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To: Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission

From: Bret Sampson, Planning Manager
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Subject: Safety Element Update Public Draft Review Workshop

The joint informational workshop for the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission is being hosted by the Planning Division, Long Range Planning Unit, and the El Dorado County's consultant, WSP USA Environment & Infrastructure Inc. (WSP) representative. The purpose of the workshop is to solicit input and encourage public participation during the process of updating the Public Health, Safety, and Noise Element (Safety Element) of the County General Plan.

INTRODUCTION

The County is in the process of updating the Safety Element, which is one of the seven mandatory elements of County's General Plan. The General Plan must contain a Safety Element that serves as a policy guide to reduce the potential risk of death, injuries, property damage, economic loss, and social dislocation resulting from natural and human-caused hazards, such as drought, earthquakes, extreme heat, fire, flood, and landslides. The County has contracted with WSP to assist with this effort, which is anticipated to be completed by Spring 2024.

The Safety Element Update identifies potential health and safety concerns in the unincorporated areas of the County and lays out goals and policies to protect the community. As a required element of the General Plan, the Safety Element provides a long-term framework on how the County will grow and keep communities and their assets safe through hazard identification, goals and policies, and implementation programs focused on hazard risk reduction and avoidance. The Safety Element does not address or analyze specific safety or hazard related projects.

Recent changes to State law require that counties review their Safety Elements when their Housing Elements or their Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMP) are updated, at least once every eight years, and make updates to include new information related to natural hazards, climate adaptation, resiliency strategies, and evacuation accessibility and to comply with statutory changes outlined in California Government Code Section 65302(g) and 65302.15 as updated by Senate Bills (SB) 1241, 379, 1035, and 99 as well as Assembly Bills (AB) 747 and 1409. The County updated its Housing Element on August 31, 2021, which necessitated the update to its Safety Element.

BACKGROUND

California Government Code Section 65302(g) requires that Safety Elements contain hazard information, mapping, and goals and policies to protect communities from seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, and ground failure; tsunamis, seiche, and dam failure; slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence; liquefaction; other seismic hazards; flooding; wildland and urban fires; and climate change. Safety Elements must also include flexible strategies to adapt to climate change and consider evacuation route planning, peak load water supply, and military installations.

SB 379 requires the inclusion of a Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) and integration of adaptation strategies in the Safety Element. A CVA identifies the risks that climate change poses to the County and the geographic areas at risk from climate change impacts. The CVA is integrated into the Safety Element Update and identifies how the County is vulnerable to wildfire, flooding, landslides, increased and earlier water runoff, reduced snowpack levels, and other relevant climate-related hazards. A CVA must be completed if the current LHMP does not meet the requirements of Government Code Section 65302(g)(4). The County's current 2019 LHMP does not meet the statutory requirements and, therefore, the County completed a CVA.

The Safety Element was adopted in July 2004 and amended four times, most recently in August 2019, to comply with then current State law.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Opportunities for residents and stakeholders to provide input on safety issues and recommend strategies is critical to the development of the Safety Element Update. With the help of the County's consultant, WSP, staff developed a robust outreach strategy, which outlines the process through which the County and its citizens, public officials, and stakeholders may participate in the development of the CVA and Safety Element.

There are several different key groups involved in the Safety Element Update. The County formed a Safety Element Advisory Committee (SEAC), which was established to inform and review the CVA and Safety Element Update; develop the updated goals, policies, and implementation programs for the Safety Element; and support public outreach and engagement for the development of the Safety Element Update. The SEAC is comprised of staff from the County and relevant agencies, such as the

County's Office of Wildfire Prevention and Resilience (OWPR), the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, El Dorado County Water Agency, El Dorado County Transportation Commission, multiple local fire protection districts, and others. In addition, the County has engaged with key stakeholders comprised of federal, state, and local agencies, and community-based organizations that can affect or be affected by a course of action associated with this Safety Element Update effort. The County has also been engaging with members of the public to ensure citizens understand risk and vulnerability as well as work with us to support policies, actions, and tools to address and reduce harm and future losses.

The County has used various coordination and outreach tools during the development of the Safety Element Update. These tools include developing a webpage; conducting a bi-lingual public survey; circulating announcements, flyers, and social media posts about the Safety Element update process; hosting workshops; holding various one-on-one coordination meetings with stakeholders; and advertising/soliciting feedback on draft documents.

Several virtual workshops were conducted to facilitate this process and ensure the broadest range of input. Thus far, the County has hosted two virtual stakeholder workshops (January 5, 2023 and August 17, 2023) and three virtual public workshops (March 9, 2023; May 9, 2023; and September 13, 2023) for the CVA and/or Safety Element Update. The County plans to host one additional public workshop once the Public Review Draft Safety Element is circulated for public comment.

Input received at the workshops has been considered and will be incorporated in the Safety Element Update, if appropriate. Comments and questions have been addressed in the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Safety Element website.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Safety Element is a comprehensive report by the County describing potential health and safety concerns of the unincorporated area and how the County's goals and policies protect the community. According to the State of California General Plan Guidelines, the goal of the Safety Element is "to reduce the potential short and long-term risk of death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from fires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, climate change, and other hazards." Safety Elements contain hazard profiles and mapping that identify fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs), floodplains, and fault zones that help the County decide where to direct development and how to protect the community in the event there is a hazard-related emergency, such as a wildfire or flood.

State law requires that jurisdictions regularly update the Safety Element upon revision of the Housing Element, which El Dorado County updated on August 31, 2021. Recent changes to State law require that cities and counties review their Safety Elements when their Housing Elements or their Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs) are updated, at least once every eight years, and make updates to include new information and to

comply with statutory changes outlined in California Government Code section 65302(g) as updated by Senate Bills (SB) 1241, 379, and 1035. The update will address fire risk in state responsibility areas (SRAs) and land classified as very high FHSZs in SRAs as well as other wildfire hazard areas, identify existing and planned uses in very high FHSZs, avoidance of wildfire hazards with respect to new land uses, identify the locations of essential public facilities outside high fire risk areas, ensure adequate infrastructure for new development, and list local and state agencies with responsibilities for fire protection (defined in section 51177; SB 1241). The County will also ensure the Safety Element addresses climate change hazards, includes a CVA, and incorporates climate adaptation and resiliency strategies (SB 379) that complement the LHMP (Assembly Bill [AB] 2140). This recent legislation is described below.

Bill Number	Specific Safety Element Requirement
SB 379	Requires the inclusion of a CVA and integration of adaptation strategies in the Safety Element and encourages a climate change discussion in the LHMP. A CVA must be completed if the current LHMP does not meet the requirements of Government Code §65302(g)(4) (2015).
SB 1035	Addresses climate adaptation strategies in Safety Element and requires an update of climate data at least every 8 years (2018).
AB 747	Requires a Safety Element to identify evacuation routes and evaluate their capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios. Requirements are in Government Code §65302.15 related to land use (2019).
AB 1409	Requires the Safety Element be reviewed and updated to identify evacuation locations (2021).
SB 99	Requires a Safety Element to identify residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes (2019).
SB 1241	Requires a Safety Element to address wildfire risks in SRAs and very high FHSZs pursuant to Government Code §65302(g)(3), develop policies to mitigate wildfire risk, and include review by the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (2012).
SB 1000	Requires inclusion of environmental justice and equity goals and policies in the Safety Element – "Climate Equity". It includes the identification of Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) and policies to reduce unique health risks, promote public engagement, and prioritize improvements that address the needs of DACs pursuant to Government Code §65040.12(e) (2016).
AB 2140	Links LHMPs and Safety Elements by encouraging the incorporation by reference of LHMPs into Safety Elements and by tying State funding eligibility to the adoption of LHMPs into the Safety Element (2006).

The current Safety Element does not address all these recent statutory requirements. Therefore, the County must modernize the Safety Element and bring it into compliance with state law.

PROPOSED REVISIONS

This revision is an update to the Safety Element, not a comprehensive rewrite. The major changes are centered on 1) addressing wildfire risks in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones and developing policies to mitigate that risk, 2) addressing climate change hazards and incorporating the CVA to integrate climate adaptation and resiliency strategies, 3) referencing the soon-to-be updated LHMP that will identify an evacuation route plan and evaluate the capacity, safety, and viability of the routes in the plan under a range of scenarios, and 4) identifying residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes. Furthermore, the goals, policies, and implementation measures have been updated to reflect changes in state law as described above. These goals, policies, and implementation measure revisions are summarized in more detail below.

Wildfire

The proposed Safety Element wildfire policy updates largely reflect standards and regulations that the County must already comply, or standards and regulations the County complies with as required under the State Fire Safe Regulations. Updates to the wildfire section in the Safety Element include:

- New maps and updates to existing maps;
- Updated wildfire information such as ignition sources and causes, major wildfires, and hazard reduction measures;
- Hyperlinks to online resources and related plans, such as the LHMP, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and Emergency Operations Plan;
- Updated wildfire related plans and services;
- Information on public outreach programs for defensible space and emergency preparedness;
- Measures, tools and programs to reduce wildfire risk;
- Identification of single egress neighborhoods (pursuant to SB 99); and
- Applicable local, state, and federal codes and regulations.

The Safety Element also contains updated objectives, policies, and actions, including one revised objective and one new objective as well as three revised policies and 16 new policies. Each of these policies was drafted to meet requirements in California Government Code Section 65302(g).

Evacuation Planning

Evacuation planning is required to be addressed in the Safety Element, pursuant to SB 99 (2019), AB 747 (2019), and AB 1409 (2021). To meet the requirements in these bills, one objective was drafted to address SB 99, requiring the identification of residential neighborhoods without at least two means of egress, and one objective to address AB 747 and AB 1409, requiring the identification of evacuation routes and their capacity,

safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios, as well as evacuation locations in the County. Three policies were added to meet the requirements laid out in SB 99, three policies were added to meet the requirements of AB 747 and AB 1409, and an additional policy addressed all three bills. Additionally, a policy was added to support the County's efforts to extend safety and evacuation information to vulnerable populations.

Climate

SB 379 (2016) requires the Safety Element to address climate adaptation and resiliency strategies, including a set of goals, policies, and objectives for the County based on the vulnerability assessment, as well as implementation measures, including the conservation and implementation of natural infrastructure that may be used in adaptation projects. To address requirements in this section, a CVA was drafted, and will be added as an appendix to the Safety Element. The CVA includes:

- Information from the Internet based Cal-Adapt tool;
- Information from the most recent version of the California Adaptation Planning guide;
- Identification of local populations most sensitive to climate change exposures;
- Information regarding the ability of local agencies to deal with the impacts of climate change;
- Identification of historical data on natural events and hazards, including sites which have been repeatedly damaged; and
- Maps showing existing and planned development in at-risk areas.

The Safety Element also includes a set of adaptation and resiliency goals, policies, and objectives based on the findings in the CVA, as well as a set of feasible implementation measures designed to carry out these goals, policies, and objectives. Hazards addressed by the CVA and the Safety Element include drought and water supply issues, agricultural and forestry disease, extreme heat, high wind, severe weather, human health hazards, and general climate change adaptation and resiliency. The Climate and Adaptation section of the Safety Element contains seven new climate adaptation policies, in addition to 10 new drought and water supply policies, four new agriculture and forestry disease policies, five new extreme heat policies, four new wind policies, and three new severe weather policies. This set of policies ensures the County includes an adaptation framework in the Safety Element in compliance with SB 379.

The Safety Element also consisted of revisions to other hazard sections, primarily to address current hazard and human-health risks. Eight additional policies were added to the existing geologic and seismic hazards section, two new human-health policies, and one additional policy was added to the existing flood section.

In all, the Safety Element includes 36 implementation measures – 25 measures are from the prior Safety Element and are in progress or ongoing, and 11 are new measures that have been added (see listed below).

New Implementation Measures:

- HS-Y: Develop development standards, coordinated emergency notification, and evacuation plans and procedures for development in the WUI, SRA, or very high FHSZ
- HS-Z: Coordinate climate resiliency efforts
- HS-AA: Designate facilities to be cooling centers or resilience hubs
- HS-BB: Promote water conservation
- HS-CC: Support EDCWA's water resource programs and drought plans
- HS-DD: Ensure free or discounted vaccination
- HS-EE: Update emergency plans and procedures every 5 years
- HS-FF: Develop and implement Drought Task Force and Drought Resilience Plan
- HS-GG: Implement Stormwater Management Plan
- HS-HH: Analyze environmental impacts when a project is in hazardous location
- HS-II: Support biomass utilization

No action is required for this workshop. Staff plans to return to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors in Spring 2024 with a final draft Safety Element Update reflecting comments from today's workshop along with direction from the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and California Geological Survey.