



CITY OF SALINAS

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: JULY 3, 2024

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: LISA BRINTON, DIRECTOR

THROUGH: GRANT LEONARD, PLANNING MANAGER

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TITLE: GENERAL PLAN UPDATE/VISIÓN SALINAS 2040: PUBLIC SAFETY AND HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

No action required. Receive and comment on report and presentation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report and study session discusses and seeks Planning Commission guidance on emerging topics of conversation and priorities of the Public Safety and Health and Environmental Justice Elements being prepared as part of the General Plan update. The Health and Environmental Justice Element is a new state mandate and is meant to establish goals and programs related to understanding and addressing environmental injustices in the community. Public Safety discussion expands on the current, broader, Safety Element, which has now been split into two separate chapters, Environmental Safety and Public Safety. The Public Safety Element also tackles issues pertaining to inequity and seeks to work in conjunction with Health and Environmental Justice Element to create a safer, healthier, thriving Salinas for all.

DISCUSSION:

Public Safety

Over the last few years, City leadership and community stakeholders have expressed a desire for a more robust Safety Element. Using the General Plan Update process as an opportunity to address this ask, staff collaborated with both the Fire and Police Departments, as well as Library and Community Services' Community Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP) divisions to establish a new framework for the City's first Public Safety Element. The previous General Plan held the concept of safety as a broader concept which included safety from natural and human made hazards and how to mitigate and address them. The goal for the new Public Safety Element is to look

beyond the standard safety practices and looks at goals, policies and actions that go outside of the traditional police/fire department activities.

This Public Safety Element addresses issues of crime, violence, and other human caused hazards and identifies methods to provide a safe and enjoyable environment by:

1. Continuing to promote non-violent conflict resolution.
2. Providing effective and responsive emergency services, including response alternatives.
3. Implementing building and outdoor design techniques that support safety and mitigate human hazard.

Public Safety Engagement

Public safety has been a recurring discussion topic throughout this and other planning processes. Many of the Health and Safety goals, policies and actions from the Alisal Vibrancy Plan were used as a foundation for Public Safety Element outreach. Existing goals were carried over and a series of new policies and actions were added to reflect the community's vision. Feedback was captured through a series of pop-up activities, community-led surveys (including a youth survey) and two (2) community workshops, one in English and one in Spanish. The top three areas of concern determined by four (4) pop-up activities were (1) more lighting in streets and public spaces, (2) pedestrian traffic safety, and (3) youth programming and services. Feedback from the 2022 and 2023 budget surveys, which included over 4,000 responses, was also incorporated into the recurring themes.

Public Safety Element Policy

The Draft Public Safety Element goals, policies, and actions in Attachment 1 are written to address issues of crime, violence, and other human caused hazards and identifies methods to provide a safe and enjoyable environment. Draft policies and actions summarized below are organized under three (3) goals:

PS Goal 1: Continue to play a central role in the creation and maintenance of a community that resolves its problems in non-violent ways.

- Improve community safety through civic engagement and relationship building.
- Implement alternative policing methods.

PS Goal 2: Provide effective and responsive police and fire services to ensure a safe and vibrant community.

- Ensure residents have effective and responsive emergency services.
- Improve facilities and access to equipment and technology.
- Foster collaboration with other departments, outside agencies/organizations to improve community reach.
- Provide a range of services to support community education and non-emergency situations.

PS Goal 3: Create a safer community through the use of design techniques for existing spaces, new developments and reuse/revitalization projects.

- Promote the use of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques and strategies.
- Cultivate a safe and clean neighborhood environment.

Health and Environmental Justice

The Health and Environmental Justice Element is the result of Senate Bill 1000 which requires local governments to include and EJ Element in their General Plans to address inequitable distribution of pollution and the associated health effects in disadvantaged and underserved communities of color.

"Environmental justice" is defined in California law as 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. “ (Cal. Gov. Code, § 65040.12, subd. (e).) The Health & Environmental Justice (HEJ) Element addresses issues of health inequities concerning:

1. Quality of the built environment
2. Access to community services, programs, and facilities
3. Access to healthy and affordable foods
4. Safe and sanitary homes
5. Access to safe and good-quality recreational facilities
6. Civic engagement.

Historically, throughout Salinas, low-income residents, communities of color, indigenous peoples, and immigrant communities have disproportionately suffered the greatest environmental burdens. Issues related to pesticide exposure (contributing to air pollution and poor water quality), lack of access to green space and fresh food, limited access to health care, overcrowded housing and a poorly maintained housing stock have resulted in long-term health effects and a substandard quality of life for many Salinas residents. This Health Environmental Justice (EJ) Element seeks to alleviate those realities by placing its focus on people, how they are connected and affected by environmental hazards, and how those issues could be minimized and mitigated regardless of race, ethnicity, or income level.

Health and Environmental Justice Engagement

Health and Environmental Justice engagement began in the fall of 2022 and continued through the Spring of 2023. Various outreach strategies were utilized to highlight community priorities and assist in the development of goals, policies and tangible actions connected to air and chemical pollution, healthy food access, problems with City infrastructure, health care access, and concerns related to safe/healthy housing. Following the recurring theme of meeting community members where they are, Health and EJ engagement also included additional strategies to include the voices of Salinas residents often left out of the decision-making process. These strategies included holding pop-up events in unorthodox locations like a bakery at 5 a.m. that is popular amongst farmworkers picking up lunch before their shifts, and lunch time presentations and focus group discussions in fields on the outskirts of town.

The development of the Health and EJ Element also included the City's first Spanish-led community workshop and grassroots led engagement in Mixteco speaking communities. Over five hundred forty (540) residents were reach through these workshops, pop-up activities, focus groups and community presentations. The top three areas of concern determined by the collective outreach were:

1. Health care access
2. Access to safe/healthy housing
3. Access to healthy food and grocery stores.

Additional feedback from the 2022 and 2023 Budget Survey was also incorporated into the HEJ goal and policy development.

Health and Environmental Justice Element Policy

The Draft Health and Environmental Justice goals, policies, and actions in Attachment 2 reflect community engagement throughout the General Plan Update, recommendations from other recent planning efforts, and Steering Committee review. The draft's policies and actions summarized below are organized under seven (7) goals:

HEJ Goal 1: Improve the quality of the built and natural environments to support healthy lifestyles & reduce health inequities.

- Improve the built environment through land use policies and programs.
- Ensure that sensitive land uses are not negatively impacted by hazardous materials.

HEJ Goal 2: Provide and maintain a range of community services, programs, and institutional facilities to equitably meet the needs of the community.

- Expand access to high quality childcare.
- Provide resources for seniors, persons with diverse abilities and other vulnerable populations.
- Strengthen the capacity and sustainability of community-based organizations (CBOs).

HEJ Goal 3: Ensure all Salinas' residents have access to purchase and grow healthy, affordable, and culturally diverse relevant foods.

- Reduce food insecurity and promote healthier eating habits through community programs and education.
- Promote year-round access to locally sourced food through urban agriculture.

HEJ Goal 4: Ensure safe and sanitary homes.

- Work to eliminate health risks associated with lead-based paint, mold, and other contaminants.
- Pursue policies that prevent displacement.

HEJ Goal 5: Promote spaces for physical activity.

- Create and maintain safe and accessible spaces to encourage physical activity.

- Provide resources for youth and seniors to engage in safe physical activity.
- Encourage physical activity in the workplace.

HEJ Goal 6: Encourage robust civic engagement and the development of resident leaders committed to shaping the City's future.

- Create a welcoming environment for community engagement.
- Build resident leadership.

HEJ Goal 7: Improve existing and create new programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities.

- Continue to provide services to stabilize unhoused population.
- Reduce disparities among different race/ethnicities, income levels and LGBTQ+ communities.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

Not a Project. The City of Salinas has determined that the proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378). In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 includes the general rule that CEQA applies only to activities which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Because the proposed action and this matter have no potential to cause any effect on the environment, or because it falls within a category of activities excluded as projects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378, this matter is not a project. Because the matter does not cause a direct or foreseeable indirect physical change on or in the environment, this matter is not a project. Any subsequent discretionary projects resulting from this action will be assessed for CEQA applicability. An Environmental Impact Report is being prepared for the General Plan Update.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Public Safety Goals, Policies, and Actions
2. Public Safety Engagement
3. Draft Health and Environmental Justice Element Goals, Policies, and Actions
4. Health and Environmental Justice Engagement