



The City of San Diego

Staff Report

DATE ISSUED: 10/26/2021

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Department

SUBJECT: Climate Resilient SD, Amendments to General Plan Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element

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Council District(s): Citywide

OVERVIEW:

Climate Resilient SD is a comprehensive climate adaptation and resilience plan that addresses the four primary climate change-related hazards that the City of San Diego faces: extreme heat, changes in precipitation (extreme rainfall or drought), wildfires, and sea level rise. The plan is a framework for action that includes a range of potential adaptation strategies to minimize risk and increase the resilience of San Diego's people, assets, economy and natural resources to climate change. Climate Resilient SD is intended to not only prepare San Diego for climate change, but also to ensure that we prepare in ways that improve the lives of the people that live in and visit San Diego.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

RECOMMEND ADOPTION of the Climate Resilient SD Plan.

RECOMMEND ADOPTION of amendments to the General Plan Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element.

RECOMMEND CERTIFICATION of an addendum to the 2008 General Plan Environmental Impact Report No. 104495 (SCH No. 2006091032).

DISCUSSION OF ITEM:

Background

Climate change is already impacting San Diego and can be felt in the daily lives of City residents. The City already experiences days of extreme heat, has intense rainstorms that can leave streets flooded, and breathes air impacted by wildfire smoke. Climate Resilient SD is a comprehensive climate adaptation and resilience plan that addresses the four primary climate change-related hazards that have been identified for the City of San Diego: extreme heat, changes in precipitation (extreme rainfall or drought), wildfires, and sea level rise. The plan is a framework for action that includes a range of adaptation strategies to minimize risk and increase the resilience of San Diego's people, assets, economy, and natural resources to climate change.

Background

California Senate Bill 379 (SB 379) requires each local jurisdiction to review and update its General Plan Safety Element by January 1, 2022, to address applicable climate adaptation and resiliency strategies. Among other requirements, Senate Bill 379 requires a vulnerability assessment, a set of adaptation and resilience goals, policies and objectives, and a set of feasible implementation measures. Climate Resilient SD includes an update to the City's General Plan Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element and is intended to meet the SB 379's legislative requirements.

Climate Resilient SD looks at how climate change will impact San Diegans now, and into the future. The plan considers how to best plan for vibrant communities, how to protect the environment, and how to prosper in the emerging economy. As the impacts of climate change are not felt equally across all communities, Climate Resilient SD also focuses on how we can protect communities that are most vulnerable to climate change and have fewer resources available to prepare and respond. Climate Resilient SD includes a suite of goals, policies and strategies that have been shaped by public input, and the strategies included are intended to provide flexibility in implementation, to allow the City to adjust implementation with changing climate conditions, and to prioritize action based on community needs. Climate Resilient SD is also intended to be a living document; its implementation shaped by continued community engagement and active involvement in plan implementation.

Climate Resilient SD is a plan that is informed by the completion of several vulnerability assessments that have been prepared to identify City exposure and vulnerability to climate change hazards. These assessments identified and analyzed the four primary hazards that will affect the City of San Diego: extreme heat, wildfire, changes in precipitation (flooding and drought), and sea level rise. The assessments identified City asset vulnerability to climate change, and identified what the potential consequences would be if these assets or resources were impacted. This information in turn informed the overall development of the Climate Resilient SD plan.

Goals and Policies

With help from the public, the Planning Department developed five main goals for a climate resilient City. These goals are to:

1. Ensure communities are connected and informed to be best prepared for climate change.
2. Plan for and build a resilient and equitable city.

3. Safeguard, preserve and protect historic and tribal cultural resources from the effects of climate change.
4. Support and prioritize thriving natural environments and enhance adaptability.
5. Maintain and ensure minimal disruption to all critical City services in the face of climate change hazards.

One of the primary goals of the plan is to make a clear statement that the City prioritizes investments and resources in underserved communities which have the greatest needs and fewest resources available to adapt. The consequences of climate change vulnerability can be felt very differently across the City. For example, the effects of extreme heat will be felt differently by those who have resources, such as insulated homes with air conditioning, than by those who have older homes without air conditioning, and who cannot easily access public spaces where they can cool down. Therefore, strategies to adapt to extreme heat, such as tree plantings, cool zones, and cool streets, need to be prioritized in areas with greater needs.

For each adaptation strategy, the plan identifies Core Benefits, which are discussed in more detail below. These are benefits that the City can gain from strategy implementation in addition to addressing and adapting to climate change. Equity is an important Core Benefit that can be gained through many of the potential strategies, and is identified as a prioritized factor for implementation.

The plan also prioritizes nature-based climate change solutions. These are solutions that work with nature to address climate change, meaning that they leverage the ecosystem benefits that a healthy and well managed ecosystem can provide, such as emissions reductions, cleaner air, and water quality protection. Nature based solutions are prioritized because of the multiple benefits they provide to communities and to the City overall, such as additional green spaces to provide community cooling and cleaner air. Examples of nature-based solutions include restored natural landscapes such as wetlands and the creation of living shorelines, as well as green streets, bioswales, and tree plantings.

Adaptation and Resilience Strategies

Overall, the plan includes a suite of 86 potential adaptation and resilience strategies, which consist of policies, programs, projects, or actions. Strategies fall mainly into two categories: those that provide risk mitigation, and those that build better communities.

- Risk mitigation strategies reduce exposure to climate hazards, reduce the sensitivity to the exposure, or increase the capacity to adapt.
- Strategies focused on building better communities increase the ability of a community to respond to climate change impacts.

Details provided on each of the strategies includes: the climate hazard addressed, the actions needed to implement the strategy, Core Benefits to be realized with strategy implementation, and the implementation timeframe and order of magnitude costs.

As Climate Resilient SD is intended to not only prepare San Diego for climate change, but also to ensure that we prepare in ways that improve the lives of the people that live throughout the City, the plan identifies Core Benefits that are associated with each adaptation strategy. Core Benefits are services and benefits that the City gains from strategy implementation in addition to adapting to climate change. For example, increasing green spaces in areas subject to flooding helps to lower the

risk of flooding, but also improves air quality, provides recreational opportunities and provides additional habitat for plants and animals.

The Core Benefits identified in the Climate Resilient SD plan include:

Core Benefit	Description	Example Strategy
City Services	These strategies maintain critical services provided by the City, such as maintaining streets, water supply, and Fire-Rescue services.	Account for projected changes in precipitation and sea level rise in water and wastewater planning.
Public Health and Safety	These strategies protect members of the public from the effects of extreme heat, flooding, and other climate hazards.	Coordinate with the County of San Diego Department of Public Health on Cool Zones program. Provide easily accessible locations, particularly in Communities of Concern. Expand access to Cool Zones, shade corridors, and the coast.
Historic and Tribal Cultural	These strategies protect historic and tribal cultural resources such as historic structures, archaeological sites and artifacts and cultural landscapes against the impacts of climate change.	Incorporate climate change impacts to historic and tribal cultural resources planning. Develop and implement a cultural resources management plan that aims to reduce stress and minimize exposure of historic, archaeological and tribal cultural resources to climate change impacts.
Recreation, Green Spaces, and Tourism	These strategies protect the City's recreational spaces, such as parks and beaches, so that residents and visitors alike can continue to enjoy them.	Update open space and community park plans as needed, including master plans, precise plans, general development plans, and natural resource management plans to protect open space and park land against impacts of climate change and to improve natural integrity.
Water Quality and Use	These strategies protect and improve the integrity of our water bodies through stormwater management and promotion of water conservation actions.	Continue to implement land management practices that support ecosystem function and healthy watersheds and, in turn, increase the capacity of the system to withstand stress due to climate change.

Natural Resource Protection and Air Quality Improvement	These strategies protect and improve integrity of the City's natural spaces and resources, providing a multitude of benefits to the City's residents including air quality improvement.	Prioritize the preservation, restoration and expansion of natural features such as habitat, open space, wetlands, kelp forests, marshes and vegetated buffers to increase resilience of natural systems. Continue to implement and uphold the Multiple Species Conservation Program to preserve network of habitat and open space and to protect biodiversity.
Greenhouse Gas Reductions	These strategies reduce emissions of climate change causing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.	Support expansion and management of active transportation network. Provide safe, accessible active transportation infrastructure.
Economic Continuity	These strategies help the City's economy to continue thriving in the face of climate change impacts.	Implement nature-based shoreline protection methods to protect areas subject to coastal flooding. Develop a coastal resilience master plan that would identify locations for implementation of nature-based solutions to mitigate coastal flooding and erosion, improve coastal resiliency, protect habitat, and increase recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
Social Equity	These strategies protect the City's most vulnerable communities from the effects of climate change.	Increase access to parks and open space for all San Diegans. Increase overall shaded area at park spaces. Natural shade from trees shall be prioritized over artificial shade structures, whenever feasible.

These Core Benefits, along with the effectiveness and estimated cost of potential strategies, are anticipated to be used to prioritize strategy implementation in the future.

Implementation

Climate Resilient SD includes a suite of potential adaptation strategies that will help the City adapt to climate change. While implementation of the plan will cost money, it is estimated that proactive planning and strategic action now is four to six times less costly than doing nothing.

The plan is designed as a policy framework that provides for flexible implementation, which allows the City to prioritize implementation based off of the Core Benefits that are associated with each strategy. The plan is also designed so that it can be implemented in a way that best serves our communities, based on conditions at the time and place of strategy implementation. This means that continuous community engagement will be critical to the plan's success, especially as the City will regularly monitor the plan's implementation.

City Strategic Plan Goal(s)/Objective(s):

Goal # 2: Work in partnership with all of our communities to achieve safe and livable neighborhoods.

Objective # 3: Invest in quality infrastructure.

Goal # 3: Create and sustain a resilient and economically prosperous City with opportunity in every community.

Objective # 1: Create dynamic neighborhoods that incorporate mobility, connectivity, and sustainability.

Objective # 4: Prepare and respond to climate change.

Fiscal Considerations:

There are no expenditures being authorized with this action.

Charter Section 225 Disclosure of Business Interests:

N/A; there is no contract associated with this action.

Environmental Impact:

The City of San Diego previously prepared and certified the General Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) (Project No. 104495/SCH No. 2006091032). The 2008 General Plan Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element, which was analyzed in the General Plan PEIR, identified the need for a comprehensive Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Plan. Climate Resilient SD fulfills the goals of the 2008 General Plan Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element through the inclusion of the Climate Resilient SD plan and an amendment to the General Plan Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element. Based upon a review of the current project, it has been determined pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 that:

- a. There are no new significant environmental impacts not considered in the previous EIR;
- b. No substantial changes have occurred with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken; and
- c. There is no new information of substantial importance to the project.

Therefore, an Addendum to the General Plan PEIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15164. The project is consistent with the analysis in the General Plan PEIR and there would be no new significant environmental impacts which were not already considered in the previous PEIR.

Equal Opportunity Contracting Information (if applicable):

N/A

Key Stakeholders and Community Outreach Efforts:

Like many planning efforts, the development of Climate Resilient SD has been a several years long process. The effort began with the completion of three climate change vulnerability assessments to assess the primary climate change hazards that will impact the City. These vulnerability assessments formed the basis for the development of the adaptation strategies that are included in the Climate Resilient SD plan. The Planning Department began developing the plan itself in 2020, and has collected feedback from community-based organizations, surveys, workshops, stakeholder briefings, community newsletters, and through other community events to help shape and refine the plan.

A Vision and Goals survey was made available online in late 2020. This survey provided an overview of the four primary climate change hazards for the City, how these hazards will intensify in the future, and what potential impacts may be for San Diegans. It also outlined the draft goals of the Climate Resilient SD plan and asked participants to indicate their level of support. At the end of the survey, open ended questions allowed participants to share their own experiences with the effects of climate change in their community, as well as any ideas they had for how San Diego can adapt and thrive in these changing climate conditions.

In April, the City had the opportunity to receive feedback on Climate Resilient SD from the Climate Science Alliance Tribal Working Group. The adaptation strategies survey was also launched in April. This survey provided a short overview of the Climate Resilient SD planning effort and context to what feedback was being collected. For each of the four primary climate change hazards, it also included a short summary of projected changes (e.g. more frequent heat waves) and then presented multiple potential strategies to address the hazard. Short explanations of each strategy, as well as a summary table that included cost, effectiveness, pros, and cons, were presented in order to give participants a foundational understanding of the strategy options and how they compared to one another. The survey asked participants to rank their level of support for each strategy, provide feedback on their priorities for strategies selection, and share concerns regarding each of the climate change hazards. It also provided space for additional comments or input.

To support participation in the adaptation strategies survey and in the first community workshop, the City held a series of stakeholder briefings with community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide an overview to the Climate Resilient SD planning effort, share about the adaptation strategies survey and community workshop, and provide opportunity for feedback. Information about the adaptation strategies survey and the first community workshop was shared via social media on the City's Facebook and Twitter accounts, by the City's CBO partners, and through NextDoor, and was also circulated to subscribers of the Climate Resilient SD and Climate Action Plan newsletters.

The first community workshop, Preparing for Climate Change, was conducted virtually on April 19th, 2021. The workshop was held in both English and Spanish. The primary purposes of this workshop were to educate members of the community about the Climate Resilient SD planning process and climate adaptation planning work that the City has completed to date; share the findings from the initial Vision and Goals Engagement Tool; and provide additional opportunities to discuss and submit feedback on potential adaptation strategies that the City could pursue to ensure a more equitable and resilient future.

In order to help ensure meaningful public participation throughout the Climate Resilient SD planning process, the City also partnered with several local CBOs whose work is focused within Communities of Concern and who have an expertise and knowledge of these communities. For this effort, the City

partnered with MidCityCAN, Casa Familiar, and the San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition. The CBOs conducted outreach activities to help facilitate the involvement of members of Communities of Concern in the Climate Resilient SD planning process, including feedback on the draft adaptation strategies, participation in community workshops, and feedback on the draft Climate Resilient SD plan.

In addition to several in person community engagement events in Summer 2021, the City also had the opportunity to engage with community members while working with them on projects to help their communities adapt to one of San Diego's primary climate hazards: extreme heat. In August, City Planning Department staff partnered with the YMCA to help campers create a new living wall at the Copley Price YMCA in City Heights. Staff had the opportunity to teach the campers about how green spaces support clean air and help the City prepare for climate change, all the while helping them play a hands on role in this project for their own community. The City also partnered with the San Diego Foundation to hold a community heat mapping event in September. Students from High Tech High and other community volunteers used sensors and drove routes across the City in the morning, afternoon, and evening. When this data is processed, it will provide the City with a heat profile through the day to better understand which areas of the City are heating up more on hot days, and how that changes over the course of the day. The study area focused on Communities of Concern, plus a buffer zone, and the data collected through this effort will provide location specific, on the ground information on how hot days are affecting different areas of the City, and where the City needs to prioritize implementation of strategies to address extreme heat.

Outreach will continue through the release of the draft plan in October. Several stakeholder briefings are scheduled throughout the month of October, and a second community workshop was also held on October 19th. This workshop, like the first, was also held in both English and Spanish. City Planning Staff also hosted a Movie in the Park event on October 22nd, to educate the public about Climate Resilient SD while showing select episodes of Netflix's Our Planet documentary series.

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