



HOUSING, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

Friday, March 27, 2026

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa

AGENDA

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Leslie Castellano, Council Member, Eureka

Vice Chair Jorgel Chavez, Mayor, Bell Gardens

II. Public Comment

III. Affordable Housing Development in Orange County

Informational

William Hughes, Executive Director, Irvine Community Land Trust

Todd Cottle, Principal, C&C Development

IV. Legislative Agenda

Action

Brady Guertin, Legislative Advocate, Cal Cities

- AB 1674 (Ahrens) Food Affordability Act. (*Attachment A*)
- AB 1738 (Carrillo) State Housing Law: Remote Inspections. (*Attachment B*)
- AB 1738 Fact Sheet (*Attachment C*)
- AB 1914 (Schiavo) General plan elements: childcare. (*Attachment D*)

V. State Legislation, Budget, and Regulatory Update

Informational

- [HCED legislative bill list](#) (bills with positions)

VI. Adjourn

Next Meeting (Virtual): Friday, June 5, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Brown Act Reminder: The League of California Cities' Board of Directors has a policy of complying with the spirit of open meeting laws. Generally, off-agenda items may be taken up only if:

1) Two-thirds of the policy committee members find a need for immediate action exists and the need to take action came to the attention of the policy committee after the agenda was prepared (Note: If fewer than two-thirds of policy committee members are present, taking up an off-agenda item requires a unanimous vote); or

2) A majority of the policy committee finds an emergency (for example: work stoppage or disaster) exists.

A majority of a city council may not, consistent with the Brown Act, discuss specific substantive issues among themselves at League meetings. Any such discussion is subject to the Brown Act and must occur in a meeting that complies with its requirements.



**HOUSING, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
and COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY COMMITTEES
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

Staff: Brady Guertin, Legislative Advocate, Housing, Community, and Economic Development
Caroline Grinder, Legislative Advocate, Community Services
Waleed Hojeij, Policy and Legislative Affairs Analyst, Housing, Community, and Economic Development
Serena Scott, Policy and Legislative Affairs Analyst, Community Services

AB 1674 (Ahrens) Food Affordability Act.

Bill Summary:

AB 1674 would establish the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program to provide funding to developers and grocery store operators in designated food deserts. This measure would also require local governments in a food desert or an area at risk of becoming a food desert to ensure that applicants for new housing developments do not reduce the site's capacity for a large grocery store. If the site capacity is reduced, the local government must require the applicant to provide equivalent mitigation. Equivalent mitigation would include, at a minimum, "dedication of equivalent space and infrastructure for future grocery use, or funding contributions to the Food Desert Elimination Fund that are sufficient for a replacement store within one-half mile as determined by the Department of Food and Agriculture."

Author's Statement Summary:

According to the author, "challenges can arise when developers use the Density Bonus Law, which permits waivers of certain development standards in exchange for building more affordable housing units. While this law increases affordable housing, it can also result in reduced commercial space, including grocery stores, as developers prioritize residential units over commercial development. This shift can further limit access to healthy food and increase the risk of communities becoming food deserts".

According to the author, AB 1674 "would create the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program to support grocery stores in underserved areas, especially in new housing developments. The bill requires developers to maintain or mitigate any loss of grocery store capacity in these projects, ensuring continued access to healthy food."

- [Author's Fact Sheet](#)

Bill Description:

AB 1674 would establish the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program within the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to help improve access to healthy foods in food deserts and areas at risk of becoming food deserts. The grant would be used towards

feasibility studies, employee compensation, rent, land acquisition, and other capital and operational expenses for grocery stores in low-income and low-access areas.

This measure would also require cities to ensure that any new housing development in a food desert does not reduce the site capacity needed for a large grocery store. If development reduces site capacity, the applicant must provide mitigation, including either dedicating equivalent space or infrastructure for future grocery use, or making funding contributions to the Food Desert Elimination Fund sufficient to fund a replacement store within one-half mile, as determined by the Department of Food and Agriculture.

The program also requires annual reporting by local governments to the Department of Food and Agriculture on new housing development projects in food deserts, including project capacity assessments and mitigation measures. These requirements would apply until January 1, 2031, and then will be repealed after that date.

The requirements defined in this bill will apply to any city that has a "food desert." A food desert is a census tract that meets the definitions of **both** [federal standards of low-access areas and low-income areas](#).

- "Low-access area" means a census tract in which there are significant barriers to accessing a large grocery store, which may include, but not be limited to, a census tract with at least 33 percent of the population that lives more than one-half mile, for nonrural areas, or more than 10 miles, for rural areas, from a large grocery store.
- "Low-income area" means a census tract with a poverty rate of 20 percent or higher, or a census tract with a median family income less than 80 percent of the median family income for the state or metropolitan area.

Background:

Areas commonly referred to as ["food deserts"](#) are low-income inner-city neighborhoods and rural communities where residents live far from the closest grocery store or supermarket. Under current law, the [Office of Farm to Fork](#) within the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) coordinates programs designed to address food distribution barriers across the state. This office was created in 2014 when Governor Brown signed [AB 2413](#) (Perez). Since then, expanding access and affordability of healthy foods in underserved communities has been a major priority for CDFA.

Food deserts often arise from a combination of economic and land-use factors, including the high cost of developing large grocery stores, lower profit margins in low-income neighborhoods, and transportation barriers that limit residents' ability to travel to larger food retailers. Building decisions, [specifically urban sprawl between 1990 and 2014](#) created many housing environments where essential services (like grocery stores) were only accessible by car. In the years since, these design choices have shown to disproportionately affect minority and lower-income communities, compounding existing disparities in health outcomes and quality of life. Healthy food access is critical to well-being and a healthy life, yet there are many [communities across California that face food insecurity](#) and are reliant on traveling far distances to access large grocery stores.

As a result, policymakers have increasingly explored strategies such as grants, financing programs, and land-use planning tools to incentivize grocery store development and improve food access.

California has taken several steps in the last decade to address barriers to healthy food access. One of the earliest policy efforts in this area was the California Healthy Food Financing Initiative (CHFFI), created by [AB 581](#) (Perez, 2011). The initiative established the CHFFI Fund to support projects that expand access to healthy foods in underserved communities. California has also implemented targeted programs such as the [Healthy Refrigeration Grant Program](#), which provides grants to corner stores, small businesses, and food donation programs to install energy-efficient refrigeration units so they can stock fresh produce and other perishable foods in low-income or low-food-access areas.

A recent proposal similar to this bill was recently vetoed by the Governor. [SB 1419](#) (Rubio, 2024) sought to create the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program to provide grants to large and small-scale grocery store operators in food deserts. In his veto message, the Governor explained that he vetoed the bill because it created a new, unfunded grant program that instead should have been considered in the annual budget process.

In addition to state efforts, the federal government has focused on financing and supporting grocery stores and other food retailers in underserved communities. The [Healthy Food Financing Initiative](#) (HFFI), a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provides funding and financing tools to support grocery store development and other food retail projects in areas with limited access to healthy foods.

In addition to financial barriers, food access issues are increasingly being discussed within the broader context of land-use planning and housing development. As California continues to face a significant housing shortage, many communities are experiencing increased pressure to redevelop or repurpose commercial land for housing projects.

In recent years, state legislation has significantly increased housing production requirements that local governments must plan and site for within their communities, while limiting local decision-making on housing development to address the statewide housing shortage. Specifically, cities must comply with identifying adequate sites to meet their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers and demonstrating in their plans that zoning and land-use policies allow housing development at required densities. RHNA also requires local governments to demonstrate that, within the cycle, housing sites must be viable for development over the next five to eight years.

The land-use provisions in AB 1674 would impose new requirements on developers, potentially undermining project feasibility. As a result, local governments may face greater difficulty approving housing developments that meet both local housing goals and state expectations, as fewer projects may “pencil out” under the added constraints of AB 1674.

Existing Cal Cities Policy:

Local Control

- *"To expand and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. ii)
- *"The vitality of cities is dependent upon their fiscal stability and local autonomy."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. ii)

General Plans / Local Planning Authority

- *"Cal Cities supports the use of the general plan as a guide to meeting community planning needs."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 50)
- *"A city's general plan should guide the individual city's land use planning and strategic decision-making."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 50)
- *"General plan requirements should be flexible and provide guidance to local communities without requiring inappropriate levels of detail or mandating new topics or elements."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 50)

Economic Development

- *"Cal Cities supports legislation that will provide tangible and productive tools and incentives to support job creation and retention in housing rich, jobs-poor communities, such as the awarding of direct grants to fund the development of infrastructure that results in the creation and retention of jobs"*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 47)

Principles for Smart Growth

- *"Cal Cities supports well-planned new growth to recognize and preserve open space, watersheds, environmental habitats, and agricultural lands while accommodating new growth in compact forms in a manner that:*
 - *De-emphasizes automobile dependency;*
 - *Integrates the new growth into existing communities;*
 - *Creates a diversity of affordable housing near employment centers; and*
 - *Provides job opportunities for people of all ages and income levels.*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 53)
- *"Cal Cities supports vibrant city centers by giving preference to the redevelopment and reuse of city centers and existing transportation corridors by supporting and encouraging:*
 - *Mixed-use development;*
 - *Housing opportunities for all income levels;*
 - *Safe, reliable, and efficient multi-modal transportation systems; and*
 - *Retaining existing businesses and promoting new business opportunities that produce quality local jobs.*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 53)

Healthy Cities Policy

- *“Cal Cities encourages California cities to help parents make healthy family choices; create healthy schools; provide access to healthy and affordable foods; and adopt city design and planning principles that promote physical activity.”*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 4)

Fiscal Impact:

There are likely significant state and local costs. At the state level, AB 1674 would create a new grant program requiring appropriations, staffing, guideline development, oversight, technical assistance, and reporting. Given the state's structural budget deficit, allocating a significant amount of funding to the Food Desert Elimination Fund is unlikely, meaning a majority of the fund would likely have to be dependent on other sources, such as private and federal donations (which are typically inconsistent and in one-time allocations). Essentially, the bill establishes a grant program without identifying a stable or dedicated funding source.

At the local level, the bill would impose new annual reporting requirements on cities and new review and mitigation standards for developers of housing projects in food deserts or areas at risk of becoming food deserts. Additionally, the mitigation requirements for developers may increase housing costs due to the need to incorporate additional food desert considerations into their projects.

Staff Comments:

AB 1674 addresses an important public health and equity issue by attempting to improve access to healthy food in underserved communities. In many communities, particularly in urban areas, large grocery store sites are often much more easily accessible due to improved transit and strategic locations near higher-density communities. The proposed grant program and developer requirements outlined in AB 1674 could serve as a useful tool to incentivize grocery development in areas where the private market and location resources alone have not supported large-scale food retail investment.

However, the bill also introduces land-use requirements that may conflict with current housing production goals and local planning processes. Requiring applicants to preserve site capacity for large grocery stores, or to provide mitigation if housing development reduces that capacity, could constrain cities' ability to approve affordable housing projects on those sites. These overlapping priorities may have unintended consequences for building housing.

This issue may be particularly significant for affordable housing development, which often relies on underutilized commercial parcels or redevelopment of aging retail centers (which grocery store development also relies on). In some cases, these sites present the most feasible opportunities for affordable housing due to existing infrastructure, proximity to transit, and compatibility with higher-density zoning. If cities are required to approve only development applications that maintain grocery store site capacity or provide mitigation, this could increase project costs, delay development timelines, or discourage affordable housing proposals in areas already experiencing housing shortages.

Accessible, healthy food is a vital component of quality housing, as is supporting cities and developers in building affordable housing. We encourage the committee to consider how this bill impacts both of these important goals and to consider if AB 1674 strikes the appropriate balance between them.

Support:

This measure is author-sponsored.

Opposition:

None listed at this time.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend that the committee discuss this measure and consider taking a position.

Committee Recommendation:

Board Action:



HOUSING, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE Legislative Agenda

Staff: Brady Guertin, Legislative Affairs Lobbyist
Waleed Hojeij, Legislative Affairs and Policy Analyst

AB 1738 (Carrillo) State Housing Law: Remote Inspections

Bill Summary:

AB 1738 would require cities and counties to offer homeowners and contractors the option to request remote building inspections for certain residential permits by July 1, 2027. Remote inspections could be conducted via video conferencing or through recorded photos and videos for specific residential construction activities, including residential heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), water heaters, photovoltaic systems, minor electrical work, plumbing work, reroofing, and small accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The bill would also require cities and counties to report on their use of remote inspections in their annual progress reports beginning April 1, 2028.

Bill Description:

Existing law under the State Housing Law requires local building departments to enforce statewide building standards and conduct inspections to ensure compliance with the California Building Standards Code and other housing-related regulations. Local agencies are responsible for performing inspections associated with building permits to confirm that construction work complies with applicable safety standards.

AB 1738 would require cities and counties to offer remote inspection options for specified residential construction projects in one and two-family dwellings by July 1, 2027. These inspections could be conducted through video conferencing or submitted photo/video documentation rather than in-person inspections.

The bill divides remote inspection eligibility into two categories:

Local governments would be required to provide a remote inspection option for the following types of permits:

- Residential Water heaters
- HVAC systems
- Residential and commercial reroofs
- Minor electrical work including:
 - Main and subservice panels
 - Rewire work
 - Whole-house fans
 - Ceiling fans
 - New electrical circuits
- Residential plumbing work including:

- Sewer repair and replacement
 - Replumbing of supply and drainage piping
 - Fixture replacement
- Solar photovoltaic and energy storage systems
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Accessory dwelling units or junior accessory dwelling units under 800 square feet
- Home hardening improvements and wildfire defensible space work to comply with the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code.

Local governments would be required to offer the option of the following inspection options at the discretion of the construction inspector:

- Drywall
- Exterior siding
- Insulation
- Signs
- Window replacement
- Light foundations and footings
- Fireplace inserts
- Patios or decks
- Temporary power poles
- Demolition
- Removing gas lines
- Residential additions under 800 square feet
- Storage sheds under 800 square feet

The bill would also allow local jurisdictions, at their discretion, to establish a process to conduct in-person audits of remote inspections to verify compliance and confirm that a homeowner or contractor accurately represented the work subject to a remote inspection. Additionally, if the homeowner or contractor is found to have willfully misrepresented the work subject to a remote inspection, the local government may temporarily ban the homeowner or contractor from using a remote inspection. Third, the measure specifies that a local government and its staff would not be liable for any remote inspection if it goes wrong.

Additionally, beginning April 1, 2028, cities and counties must include information on remote inspections in their annual General Plan progress report, including:

- Number of remote vs. in-person inspections
- Failure rates for inspections
- Number of remote inspection audits conducted.

The bill declares that the regulation of building inspection processes is a matter of statewide concern, meaning the requirements would apply to charter cities. Finally, the bill states that no state reimbursement is required because local agencies can charge service fees sufficient to cover implementation costs.

Background:

California continues to face a housing shortage and high housing costs. State policymakers have focused on reducing barriers to housing construction and residential improvements, including delays in permitting and inspections.

Local building departments play an important role in the housing development process by reviewing permits and conducting inspections to ensure compliance with safety standards. However, many jurisdictions face staffing shortages or inspection backlogs that can delay construction timelines; remote virtual inspections may help address these issues.

The concept of remote virtual inspections (RVIs) gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic when many jurisdictions adopted remote technologies to maintain inspection services while limiting in-person contact. Since then, several California cities have continued using remote inspection systems for routine inspections. According to the author's fact sheet ([see Attachment C](#)), "over 19 jurisdictions in California offer remote inspections ranging from Los Angeles County to the City of Paradise. Outside of California, Texas and Florida authorize RVI, with Florida requiring RVI for some of their permits."

In fact, the International Code Council, which establishes, adopts, and approves international building standards, released recommended practices for Remote Virtual Inspections in [May 2020](#). Many local governments used remote inspections during the COVID-19 Pandemic and may have continued these efforts today.

Remote inspections may offer several potential benefits:

- Reduced inspection wait times;
- Increased efficiency for building departments;
- Reduced travel time for inspectors; and
- Faster permitting timelines for homeowners and contractors.

At the same time, cities have raised concerns about ensuring inspection accuracy, maintaining safety standards, and addressing administrative burdens associated with implementing new digital systems.

This bill also intersects with the state's ongoing efforts to encourage accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and other small-scale residential improvements, which the Legislature has promoted as part of broader housing production strategies.

According to the author, "California is facing a severe housing crisis, worsened by staffing shortages in local building and planning departments. These shortages have created significant backlogs in permit processing and long wait times for building inspections. A substantial share of staff time is devoted to inspecting routine home renovations, which takes time away from the urgent need for getting new housing built and drives up costs families face in making improvements to their homes, including in adding ADUs and JADUs."

Existing Cal Cities Policy:

- **Local Control / Guiding Principles**
“The vitality of cities is dependent upon their fiscal stability and local autonomy.”
(*Cal Cities Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles*, p. ii)
- **Planning and Zoning Authority**
“Cal Cities supports the authority of cities to exercise control over local land use decisions.”
(*Cal Cities Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles*, p. 49)
- **Building Standards**
“Cal Cities supports flexibility in the adoption and implementation of health and safety standards and local reach codes contained in the building codes.”
(*Cal Cities Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles*, p. 52)
- **Development Fees / Cost Recovery**
“Cal Cities supports the ability of cities to recover costs associated with providing services through appropriate fees.”
(*Cal Cities Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles*, p. 51)
- **State Mandates**
“Cal Cities opposes the imposition of state mandates without full reimbursement of associated local costs.”
(*Cal Cities Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles*, p. 63)

Fiscal Impact:

Although the bill states that no state reimbursement is required, it assumes that local agencies can offset costs through permit fees. However, cities may still incur upfront implementation costs associated with new technology systems or staffing adjustments.

Staff Comments:

This year, the legislature has increased its focus on housing affordability by exploring ways to reduce construction costs. Several proposals address new building types, such as factory-built or modular housing, while others examine opportunities to streamline construction review and inspection processes. Cal Cities is in a unique position to determine how our role as local governments could create local efficiencies and reduce construction costs without taking away local funds or revenue, and ensure local governments are protected from potential litigation. As the legislature cites development impact fees, bureaucratic red tape, and building codes as cost drivers, there may be other sources of construction costs that the organization can help the legislature consider, so it can join these conversations and provide potential solutions to the ongoing increase in housing costs in California.

Support:

Permit Power
San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Association

Opposition:

California Building Officials

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend the committee discuss AB 1738 and make a recommendation to the Board.

Committee Recommendation:

Board Action:



PURPOSE

Assembly Bill 1738 requires local jurisdictions to offer Remote Virtual Inspections (RVI) for simple home renovation projects for single family homes and duplexes.

BACKGROUND

California is facing a severe housing crisis, worsened by staffing shortages in local building and planning departments. These shortages have created significant backlogs in permit processing and long wait times for building inspections. A substantial share of staff time is devoted to inspecting routine home renovations, which takes time away from the urgent need for getting new housing built and drives up costs families face in making improvements to their homes, including in adding ADUs and JADUs.

For example, a recent audit in the City of Palo Alto found that the most critical issue in the permit process is the wait for building inspections, which typically averages about two weeks between request and inspection. Ultimately, California families are paying for these additional costs and delays.

RVI allow the use of photos, recorded video, and/or live video by owners or contractors for building departments to conduct inspections remotely. Some local agencies already have experience with RVI, as many inspections shifted to virtual formats during the COVID-19 pandemic. RVI saves travel time, reduces backlogs, and ensures staff capacity is available to focus on higher-complexity inspections and

new home construction.

EXISTING LAW

Currently, there are over 19 jurisdictions in California that offer remote inspections. These jurisdictions range in size from LA County with over 9 million residents to the city of Paradise with under 5,000 residents.

Outside of California, Texas and Florida authorize RVI, with Florida requiring RVI for some of their permits. The International Code Council, the main code making body in the United States, has issued best practices for remote inspections and the National Fire Protection Association and federal Housing and Urban Development agency have also issued remote inspection standards.

SOLUTION

AB 1738 will require all jurisdictions in California to offer remote inspections upon request for the following permits for one and two-family buildings:

- Water Heaters
- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Systems (HVAC)
- Re-Roofs
- Minor Electrical Work¹
- Minor Plumbing Work²
- Photovoltaic and Battery Systems
- WUI/Wildfire home hardening and defensible space inspections
- ADU/"Junior" ADUs

¹ Main and sub service panels, rewire work, whole house fans, ceiling fans and new electrical circuits.

² Sewer repair and replacement, re-plumbing of supply and drainage piping, and fixture replacement.

Local agencies in California will also offer remote inspections for the following permits upon request at the discretion of the building inspector:

- Drywall
- Exterior Siding
- Insulation
- Signs
- Window replacements
- Light foundations and footings
- Fireplace inserts
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Patios/decks
- Temporary power poles
- Residential additions up to 800 square feet

Local agencies may establish an on-site auditing process and may temporarily suspend contractors from participating in remote inspections if they do not pass required audits.

Local agencies are also required to submit an annual report to the state detailing the number of inspections conducted remotely and the number conducted in person.

SUPPORT

Permit Power (Co-Sponsor)
San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban
Research Association (SPUR) – (Co-Sponsor)

CONTACT

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**COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HOUSING, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEES
Legislative Agenda**

Staff: Brady Guertin, Legislative Advocate, Housing, Community, and Economic Development
Caroline Grinder, Legislative Advocate, Community Services
Waleed Hojeij, Policy and Legislative Affairs Analyst, Housing, Community, and Economic Development
Serena Scott, Policy and Legislative Affairs Analyst, Community Services

AB 1914 (Schiavo) General plan elements: childcare.

Bill Summary:

This measure would require cities and counties, when they update two or more general plan elements on or after January 1, 2028, to review and update, at a minimum, the land use, circulation, housing, safety, and environmental justice elements, to address local childcare needs.

Author's Statement Summary:

According to the author: "As we continue to build housing to address our housing crisis, families need affordable childcare near where they live and work. This act recognizes childcare as essential infrastructure by requiring cities and counties to incorporate childcare into long-term growth strategies and general plans."

- [Author Fact Sheet](#)
- [Sponsor Support Letter](#)

Bill Description:

This measure would require local agencies to update various general plan elements and include childcare within the respective elements if two or more elements are updated after January 2028. A city would, at a minimum, be required to update the land use, circulation, housing, safety, and environmental justice elements to include childcare, as defined by the law. This represents a significant change, integrating childcare planning across multiple components of a city's general plan.

This measure defines "childcare" as all licensed childcare and development services and license-exempt childcare, including private for-profit programs, nonprofit programs, and publicly funded programs, for all children up to 12 years of age.

The bill's language outlines several ways to ensure that every family has access to quality, convenient, safe, and affordable childcare, including:

- Co-locating childcare near housing, jobs, and transportation;
- Partnering with local childcare planning organizations;

- Revising zoning and permitting to support family daycare homes and daycare centers;
- Incorporating childcare into emergency preparedness, hazard mitigation, and climate resilience planning; and
- Allowing emergency shelters to include childcare space.

Background:

General Plans Overview

Under California's Planning and Zoning Law (Government Code section [65302](#)), every city and county must adopt and periodically update a general plan, which serves as the jurisdiction's long-term blueprint for physical development, land use patterns, housing growth, transportation systems, and public services. State law requires [several core elements](#) like land use, circulation, housing, safety, open space, conservation, and noise, while allowing jurisdictions to organize the plan and add additional elements based on local priorities.

[Jurisdictions in the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District](#) must also address air quality in their general plans, and per [SB 1000 \(Leyva\)](#), jurisdictions identified as disadvantaged communities must either add an environmental justice element or integrate environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives into another element to comply with the law. This means some cities may technically have nine required elements, while all cities are otherwise required to have seven.

For the last several years, the legislature has passed multiple general plan update requirements that local agencies must complete on or after January 1, 2028. These laws include updates to the conservation, safety, and circulation elements, meaning local governments will be required to update two or more elements simultaneously at a minimum over the next few years, thereby triggering the current measure.

Descriptions of each element:

- Land use: Will reflect the community's vision; promote thoughtful, equitable, and accessible distribution of different land uses, including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and open space; and align well with other general plan elements.
- Circulation: More than a transportation plan, but rather a strategy addressing infrastructure needs for the circulation of people, goods, energy, water, sewage, storm drainage, and communications.
- Housing: The blueprint for how a city or county will grow and address changing needs for development.
- Conservation: Establishes goals and policies for the retention, enhancement, and development of land, water, ecosystem services, living resources, and the benefits that these resources provide to the community.
- Open Space: Identifies areas that provide value in an essentially undeveloped condition and creates a plan to preserve such areas.
- Noise: Ensure that a local planning area limits the exposure of the community to excessive noise levels in noise-sensitive areas and at noise-sensitive times of day.

- Safety: Reduce the potential short and long-term risk of death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from fires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, climate change, and other hazards.
- Environmental Justice: Identify disadvantaged communities within jurisdictions planning areas and develop policies to reduce health risks and promote civic engagement.
- Air Quality: To address air quality issues through general plans, development ordinances, local circulation systems, transportation services, and other plans and programs.

Land use, circulation, conservation, noise, and open space don't have specific deadlines for updates but can be revised at the city's discretion. It should be noted that local governments may only amend a single mandatory element no more than four times per year, but cities may do more than one change at a time.

The housing element, on the other hand, must be updated and approved by the [state every five or eight years, depending on the jurisdiction's location](#). This deadline follows a staggered schedule for approval. The [safety element must also be updated when the housing element is updated, or at a minimum, a local agency must update it at least once every eight years](#). These timelines are important because they illustrate how frequently cities may be required to incorporate childcare considerations if the requirement is triggered whenever two or more elements are updated.

Childcare in California

California has experienced persistent challenges related to childcare affordability and availability, which policymakers increasingly link to workforce participation and housing stability. [Research shows](#) that childcare capacity in California meets the needs of only about one in four children who require care, and many families face difficulty securing reliable childcare arrangements.

[In addition](#), fewer than half of children ages 0–5 have regular childcare arrangements, and nearly one in five households report being unable to secure care when needed, with cost cited as the primary barrier. Childcare costs can also be substantial: average annual expenses for one child in [California have been estimated at roughly \\$11,900 per year](#), representing a significant share of household income.

Because childcare facilities must operate within local zoning and land use frameworks, some policymakers and advocates have argued that planning decisions like where housing, transportation, and employment centers are located can influence access to childcare services. This has led to increasing policy discussions about whether local planning processes should more explicitly consider childcare access when planning communities.

Existing Cal Cities Policy (Housing):

Local Control

- *"To expand and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. ii)
- *"The vitality of cities is dependent upon their fiscal stability and local autonomy."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. ii)

General Plans / Local Planning Authority

- *"Cal Cities supports the use of the general plan as a guide to meeting community planning needs."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 49)
- *"A city's general plan should guide the individual city's land use planning and strategic decision-making."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 49)
- *"General plan requirements should be flexible and provide guidance to local communities without requiring inappropriate levels of detail or mandating new topics or elements."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 49)

Existing Cal Cities Policy (CS):

Child Care Policy

- *"Cal Cities supports the creation of more affordable, innovative and quality parks and recreation and childcare options for parents and concurrently encourages adherence to strict regulations and guidelines."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 2)
- *"Cal Cities supports funding and resources to address the affordability and availability of early learning and care options."*
 - (Cal Cities Existing Policies & Guiding Principles, p. 2)

Fiscal Impact:

This measure would have little to no fiscal impact on the state because it does not require state reimbursement. This measure states that reimbursement is not required because cities can levy service charges, fees, or assessments sufficient to cover the mandated level of service.

For cities, likely costs include:

- Staff time to analyze childcare needs across multiple general plan elements;
- Consultant expenses for technical studies, drafting, outreach, and plan integration;
- Possible CEQA and noticing costs associated with plan amendments
- Potential costs related to downstream zoning and permit code updates.

Smaller and under-resourced cities may be disproportionately impacted because the bill does not provide a funding source, planning grant program, or state technical assistance framework.

Staff Comments:

Since not all cities are required to have a standalone Environmental Justice element in their general plan, this measure could impose requirements on elements that cities do not currently have or have never been subject to.

Cal Cities staff also note that the two-element trigger would not account for when childcare-related updates were previously completed. Cal Cities staff have been in communication with the author's staff and the sponsors regarding what elements would be most relevant to childcare considerations and ensuring that redundant work is avoided.

Both the author's office and the sponsors relayed that the intent of the bill is not to burden cities with adding unmandated elements or continuous cycles of childcare considerations. They expressed interest in ideas for amending the language as follows:

~~b) (1) Upon the next update of two or more elements described in Section 65302, on or after January 1, 2028, a city or county shall review and update the land use, circulation, housing, safety, and environmental justice elements, and any other element, where appropriate, to address the childcare needs of the jurisdiction.~~

After January 1, 2028, upon adoption or next revision of the following elements a city or county shall review and update the element to address the childcare needs of the jurisdiction:

- *Land use*
- *circulation*
- *Housing*
- *Safety*
- *Environmental justice, if applicable*

Given these conversations, we recommend the committees discuss the following:

- What elements of the general plan would be most important to help facilitate robust, accessible and safe childcare?
- If an element is recently updated to include childcare, how often should it be revisited and what should the trigger be in the first place?
- Is the workload associated with revising multiple elements at one time to incorporate childcare, worth the intended goal of more childcare considerations in a city's planning process?

Support:

Low Income Investment Fund (sponsor)

Opposition:

N/A

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the committee discuss this measure and consider how the committee's goals around childcare access and affordability relate to local planning requirements.

Committee Recommendation:**Board Action:**