

Frequently Asked Questions for Alameda's Climate Action & Resiliency Plan

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What is a climate action and resiliency plan?

A climate action and resiliency plan considers the future impacts of climate change and strategies the City can take to minimize impacts to the community. The plan acts as a blueprint for creating a more sustainable city where all residents can thrive while ensuring a sustainable and healthy economy, society, and environment. Alameda's Climate Action and Resiliency Plan (CARP) provides a roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, becoming more resilient, and making Alameda a healthier and more sustainable place to live, work and play.

2

What does resiliency mean?

Resiliency is the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and/or systems to respond, adapt, and thrive when experiencing shocks or stresses like fire damage, major earthquakes, or toxic spills. Resiliency depends on the state of physical infrastructure, like sea walls and storm drains, and on social factors like income, transportation access, and physical ability. In the Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, the City is assessing Alameda's physical and social vulnerability to climate change impacts like sea level rise and developing strategies to address those vulnerabilities and build resilience.

3

Is climate change real?

Climate change is driven by changes in the composition of Earth's atmosphere, including a dramatic increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide. This increase in carbon dioxide is primarily due to deforestation, mass consumption of natural resources, and the burning of fossil fuels like oil, gas, and coal. Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have been continuously monitored since the 1950s, displaying a clear upward trajectory since measurements began. Predictions of potentially catastrophic impacts due to burning of fossil fuels were made by scientists at major oil companies like Exxon when the issue started to gain prominence in the 1970s and '80s. The evidence that links climate change to the burning of fossil fuels is now widely accepted and reflected in recent reports by the U.S. federal government, California state government and United Nations. The lengthening wildfire season and growing intensity of hurricanes in recent years, severe droughts, bleaching of coral reefs and loss of species, are evidence of the way climate change impacts our everyday lives.

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Shouldn't we focus our attention on housing issues and roads rather than climate change?

Housing and roads are both important components of the Climate Action and Resiliency Plan. A large focus of the plan is figuring out how to keep roads safe and maintain access on and off the island in flooding and other climate events. Reliable and sufficient housing amidst climate impacts is also key for Alameda's resilience. More frequent flooding means homes will be vulnerable to water damage, creating hardship for people without flood insurance. Because earthquakes can cause loose or wet ground to sink, many houses in Alameda must be retrofitted in order to be habitable after quakes. The City is also looking at housing and transportation from a sustainability perspective. More energy efficient homes save households money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the same time. Having a variety of transportation options that are efficient and safe to use, including biking and public transit, can improve quality of life and reduce traffic in addition to reducing harmful air pollution. Because the CARP aims to create a more efficient, sustainable and thriving Alameda, the City must look at many aspects of daily life including housing and road access.

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What are the actual impacts of climate change in Alameda? Will it actually affect us?

Over the next 2-3 decades, we can expect an increase in flooding and a rising groundwater table. In the longer term, action will be needed to prevent large sections of Alameda from being flooded, including the Posey and Webster Tubes, Crown Beach, and many homes and businesses. Heat waves are projected to become longer and more intense, which is especially dangerous for elderly residents. Hazardous air quality due to wildfires will become more frequent, posing health risks for all residents, especially children and those with respiratory conditions like asthma.

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Isn't Alameda too small to have any real impact on climate change?

While the impacts of climate change are already happening and will continue to happen, Alameda can still have an influence on minimizing the impacts locally. By becoming more sustainable and resilient as a city, Alamedans will be better equipped to respond to crises and thrive in harmony with the natural functions of the planet. Because climate change is such a large issue, starting locally contributes to regional and statewide efforts and Alameda's efforts can influence other cities to do the same, creating an even greater impact that contributes to a more environmentally-friendly future.