

Part 2 The Planning Process

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## Chapter 3 The Planning Process

### 3.1 The Purpose of the Plan

The Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000 (Public Law 106-390), commonly known as the 2000 Stafford Act Amendments, was approved by Congress on October 10, 2000. To implement the DMA 2000 planning requirements, FEMA prepared an Interim Final Rule, published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2002, which established planning and funding criteria for states and local communities. This act required state and local governments to develop hazard mitigation plans as a condition for federal grant assistance. For the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program, local jurisdictions must have an approved mitigation plan to receive a project grant. Prior to 2000, federal legislation provided funding for disaster relief, recovery, and some hazard mitigation planning. The DMA improves upon the planning process by emphasizing the importance of community planning for disasters before they occur. Using this initiative as a foundation for proactive planning, the County of Santa Cruz developed this hazard mitigation plan in an effort to reduce future loss of life and property resulting from disasters. Through careful planning and collaboration among public agencies, stakeholders, and citizens, it is possible to avoid or minimize losses that can occur from disasters. Hazard mitigation is any action taken to permanently eliminate or reduce long-term risks to human life and property from natural hazards. Along with preparedness, response, and recovery, mitigation is an essential element in emergency management. Disasters can have significant impacts on communities. They can destroy or damage life, property, and infrastructure, local economies, and the environment.

This LHMP is intended to assist the County of Santa Cruz in reducing its risk from all hazards by identifying resources, information, and strategies for risk reduction. The plan will also help guide and coordinate mitigation activities throughout the County. Building on a tradition of progressive planning and past mitigation successes, the County of Santa Cruz planning team set out to develop a plan that would meet the objectives summarized below.

- The plan would meet or exceed program requirements specified under the DMA
- The plan would meet the needs of the County of Santa Cruz
- The plan would coordinate existing plans and programs so that high priority initiatives and projects to mitigate possible disaster impacts would be funded and implemented. The plan would also create a linkage between the LHMP and established plans such as the County's General Plan and Emergency Management Plan so that they will work together in achieving successful disaster mitigation.

It should be noted that DMA compliance is not the sole purpose of this LHMP. Santa Cruz County experienced the most significant disaster in our community since the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake in 2020 with the CZU lightning Complex Fire. This event has fostered an enhanced effort of proactive planning and program implementation. This practice is further enhanced by the update of our LHMP. Multiple objectives drive this planning effort, one of which is DMA compliance. Elements and strategies included in this plan were selected not only because they meet a program requirement but also because they meet the needs of the community.

### 3.2 Documentation of the Planning Process

This section describes the process to develop the original LHMP and this update to the plan. This includes the federal requirement followed by the County's actions applied to this process.

**Public Involvement - Requirement §201.6(b):** In order to develop a more comprehensive approach to reducing the effects of natural disasters, the planning process shall include:

- (1) An opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval;
- (2) An opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, and agencies that have the authority to regulate development, as well as businesses, academia, and other private and non-profit interests to be involved in the planning process; and
- (3) Review and incorporation, if appropriate, of existing plans, studies, reports, and technical information.

**Documentation of the Planning Process - Requirement §201.6(c)(1):** The plan shall document the planning process used to develop the plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how the public was involved.

The County of Santa Cruz first completed this LHMP in 2010 and updated it in 2016. This 2021 update is the second update of the original plan. The County Office of Emergency Services took on the initial responsibility for development of the plan. The initial phase of the planning process established a project team made up of representatives from various County government departments responsible for different aspects of the hazard mitigation plan including Planning and Building, Public Works, Fire, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). From this group, project team leaders were identified. The project team was formed as a task group to develop the plan. Meeting dates were set based on progress and focus. The project team invited interested parties such as UCSC, Cabrillo College, the cities of Capitola, Watsonville, Scotts Valley and Santa Cruz, the local American Red Cross as well as scientific and technical specialists at the local, state, and national level to review the draft at various stages.

The original plan was developed between May 2008 and December 2009. The project team leaders met once per week and the project team met approximately once per month from September 2009, through December 2009, and then as needed in 2010 until the draft plan was circulated for a 30-day public review on January 15, 2010. The project team leaders identified characteristics and potential consequences of natural hazards that are a potential threat to Santa Cruz County. With the understanding of the risks posed by the identified hazards, the team determined priorities and assessed various methods to avoid or minimize any undesired effects. Responsible departments were consulted at several points in the development of the goals, objectives, and actions. As a result, the mitigation strategy, including goals, objectives, and actions, was determined, followed by an implementation and monitoring plan. This monitoring plan included tracking of hazard mitigation projects, changes in day-to-day County operations, and continued hazard mitigation development.

Public input during the development of the original mitigation plan assisted in shaping plan goals and mitigations and integrating the LHMP with the Public Safety Element of the General Plan Update. The 2010 LHMP was a topic of discussion at three public meetings of the Emergency Management Council.

When the draft was completed, a 30-day public comment period was initiated. A public notice was placed in the local paper to invite the public to review and comment on the draft plan. Copies of the plan were made available at the Aptos, Live Oak and Felton Branches of the Santa Cruz Public Library and in the General Services Department at the County Administrative Building. A draft of the plan was posted on the County’s website with an interactive response option that provided an opportunity for interested members of the public to comment on the draft LHMP on the web. Those comments were incorporated into the final document.

The draft LHMP was also sent to members of a technical committee, which consisted of national, state, and local scientists and experts for review prior to creation of the Public Draft. Comments received were incorporated into the final draft LHMP. A summary of the in-house and public meetings is in Table 5.

<b>LHMP Meetings</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>
Project Team Leaders	July 1, 2009	In house
Subject Matter Expert	July 21, 2009	In house - Flood
Subject Matter Expert	July 28, 2009	In house – City of Santa Cruz
Consultant	July 29, 2009	In house – Civil Engineering
Project Team Leaders	August 3, 2009	In house
Consultant	September 2, 2009	In house – Civil Engineering
Emergency Management Council (EMC) presentation and adoption of goals and objectives	September 3, 2009	Public
Consultant	October 8, 2009	In house
Project Team Leaders & GIS	October 13, 2009	In house
Project Team	October 15, 2009	In house
Project Team (CRS Team)	October 29, 2009	In house
EMC section review	November 5, 2009	Public
Project Team Crosswalk Review	December 9, 2009	In house
Project Team	December 16, 2009	In house
EMC Presentation of draft plan	January 7, 2010	Public
Project Team Leaders	January 11, 2010	In house

*Table 5 2010 LHMP meeting schedule*

The LHMP was approved in 2010 and must be updated on a 5-year cycle, and the Planning Department is the agency designated to lead the plan update process. In 2015, the Planning Department Project Leader initiated the update process by assembling a Project Team. Information on the update process

and roles of team members was provided to Project Team members on June 1, 2015. For the 2016 Plan Update, the Project Team worked under the direction of the Project Leader to evaluate and update the plan. The Project Team was responsible for evaluating the hazards, risks, and mitigation measures identified in the previous plan within their respective areas of expertise and providing feedback to the Project Leader for incorporation in the updated Plan. The Project Leader facilitated this process through direct email and telephone communication with staff to ensure full participation by staff members to provide input on every aspect of the plan's content. Using guidance from FEMA, report forms for each Mitigation Action were created and sorted by responsible Department. The forms were provided to staff in each responsible department along with guidance and instructions for the purpose of completing an overall evaluation of the plan as applicable to each staff's and each department's area of expertise. This part of the process occurred during the month of June 2015. Following this phase of the plan update process the Project Leader incorporated the work of the Project Team into the plan update, including reporting our progress on the Mitigation Actions, and revising the plan as appropriate based on an overall evaluation of the plan.

The 2016 update of the LHMP was informed by a complementary planning processes involving the update of the General Plan Public Safety Element and creation of a County Climate Action Strategy (CAS). As further described below and summarized in the table at the end of this section, a number of complimentary planning efforts and public outreach and participation contributed to the process of updating the LHMP in 2016 and 2021.

The project to update the Public Safety Element included a process of public and agency outreach that played an important role in update of the LHMP. The project has facilitated a comprehensive review of policies related to fire hazards, flood hazards, coastal erosion hazards, and hazards related to climate change. The 2016 LHMP update identified the hazard of climate change as a significant hazard and included a series of additional mitigation actions to address the hazard, as further described below.

The 2016 update of the LHMP involved a long process conducted in stages beginning with creation of a CAS. The CAS includes a plan for adaptation to climate change impacts, which, according to the best available science, are very likely to occur. The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy became the major component of the 2016 update to the LHMP, comprising the additional Chapter 13 of the LHMP Update. Therefore, the public outreach effort to develop the Climate Change Adaption Strategy had a specific application to the 2016 LHMP update.

In 2013 the County adopted a CAS to address the two pillars of community response to climate change: reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation to the environmental changes that are expected to occur. Efforts to understand, mitigate and adapt to climate change cross many disciplines and departmental areas of responsibility were made. Recommended strategies guide a multitude of practical endeavors at the County. These strategies seek to mitigate Climate change impacts from land use, resource management, County operations, transportation, building, economic development, emergency management, and the environment. For this reason, the preparation of the CAS included many County Departments and has benefitted from review by a wide variety of staff people, technical experts, stakeholder groups, and community members, as indicated on the acknowledgments page of the CAS, reproduced below.

The CAS was the subject of a community meeting in June 2012 and several focus group meetings in 2012 with members of the public, non-profit and volunteer groups working in the climate action arena, and with representatives of agriculture including the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau and University of

California Cooperative Extension. There was outreach to the business community in the context of renewable energy and energy efficiency financing, which included local financial institutions, solar installers, the Chamber of Commerce, and commercial property owners. A web page was created, which included a brief explanation of the CAS, a link to the document, and an online tool for providing feedback called "Open Town Hall." Substantial improvements and modifications were made to the CAS as a result of public input, including the addition of the agricultural inventory, a forestry section, and a detailed emissions inventory.

On January 23, 2013, a presentation of the CAS was provided to the Commission on the Environment at public hearing. As recommended by the Commission on the Environment, on February 26, 2013 the CAS was adopted by the Board of Supervisors at a public hearing.

In 2011 the Planning Department obtained funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Disaster Recovery Initiative grant program to implement recommendations of the 2010 LHMP related to flooding, coastal bluffs and beaches, erosion, and fire. The project to amend portions of the General Plan and related County Code chapters that address public safety was initiated to promote goals, policies and regulations that would increase the resilience of the community relative to the expected impacts of climate change in Santa Cruz County, provide for adaptation strategies, and implement several Priority Actions in the County's 2010 LHMP. The project to update the Public Safety Element was led by the Planning Department and involved input from representatives of other agencies, local stakeholder groups and the general public.

The process to update the Public Safety Element involved six public hearings of the Planning Commission and three public hearings of the Board of Supervisors. Public input was exclusively focused on the policies addressing the hazard of sea level rise along the coast with updates to the geologic hazard assessment policies for development on coastal bluffs and beaches. The approach by County staff involved updating the County's historic policy and practice regulating development in coastal hazards areas with the intent of the Coastal Commission's Sea Level Rise Guidance (Guidance). The updated policies addressing development on coastal bluffs and beaches are a balance between the goals to protect human life, private property, and the environment, and to minimize public expenses by preventing inappropriate use and development or location of private and public facilities and infrastructure in those areas which, by virtue of natural dynamic processes or proximity to other activities, present a potential threat to the public health, safety, and general welfare. The Board of Supervisors adopted the updated Public Safety Element on September 15, 2020. The updated policies and regulations are in effect outside the Coastal Zone and will become effective inside the Coastal Zone upon certification by the California Coastal Commission. However, significant modifications by the Coastal Commission could require concurrence of the Board of Supervisors after a public hearing.

Public outreach for the 2016 LHMP update sought to build on these complimentary planning efforts by emphasizing outreach to the public and local agency representatives that normally are interested in and participate in hazard mitigation and response activities. This was accomplished through the process of the County Emergency Management Council (EMC), specifically their meeting held on September 3, 2015. The meeting agenda was mailed to all members of the EMC, a list of interested parties in the at-large community, and publicly noticed according to standard public meeting notification procedures. A sign in sheet from the September 3, 2015 meeting indicates attendance at this meeting by a total of 23 people representing members of the EMC and other members of the public associated in some way with disaster response and hazard mitigation. At this meeting, the Project Leader described the LHMP Update project, including the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, inviting them to participate in the

development of the LHMP Update and giving them the opportunity to be involved in the planning process. Access to the LHMP Update document was provided for this purpose by posting the document on the Planning Department website. In addition, a general announcement regarding the LHMP Update project placed on the main page of the Planning Department website for access by any interested member of the public. This posting included notice the plan was available at local public libraries throughout the County. No input or feedback was received as a result of these efforts.

This outreach effort was similar to the efforts in preparation of the original 2010 LHMP. However, considering the outreach efforts associated with the update of the Safety Element and the development of the CAS, the list of contributors for the update, and the broad range of outreach efforts associated with the update and related planning processed, is more extensive and represents a broader effort to include interested member of the public as well as agency personnel. Table 6 is a summary of the outreach effort for the 2016 and 2021 updates of the LHMP.

<b>Planning Process</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting/Work Type</b>
Disaster Recovery Initiative Grant	June 2011	Funding to update Public Safety Element
Climate Action Strategy	June 2012	Community meeting
Climate Action Strategy	2012	Focus group meetings
Climate Action Strategy	January 23, 2013	Commission on the Environment public hearing
Climate Action Strategy	February 26, 2013	Board of Supervisors public hearing
Public Safety Element update	September/October 2014	FPO monthly meetings
Public Safety Element update	November 2014	Meeting with private sector engineers, geologists, and land use planning consultants
Public Safety Element update	December 2014	Environment Review public comment period
Public Safety Element update	February 2015	Planning Commission public hearing
Public Safety Element update	April 2015	Stakeholder meeting
Public Safety Element update	April 2015	Meeting with California Coastal Commission staff
LHMP update	June 1, 2015	Project Leader assembles Project Team
LHMP update	June 2015	Project Team evaluation and update of LHMP
LHMP update	June through September 2015	Project Leader update of LHMP
Public Safety Element update	September 2015	Meeting with California Coastal Commission staff
Disaster Management Council meeting on LHMP update	September 3, 2015	Public meeting of local and regional agencies
Public review period for LHMP update	September 2015	Public notice on website LHMP posted on website and local libraries



<b>Planning Process</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting/Work Type</b>
LHMP update	October 2015 through February 2016	Plan revisions by Project Leader in response to State OES comments
<b>LHMP update</b>	<b>August 3, 2016</b>	<b>FEMA approval</b>
Safety Element update	June 22, 2018 to August 1, 2018	CEQA review public comment period
Public Safety Element update	October 10, 2018	Planning Commission public hearing
Public Safety Element update	October 24, 2018	Planning Commission public hearing
Public Safety Element update	November, 2018	Community meetings
Public Safety Element update	December 12, 2018	Planning Commission public hearing
Public Safety Element update	February 13, 2019	Planning Commission public hearing
Public Safety Element update	March 13, 2019	Planning Commission public hearing
Public Safety Element update	November 13, 2019	Planning Commission public hearing
Public Safety Element update	October 8, 2019	Board of Supervisors public hearing
Public Safety Element update	February/March, 2020	Community meetings
Public Safety Element update	March 10, 2020	Board of Supervisors public hearing
Public Safety Element update	September 15, 2020	Board of Supervisors public hearing
LHMP update	January 7, 2021	Emergency Management Council meeting
LHMP update	Jan. - June, 2021	Project Team reviews, LHMP updates
LHMP update	June/July 2021	Public input period
LHMP update	July, 2021	Emergency Management Council review

*Table 6 Summary of outreach for 2016 and 2021 LHMP update*

In summary, in 2016 the Planning Department led the effort to coordinate an update of the Plan. The purpose of the update was to review the Plan, revise the Plan if necessary, and resubmit the Plan for approval in order to remain eligible for benefits awarded under the DMA. The update was led by Planning Department staff involved in the update of the General Plan Safety Element. Best available information was used to update the hazard risk assessment. The action plan has been reviewed and amended, to account for changes in the risk assessment and new county policies identified under other planning mechanisms, as appropriate (such as the General Plan and Climate Action Strategy). The plan update process involved appropriate agencies, and the public was given an opportunity to comment. The updated plan was presented to the County Board of Supervisors for adoption. Final approval of the adopted updated Plan was provided by FEMA in a letter dated August 3, 2016. The LHMP must be updated and submitted to FEMA by August 3, 2021 for the County to remain eligible for disaster-related assistance under the DMA.

The 2021 update of the plan followed a similar process lead by the Planning Department Project Leader to incorporate staff, agency, and public input. Communications with County staff occurred via email, phone, and virtual meeting in the COVID-19 remote working environment. A draft of the plan update was developed and circulated amongst various County staff in their respective areas of expertise. The Community Profile is updated with the best available information. The plan was updated to reflect changes in development trends, progress in local mitigation efforts, and changes in priorities. Significant changes in development patterns are identified. A notable improvement in the 2021 update compared to the 2016 update, is the risk assessment was updated to reflect new information, updated maps, and current data on the hazards and vulnerability. Additional lessons learned, and modifications to risks and

hazards were identified and included as a result of the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire. Progress in local mitigation efforts is documented in updated mitigation action worksheets in Appendix L. The process for staff, public, and agency input was similar to the previous update. Nearly all communication for the update was by electronic applications including email, web, phone, and virtual meeting platforms in a COVID-19 remote working environment. This process of staff, agency, and public outreach occurred beginning in late 2020 and continued through July 2021.

In July 2021, the updated plan was posted on a dedicated page of the [County Planning Department website](#) with an announcement on the main page about the availability of the plan for public review and comment. The webpage contains a brief overview of the purpose of the plan and the update process, including links to the entire document and separate links to individual chapters. A companion document was prepared and posted that provides a guide to the update highlighting all of the significant updates to the plan. County social media applications (Twitter and Facebook) were used to advertise the availability of the plan for public review and comment. Activity on social media included over 10,000 estimated views and over 300 engagements with the plan. No public comments were received, and positive feedback was received from one member of the Emergency Management Council.

### 3.3 Local Capabilities Assessment and Integration

**Requirement §201.6(c)(3)(ii):** The mitigation strategy shall include a section that identifies and analyzes a comprehensive range of specific mitigation actions and projects being considered to reduce the effects of each hazard, with particular emphasis on new and existing buildings and infrastructure. **Reference §201.4(c)(3)(ii):** Inform the State’s blueprint for reducing the losses identified in their risk assessment by providing a general description and analysis of the effectiveness of local mitigation policies, programs, and capabilities.

This assessment of the mitigation goals, programs and capabilities included a review of the following items:

- Human and technical resources
- Financial resources and funding sources
- Local ordinances, zoning and building codes
- On-going plans or projects

Sources used to inform the LHMP include, but are not limited to, the General Plan Public Safety Element, the Emergency Management Plan, the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, the Climate Action Strategy, the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), County policies, ordinances, zoning and building codes. Consistency between these plans, programs and policies was reviewed by using these approved plans and policies as a foundation for the LHMP and by consulting with the departments responsible for the various plans and programs. In reviewing the effectiveness of local programs, Appendix H lists successful programs that have been implemented by the County. While these programs and the updated Emergency Management Plan have increased the County’s hazard mitigation capabilities, funding availability is the limiting factor in the implementation of additional identified hazard mitigation programs.

The Project Team leaders met several times with County staff and members of the Planning Department to ensure that the LHMP was consistent with the General Plan Public Safety Element. The project leaders met with County staff in the Environmental Health Department to incorporate hazard mitigation efforts identified by the various Water Departments within the county. Project leaders met with Fire Department staff to ensure that the LHMP was consistent with the current and planned programs and fire safety plans. The project leaders also met with the County GIS coordinator to ensure that maps were consistent with those in the General Plan and were accurate as of the draft publication date.

In this plan update, the planning team has verified that capabilities are documented sufficiently and capability changes from the previous plan are described. The Plan identifies actions that are within the capability of the County and its partners to implement and describes how the mitigation action items have been implemented since 2016. In this 2020-2021 update the Plan was enhanced by identifying changes to the community profile, any significant changes in development patterns, and progress in local mitigation efforts. Additionally, relevant updates to local zoning, building, and fire codes, and updated plans, including the Emergency Management Plan, Capital Improvement Program, and General Plan Safety Element, were reviewed to ensure consistency between the plans, programs, and policies as the foundation for the LHMP.

Following the CZU Lightning Complex Fire the County is actively engaged in rebuild and recovery efforts from the fire. Recognizing the importance of improving and expanding its hazard response, mitigation, and recovery capability, the County has established a new Office of Response, Recovery and Resiliency (OR3) in the County Administrative Office (CAO) in November of 2020. Through the creation of this interdepartmental office the County is increasing resiliency and capacity to respond to future disasters, including the impacts of climate change. The structure of the OR3 builds on the framework for fire recovery and rebuilding including, Human Care and Recovery, Rebuild and Recovery, and Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency as depicted in Figure 7.



Figure 7 Office of Response, Recovery and Resiliency structure

The technical and adaptive challenges were described in the Board memo and discussed at the public hearing on November 10, 2020 on the new OR3:

*The County of Santa Cruz faces a multitude of interconnected challenges. The impacts of global climate change are already being felt in the form of drought and severe storm events and there is the expectation of sea level rise. Earthquakes are also an ever-present danger and our aging infrastructure may be inadequate to meet the needs of the future. Combined with housing unaffordability and the need to address social inequity, the County stands at a crossroads as we plan for today and prepare for tomorrow.*

*In order to improve our emergency response, increase the public’s disaster awareness and prepare for a new normal where disasters are more prevalent and more robust due to climate change, we will need to engage our community in adaptive work. In order to envision a different future, we will need to create bold new goals. We will have to ask ourselves hard questions about our policy goals and funding priorities. We will have to get a clearer picture of our community values, and we will need to manage conflicts between those values and our strategic plan goals.*

*For technical work to succeed, a critical path of specific steps and milestones to achieve must be forged. For adaptive work to succeed, new tools need to be developed, leadership across sectors will be required and building community capacity through direct engagement must occur. A plan should be made but may need revisions along the way as new information is gathered and synthesized.*

*The CZU Lightning Complex Fire has provided us with a unique opportunity to improve community connections so that varied challenges can be approached strategically. The creation of the Office of Response, Recovery and Resiliency is the first step in transforming this tragedy into an opportunity to learn and develop a community that thrives.*

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