



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

CITY HALL

CITY OF SONORA 94 N. WASHINGTON STREET, SONORA, CA 95370 P: (209) 532-4541

SERVICE, INNOVATION, INTEGRITY, COLLABORATION, RESPECT, LEADERSHIP

DATE: May 18, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Tyler Summersett, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Consider Adoption of Resolution 05-18-2026-B Accepting the Updated Safety Element and Amending the City of Sonora General Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider Adoption of Resolution 05-18-2026-B Accepting the Updated Safety Element and Amending the City of Sonora General Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Sonora developed a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) in 2024. The City had previously participated in the development of the 2018 Tuolumne County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, however the LHMP was created to identify specific needs, goals, mitigation actions, capital improvement projects, and local and regional partnerships relevant to the City of Sonora, for the purpose of protecting the community from natural and human-caused hazards.

Further details regarding these natural disasters, including relevant mitigation actions to reduce vulnerability, are included in the City of Sonora Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). The City of Sonora LHMP was developed in accordance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) and followed FEMA's 2023 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan guidance. The LHMP incorporates a process where hazards are identified and profiled, the people and facilities at risk are analyzed, and mitigation actions are developed to reduce or eliminate hazard risk. The implementation of these mitigation actions, which include both short-term and long-term strategies, involve planning, policy changes, programs, projects, and other activities. The LHMP is on the City's webpage and may be viewed at: <https://sonoraca.com/local-hazard-mitigation-plan/>.

The LHMP and Safety Element address similar issues, but the Safety Element provides a higher-level framework and policies that pertain to safety in the City, while the LHMP focuses on more specific mitigation, often short-term, and actions to enable jurisdictions to better protect lives, property, and natural systems. The Safety Element Update (SEU) addresses hazards of concern relevant to the City and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to adapt to and minimize these hazards. The 2026 Sonora SEU was developed in conjunction with the development of the 2024 City of Sonora Local



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Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). The hazards identified in the SEU and many of the goals, policies, and implementation measures included in the SEU coincide with the hazards, goals, and actions included in the LHMP.

Natural and human-caused hazards determined relevant to the City of Sonora in the SEU include the following: wildfire and urban fire hazards, seismic hazards, geologic hazards, flooding, hazardous materials/wastes, emergency operations, human-caused hazards, climate change, critical infrastructure, and evacuation.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS:

Required by State law, the City's Safety Element is a plan to minimize the hazards to public health and safety in and around the City of Sonora. It identifies the natural and human-caused hazards that affect, or have the potential to affect, existing and future development and operations, and provides guidance for protecting residents and other community members from injury and death. It describes existing conditions and sets policies and standards for improved public safety. The Safety Element also intends to minimize physical harm to the buildings and infrastructure in and around Sonora as a result of hazard events, and to reduce damage to local economic systems and community services (**Attachment 2** – *City of Sonora Safety Element dated 2026*).

The Safety Element reflects the City of Sonora's regard for the health and safety of its residents, and the well-being of other community assets. The Element addresses issues that would require government intervention to effectively achieve public safety. It is the responsibility of the City of Sonora to protect community members from danger and harm. The Safety Element helps to guide new development, as well as community programs and other efforts, with the intent of reducing the potential for harm from natural and human-caused hazards within Sonora and the Planning Area, which includes the land within City limits and the City's sphere of influence.

Some degree of risk is inevitable, as the potential for many disasters cannot be completely eliminated or avoided and efforts to predict when such disasters may occur are limited. Notwithstanding, the goal of the Safety Element is to reduce the risk of injury, death, property loss, or other hardships to acceptable levels. In accordance with California law, the Safety Element serves the following purposes:

- Protect the community from risks associated with a variety of hazards, including seismic activity, landslides, flooding, and wildfire, as required by the California Government Code Section 65302(g)(1).



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- Map and assess the risk associated with flood hazards, develop policies to minimize the flood risk to new development and essential public facilities, and establish effective working relationships among agencies with flood protection responsibilities, as required by California Government Code Section 65302(g)(2).
- Map and assess the risk associated with wildfire hazards, develop policies to reduce the wildfire risk to new land uses and essential facilities, ensure there is adequate road and water infrastructure to respond to wildfire emergencies, and establish cooperative relationships between wildfire protection agencies, as required by California Government Code Section 65302(g)(3).
- Assess the risks associated with climate change on local assets, populations, and resources. Note existing and planned development in at-risk areas and identify agencies responsible for providing public health and safety and environmental protection. Develop goals, policies, and objectives to reduce the risks associated with climate change impacts, including locating new public facilities outside of at-risk areas, providing adequate infrastructure in at-risk areas, and supporting natural infrastructure for climate adaptation, as required by California Government Code Section 65302(g)(4).

The City of Sonora Safety Element is one of several plans that address community public safety and related topics, including other Sonora General Plan Elements, the Sonora Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), the Tuolumne County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), and local regulations. The 2026 Sonora Safety Element Update was developed in conjunction with the development of the 2024 City of Sonora Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Safety Element should be consistent with other Elements and plans in order to minimize conflicts between documents and ensure that the City has a unified strategy to address public safety issues. The Safety Element incorporates information and policies from these other documents where appropriate to help support this consistency. The following is a summary of each section in the Safety Element:

Section 1 – This section provides an introduction to the City’s Safety Element and State law requirements. The Safety Element reflects the City of Sonora’s regard for the health and safety of its residents, and the well-being of other community assets. The Element addresses issues that would require government intervention to effectively achieve public safety. It is the responsibility of the City of Sonora to protect community members from danger and harm. The Safety Element helps to guide new development, as well as community programs and other efforts, with the intent of reducing the potential for harm from natural and human-caused hazards within Sonora and the

Planning Area, which includes the land within City limits and its Sphere of Influence.



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Section 2 – This section discusses relationships between the Safety Element and other documents such as the other General Plan Elements, City of Sonora Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, Tuolumne County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, Tuolumne County Emergency Operations Plan and City of Sonora Emergency Operations Plan.

Section 3 – This section provides an overview of the City’s geographic context and community profile.

Section 4 – This section provides an analysis of the City’s Existing Conditions, including Fire, Wildfires, Wildland-Urban Interface Fires, Structural Fires, Past Fire Occurrences, Potential Changes to Fire Risk in Future Years, Climate Change and Wildfire, Fire Protection, Fire Hazards Goals, Policies, and Program Implementation.

Seismic and Geologic Hazards, Past Occurrences, Potential Changes to Geologic and Seismic Risk in Future Years, Climate Change and Geologic and Seismic Hazards, Seismic and Geologic Hazards Goals, Policies, and Programs/Implementation.

Flooding Hazards, Past Flood Occurrences, Potential Changes to Flood Risk in Future Years, Climate Change and Flooding, Flood Hazards Goals, Policies, and Programs/Implementation.

Hazardous Materials/Wastes, Hazardous Materials Goals, Policies and Programs/Implementation.

Emergency Operations, Pandemic, Emergency Operations Goals, Policies, and Programs/Implementation.

Human-Caused Hazards, Aircraft Crashes, Civil Disturbance, Cyberattacks, Human-Caused Hazards Goals, Policies, and Program/Implementation.

Climate Change, Vulnerable Populations and Assets, Climate Change Hazards Goals, Policies, and Programs/Implementation.

Critical Facilities and Infrastructure, Critical Facilities and Infrastructure Goals, Policies, and Programs/Implementation.

Evacuation, Evacuation Hazards Goals, Policies, and Programs/Implementation and Constraints



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CEQA DETERMINATION:

An Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) was prepared for the Safety Element Update Project. Based upon the Initial Study, the City determined that preparation of an EIR to address the potential environmental impacts associated with the project consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15161 and 15168 was not required. The Initial Study evaluated several potential environmental effects of the proposed project. These resource categories were determined to be less than significant or have no impact based upon project specific impacts, including Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology/Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology/Water Quality, Noise, Recreation, Utilities/Service Systems, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Land Use/Planning, Population/Housing, Wildfire, Energy, Mineral Resources, Public Services, Tribal Cultural Resources and Transportation (**Attachment 3 – Initial Study/Negative Declaration**).

PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS:

Public Notice of Intent to Adopt a Negative Declaration and Notice of Public Hearing for the project was prepared and posted pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines and State law. The Negative Declaration was circulated through the Office of Planning & Research for a 30-day public review period from July 14, 2025, through close of business on August 12, 2025.

The Tuolumne Utilities District (TUD) responded to the Community Development Departments request for review by stakeholder agencies, with some suggested edits and updates. These modifications were incorporated into the document. Comment letters on the project are in **Attachment 4 – Comments on Initial Study/Negative Declaration**.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Adoption of the updated Safety Element is not anticipated to have a direct fiscal impact on the City's General Fund. Implementation of future goals, policies, and mitigation measures identified in the Safety Element will be incorporated into future budget discussions and may be supported through grant funding opportunities, capital improvement planning, and other available funding sources.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution No. 05-18-2026-B
2. Final City of Sonora Safety Element dated March 2026
3. Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND)—For Safety Element/Housing Element
4. Comments on IS/ND and Draft Safety Element



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CORE COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

Economic Development/Growth and General Plan