

MEMORANDUM

This memorandum summarizes the service provider discussions held as part of the initial phase of outreach for the Peninsula Resilience Planning (PREP) project. It includes a description of the discussions and a summary of the feedback received from participants. These discussions are meant to inform development of the vulnerability assessment and Safety Element goals, policies, and actions.

Meeting Planning and Participation

The PREP project consultant team put together an initial list of service providers (initially called “stakeholders”, but the team changed the name to “service providers” to better distinguish these organizations from community members) operating in the PREP jurisdictions. These service providers are government agencies, non-profit organizations, and for-profit companies that provide important services to local community members. These services include providing vital utilities, transportation, healthcare, financial assistance, and community organization and advocacy. Many of these service providers focus their efforts on community members who may be disproportionately affected by climate change, including older adults, low-income households, and persons with access and functional needs.

PREP jurisdiction staff reviewed this list of service providers and made edits to add or remove organizations and to identify specific points of contact. The consultant team reached out to each organization and individual identified in the list to inform them about the PREP project and to invite them to participate in a 30 to 60-minute virtual discussion about their organization’s work and how it relates to public safety and climate resilience. If the team did not have a specific point of contact for an organization, the team used a general email address or web form to try to reach someone who could participate in these discussions.

The consultant team and jurisdiction staff identified 74 individuals representing 54 different organizations. Of these individuals, the team was able to get contact information and send invitations to 64 people, including general inquiries. Ultimately, 24 individuals confirmed their interest and were able to participate in the discussions.

Meeting Schedule and Approach

The consultant team grouped the 24 participating individuals into eight categories, depending on the type of organization they represented:

- Chambers of Commerce and business groups
 - Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce
- Community service organizations
 - Center for Independence for Individuals with Disabilities
 - Housing Leadership Council
 - Thrive Alliance
- Energy providers and related services
 - San Mateo County Energy Watch & RICAPS
- Environmental groups
 - Burlingame Neighborhood Network

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- Citizen’s Environmental Council
- Save the Bay
- Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter
- Faith-based organizations
 - California Interfaith Power and Light
- Public health organizations
 - SMC Health: Public Health, Policy & Planning
 - Bay Area Community Health Advisory Council (BACHAC)
- Transit providers
 - Caltrain
 - SMTCA
 - Samtrans
 - Water and wastewater providersMid-Peninsula Water District

The team offered participants in each group three timeslots for a discussion and chose the one that the greatest number of people were able to participate in. The team held these discussions over Zoom between June 3, 2024, and June 18, 2024. Each discussion had one or two senior members of the consultant team acting as a facilitator, in addition to another member of the consultant team to take notes. Staff from the PREP jurisdictions also had the option to sit in on any discussions of their choice.

All discussions followed the same general format. Facilitators introduced the PREP project and how the service provider discussions would support PREP’s goals. Service provider representatives had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. The facilitators then asked a series of questions to better understand each organization’s role in the community and how it relates to PREP’s goals, the organization’s experiences with public safety issues, and how the participating communities can support and work with these organizations to improve local adaptation and resilience. Service provider representatives received the questions in advance of the meeting to better prepare responses. At the end, representatives had the option to ask further questions. Facilitators then informed the service provider representatives of next steps and gave them the opportunity to be added to the project email update list.

Facilitators asked the same questions in all meetings, varying the wording and order of the questions somewhat depending on how the discussion evolved:

1. What programs or initiatives does your organization have or provide to address hazards, public safety, and/or climate adaptation?
2. How has your organization prepared for, responded to, or recovered from natural disasters or hazard events like wildfires, earthquakes, debris flows, extreme heat, or similar events? What strategies have been most effective?
3. What type of populations, infrastructure, and community assets do you think are most vulnerable to hazards in San Mateo County?
4. What hazards are of most concern to your organization and the people you work with? What do you feel most and least prepared to address?
5. How does your organization work, partner, or engage with County and City staff?

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6. What opportunities do you see available in the county or cities to increase the community's resilience to hazards? Are there barriers that the County or cities can help remove?
7. If you've been able to review any of the project materials available on the project website, do you have any recommendations or comments that we can consider as we move through the project?

Summary of Feedback

The feedback from the discussions varied widely depending on the service providers and their role in the community. Despite the diversity of organizations involved, there were some common topics and themes that representatives raised. This section summarizes the key points raised during the discussions.

HAZARDS AND VULNERABILITIES

- Representatives from organizations that rely on large-scale infrastructure, such as pump stations, underground substations, roads, overhead powerlines, and rail tracks, to provide services spoke about the challenges they have had with facilities being damaged by past hazards and the difficulties in preparing these facilities for future disruptions. Service providers are considering these vulnerabilities in planning for future service routes or siting operations infrastructure away from hazard zones. Moving critical infrastructure can be more expensive or time intensive, but repairing damaged infrastructure in hazard zones may only be a short-term solution. In one instance a service provider installed flood gates to prevent damage to facilities.
- While there was no single hazard that representatives felt posed the greatest threat to their operations, and hazards of concern varied widely by representatives, many representatives mentioned extreme heat as one that their felt their community was not widely prepared to address. Several representatives mentioned the significant health risks posed by extreme heat and the threat posed to people who are already facing disproportionate impacts, such as the lack of air conditioning and shade trees in many lower-income neighborhoods.
- Many representatives had specific concerns about hazards that were relevant to their organization's work, such as:
 - Sea level rise creating a human health risk by threatening biotech facilities near the shoreline.
 - Downed power lines interrupting electrified transit services.
 - Earthquakes threatening low-income housing that has not been seismically retrofitted and damaging pipes.
 - Rail tracks flooding during storms or buckling in extreme heat.
 - Flooding and sea level rise inundating operational facilities such as bus bases, pump stations, or substations.
 - Landslides and tree debris impacting bus routes, especially on steeper hills.
- Many representatives were concerned about the possibility of a major hazard event preventing their staff or volunteers from traveling, further reducing their organizations' ability to provide key services. These representatives also spoke about supply chain challenges complicating preparation and recovery activities.

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- Several representatives mentioned that, while the frequency of power outages has declined in the county in recent years, they are still too frequent, particularly for people in remote areas and for those who rely on medical devices. Many representatives were aware of actions that could help community members be more resilient to power outages, such as backup generators or solar and battery storage systems, but spoke about costs and a lack of infrastructure capacity as major barriers.

SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS

- Almost all representatives spoke about the importance of educating and preparing community members well in advance of a hazard event. Many representatives discussed social resilience and the role that community members can play in educating and helping others, and about the role of trusted community members and organizations to act as champions to build community support. Several representatives mentioned that community members are often unaware of the programs and services available to assist them, and that there isn't a single place where people can go for information. On a related note, many representatives discussed training that their organization provides to community members and encouraged the PREP project to support and promote these trainings.
- Several representatives spoke about the importance of interjurisdictional cooperation on adaptation and resilience issues, and that a unified approach is more effective than each jurisdiction acting individually. This comment came up when speaking about physical solutions (e.g., infrastructure improvements) as well as in educational programs, trainings, and other forms of community outreach. Some representatives mentioned cost-sharing challenges as a barrier to this kind of cooperation.
- Several representatives mentioned how important it was to speak regularly and openly with community members, and not only conduct engagement as a discrete phase of a project. Representatives mentioned that this is particularly important for communities that have been marginalized or are remote from decision-making (both geographically and socio-economically).
- Several representatives spoke about how the County and individual jurisdictions can support their efforts, including coordinating meetings between agencies, providing financial and staff support, and supporting community outreach efforts.
- Multiple representatives spoke about the importance of nature-based solutions or green infrastructure in helping to address climate change hazards, especially for flooding, sea level rise, and extreme heat, including expanding the urban tree canopy and conducting beach nourishment.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

- Almost all representatives mentioned funding as a barrier to accomplishing their organization's resilience goals, with staffing levels and time availability being other common challenges.
- Many representatives mentioned that their organizations know what they can do to improve climate adaptation and resilience but lack the resources to implement these steps. Some representatives spoke about the lack of data on some topics hampering decision-making, particularly related to emergent groundwater and hazardous materials.

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- Some representatives spoke about complicated permitting procedures that can get in the way of their organizations or community members in preparing for hazards. However, other representatives felt that permitting procedures should be made more restrictive, particularly for new development in hazard-prone areas.

Next Steps

The project team will use the feedback gathered from representatives of the service provider organizations to inform the vulnerability assessment (including revisions to the lists of hazards, populations, and assets) and the development of the goals, policies, and actions of the Safety Elements.