

April 18, 2023

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

Building Climate Ready Communities and Infrastructure in Los Angeles County

Los Angeles County is experiencing more extreme and severe weather patterns due to climate change. Natural disasters such as drought, wildfire, mudflows, heat storms, intense rainfall, and flooding events are on the rise, and will predominately affect vulnerable populations and communities of color disproportionately burdened by systemic inequities. Extreme weather events also pose a variety of threats to public infrastructure, which connects and protects the people we serve.

The Board of Supervisors (Board) has taken action to respond to the dangers presented by climate change. In August 2019, the Board unanimously adopted the “OurCounty Sustainability Plan” outlining a bold, inclusive, and regional vision to address the most pressing environmental issues impacting present and future generations. To advance this vision, the Chief Sustainability Office (CSO) prepared a Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) that examines the impacts of climate events on vulnerable communities, populations, and infrastructure. In April 2022, the Board directed the Department of Public Health to create the Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health as a central hub for health focused environmental justice and climate health goals. In addition, the Board recently directed the Department of Public Works, in coordination with the CSO, to assess the County’s stormwater infrastructure, prepare a plan to advance equity and climate resiliency in stormwater infrastructure improvements, and prepare communities for

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increased flood risk due to climate change.

It is important for all residents in Los Angeles County to live in a safe and resilient community. Resilient communities have an ability to adapt and thrive in response to changing conditions or disasters. Accelerating resilience to climate change means taking action now to build “adaptive capacity” within our human and infrastructure systems. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change defines adaptive capacity as, “the capacity of systems, institutions, humans and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to respond to consequences.”

Growing adaptive capacity is particularly critical in areas of the County where climate vulnerabilities are highest, including low-income communities and communities of color disproportionately burdened by systemic inequities. Certain individuals are also unfairly burdened by both environmental and climate risks, such as children, the elderly, people experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities and preexisting health conditions, individuals with limited English proficiency, and tribal and indigenous people.

With respect to infrastructure, increasing adaptive capacity will require investments that can withstand climate hazards, minimize disruption to essential services, and avoid cascading impacts to other dependent infrastructure systems. Resilient infrastructure increases the County’s capacity to respond to the climate crisis and maintain continuity of operations and service to the public. Adaptive strategies must also include preparing communities for extreme weather and evolving threats in order to emerge stronger. The County plays a crucial role in helping residents

understand their risks, build personal and community preparedness plans, and access resources to help them rebound.

The County's Climate Vulnerability Assessment was an important first step in science-based adaptation planning. By identifying climate vulnerability, we are positioned to build resilience and reduce impacts from climate change. The County must leverage the CVA to develop key adaptation strategies and actions to help prepare communities and infrastructure to be climate-ready. Having an interdepartmental working group within the County will allow departments to collaborate and consider multi-benefit and climate ready projects in our communities.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of the Department of Public Works, in partnership with the Chief Sustainability Office, to work in collaboration with relevant County departments, including but not limited to, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Regional Planning, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Office of Emergency Management:

- 1) To lead a countywide initiative to build resilience and adaptive capacity for people, communities, and infrastructure vulnerable to climate risks, with a focus on advancing equity and environmental justice. A working group will be formed to identify opportunities and investments that build resilience where vulnerabilities are highest, based on findings from the County's Climate Vulnerability Assessment;
- 2) Utilize the Climate Vulnerability Assessment Mapping Tool to identify and prioritize

vulnerable populations and communities most susceptible to the five key climate hazards - - extreme heat, wildfire, extreme precipitation and inland flooding, coastal flooding, and drought;

- 3) Identify key decision points in the infrastructure planning, design, and construction process where climate vulnerability can inform investment decisions;
- 4) Establish and work with existing community coalitions through public engagement efforts that seek to integrate input and feedback from climate-vulnerable communities and populations. Maintain transparency on the efforts being made by developing a public-facing dashboard to serve as a repository for resiliency data and information;
- 5) Identify specific infrastructure solutions and adaptation strategies to accelerate adaptive capacity, including preparing residents for community-specific risks to minimize climate vulnerability and quickly recover from climate disasters;
- 6) Identify and secure local, state, and federal funding opportunities to support infrastructure investments that increase resiliency in climate vulnerable communities; and
- 7) Provide written reports every six months with updates on progress made and projects identified by the working group.

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