

GENERAL PLAN 2020 SAFETY ELEMENT UPDATE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ELEMENT

Permit Sonoma is updating the County's General Plan Safety Element and developing a new Environmental Justice Element. The General Plan is a comprehensive, long-term community vision for guiding land use, physical development, and public action.

What will the Safety Element do?

The Safety Element establishes goals and policies to reduce the potential short- and long-term risks to people, property, and systems resulting from fires, floods, earthquakes, landslides, climate change, and other hazards. The Safety Element addresses emergency response and preparedness, hazard mitigation and risk reduction, and climate change adaptation and resilience.

The Safety Element update will:

- Identify known hazards and risks in the County, and assess vulnerability;
- Evaluate the County's vulnerability to climate change and propose strategies for climate resilience, with a special focus on adaptation for Sensitive Populations and Environmental Justice communities;
- Evaluate the capacity, safety, and viability of potential evacuation routes and locations under a range of emergency scenarios;
- Identify residential developments that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes;
- And create goals and policies for equitable community safety.

What are Sensitive Populations?

Sensitive Populations are communities that experience heightened risk and increased sensitivity to climate

change and natural hazards because they have less capacity and fewer resources to cope with, adapt to, and recover from climate impacts.

Sensitive Populations include but are not limited to: people of color, renters, households with no internet, undocumented individuals, unemployed individuals, and outdoor workers, and individuals with Access and Function Needs (AFN), such as people with disabilities, seniors, children, people with limited English proficiency, and transportation disadvantaged.

The Safety Element will seek to develop goals and policies that prioritize the safety of Sensitive Populations.

What is Environmental Justice?

Low-income communities and communities of color experience inequitable health outcomes from disproportionate pollution burden and other environmental stressors, such as unsafe housing conditions and poor drinking water quality. The [Portrait of Sonoma County](#) found that Sonoma County's Black residents have a lifespan ten years shorter than any other racial and ethnic group in the county and Latinos earn \$15,000 less than average per year.¹ These environmental burdens and resulting health outcomes stem from institutional actions.

Environmental justice is the right of all people to live and work in clean, healthy environments. State law defines the term Environmental Justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies," (Government Code § 65040.12(e)).

What will the Environmental Justice Element do?

The General Plan is a key document for integrating equity policies and objectives into county government and service. In accordance with California

¹ Lewis, Kristen. A Portrait of Sonoma County: 2021 Update. New York: Measure of America, Social Science Research Council, 2021.

Senate Bill 1000 (2016), Permit Sonoma is developing an Environmental Justice (EJ) Element as a chapter of the General Plan that will set clear goals and policies to advance health in low-income communities and communities of color with high environmental burdens. These communities are known as Environmental Justice Communities.

The EJ Element goals and policies will address the following topics:

- Pollution burden
- Healthy food access
- Safe and sanitary housing
- Healthy public facilities
- Physical activity
- Civic engagement

What are Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities?

EJ Communities are low-income communities that have disproportionate pollution burden (also known as “disadvantaged communities”). The EJ Element will result in a map of Environmental Justice Communities and policies that address the unique or compounded health risks facing these communities and Sonoma County at large.

The County’s EJ Communities Map will build on [CalEnviroScreen](#), a state mapping tool, to help identify the communities most affected by pollution and other health risks. Census tracts receiving the highest 25 percent of overall scores in CalEnviroScreen and all lands under the control of federally recognized Tribes are designated as disadvantaged.

How can I get involved?

Visit us online and sign up for updates.

<https://permitsonoma.org/longrangeplans/proposedlong-rangeplans/environmentaljusticeelement>

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