"We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history."

Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: October 6, 2026
Prepared By: Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

PROJECT INFORMATION SUMMARY

Case File: General Plan Amendment (GPA) 26-06 – Safety and Noise Element Update to Comply with State Planning Law Requirements (SB 99, AB 747/GC §65302.15, SB 379, AB 2140, and Related Provisions)

Request: Conduct a public hearing and consider a recommendation to the City Council to adopt the proposed notice of exemption (NOE) and the updated Safety and Noise Element of the City of Placerville General Plan to comply with Government Code Sections 65302(g), 65302.15, and related State requirements addressing wildfire hazards, flooding, evacuation routes and capacity/safety/viability under a range of emergency scenarios, climate adaptation and resilience, geologic and seismic hazards, hazardous materials, and noise.

Summary Recommendation: Recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed Notice of Exemption and the updated Safety and Noise Element of the City of Placerville General Plan (GPA 26-06); and direct staff to file the adopted General Plan amendments with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation pursuant to Government Code Section 65300.5.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed General Plan Amendment adopts a comprehensively updated Safety and Noise Element to replace the existing Safety and Noise Element. The update ensures consistency with current State planning law governing safety elements, including requirements related to wildfire and flood hazards, evacuation planning, climate change adaptation and resilience, geologic and seismic hazards, hazardous materials, and noise.

BACKGROUND

The City's existing Safety and Noise Element addresses core State-required topics but requires updating to reflect post-2021 Housing Element adoption triggers, the November 2024 adoption of the updated MJHMP/Annex A, recent Fire Hazard Severity Zone mapping, the 2024 WEPS study, and evolving statutory requirements for evacuation planning, climate resilience, and

related subjects. The Safety and Noise Elements have historically been combined because noise is commonly treated as a public health and safety issue.

Approximately 50 percent of the City is classified as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone within a Local Responsibility Area. The City is surrounded by State Responsibility Area lands classified as Very High, High, and Moderate. The 2021 Caldor Fire and other historic wildfires in the vicinity underscore the importance of robust fire and evacuation planning. The WEPS study provides detailed modeling of evacuation performance under multiple wildfire scenarios and identifies potential bottlenecks and infrastructure recommendations that are reflected in the Element's policies and implementation measures.

BOARD OF FORESTRY

On July 21, 2026, the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) formally reviewed the City's updated Final Draft Safety and Noise Element. The Board received the Element very favorably, specifically noting positive aspects including the related plans incorporated by reference, discussion of secondary hazards from wildfire, incorporation of the California Vegetation Treatment Program, Table 3.5-1, multiple mitigation policies, and the inclusion of live links within the document. The Board recommended adding Home Hardening language to Policy 3.1-13 and the associated Implementation Programs (page 21). Staff has incorporated this recommendation into the final draft presented with this report. The Board's formal review and positive findings support the Element's consistency with State wildfire planning requirements.

DISCUSSION

The proposed General Plan Amendment adopts a comprehensively updated Safety and Noise Element to replace the existing Safety and Noise Element of the City of Placerville General Plan. The update ensures consistency with current State planning law governing safety elements, including requirements related to wildfire and flood hazards, evacuation planning, climate change adaptation and resilience, geologic and seismic hazards, hazardous materials, and noise.

Key State mandates addressed by this update include:

- Government Code Section 65302(g) – requirements for analysis and policies addressing flooding, wildland and urban fires, evacuation routes, climate change risks, and resiliency/adaptation measures;
- Government Code Section 65302.15 (enacted by AB 747 and amended by AB 1409) – identification of evacuation routes and their capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios, and identification of evacuation locations;
- Government Code Section 65302(g)(5) (SB 99) – identification of residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes;
- AB 2140 – linkage between the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP/MJHMP) and the Safety Element to support eligibility for certain disaster relief funding;
- SB 379 – climate adaptation and resilience strategies in the Safety Element.

The updated Element incorporates by reference the most current Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) for El Dorado County/City of Placerville (including Annex A for Placerville, adopted by the City Council on November 12, 2024), the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Western El Dorado County (CWPP), the Placerville Community Wildfire Resilience Strategy (CWRS), the Greater Placerville Wildfire Evacuation Preparedness, Community Safety and Resiliency Study (WEPS, June 2024), and relevant sections of the Placerville Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Consistent with the project scope, the update includes:

- Updated background information on wildland and urban fire hazards (including the State Fire Marshal's January 22, 2025, Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone map, adopted by the City Council on April 22, 2025), flooding, geologic/seismic/soils hazards, climate change, hazardous materials, and noise;
- Identification of primary evacuation routes (U.S. Highway 50 and State Route 49, plus supporting local roadways) and incorporation/summary of WEPS modeling of route capacity, safety, and viability under multiple wildfire scenarios;
- Confirmation that no residential subdivisions within identified hazard areas lack at least two emergency evacuation routes (SB 99 compliance);
- New and refined goals, policies, and implementation programs addressing fire resilience, evacuation equity (including access and functional needs populations), climate adaptation, and related topics;
- Coordination with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), El Dorado County Office of Emergency Services, El Dorado County Transportation Commission, local fire protection districts, and other partner agencies; and
- Preparation of environmental documentation pursuant to CEQA.

Unlike many General Plan amendments, the proposed update is focused solely on maintaining consistency with State planning law and does not redesignate land uses, modify zoning, or authorize new development or changes in development capacity.

The proposed Safety and Noise Element is organized around the topics mandated by State law: Public Safety; Wildland and Urban Fires; Flooding; Evacuation Routes and Emergency Response; Geologic, Seismic, and Soils Hazards; Climate Change; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; and Noise. Each major topic includes updated background information, followed by goals, policies, and implementation programs.

<u>Evacuation Routes and Government Code Section 65302.15 Compliance</u>

Government Code Section 65302.15 requires the Safety Element to identify evacuation routes and their capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios, and to identify evacuation locations. The Element explicitly acknowledges the statute, incorporates the WEPS study by reference (Chapter 2), and summarizes its findings regarding major routes, evacuation time estimates, bottlenecks, and mitigation recommendations under multiple wildfire scenarios.

Primary routes are identified as U.S. Highway 50 (four-lane, primary east–west) and State Route 49 (two-lane, north–south), supported by local roadways illustrated in Exhibit 3.3-1. Policies

address access and functional needs equity, road standards, traffic studies for evacuation impacts, infrastructure contributions, and ongoing coordination with the El Dorado County Transportation Commission for funding of critical improvements. The Element also satisfies SB 99 by confirming that no residential subdivisions in identified hazard areas lack at least two emergency evacuation routes.

Wildland and Urban Fire Hazard Updates

The Element updates wildfire background with current Fire Hazard Severity Zone mapping (adopted by the City Council via Ordinance 1726 on April 22, 2025), historic fire information, secondary hazards (flooding, landslides, erosion following catastrophic fire), and a comprehensive suite of resilience programs and partnerships (California Vegetation Treatment Program, Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, SOFAR Cohesive Strategy, Fire Adapted 50, County Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience, Placerville Fire Safe Council, CWRS, and related efforts). Policies and implementation measures reinforce defensible space, vegetation management, building standards in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, emergency access standards, and coordination with fire protection providers.

Climate Adaptation, Flooding, Geologic Hazards, and Other Topics

The Element addresses climate change risks and adaptation strategies consistent with SB 379 and Government Code Section 65302(g)(4), incorporates MJHMP climate-related content, updates flooding analysis and policies, provides geologic/seismic/soils hazard background and policies, and addresses hazardous materials and noise. The Noise component remains integrated because of its public health and safety nexus.

A detailed comparison of the draft Element against Government Code Section 65302.15 requirements (read together with the WEPS study and MJHMP) confirms full compliance once adopted. The amendments do not modify the City's land use framework or development capacity.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Because the proposed amendments are policy-oriented and do not authorize physical development, staff has prepared a Common Sense Exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3)), included as Attachment A.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Outreach and coordination for the Safety and Noise Element update included consultation consistent with State requirements and the project scope:

- Native American tribes in accordance with applicable State law;
- Coordination with CAL FIRE, El Dorado County Office of Emergency Services, El Dorado County Transportation Commission, local fire protection districts, and other partner agencies;
- Public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council.

Tribal consultation was requested by the Wilton Rancheria Tribe and occurred on September 2, 2026. Draft mitigation measures were provided to the Tribe on September 14, 2026 (see Attachment E). Staff is working with the Tribe to finalize the draft mitigation measures prior to the City Council meeting.

Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published on September 18, 2026, in accordance with State law. Any public comments received prior to the hearing have been provided to the Planning Commission and will be forwarded to the City Council as part of the administrative record.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

Hold a public hearing and take public testimony; and,

1) Forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council
2) Forward a recommendation of approval with modifications to the City Council
3) Forward a recommendation of denial to the City Council

ATTACHMENTS

A. CEQA Notice of Exemption
B. Draft Planning Commission Resolution Recommending Approval of GPA 26-06
C. Draft Safety and Noise Element
D. Compliance Analysis – Government Code Section 65302.15
E. Draft Mitigation Measures related to Cultural Resources

INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

City of Placerville General Plan
City of Placerville Zoning Ordinance
El Dorado County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) and City of Placerville Annex A (adopted November 12, 2024)
Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Western El Dorado County (CWPP)
Placerville Community Wildfire Resilience Strategy (CWRS)
Greater Placerville Wildfire Evacuation Preparedness, Community Safety and Resiliency Study (WEPS, June 2024)
Placerville Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (selected chapters)
Contents of City of Placerville Planning Department Project File GPA 26-06