

## Senate Environmental Quality Committee

Bob Wieckowski, Chair

Informational Hearing on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Priorities in the Bay Area

May 29, 2015

Oakland, CA

### Remarks of Danielle Mieler

Resilience Program Coordinator, Association of Bay Area Government

The Association of Bay Area Governments' (ABAG) is the Council of Governments for 9 Bay Area counties and 101 member cities. With the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, ABAG is responsible for implementation of SB375 and is currently undergoing the first update of the plan which reduces GHG emissions by linking jobs and housing near transportation. ABAG has several key roles in the region which apply to climate adaptation:

- Convening discussion about region's future
- Facilitating inter-jurisdictional cooperation
- Providing data and information to inform discussion
- Advocate for policies and strategies to create a sustainable, resilient, equitable region

For forty years, ABAG's planning department has included a resilience program which examines the impacts of natural hazards on our communities and makes plans to reduce their impact and quickly recover. Our primary focus has been on earthquakes as a major regional threat, though we have studied many natural hazards. As climate change impacts become more significant, we have adjusted our efforts to align with this priority. The resilience program is a conduit for infusing regional and local planning efforts with natural hazard and climate thinking.

#### Key climate change issues for the Bay Area

**The Bay Area economy and assets are significant and threatened.** Our challenge is to protect investments through mitigation and adaptation. Significant investments have been made by Bay Area voters to upgrade infrastructure systems, but more investment is needed, especially along the bay shoreline.

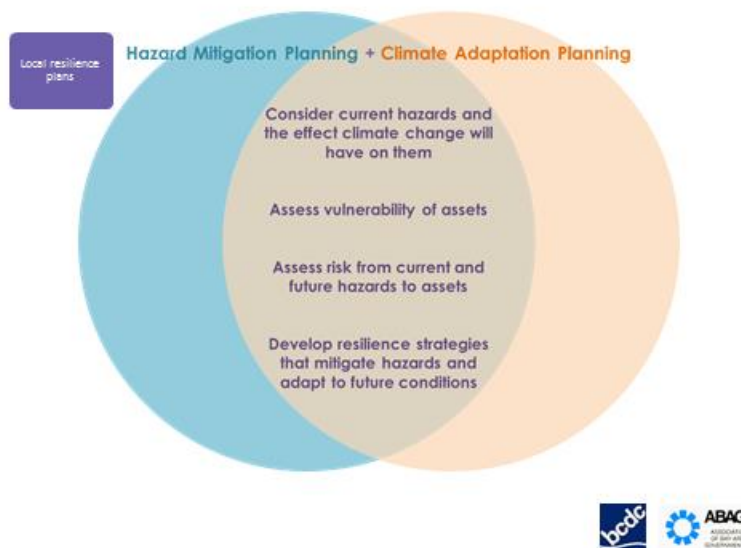
**The Bay Area is impacted by both instantaneous and slow moving disasters.** Due to climate change, we face increasing severity and frequency of flooding from sea level rise, wildfire, extreme heat, and we are currently experiencing an unprecedented drought that has increased in severity over the past four years. In addition, a large earthquake that could cause a suite of damage and impacts to the region, requiring years of recovery and rebuilding efforts.

**Extreme events are exacerbated by other social and economic pressures.** While the Bay Area is experiencing a second tech boom, not all residents are bolstered by the strong economy. The

region is experiencing a significant housing crisis that is dramatically and rapidly increasing the cost of housing and driving many longtime residents from their neighborhood. Natural disasters and climate impacts will add additional pressures to these already burdened communities and exacerbate these existing inequalities. Many of the communities that will be most impacted by current and future disasters are particularly vulnerable to displacement and lack the resources to effectively recover from disasters.

**The Bay Area has led the nation in planning for natural hazards.** ABAG's work and expertise in planning for earthquakes can be leveraged to plan for the changing landscape of the threats our region faces from natural hazards. We can leverage and align our work to plan for both current and future natural hazards. While the worlds of natural hazard planning and climate mitigation have traditionally been fairly separate and independent, at ABAG we see synergy between the two. The goals of reducing vulnerability and risk are largely the same as are many of the methods. By planning for both current and future hazards and integrating these efforts with other long-range planning efforts, we can more holistically build a more resilient region that is adaptive and bounces back quickly from extreme events.

As climate change intensifies many existing natural hazards, our years of planning and expertise for earthquakes provide a strong platform for planning to respond to climate related disasters.



*This graphic shows the alignment of planning process and outcomes between natural hazard mitigation planning and climate adaptation planning. Better aligning these processes will lead to stronger outcomes, greater synergies and better use of resources.*

**A lot of work is already happening in the Bay Area already to address climate change at different scales.** No single agency is responsible for addressing climate adaptation. It's a complex web of private, local, regional, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations and

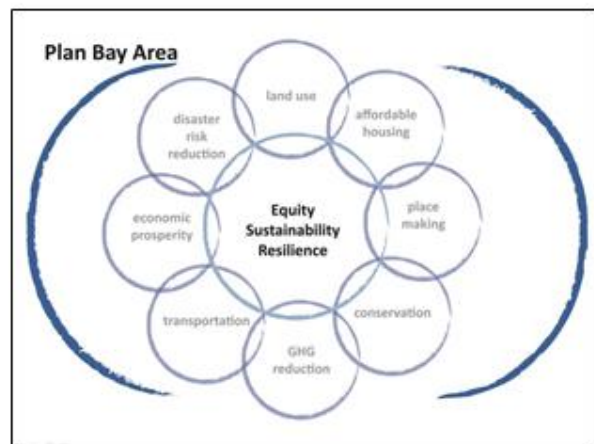
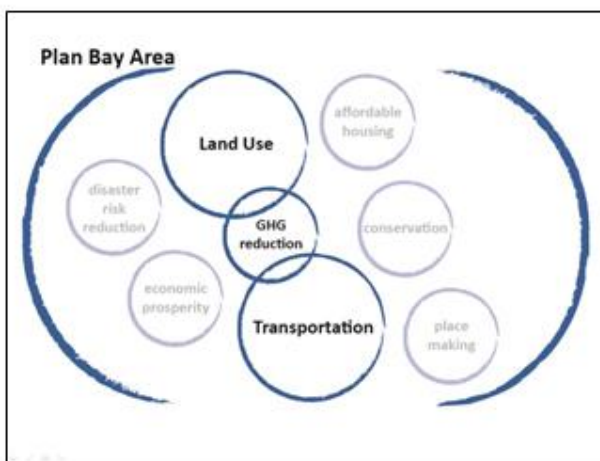
service providers. Each agency has its area of specialty and jurisdictional boundaries. The task will require significant coordination and cooperation. A major challenge is developing appropriate financing mechanisms that support cross agency coordination.

### Looking forward

Climate change presents new challenges and will exacerbate existing challenges. We will be best positioned to address these challenges when we leverage existing institutional infrastructure and planning mechanisms, coordinate and collaborate, and address multiple hazards simultaneously.

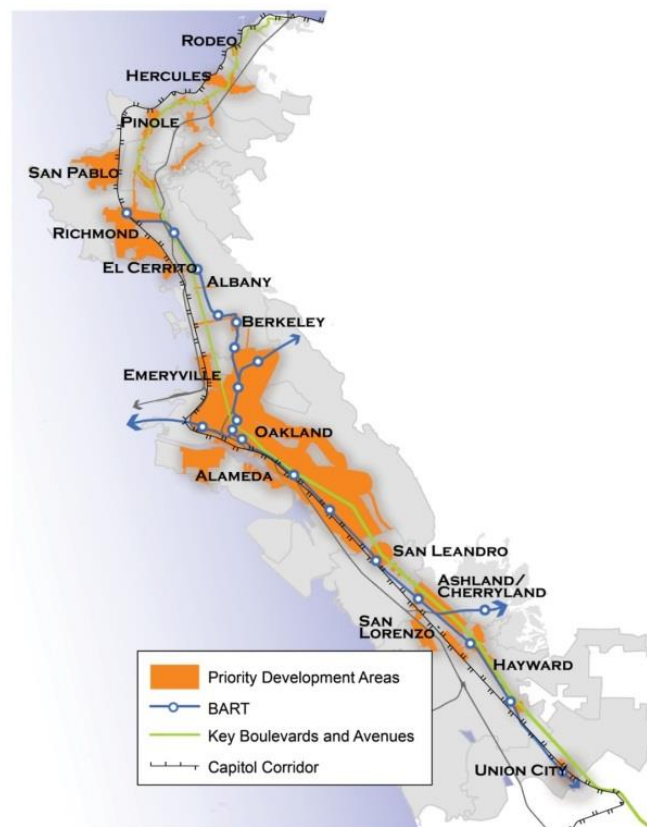
### Leverage existing planning mechanisms

For example, SB375 mandates that regions create a Sustainable Communities Strategy that reduce GHG emissions in part by creating better transit linkages between jobs and housing. *Plan Bay Area*, as the SCS is called, has become the long-term vision that guides development in the region and seeks to address some of the major challenges faced by the region. In order to achieve our vision for the future, we need to be resilient to disasters. Achieving the vision of this plan has required the regional agencies to bring together a number of historically disparate elements, including equity, access to transportation, housing affordability, quality neighborhoods, earthquake safety, and climate readiness. This effort has allowed us the space to expand the perspective of each of these disciplines and allow for integration and collaboration across topic areas. Plan Bay Area has also become a vehicle to talk with local jurisdictions about mitigation and adaptation to natural hazards and climate change. The 2017 update of Plan Bay Area will be crafted through a resilience, sustainability, and equity lens



## Integrating planning efforts

While the process of developing Plan Bay Area has led to an expansion of thinking, the implementation and coordination of the plan has also had a focusing effect. Through the *East Bay Corridors* project, ABAG is coordinating fourteen cities between Rodeo and Union City to address common challenges of housing affordability and access to opportunity, improved public spaces, and resilience in the face of natural disasters and to capitalize on shared opportunities to implement local priorities emanating from Plan Bay Area. The Healthy Homes Initiative within the Corridor is exploring incentives to retrofit housing and reduce seismic and flooding risk, increase energy and water efficiency, and improve indoor air quality through creative financing mechanisms. This project is an example of how aligning efforts achieves multiple benefits - if successful, we will not only lessen the impacts of a changing regional economy on vulnerable residents, but also ensure that these residents are not permanently displaced after a future earthquake or by rising sea levels.

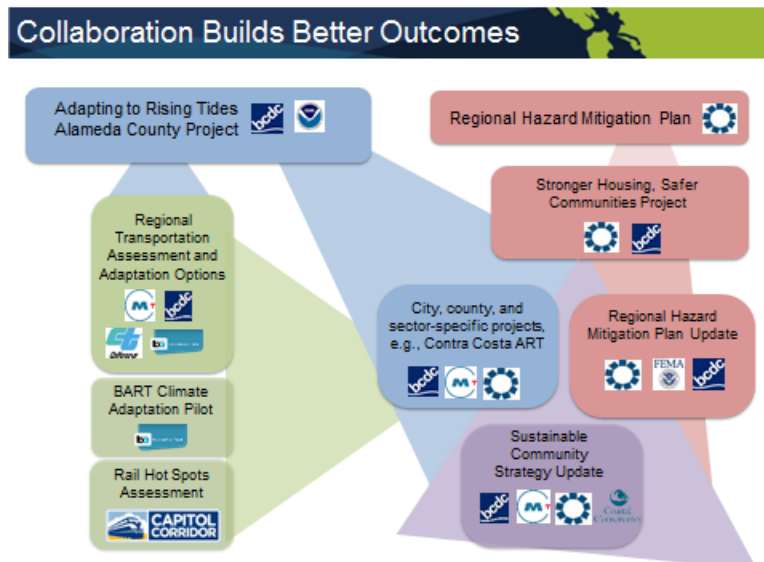


*The East Bay Corridor Initiative*

## Collaboration

We have found that good collaboration between agencies leverages the expertise, work, data, processes and relationships built across various agencies to further the work and lead toward

action. By bringing the work for current and future hazards together it is possible to work with stakeholders together on preparing for both issues, rather than having agencies and organizations participating in two separate, but similar, efforts. Since 2011 the ABAG Resilience Team and BCDC ART team have aligned and coordinated several projects to achieve stronger outcomes for both teams.



*This graphic demonstrates the way that projects that started separately back in 2011, are now, in 2015, being brought together in way that makes the work more meaningful, more efficient, easier to participate in and reduces conflicts and confusion for stakeholders.*

**Stronger Housing, Safer Communities** – This was the first project where we really worked together with BCDC and aligned our efforts to look at vulnerable housing in floods and earthquakes. The residents in these areas shown on the map are disproportionately vulnerable and less like to recover from hazard impacts. These are areas where we need to focus investment to build resilience and reduce vulnerability.

**Regional Hazard Mitigation and Climate Plans** - ABAG has supported local governments to develop local hazard mitigation plans, required by FEMA, since 2005. Since many jurisdictions are also preparing climate adaptation plans, we examined the requirements for both plans and found they closely align with each other. In this plan update process we have partnered with BCDC to support local governments in developing hazard mitigation and climate adaptation plans concurrently.

**Coordination**

Bay Area Regional Collaborative coordinates efforts among Bay Area’s four regional agencies around climate adaptation and supporting better alignment of efforts. ABAG is a member and provides funding and staff time to support the effort.

## **Success and challenges to creating effective regional structures across levels of government for addressing climate change and adaptation.**

### Successes

- Bay Area expertise in planning for earthquakes and natural disasters will enhance climate adaptation efforts
- Opportunities to align and coordinate work on current and future hazards will lead to better outcomes
- Leveraging existing structures and planning mechanisms, such as Plan Bay Area, leads to stronger outcomes that better position us to address the multi-faceted challenges we face

### Challenges

- Need to better align planning requirements current and future hazards – Natural hazard mitigation plans, climate adaptation plans, general plans
- Governance – ABAG studying recommendations for governance and financing
- Need state, federal support to address serious threats from intensification of existing hazards.
- Financing mechanisms that support cross agency collaboration