



City of Oakland: Safety Element Focus Group Discussion #1

June 30, 2022 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Held via Zoom

Participating Organizations:

- East Bay Municipal Utility District
- City of Oakland Emergency Services, Fire Department
- Save the Bay
- Public Health Institute
- Greenbelt Alliance
- City of Oakland, public works, watershed division
- Communities for a better environment
- Pacific ADA center

Meeting facilitated by Alison Moore and Rajeev Bhatia of Dyett & Bhatia

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

In this discussion, participants discussed their organizations' approaches to addressing vulnerability and hazard risk. Key strategies discussed involved improving public disaster communications and messaging, reinforcing existing infrastructure, and taking care to address longer term threats in addition to immediate disaster emergencies.

Participants were interested in feedback to ensure the plan reflects hazards that the community is concerned about and is using an equity lens. The local hazard mitigation plan is being used to make sure the city is prepared and resilient to natural disasters, but there are gaps in the plan regarding city facilities that can support emergency response. Participants noted that many facilities don't have air conditioning or high-capacity HVAC air filtering systems, and that there aren't many facilities located where they are needed. Participants also noted the need to expand emergency response facility capacity. Participants were also concerned about preemptive emergency response training and are working to develop a training model that reaches more diverse audiences.



Participants discussed particularly vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, and how decisions made related to disaster risk should be examined within a disability-centered framework, and that planners should get in touch with disability focused organizations to determine the best ways to make emergency preparedness accessible. Participants discussed how climate hazards and disaster-related emergencies disproportionately affect not only people with disabilities, but also low-income people, minority groups, and especially houseless individuals. Addressing hazards from wildfire smoke and ensuring adequate facilities for relief during wildfire smoke emergencies is a top-of-mind issue. Additionally extreme heat events can disproportionately affect unhoused populations, people who live in housing with poor ventilation, and home-bound individuals.

Risk reduction measures discussed by the group included green infrastructure to address gaps in Oakland's existing adaption and mitigation strategy. Save the Bay mentioned that chapter 6 of the safety element described lack of storm drain systems in East Oakland, and how urban green infrastructure could help divert storm water from streets. Two things that could be added to sea-level info could ground water intrusion and storm surges, and these are compounded by climate change and could create more unpredictable conditions.

Participants also highlighted positive improvements and programs, such as the Lake Merritt green streets project, an example of how green infrastructure can improve public space and contribute to community health and wellbeing. Additionally, The East Oakland neighborhood Initiative was offered as an example of an initiative utilizing urban greening and consulting the community at every step. Other programs presented by participants included Oakland's first equity driven paving plans, tree planting in East Oakland, and improving mobility and green infrastructure in Chinatown. Caltrans is in the process of imagining alternatives to the 980, and re-examining flex-streets, among other initiatives.

Essential policies that participants hope to see in the Safety Element include:

- Groundwater monitoring, did not see in the previous mitigation plan
- Equitable nature-based adaption and urban greening that protects against sea level rise, urban flooding, and urban heat
- Requiring new buildings to accommodate 2' increase in sea level rise
- Making sure there is strong language to ensure that there are the resources to implement AND maintain policies and programs moving forward
- Ensure climate-resilience and adaptation is incorporated in all aspects of the general plan
- Ensuring maintenance is budgeted for in all programs and facilities



Agencies addressing vulnerability and hazard risk

- EBMUD has emergency strategy and has been working extensively to react at a moment's notice in the event of major emergency. They have plans in place to make water available to the public in the event of a major emergency.
 - Need for public communications and messaging to the public informing what to do when dealing with sanitary waste if sewer lines are damaged. Messaging is a major component of disaster preparedness- making sure homeowners understand how to react to disasters
 - Trying to make sure infrastructure is strong enough to withstand a major disaster event
- Participant questioned, “What about slower-moving disasters - e.g. continued drought and its impact on water pricing and water availability?”
- Participant helps to push forward emergency operations in the city of Oakland. Encourages feedback about the plan to make sure the plan reflects hazards that the community is concerned about and is using an equity lens.
 - Local hazard mitigation plan is being used to make sure the city is prepared and resilient to natural disasters
 - Gaps in the plan regarding city facilities that can support emergency response,
 - Many facilities don't have air conditioning or high-capacity HVAC air filtering systems
 - There aren't many facilities located where they are needed, and there is a need to expand emergency response facility capacity
 - Also concerned about preemptive emergency response training
 - Participants in training are primarily higher income people, and are trying to develop a training model that reaches a more diverse audience
- It will be weeks to months before potable water is available to Oakland residents in certain areas in the event of the Hayward 7.0 earthquake
- Tsunami's aren't an extremely high threat, but it still exists and participant mentioned the need for string alert systems
- Issues that public health institute is most concerned about (and there are many) are wildfire smoke, and ensuring people can have access to clean air during wildfire smoke emergencies. Additionally extreme heat events, which disproportionately affects homeless people, people who live in poor housing, and home-bound individuals who live in buildings that become very hot. This links to energy efficiency in building.
 - Participant would also like to hear about what long term plans for drought planning, water pricing for low-income individuals



Risk Reduction

- Participant from Pacific ADA center mentioned that every issue discussed disproportionately impacts people with disability, and need to be thinking about how every issue impacts people with disabilities as a framework.
 - Encourages planning team to connect with people with disabilities or organizations
 - Any kind of messaging needs to be accessible (ASL interpreter needs to be at press conference, written information needs to be provided in diverse, accessible ways)
 - Spaces/shelters need to be accessible, people who are accessing shelters are people who can't afford to go elsewhere
 - As populations age, people will develop more disabilities, think about all of these issues in terms of an aging population
- City of Oakland has worked with the Pacific ADA center to develop a guide to facilities
- Save the Bay mentioned that chapter 6 of the safety element described lack of storm drain systems in East Oakland—env. Justice issue
 - Urban green infrastructure could help divert storm water from streets
 - Two things that could be added to sea-level info could ground water intrusion and storm surges, and these are compounded by climate change and could create more unpredictable conditions,
- Participant added to concerns about groundwater intrusion and contaminants, which disproportionately affect East Oakland. Would like to see monitoring and more research regarding how contaminants will respond to sea-level rise.
- Wants to see ecologically sensitive response to vegetation management with respect to wildfire risk. This shouldn't just be one organization but should be coordinated between multiple orgs and operate at the community scale.
- High inequity in Oakland tree canopy and urban greenspace; runoff retention and ground water recharge are some of the benefits of green infrastructure; in COVID we saw the need for community greenspaces, and will only continue
- Call attention to things that are working:
 - Lake Merritt green streets project, which is a great example of how green infrastructure in public space and contribute to community health and wellbeing.
 - East Oakland neighborhood initiative: using urban greening and consulting the community at every step
- TCC grant opportunity, Department of Transportation is one of the partners on the East Oakland TCC grant and doing a lot of work with community resiliency. One example is the planting of trees in East Oakland, another program in Chinatown is working toward improved mobility and green infrastructure.



- Paving plans for the city of Oakland are some of the first equity driven paving plans in the country; city is focused on paving in neighborhoods with highest need.
- Partnership with the planning department allows for ADUs, but need to make sure that as more density is allowed in the hills that there are improvements in roadways infrastructure
- Partnership with public works for ECAP, showing that programs are doing everything possible to reduce GHG emissions, West Oakland Community Action plan, Caltrans is trying to imagine alternatives to the 980, a highway that is harming Oakland.
 - Team focused on rehabbing and maintaining bridges, need to make sure bridges will hold in the event of an emergency
 - Physical barriers that exists throughout the city—making sure new develop has emergency vehicle access
 - During the pandemic initiated a flex streets program, and going back to ask communities what programs can best serve them,
- City will be looking at some of the items discussed to look at impacts on water, first goal is to take a large inventory of the city’s drainage system, the ultimate goal is to provide a roadmap for the future

One Policy You’d Like to See in the Safety Element

- Groundwater monitoring, did not see in the previous mitigation plan
- Equitable nature-based adaption and urban greening that protects against sea level rise, urban flooding, and urban heart
- Require new buildings to accommodate 2’ increase in sea level rise
- Making sure there is strong language to ensure that there are the resources to implement AND maintain policies and programs moving forward
- Ensure climate-resilience and adaptation is incorporated in all aspects of the general plan
- Make maintenance is budgeted for in all of the programs in facilities