TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: PLANNING & COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 12, 2005 CMR: 360:05

SUBJECT: LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN (LHMP)

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND

On October 30, 2000, the President signed into law the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000). This Act requires all state, local and tribal governments to develop and submit a local hazard mitigation plan as a condition of receiving Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) project grants. In spring 2005, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) received a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to prepare a regional plan; all jurisdictions could choose to participate in this regional effort. Palo Alto, along with the majority of Bay Area cities, counties, and special districts, is participating with ABAG in the development of the LHMP.

DISCUSSION

DMA 2000 became Public Law 106-390 on October 30, 2000. Its purpose is “to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to authorize a program for pre-disaster mitigation, to streamline the administration of disaster relief, to control the federal costs of disaster assistance, and for other purposes.” The four phases of disaster response are mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Mitigation takes place before a natural hazard occurs and is recognized by FEMA as “the cornerstone of emergency management.” Simply put, mitigation has proven to save lives and property and, therefore, lessen the impact of natural hazards.

Regardless of how a jurisdiction creates its LHMP, all must have the same components. According to Section 201.1 of the Interim Final Rule, “the purpose of mitigation planning is for state, local, and Indian tribal governments to identify the natural hazards that impact them, to identify actions and activities to reduce any losses from those hazards, and to establish a coordinated process to implement the plan, taking advantage of a wide range of resources.” The Interim Final Rule identifies the following five items as essential to all mitigation plans:

1. Planning Process - The planning process requires that the project plan include the public, private industries, and neighboring communities to ensure that a comprehensive community approach is taken.
2. Performing a Risk Assessment - Risk assessment includes analyzing the hazards a community faces, including historical events, and examining the risks to the current and future built environment. The risk assessment includes the type of hazard and vulnerability to the hazard. Performing risk assessment is key to mitigation planning.

3. Developing a Mitigation Strategy - The mitigation strategy is a plan for reducing the impact of hazards identified in the risk assessment.

4. Plan Maintenance Schedule - Mitigation Plans must be monitored, evaluated and updated every five years.

5. Adoption by a Governing Body - The authorizing governing body must approve each mitigation plan.

ABAG has received a grant from FEMA to prepare the regional LHMP and to assist local jurisdictions. This regional plan was reviewed and approved by the ABAG Executive Board on March 17, 2005. The ABAG plan is available for review at http://quake.abag.ca.gov/mitigation/plan.html. Each participating jurisdiction must prepare an annex to the ABAG plan addressing local hazards, local risk assessment, and existing and proposed mitigation measures. A Palo Alto annex and a matrix of proposed mitigation measures has been drafted and reviewed by the appropriate city departments including the City Attorney, Fire, Police, Public Works, Utilities, Planning and Community Environment, and Community Services. In addition, the Palo Alto Unified School District and Stanford Medical Center staff provided input to the draft LHMP.

Contrary to Palo Alto’s normal process, FEMA requires that the City take input on the LHMP from the community prior to review and approval by the governing body. For this reason, staff is implementing the following ABAG recommended process:

- The Palo Alto annex to the LHMP and the mitigation matrix will be posted on the City website beginning Thursday, September 8, 2005.
- Comments from the public will be solicited and reviewed with specific consideration from Palo Alto’s Citizen Corps.
- The revised drafts will be transmitted to FEMA via ABAG (required by DMA 2000).
- FEMA’s comments will be incorporated into the Palo Alto annex.
- The LHMP annex and mitigation matrix will be agendized as a public hearing and Council will be requested to approve a resolution adopting the plan and matrix (required by DMA 2000).
- The plan annex, mitigation matrix, and resolution, when approved by Council, will be filed with FEMA (required by DMA 2000) and posted on ABAG’s website, after which Palo Alto will be eligible to apply for and receive grants from FEMA.
- The LHMP will be reviewed annually by executive staff and updated every five years (required by DMA 2000).

**RESOURCE IMPACT**

Participating in the ABAG regional plan is far more cost effective than creating a stand alone Palo Alto specific LHMP.