of a desired future. A policy is a stated position to guide decision making. It indicates a commitment of the local legislative body to a particular course of action. An implementation program is an action, procedure, or technique that carries out general plan policy.

City of Los Angeles General Plan [Safety Element](#) was adopted in 1996. While the Housing Element is undergoing a comprehensive update, the update to the Safety Element is limited to targeted amendments that ensure consistency with legislative mandates and the other General Plan elements.

Summary of State Law Requirements for the Safety Element

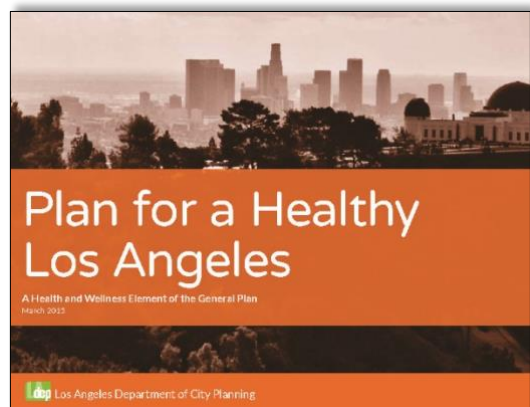
State law requires that a city's general plan include a safety element to address protection of its people from unreasonable risks associated with disasters, including earthquakes, floods, fires, landslides, and other hazards identified by the local community.

The safety element must identify hazards and hazard abatement provisions to guide local decisions related to zoning, subdivisions, and entitlement permitting, and should also integrate hazard and risk reduction strategies. In addition, the State recently adopted new legislation that requires safety elements to provide additional information related to flooding, wildfires, emergency evacuation, and climate change.

The City reviewed these recent State requirements and several long-range citywide plans and programs that relate to safety, including the existing 1996 Safety Element, the 2018 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, the 2020 Floodplain Management Plan, Resilient Los Angeles, and LA's Green New Deal. These plans provide much of the content required for the Safety Element to comply with State law. Relevant material from these plans will be consolidated and summarized for inclusion in the updated Safety Element.

Related State Law Requirements for General Plan Elements

The update of two or more general plan elements triggers a State requirement to address environmental justice under the provisions of Senate Bill (SB) 1000. Therefore, the City is required to review existing environmental justice policies to ensure compliance with State law and document the review. The Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles, adopted in 2015, is the General Plan Element that contains the majority of the City's environmental justice policies and programs. The City will make a technical amendment to the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles alongside the Safety Element to clarify its role as a compilation of environmental justice policies for the City.



City of Los Angeles, 2015 Plan for Healthy Los Angeles

Safety Element 2021 Update Summary

The following three main components of the Safety Element 2021 targeted update are summarized below:

1. Amendments to goals, policies, and objectives;
2. Integration of updated background information and mapping; and
3. Incorporation of programs from other citywide planning documents.

Goals, Policies, and Objectives

The current Safety Element provides three main goals that establish the City's intent to prevent, respond to, and recover from disasters. These goals are supported by three objectives and 18 policies. The City will maintain the current approach of including high-level goals and objectives that consider multiple types of hazards as part of this Safety Element update.

New State legislation requires that cities include goals, policies, objectives, and feasible implementation measures that place a greater emphasis on wildfires, flooding, and climate change. Wildfire and flooding are topics addressed in the existing Safety Element, though climate change is not considered as explicitly. However, the City addresses climate change adaptation and resilience in other long-range plans, such as [Resilient Los Angeles](#), and [LA's Green New Deal](#). As part of the targeted update to the Safety Element, relevant policies from these other plans will be incorporated into the Safety Element, centralizing information in the City's General Plan and providing a framework for updates to other implementing documents, allocation of resources, and actions required of City staff and collaborating agencies.

Background Information and Mapping

The State requires that general plans include background information and supporting exhibits within the safety element to identify potential hazards, including slope instability, seismic risk, flooding, wildland and urban fires, and to identify approaches to climate adaptation and resilience. Information on most of these hazards, including supporting exhibits, is currently included in both the existing Safety Element and 2018 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. This can create confusion, as the documents are updated on different timelines and maintained by different departments.



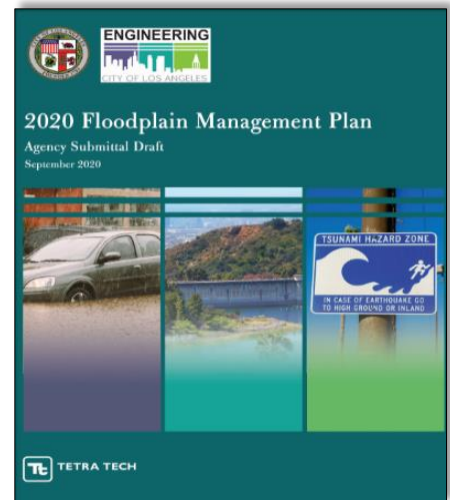
City of Los Angeles, 2018 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

To reduce duplication, the City will replace repetitive descriptions and exhibits within the Safety Element with references to the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was last updated in 2018. The information in the 2018 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is sufficient to satisfy most State requirements. Where additional information is required to satisfy State mandates, information will be included in the Safety Element 2021 targeted update, or in the next update to the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

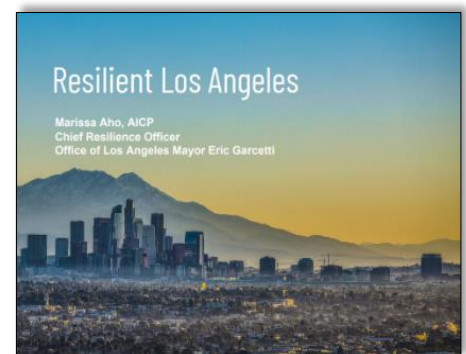
Programs

General plans typically include programs to implement the high-level vision set in the goals and policies chapter. The current Safety Element does not include a distinct listing of programs, instead describing more generally that policies are implemented by different City departments responsible for public safety and emergency response. These current programs do not include implementation details, such as targets and timelines.

The updated Safety Element will incorporate programs from the 1996 Safety Element, the 2018 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, the 2020 Floodplain Management Plan, Resilient Los Angeles, LA's Green New Deal and other related plans into a revised Chapter 4, Implementation, that includes a table of programs that implement one or more policies. The program format will generally consist of a title, program description, timeframe for when the program will be achieved, a list of responsible departments involved in implementation of the program, and related policies that the subject program is implementing.



City of Los Angeles, 2020 Floodplain Management Plan



City of Los Angeles, 2018 Resilient Los Angeles



City of Los Angeles, 2019 Green New Deal

FAQ's

What is the Safety Element?

The safety element is one of the nine State-mandated elements of the general plan. State law requires a city's safety element to address protection of its people from unreasonable risks associated with disasters, including earthquakes, floods, fires, and landslides. Other locally relevant safety issues, such as airport land use, emergency response, and hazardous materials spills may also be included.

What types of safety issues are not addressed in the Safety Element?

The City's Safety Element does not address safety issues related to crime and policing, except in the context of disasters such as traffic safety during or following a disaster. Rather, the [Framework Element](#) of the General Plan covers policing and crime prevention. Other General Plan elements that address safety include the [Housing Element](#), which details safety in relation to housing units; the [Mobility Plan 2035](#) (Transportation Element), which states "Safety First" as one of its five top-level transportation goals, and sets a vision for zero transportation-related fatalities; and the [Air Quality Element](#) and [Noise Element](#), which deal with public and environmental health and welfare related to air pollutant emissions and environmental noise.

Why update the Safety Element?

The current [Safety Element](#) requires targeted updates to bring it into compliance with recent State law. State legislation requires that the Safety Element be reviewed and updated as necessary alongside the Housing Element, which is scheduled for adoption in Fall 2021, and now requires additional information related to flooding, wildfire, and climate resilience. Government Code Section 65302(g) describes required background information and provides policy and program guidance for safety element updates. Please see <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov> for further information.

How is the Safety Element currently implemented?

The current Safety Element is implemented by several City departments.

- The [Emergency Operations Organization \(EOO\)](#) and [Emergency Management Department \(EMD\)](#) are the primary City agencies that implement the Safety Element. They centralize the direction and control of the planning, coordination, and management of disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.
- The [Department of Building and Safety](#) administers and revises the Building Code to maximize the resilience of new and existing structures. A recent example is the [Soft Story Retrofit Program](#).

- The Department of [City Planning](#) integrates hazard concerns into planning and land use, through zoning and policy decisions made during Community Plan Updates, targeted resilience programs like the [Venice Local Coastal Program](#), and land use entitlements specific to hazard areas like oil drilling zones.
- The [Los Angeles Fire Department](#) uses regulations like mandated brush clearance and red flag parking restrictions to implement the fire safety provisions of the Safety Element.

These are just some of the many ways the City works to achieve the hazard-related goals set in the Safety Element. The revised program list in the updated Safety Element will be used by the City to guide department work programs, identify expertise that may be required, allocate necessary resources, and organize the engagement and interdepartmental and interagency coordination required to carry out the programs within the established timeframes.

What is the relationship between the General Plan, Community Plans, and the Zoning Code?

The [City's General Plan](#) provides the structure for all planning and land use activities in the City. It articulates the City's vision and goals in the broadest terms. The City's [35 Community Plans](#) comprise the Land Use Element of the General Plan. The Zoning Code translates the policies set in the General Plan and Community Plans into specific rules and regulations, which are applied to every plot of land in the city.

The City of Los Angeles is geographically divided into 35 Community Plan Areas (and two Special Purpose Districts: [Port of Los Angeles](#) and [Los Angeles World Airports](#)). Los Angeles City Planning has embarked on a separate, but related, effort to [update these plans](#). Additionally, the City is preparing the City's [new Zoning Code](#), which will be available for Community Plans' update efforts and will help implement the vision of the updated General Plan.

How does the Safety Element relate to other planning efforts, including Community Plan Updates and the Housing Element?

The Safety Element must be consistent with other General Plan Elements, including the Land Use Element (comprised of 35 Community Plans) and the Housing Element. The Safety Element lays the groundwork for citywide hazard planning and programming and the Community Plan updates will carry out those policies and programs related to locally identified hazards and community concerns. For example, a Community Plan that includes Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones will consider that designation when making zoning decisions, generally designating lower zoning densities for hazard areas. Similarly, when considering recommendations to meet the Los Angeles Regional Housing Needs Allocation, the Housing Element will consider hazard designations as identified in the Safety Element. Safety Element staff are working closely with both the community planning and housing teams to ensure the required consistency.

What plans are being considered in the Safety Element update?

The City has reviewed several long-range citywide plans and programs that relate to hazard and disaster safety, including the existing [1996 Safety Element](#), 2018 [Local Hazard Mitigation Plan](#), [2020 Floodplain Management Plan](#), [Resilient Los Angeles](#), and [LA's Green New Deal](#). These plans provide most of the content required for the Safety Element to comply with State law. Relevant material from these plans will be consolidated and summarized for inclusion in the Safety Element.

How is climate change and resilience being considered in the Safety Element update?

New policy language will be incorporated from LA's Green New Deal, Resilient Los Angeles, and the 2020 Floodplain Management Plan to offer additional direction on retrofitting the City to be more resilient against the increase in severity of hazards and disasters associated with climate change. Safety Element targeted updates will incorporate programs from Resilient Los Angeles that address climate change, adaptation, and increasing the resiliency of underserved communities, reflecting the significant planning work the City has already completed, consistent with new State requirements related to climate change for general plans.

How is the updated Safety Element considering wildfires?

Wildfires are addressed in the existing Safety Element. The City will review and update existing information, as necessary. Additionally, the City Planning Department will collaborate with the Los Angeles Fire Department regarding appropriate policy revisions and cross referencing other more detailed documents that establish fire suppression and other important standards. The Safety Element targeted update will also

incorporate programs from the 2018 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan that address and minimize wildfire risk.

What types of disasters are discussed in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan?

The 2018 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan addresses the following hazards: adverse weather, climate change and sea-level rise, dam failure, drought, earthquake, flood, landslide, tsunami, wildland/urban interface fire, and human-caused hazards like terrorism and cyber attacks. The Safety Element will be revised to clarify that the goals, policies, and objectives of the Safety Element pertain to this full list of hazards.

How is Environmental Justice addressed in the Safety Element and General Plan?

The update of two or more General Plan Elements triggers a State requirement to address environmental justice. The [Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles](#) addresses environmental justice with a collection of goals, policies and programs that seek to further 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. The City will make technical amendments to this Element at the same time the Safety Element is updated to clarify compliance with State regulations.

What is the process for adopting the updated Safety Element?

The adoption process for the update of the Safety Element began in early 2021, when a [Notice of Preparation](#) for an EIR to assess both the Housing and Safety Elements was launched with a series of scoping meetings. Public webinars, hearings, and consideration by the City Planning Commission, Council Committees, and City Council will follow through summer and fall 2021. State agencies such as the California Geologic Survey, California Office of Emergency Services, and California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection will also review the updated documents prior to their adoption by the Council, anticipated in late 2021.

How can the public be involved in the process and stay informed?

[Sign up for email updates](#) to be notified of upcoming engagement opportunities. Please email OurLA2040@lacity.org with any questions.