

MEMORANDUM

DATE May 16, 2025

TO Neda Zayer, Community Development Director, City of Burlingame
Ruben Hurin, Planning Manager, City of Burlingame

FROM Tammy L. Seale, PREP Principal-in-Charge
Eli Krispi, PREP Project Manager
Lauren Willey, Associate Planner

SUBJECT Burlingame Safety Element and Environmental Justice Element Update - April 16 Community Workshop Summary

This memo summarizes the in-person community workshop and joint study session with the City Council and Planning Commission of the City of Burlingame. The City hosted this workshop as part of the second phase of outreach for the City of Burlingame Safety Element Update and Environmental Justice Element Update. It includes a description of the workshop activities and a summary of the feedback received from Planning Commissioners, City Council members, and members of the public. The feedback is meant to support the development and refinement of the Safety Element and Environmental Justice Element goals, policies, and actions.

WORKSHOP PURPOSE AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

The workshop had two primary purposes: 1) to share information about the Safety Element and Environmental Justice Element Updates, including the status of the projects and the results of initial technical analyses; and 2) to receive input on the high-level draft policy concepts for the City's Safety and Environmental Justice Elements.

Community Workshop Summary

AGENDA AND FORMAT

The City of Burlingame hosted an in-person community workshop at the Burlingame Community Center from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 16, 2025. Consultants and City project team staff jointly staffed the workshop, with consultant team members delivering the presentation and all staff circulating during the open house period to help answer questions. All five City Council members, four Planning Commissioners, and approximately ten members of the public attended the study session.

The workshop began with an open-house period to allow attendees to circulate between six stations outlining the purpose and significance of the Safety Element and Environmental Justice Element, key climate change hazards impacting Burlingame, and the priority vulnerabilities (populations and community assets facing the greatest risk of harm from climate change). Attendees reviewed workshop boards with information about hazards and climate change impacts affecting Burlingame, as well as analyses and study results to support the Environmental Justice Element Update. Participants were also able to talk with project team staff and participate in interactive activities during this phase of the event. Following this phase of the workshop, the project team

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gave a short presentation to participants, Planning Commissioners, and City Council members and then participated in a discussion and question-and-answer session with participants. After the joint session, the workshop shifted back into an open house format for the remainder of the event.

The presentation on the Safety Element Update provided an overview of the project process, including the structure and purpose of the Safety Element, the Peninsula Resilience Planning (PREP) regional coordination effort, new state Safety Element requirements, the relationship with Burlingame's other planning documents, and findings from the vulnerability assessment. The presentation on the Environmental Justice Element Update provided an overview of the Equity-Focus Areas or EFAs (neighborhoods where community members experience disproportionate environmental injustices), key environmental justice issues in Burlingame, and initial policy concepts to address environmental justice topics. Planning Commission and City Council members and members of the public were able to ask questions, discuss safety and environmental justice issues with project staff, and provide feedback on policy concepts and other issues after the presentation.

ACTIVITY STATIONS

The six stations were organized as follows:

- » **Station 1: What is a Safety Element?** This station explained what the Safety Element is and why the City is updating it as part of the PREP regional effort involving nine jurisdictions. The station described the State requirements for safety elements and how Burlingame's Safety Element relates to other City and County plans and programs. It also listed the various hazards and emergency topics that the Safety Element will address.
- » **Station 2: Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Results.** This station provided an overview of the vulnerability assessment results, which included a list of the priority vulnerabilities in Burlingame (populations and community assets). The station listed the priority climate hazards that have the potential to cause the most harm to people and assets in Burlingame. These priority hazards are sea level rise, emergent groundwater, flooding, extreme heat, and wildfire.
- » **Station 3: What is an Environmental Justice Element?** This station explained what the Environmental Justice Element is and what analysis has been done to date. The station identified the three EFAs, which are areas of the City that are disproportionately impacted by environmental justice issues. These areas are the Northwest Burlingame EFA, El Camino Real Corridor EFA, and East Burlingame EFA.
- » **Station 4: Wildfire.** This station summarized wildfire risks in Burlingame, including maps of the new proposed fire hazard severity zones. The station highlighted key wildfire challenges facing the community, including rising property insurance costs, older buildings lacking fire-safe features, wildfire smoke impacts, vegetation management, and power outage vulnerabilities. The station presented approaches to address wildfire safety through public education, development requirements, vegetation management standards, and regional fire agency coordination.

Activity: At Station 4, attendees were asked to provide feedback on whether they support, were unsure about, or opposed selected draft wildfire policy concepts. There was also space for attendees to provide feedback on additional questions/considerations they had related to the policy concepts.

- » **Station 5: Flooding, Sea Level Rise, and Emergent Groundwater.** This station described flood conditions in Burlingame, including flood hazard zones and projected sea level rise impacts. The station highlighted how climate change is exacerbating flooding challenges through more intense storms and rising sea levels, which also pushes up fresh groundwater in low-lying areas of the City (a hazardous condition called emergent groundwater).

Activity: At Station 5, attendees were asked to provide feedback on whether they support, were unsure about, or opposed selected draft flood and sea level rise policy concepts. Attendees could also share any

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implementation concerns they had about these policy concepts, what resources they would like to have available for flood and sea level rise protection, and preferences for green infrastructure in their neighborhoods.

- » **Station 6: Other Safety Issues and Policies.** This station highlighted additional hazards affecting Burlingame, which are drought, extreme heat, landslides, human health hazards, ecosystem pests, severe weather, and airport hazards. The station also explained Burlingame’s current approach to emergency preparedness and response.

Activity: At Station 6, attendees were asked to provide feedback on whether they support, were unsure about, or opposed selected draft policies addressing these other hazards. Additionally, a space with four open-ended questions invited attendees to share further feedback, such as thoughts on personal preparedness or other considerations.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Attendees were able to ask questions during the initial open-house period and after the presentations on each element. As attendees circulated between each of the six stations, members of the project team invited them to provide feedback on the content provided on each of the posters. Participants were able to write comments on sticky notes to affix to the poster or a large writing pad near the poster, dictate comments to workshop staff, and use stickers to answer questions.

Feedback Summary

During the dot-voting exercise, participants showed strong overall support for the draft policy concepts related to wildfire, flooding and sea level rise, and other safety issues. At Station 4 (Wildfire), attendees supported policies focused on infrastructure hardening, regional coordination, public education, and water supply management though one comment questioned why Mills Canyon was rated only “moderate” fire risk. At Station 5 (Flooding, Sea Level Rise, and Emergent Groundwater), participants favored nature-based shoreline infrastructure and building protective defenses into the Bay, periodically reassessing development requirements for vulnerable properties, groundwater vulnerability assessments for new development, and restoration of riparian corridors. At Station 6 (Other Safety Issues), although there was no additional written feedback, the sticker voting indicated support for resilience centers, drought-tolerant landscaping, extreme heat public education, and climate-adaptive land management practices. Across all stations, only five out of 37 total votes expressed opposition. Some participants opposed the promotion of drought-tolerant landscaping, climate-adaptive land management, regionally coordinated adaptation strategies for groundwater resilience, and fire service readiness.

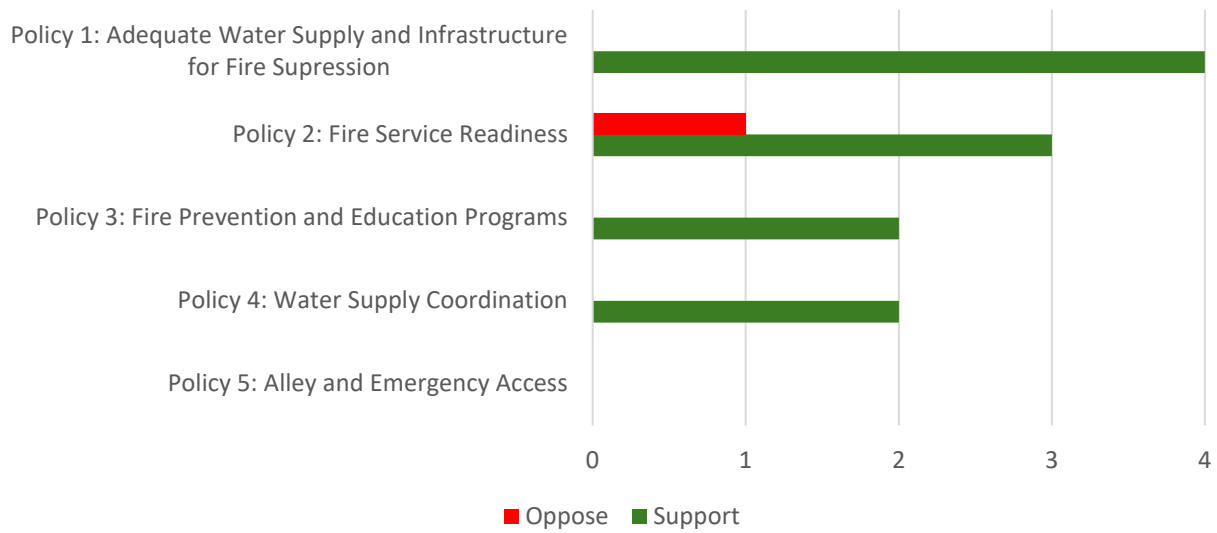
During the discussion period, City Council members and Planning Commissioners expressed support for the draft policy concepts, especially those related to wildfire safety, flooding, and environmental justice. Participants emphasized the need to address vulnerabilities such as wildfire risks in Mills Canyon, sea level rise impacts on infrastructure, the urban heat island effect, hazardous trees during drought-periods, and the lack of tree canopy in certain neighborhoods. Comments also highlighted the importance of equitable outreach, particularly to Burlingame’s Chinese community, and called for more detailed demographic data in Equity-Focus Areas. Attendees raised questions about policy funding, hazard analysis frequency, and balancing resilience strategies with urban development.

Activity Responses

Attendees were able to use stickers to show their support of or opposition to a set of draft policy concepts at Stations 4, 5, and 6. Overall, there was strong support for most policy concepts presented, with only five opposition votes out of 37 total votes. The figures below depict the total count of opposing or supportive votes on each policy concept and a transcription of any written comments received.

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Station 4. Selected draft policies for review: Wildfire

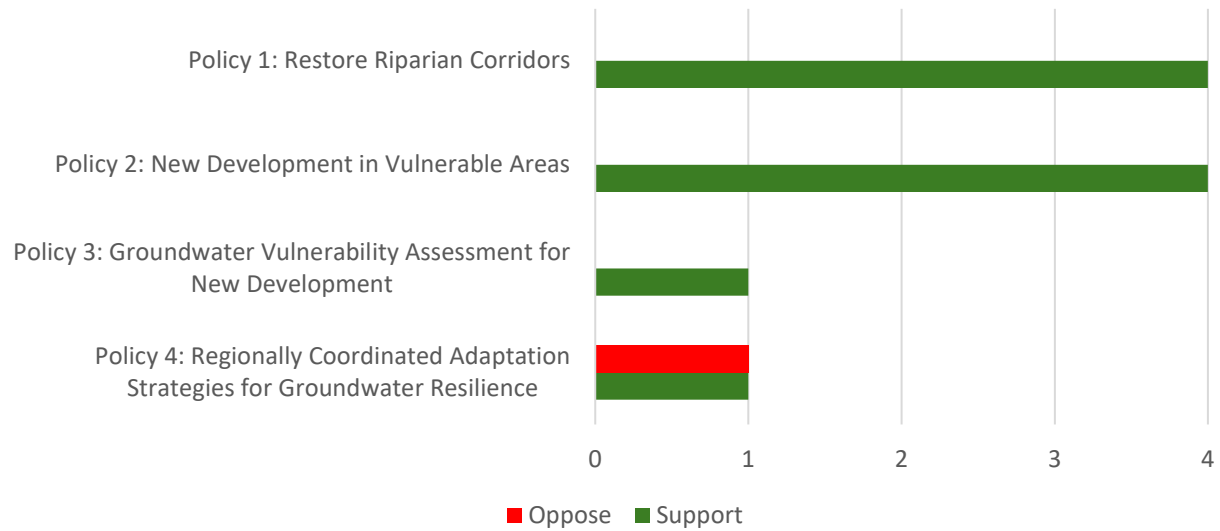


Additional feedback:

- Harden water delivery infrastructure.
- Why is Mills Canyon rated only “moderate” fire risk?
- To get ahead of the curve, council should be aware of different levels of biohazard risks at life science operations and regulate with a reasonable balance.
- Declining height equals ugly architecture.

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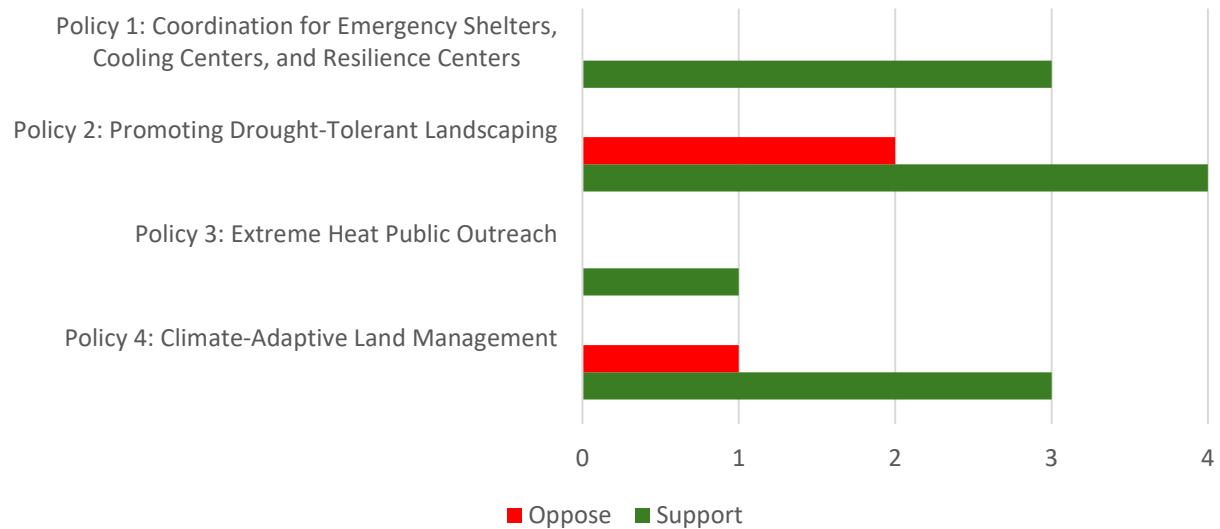
Station 5. Selected draft policies for review: Flooding, Sea Level Rise, and Emergent Groundwater



Additional feedback:

- Nature-based sea level rise infrastructure on shoreline.
- Building defenses into the Bay to save and protect buildings.

Station 6. Selected draft policies for review: Other Safety Issues



There was no additional written feedback at this station.

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Other Feedback

In addition to the open house activities, members of the public, Planning Commissioners, and City Council members were able to ask questions of the project staff and provide feedback and recommendations in the form of verbal commentary following each presentation. Below is a summary of the questions and comments received.

Safety Element

- Highlight children as a vulnerable population.
- There is a tension between vegetation management for fire prevention and potentially intensifying the urban heat island effect. Similarly, there is a tension between increasing density and the requirements for evacuation or defensible space between buildings in urban areas. How do we solve these seeming conflicts?
- The sea level rise and flooding policies are missing strategies for constructing defenses into the Bay. This is a topic of conversation within the City currently.
- The wastewater treatment plant is also vulnerable to sea level rise.
- Large eucalyptus limbs are at risk of falling in drought conditions. The City has already done some analysis and planning for tree removal, especially around El Camino Real.
- Mills Canyon is a significant fire risk and should be added to the local responsibility area fire hazard severity zones.
- Older homes on hillsides that are not being retrofitted are at risk of landslides and erosion following heavy rains.
- Most homes in Burlingame don't have air conditioning and don't necessarily need it.
- Transit needs to be a focus as Burlingame and the surrounding region adds density.
- Linguistically-isolated individuals are vulnerable in the event of an emergency and evacuation.
- Attendees asked if there would be any cost estimates of the Safety Element policies included in the final element and noted that they would like to have visibility into how other communities are funding these strategies. They also asked if there would be recommendations on how frequently to analyze various hazard risks and what should be a localized effort or a coordinated countywide effort.

Environmental Justice Element

- There is a lack of tree canopy in some areas of Burlingame. Review and consider incorporating the 30-300 recommendation from Cecil Konijnendijk, a Dutch researcher and educator, which recommends 3 mature trees for every home, 30 percent tree canopy cover in every neighborhood, and that all residents should be at least 300 meters from the nearest public park or green space.
- The Chinese population should be more involved in these efforts and language is often a barrier for them. The project team should perform targeted outreach to the Chinese community in Burlingame.
- Attendees asked how the Equity-Focus Areas were defined and if they considered future conditions. There was a request to see more granularity in the social demographics of these areas.

Next Steps

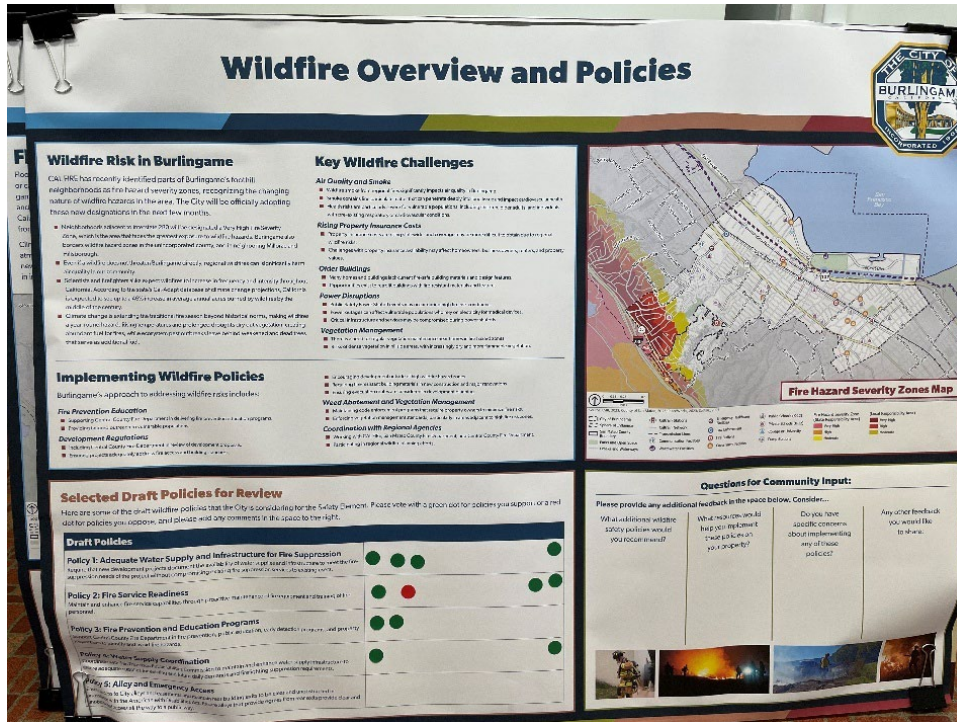
This memo provides a summary of the community workshop for the Burlingame Safety Element and Environmental Justice Element Updates for the City of Burlingame. The project team will use the feedback gathered from community members to inform the development of the Safety and Environmental Justice Element goals, policies, and actions. Following this community engagement phase, the project team will develop draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be made available for public review in the late summer/fall of 2025.

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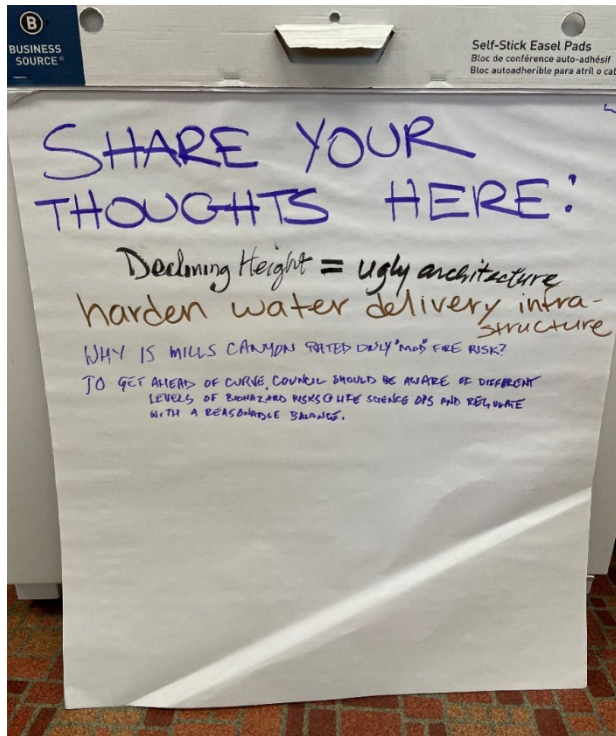
Appendix: Workshop Photos of Dot-Voting Exercise and Written Comments

This appendix presents photographs of the boards at the conclusion of the workshop with the dot-voting exercise and the writing pads with comments that were placed near the informational boards.



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Flooding, Sea Level Rise, and Emergent Groundwater Overview and Policies In Burlingame

Flood Risk in Burlingame

Flooding occurs when water overflows the banks of local water bodies, rises where storm surges, or cannot soak into the soil fast enough. It is usually caused by heavy or persistent rainfall. In Burlingame, flooding is a chronic issue, particularly along Mills Creek, Easton Creek, Burlingame Creek, and Sanchez Creek. Several areas are flood-prone, including properties along streets, areas west of California Drive, and along the highway. Parts of the Burlingame shoreline are protected by a levee in front of Anza lagoon, which helps to safeguard major hotels and recreational areas.

Climate change is expected to make flooding worse due to more intense rainfall events, less regularly atmospheric moisture, lower storm clouds become more frequent, and rising sea levels and melting new flood-vulnerable areas. Additionally, longer drought periods will cause soil to harden, resulting in increased runoff when rain arrives.

Emergent Groundwater

Emergent groundwater occurs when fresh water is pushed upward by dense saline water traveling further inland as sea levels rise. By 2050, 1/3 of the metropolitan area is expected to be inland as sea levels rise. Higher groundwater, even below the surface, can infiltrate storm drains. Overabundant water, spread out underneath the road, can infiltrate storm drains, causing them to overflow and cause damage to the road and surrounding properties. The impacts can be as great as causing a road to sink or causing a road to be closed for days. This is a major problem for the City of Burlingame, as it is a coastal city and has a high risk of flooding. The City of Burlingame is currently working on a plan to address this issue.

Key Challenges

Burlingame faces several key challenges related to flooding, sea level rise, and emergent groundwater:

- Aging infrastructure, including storm drains and sewer lines.
- Development in flood-prone areas, including residential and commercial properties.
- Higher groundwater levels, which can cause damage to the road and surrounding properties.
- The City of Burlingame is currently working on a plan to address this issue.

Implementing Flooding Policies

Regional Coordination

- Burlingame is currently working on a plan to address this issue.
- The City of Burlingame is currently working on a plan to address this issue.

Information and Planning

- The City of Burlingame is currently working on a plan to address this issue.
- The City of Burlingame is currently working on a plan to address this issue.

Development Standards

- The City of Burlingame is currently working on a plan to address this issue.
- The City of Burlingame is currently working on a plan to address this issue.

Sea Level Rise in Burlingame

Sea levels in Burlingame could rise as much as 5 inches by 2030, 16 inches by 2050, and 75 inches by 2100. Storm surge and rising tide events can add an additional 24 to 36 inches of flooding to the city.

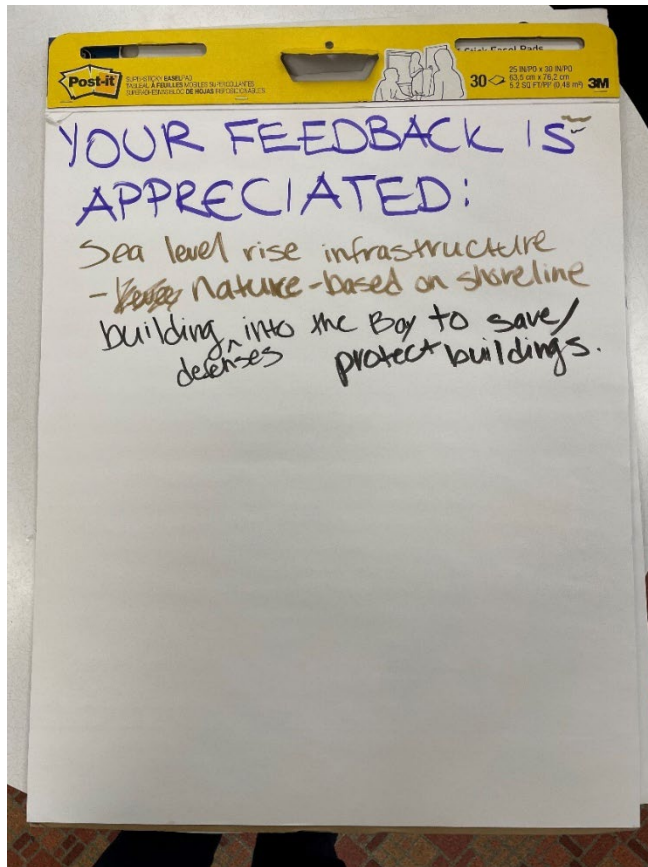
Flood Hazards Zones Map

Questions for Community Input

Please provide any additional feedback in the space below. Consider:

- What types of green infrastructure (e.g., permeable pavement, rain gardens, etc.) would you like to see in your neighborhood?
- Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

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Other Safety Issues and Policies

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Burlingame's approach to emergency preparedness involves multiple layers of planning, coordination, and community engagement. The City maintains a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, supported by Central County Fire Department, which trains volunteers to assist during disasters when professional responders may be overwhelmed.

The Burlingame Neighborhood Network (BNN), a citizen-led organization, supports City safety efforts during catastrophes by organizing neighborhood preparedness activities and facilitating communication between neighbors. The City also maintains emergency alert systems, in partnership with San Mateo County, and works to ensure equitable access to emergency information.

Other Hazards

A drought occurs when conditions are drier than normal for an extended period, reducing water availability. Burlingame participates with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) to conserve water from the SFPUC's water treatment plant in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and 10% from local watersheds in the Alameda and Potrero regions. Climate change is likely to result in more severe droughts with related Sierra Nevada snowpack and decreased groundwater recharge.

An extreme heat day in Burlingame occurs when temperatures exceed 87°F. Climate change is expected to increase extreme heat days from an average of 4 days annually to 10 days by mid-century. Increasing the heat risk, commercial areas such as Highway 92, and low-income neighborhoods face a disproportionate burden. Higher temperatures also lead to health risks.

The highest neighborhoods of Burlingame, including Mt. Carmel Park, face moderate to high landslide risk. Climate change may increase landslide frequency through more severe rainfall after dry periods, particularly in previously burned areas.

Climate change promotes the proliferation of disease-carrying insects such as mosquitoes and ticks. Warmer, wetter conditions allow larger populations of these vectors, potentially spreading diseases like West Nile virus and Lyme disease, which increase heat can worsen respiratory conditions.

Climate change is expected to increase pests and diseases by increasing the abundance and range of both native and non-native pests. These threats could damage Burlingame's urban tree canopy and the Burlingame Lagoon and local Lagoon ecosystems. Invasive species and pests could damage riparian habitat by taking protection from local fire and flooding.

Climate change is increasing severe weather events in Burlingame, including high winds and extreme storms. Storms cause damage to buildings, power outages, and lead to fallen trees and landslides. Public Safety Power Shutoffs during high fire risk conditions also pose risks to vulnerable populations.

Burlingame is a priority to San Francisco International Airport Airpark using safety planning and the corridor of Burlingame west of Redwood Park has active SFPUC CWSL access corridor, and development must comply with Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan requirements for safety.

Implementing Other Safety Policies

Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

- Identifying City-owned infrastructure with climate resilience and safety plans.
- Expanding the value chain capacity to mitigate exposures that provide other benefits.
- Incorporating green infrastructure approaches in public spaces.

Building Standards and Design

- Continuing to require specific code investigations for projects in hazard zones.
- Promoting sustainable, energy-efficient building features.
- Implementing nature-resilient building standards.

Regional Collaboration

- Working with the Bay Area Air Quality and neighboring jurisdictions on air quality management.
- Collaborating with San Francisco Public Utilities Commission on water supply resilience.
- Supporting state and regional climate adaptation solutions.

Selected Draft Policies

Here are some of the draft policies that the City is considering for the Safety Element to reduce the threat from other hazards in the community. Please vote with a green dot for policies you support or a red dot for policies you oppose, and please add any comments below.

Draft Policies

Policy 1: Coordination for Emergency Shelters, Cooling Centers, and Resilient Centers

Coordinate with surrounding jurisdictions, including agencies, non-profits, and private citizens, and interagency based organizations to ensure professional and community-based emergency response, and advance the City's role in the community. This policy is highly recommended.

Policy 2: Promoting Drought-Tolerant Landscaping

Promote the use of the drought-tolerant and drought-resistant plants and trees in landscaping for both public spaces and private properties through educational materials, community outreach, and rebates.

Policy 3: Enhance Public Space

Develop and improve public space, including parks and green spaces, to enhance the community's resilience to climate change, and provide a safe and healthy environment for the community.

Policy 4: Climate-Adaptive Land Management

Implement land use planning and management policies that are consistent with the community's resilience to climate change, including the use of green infrastructure, and ensure the community's safety and health.

Questions for Community Input:

Please provide any additional feedback in the space below, if possible.

Which of these safety issues concerns you most? (Please rank)

- Air quality
- Seismic hazards
- Hazardous materials
- Other (please specify)

What additional policies would you recommend to address these safety issues?

What resources would help you prepare for these hazards at home or work?

Are there specific populations or areas in Burlingame that you believe need special attention regarding these safety issues?

Any other feedback you would like to share.