

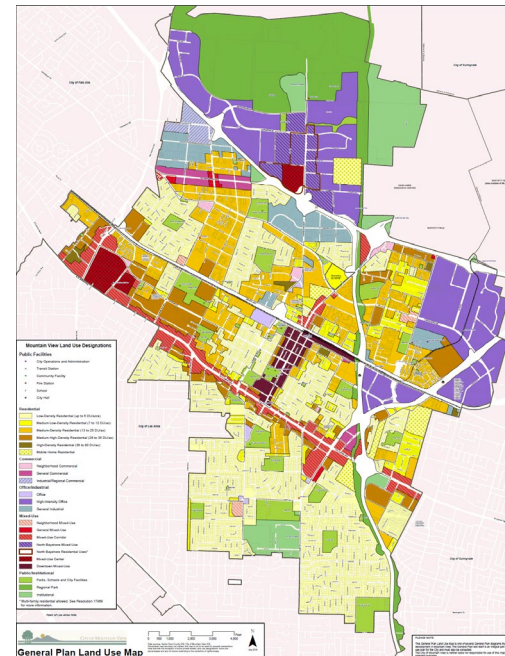
IN THE TRENCHES WITH YOUR GENERAL PLAN



GENERAL PLAN OVERVIEW

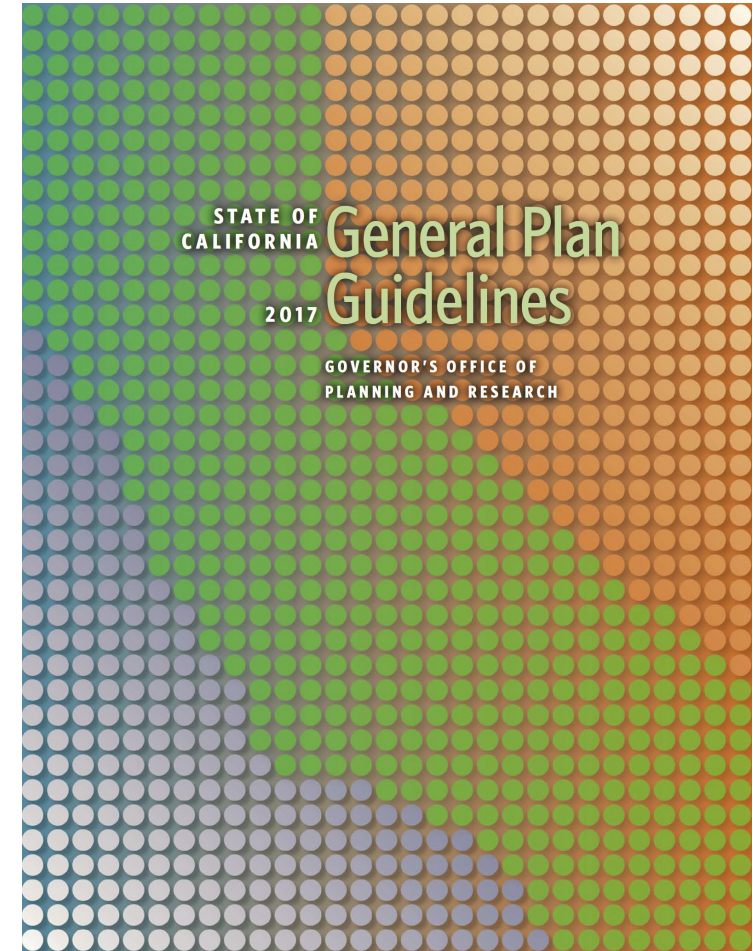
Nature of the General Plan

The general plan is often described as a **blueprint** or **constitution** for land use, development and resource decisions

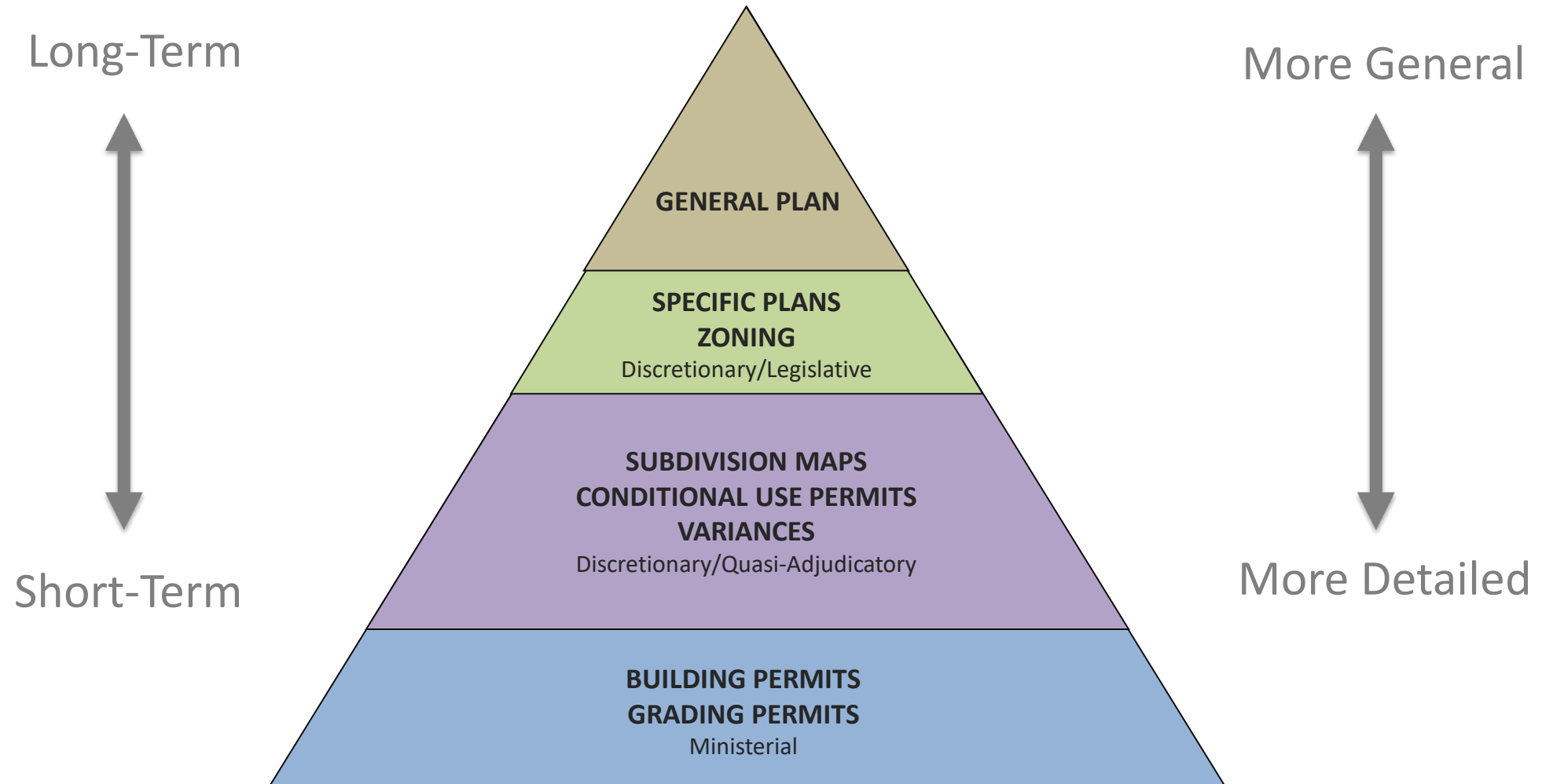


Minimum Requirements

- Comprehensive
- Long-term planning horizon (20-25 years)
- Identified planning area
- Internal consistency



Land Use Planning Hierarchy



Required General Plan Elements



Land Use Element

Identifies how land can be used and distributes those uses



Conservation Element

Addresses the conservation and development of natural resources



Circulation Element

Identifies transportation and mobility solutions for all modes of travel



Safety Element

Establishes programs to protect communities from natural hazards



Housing Element

Addresses housing issues and projects future housing needs



Noise Element

Identifies noise issues in the community and addresses their impacts on sensitive uses



Open Space Element

Details plans for open land preservation and parks



Environmental Justice Element

Ensures all people are treated fairly by land use decisions

Required General Plan Elements



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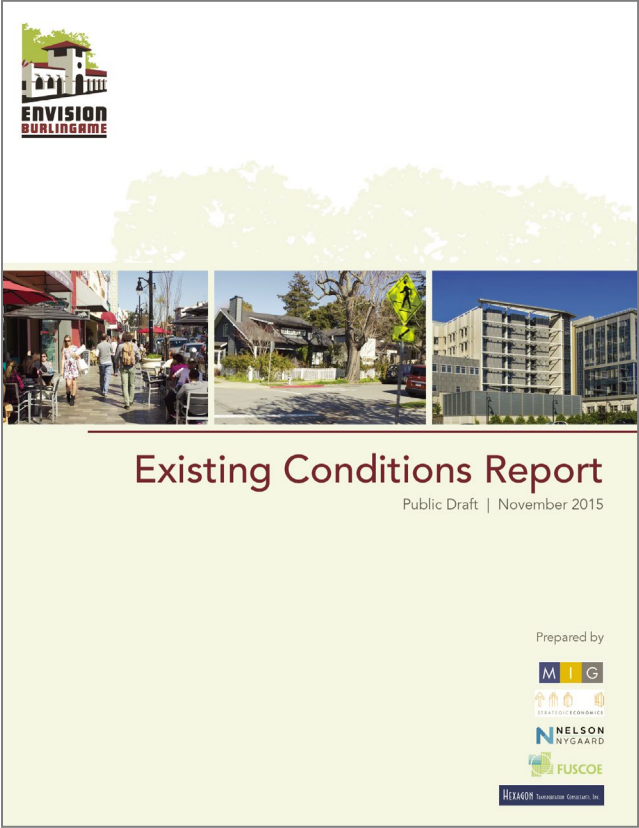
Details plans for open land preservation and parks



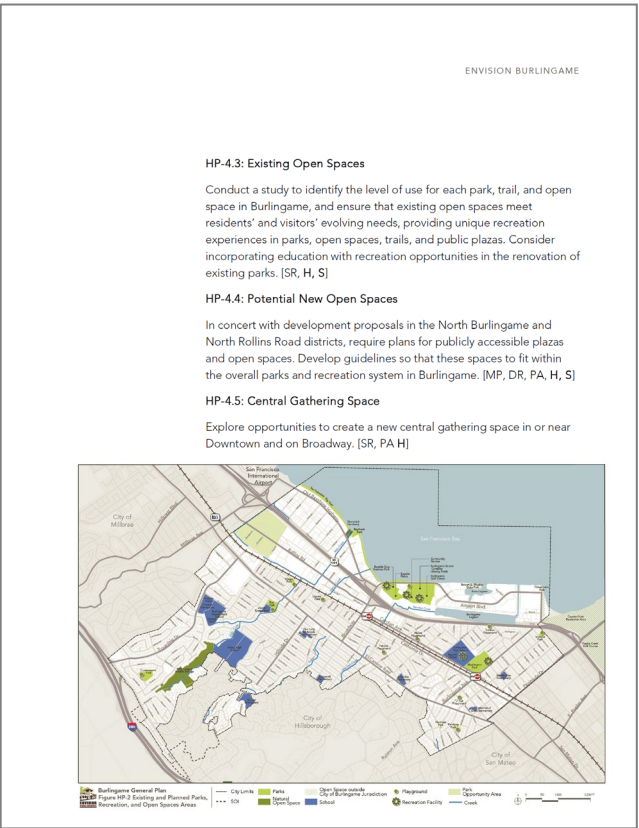
Environmental Justice Element

Ensures all people are treated fairly by land use decisions

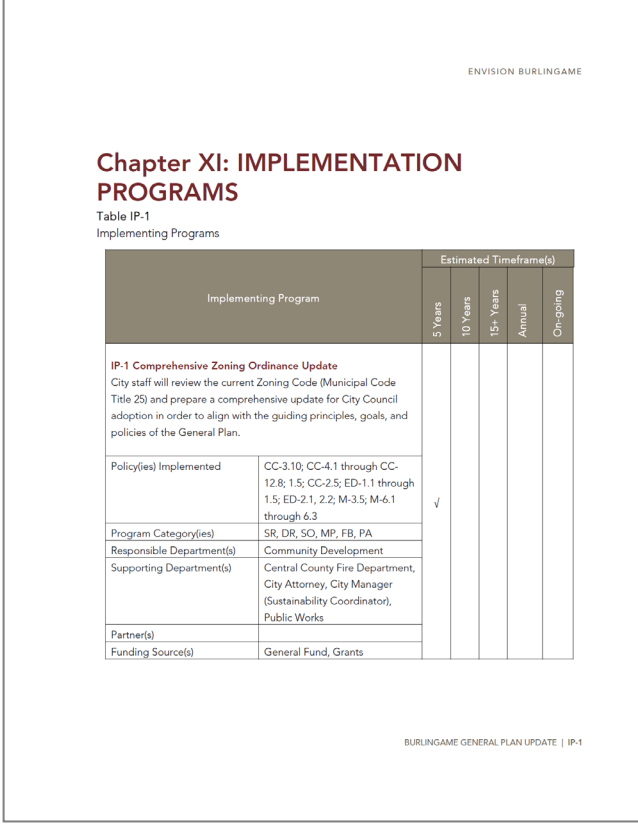
Basic Structure



Background Information



Policy (text + diagrams)



Implementation Programs

Consistency with the General Plan

- There are over **20 types of approvals and actions** that must be consistent with the General Plan
- CEQA review of projects **requires** a General Plan consistency analysis

- ☐ Specific Plans
- ☐ Zoning
- ☐ Conditional Use Permits
- ☐ Development Agreements
- ☐ Development Projects
- ☐ Capital Improvement Programs
- ☐ Public Works Projects
- ☐ Open Space Zoning
- ☐ Acquisitions
- ☐ Disposals
- ☐ Easements
- ☐ Reserving Land For Public Uses (Police/Fire Stations, Parks)
- ☐ Road/Utility Rights-of-Way

Inadequate General Plan Consequences

- **Court order** to fix the General Plan
- **Limits** on future development
- **Vulnerability** of past approvals
- Attorney's **fees**

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENTS AND UPDATES

General Plan Amendments

- The State encourages general plans to be **current** and **relevant**
- However, cities and counties are limited to **four amendment “cycles”** per year for any required elements



General Plan Updates

- While amendments are good, general plans typically require more **comprehensive updates** every 15 to 20 years
- General plan updates are **opportunities to engage the community**, confirm the long-term vision and fully update, analyze and evaluate all parts of the document



RECENT CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

Complete Streets (AB 1358)

Requires Circulation Elements to include a **plan for a balanced, multi-modal transportation network** to meet the needs of all modes of transportation and users.



Climate Change (AB 32, SB 97, S-13-08)

Requires local jurisdictions to identify ways to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent** in 2030 from their 2020 levels through land use and mobility policy and programs.



Sustainable Communities Strategies (SB 375)

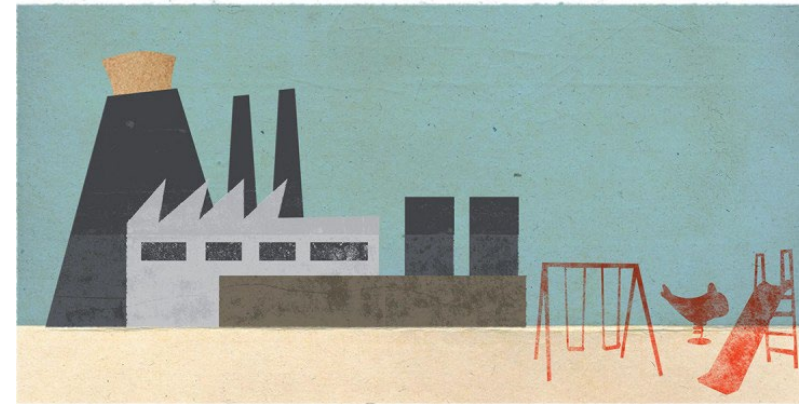
Links land use, transportation and housing planning to greenhouse gas reductions strategies, and **requires regional coordination.**

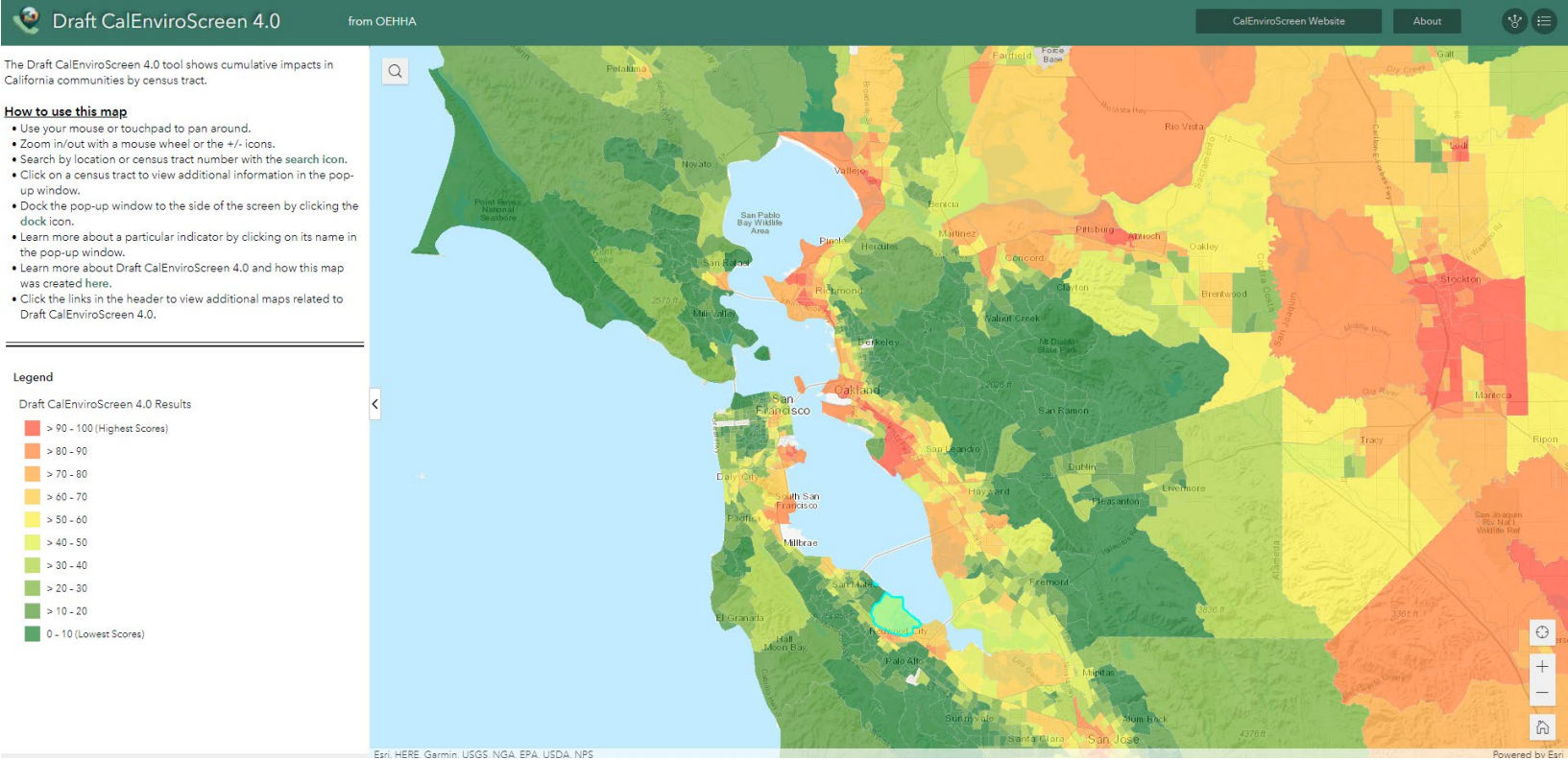
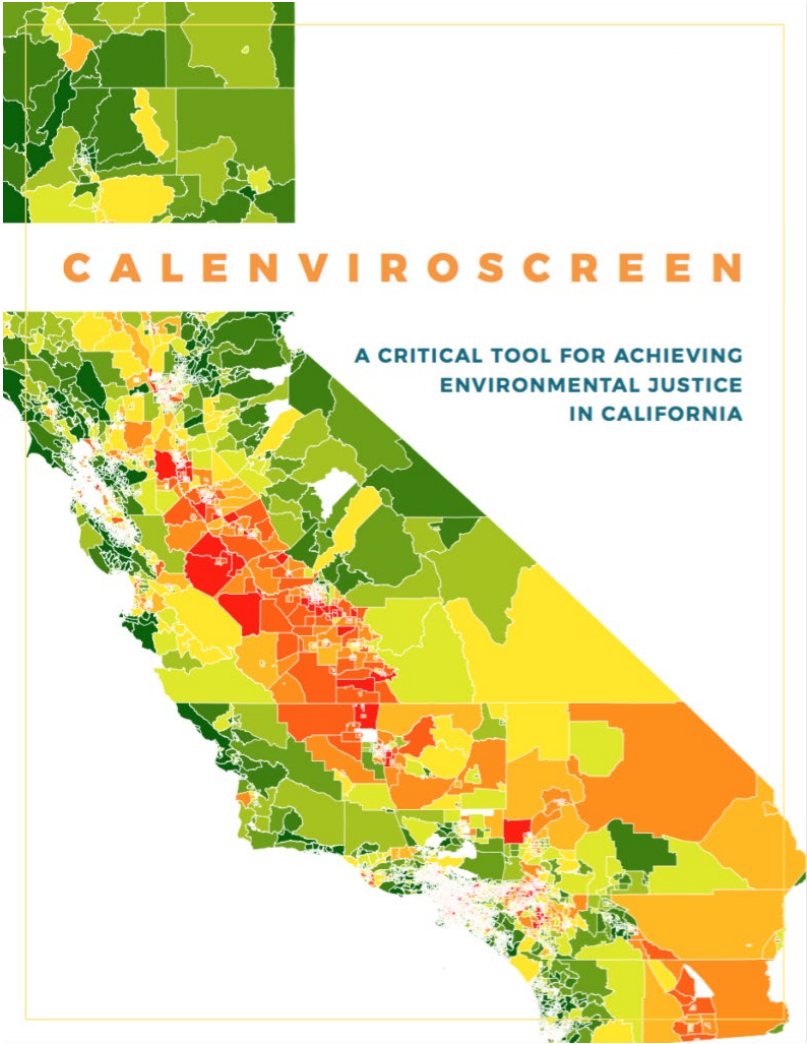


Environmental Justice (SB 1000)

Requires **the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures and incomes** with respect to the development, adoption, implementation and enforcement of the general plan

Includes specific requirements to address EJ when revising two or more General Plan elements and when disadvantage communities have been identified

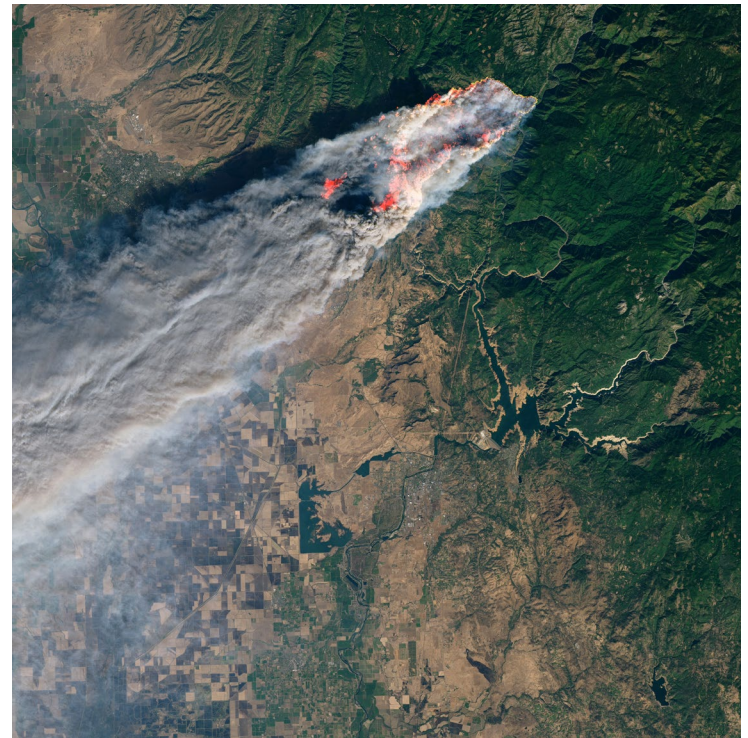




Safety Element Updates

State also requires Safety Elements to be updated regularly.

- Update flooding, earthquake and wildfire information and policies
- Address changes to climate-related hazards
- Identify and address areas facing evacuation constraints
- Includes other updates for new information and best practices

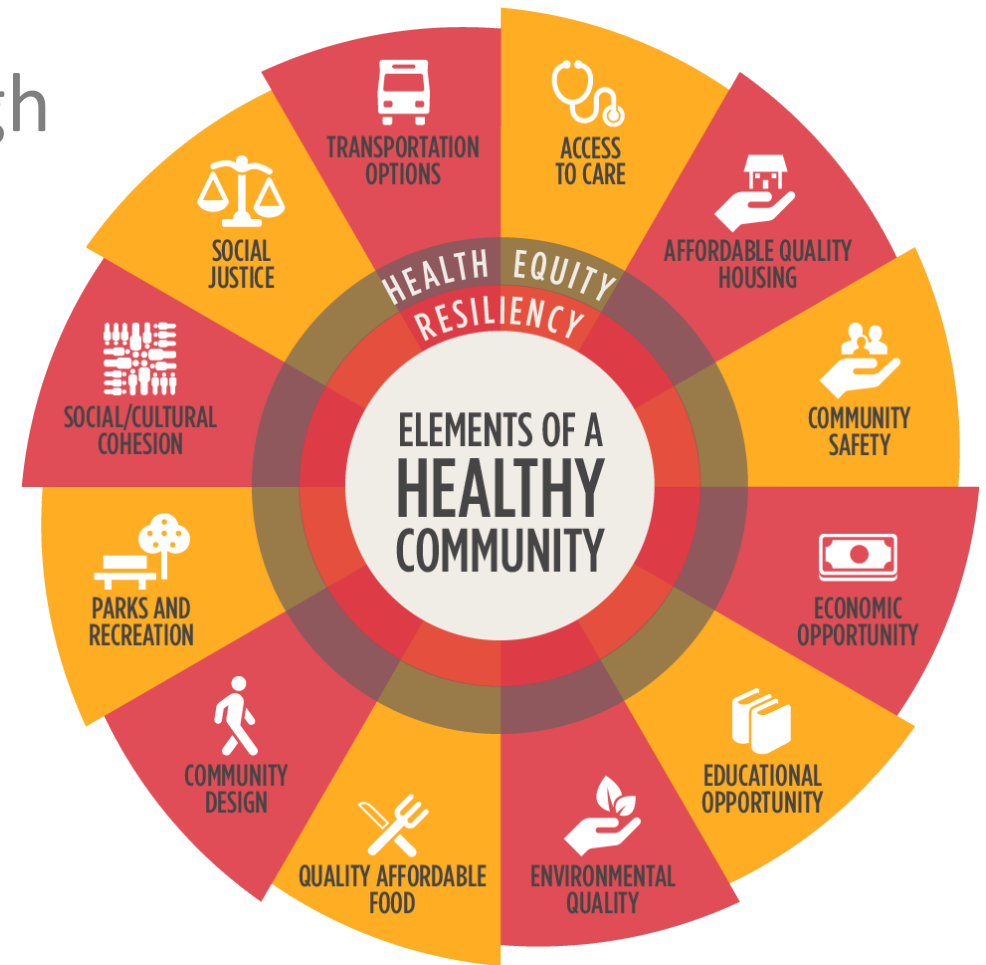


ADDITIONAL TOPICS THAT RELATE TO ALL ELEMENTS

Healthy Communities

While not a legal requirement, addressing community health through the general plan is a growing trend:

- Safer communities
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Access to healthy foods, parks and recreation
- Access to Healthcare
- Worksite wellness

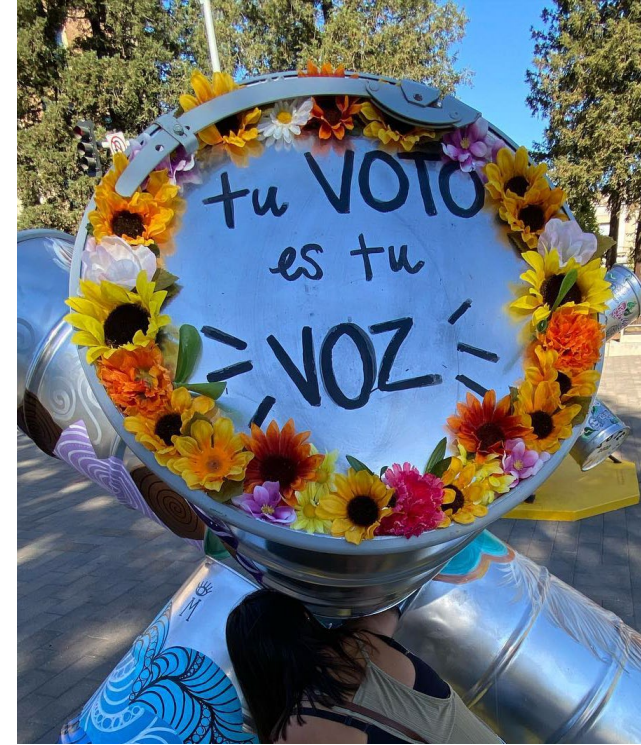


Social Equity

Addressing social equity is vital for the health, well-being, and prosperity of a community.

Areas of focus:

- Community Engagement
- Infrastructure
- Public Services and Amenities
- Equitable Economic Development
- Housing
- Education
- Health
- Sustainability



HOUSING ELEMENTS

Housing Elements

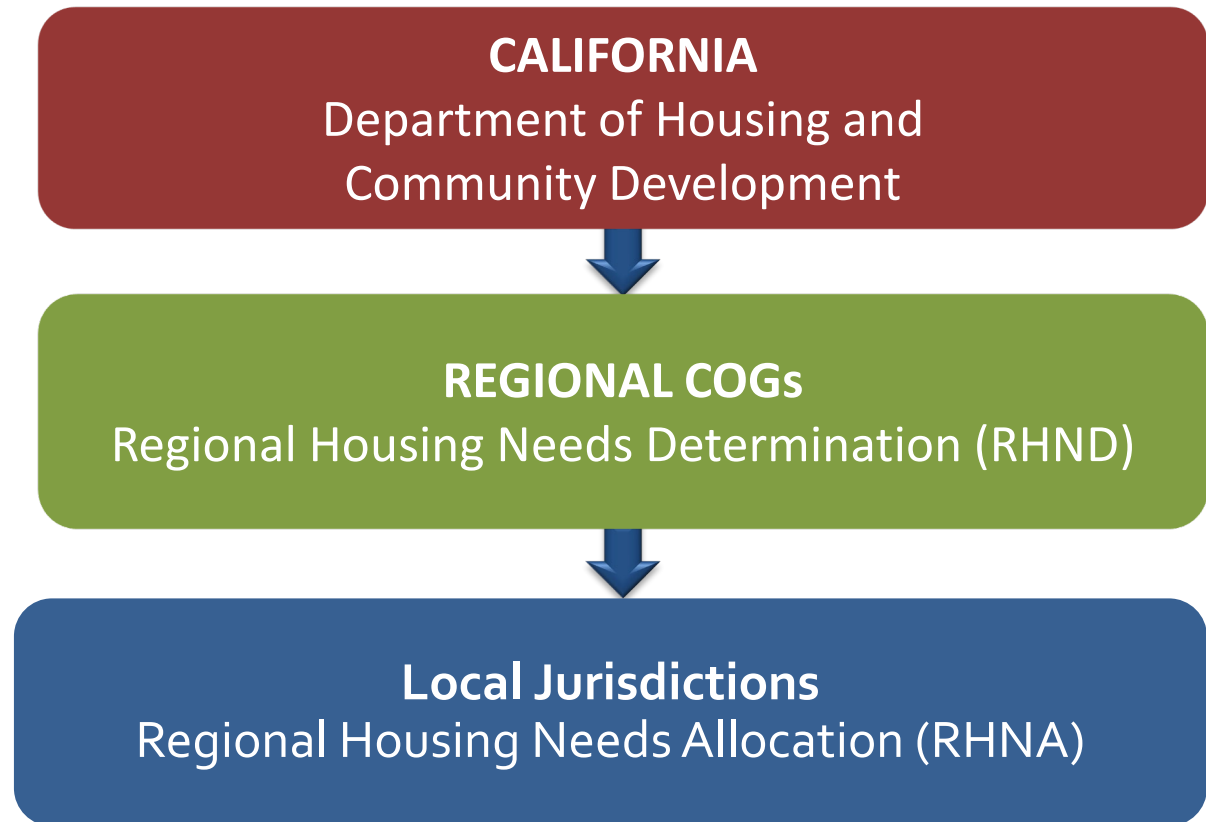
- Plan for accommodating a jurisdiction's “**fair share**” of regional housing needs
- State-mandated 8-year update cycle
- Reviewed and certified by State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for compliance with State law



Regional Housing Needs Assessment/Allocation (RHNA)

RHNA is divided by income category, typically:

- 40% lower income (very low and low)
- 20% moderate income
- 40% above-moderate income

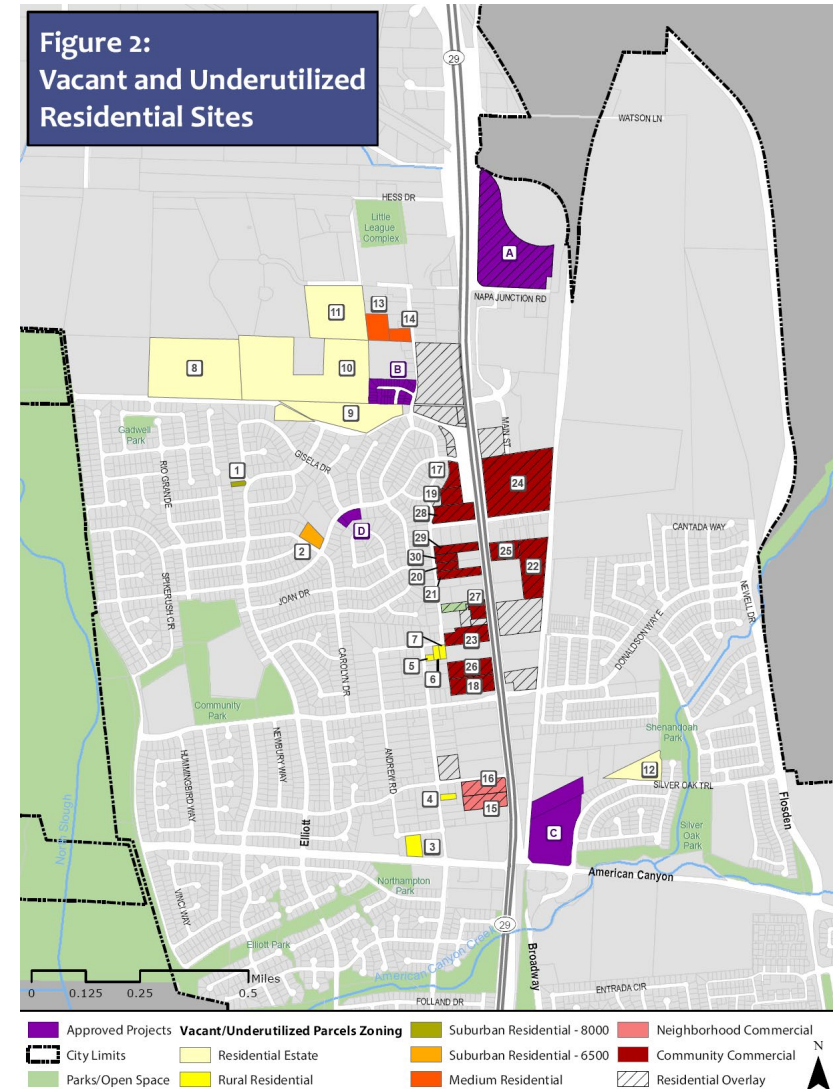


Accommodating the RHNA

Cities and counties must demonstrate availability of land zoned to accommodate the RHNA at each income level.

Default density standard for lower-income housing:

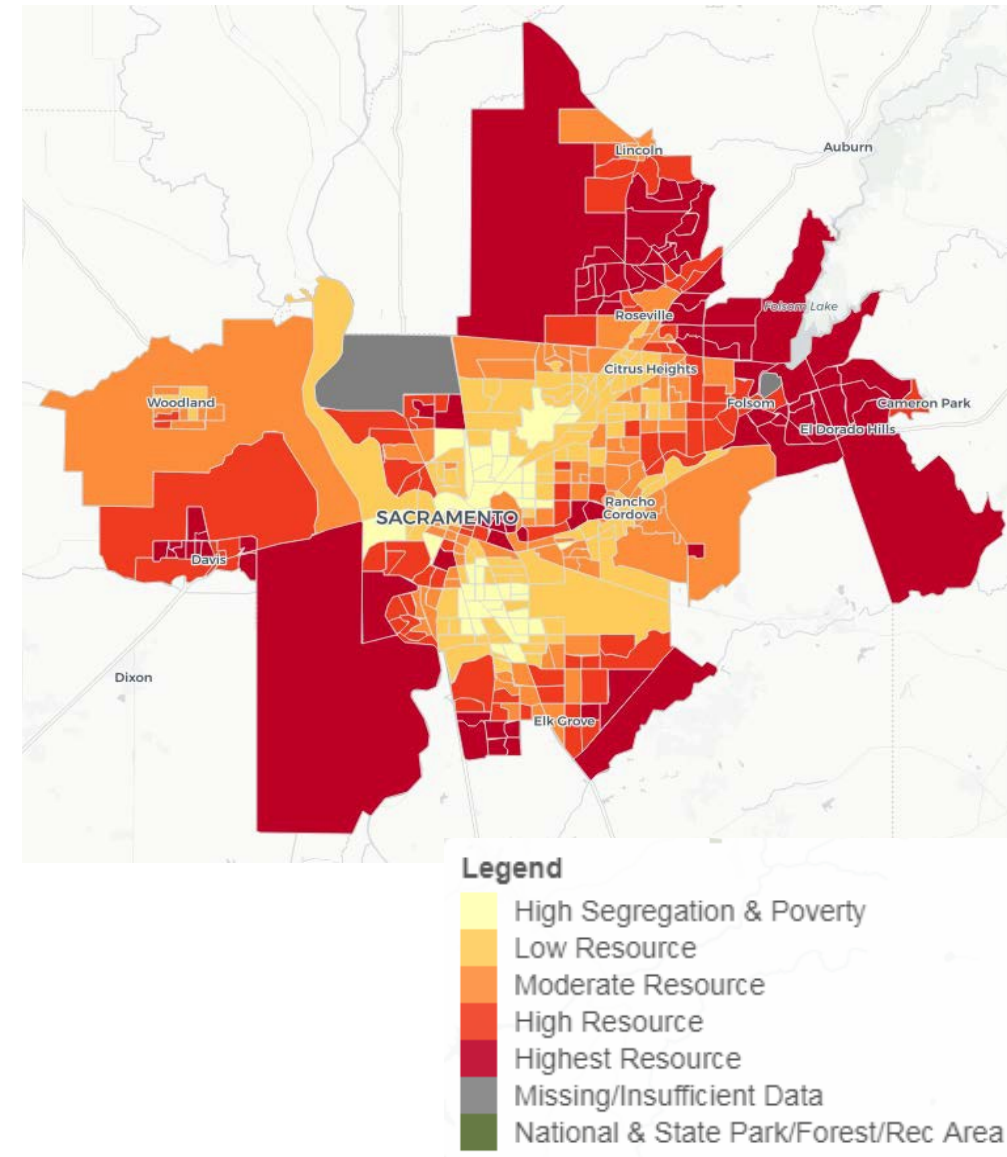
- Metropolitan jurisdictions: 30 units/acre
- Suburban jurisdictions: 20 units/acre
- Non-metropolitan with micropolitan area: 15 units/acres
- Non-metropolitan jurisdictions: 10 units/acre



RECENT CHANGES TO STATE HOUSING LAW

Regional Housing Needs Allocation

- Higher housing targets to address prior underachievement plus new growth
- Other considerations:
Overcrowding and household cost burdens



No Net Loss (SB 116/SB 1333)

If a project is approved on a housing element site with either fewer units or a different income category, cities and counties must either:

- Make written “**no net loss**” finding that other housing element sites are adequate to meet the RHNA for lower- or moderate-income housing; or
- Identify and make available within 180 days other sites zoned at a density suitable for lower- or moderate-income housing.

Housing Accountability Act (HAA)

- Applies to **all multi-family housing** developments and certain mixed-use projects, not just affordable projects
- If a housing project complies with all "objective" general plan, zoning, and subdivision standards, it may **only be denied** or have its **density reduced** if a city or county can find that the project would have a "specific adverse impact" on public health and safety

Objective Design Standards (SB35 and HAA)

Standards that involve "no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant... and the public official prior to submittal."

- Density and Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
- Building height
- Lot coverage
- Percentage of open space
- Setbacks and stepbacks
- Façade breaks every “x” feet
- Screened utility equipment
- Well-defined walkways separated from car traffic
- Front porches or stoops for ground-floor units
- Paned windows

Affordable Housing Streamlining (SB 35)

Allows a ministerial permit instead of discretionary review if a project/developer meets the following:


- The site is **suitable for development** and adjoins urban uses
- The project **includes affordability requirements** and a determined percentage of affordable units
- The project is **consistent with local zoning** and design review requirements
- The construction workers for the development will be paid with at least general **prevailing wages**

Business > Real Estate

Developer tries to fast-track housing at Vallco Mall under new state law

Plan Includes 2,402 housing units

[f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [r](#)



A rendering shows what the proposed Vallco Town Center project in Cupertino would look like. The plan to redevelop the failing Vallco Mall includes 2,402 housing units, 400,000 square feet of retail space, 3.8 million square feet of office space and a 90-acre rooftop park. Developers submitted the proposal for Cupertino city officials' review, March 27, 2018. (Courtesy of Sordani Property Company)

By MARISA KENDALL | mkendall@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group
PUBLISHED: March 31, 2018 at 10:01 pm | UPDATED: March 31, 2018 at 10:18 am

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Berkeley housing development first to seek fast-track under controversial new state law

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A 260-unit mixed-use residential and retail complex proposed for west Berkeley. In a conceptual visualization, developers who have been trying, and failing, for five years to get approval to build hundreds of housing units on a parking lot here went over city officials' heads on Thursday — making them the first to make use of a controversial new state law aimed at fast-track municipal approvals of residential developments.

By MARISA KENDALL | mkendall@bayareanewsgroup.com and GEORGE ANALOS | gvalos@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group
PUBLISHED: March 8, 2018 at 3:24 pm | UPDATED: March 22, 2018 at 8:02 am

BERKELEY — Developers who have been trying, and failing, for five years to get approval to build hundreds of housing units on a parking lot here went over city officials' heads on Thursday — making them the first to make use of a controversial new state law aimed at fast-track municipal approvals of residential developments.

Developer West Berkeley Investors has filed an application for streamlined approval of a 260-unit project at 1900 Fourth St. in Berkeley, of which half will be reserved for low-income families. The planned project also would include 27,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, a park and a community center.

The developer says the project is eligible for the fast-track under Senate Bill 35, a bill passed last year that vests power away from local governments, requiring cities to approve certain residential developments if the cities are behind in meeting their state-mandated housing goals. Nearly 98 percent of cities and counties in California are subject to the new law, according to a recent report released by the state.

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- 5 Tommy Lee and son Brandon want to end family feud, but there's a problem
- 6 UC schools reject March For Our Lives leader David Hogg
- 7 Tesla claims Highway 101 barrier was missing at time of fatal crash
- 8 Kurtzbach: What we learned in the short-handed Victoria's Secret show

Key 2021 bills winding through the legislature...

SB9:

Duplexes allowed
in single-family
zones

SB55:

Restrictions on new
housing in very
high fire severity
areas

AB115/SB6:

Housing in
commercial zones
if 25% of units
affordable

SB10:

Allow at least 10
units on a lot in
transit-rich, jobs-
rich, and infill areas

SB290:

Density bonuses for
student housing with
20% affordable units

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Governor's Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines Website

<https://opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/guidelines.html>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) General Plan Guidelines website. The header includes the OPR logo, navigation links (About OPR, Meetings, Publications, Partners, E-Lists, Settings), and a search bar. Below the header, there are links to various sections: CEQA & State Clearinghouse, Planning & Land Use, Climate & Resilience, Economic Development, and Long-Range Research. The main content area is titled "General Plan Guidelines and Technical Advisories" and includes a notice about a recent update on June 24, 2020. Two buttons are present: "2020 Updated Environmental Justice Element" and "Draft Fire Hazard Planning TA Update". The text explains that OPR is required by Government Code Section 65040.2 to adopt and periodically revise the State General Plan Guidelines (GPG) for the preparation and content of general plans for all cities and counties in California. It also mentions that the GPG was last updated comprehensively in 2017 and that OPR continues to monitor relevant legislation and new general plan requirements. A link to the "General Plan Guidelines E-List" is provided for updates and workshops, and a link to the "General Plan Frequently Asked Questions Document" is provided for questions about the 2017 GPG. Below this text is a large banner image of a construction site with the text "Complete Guidelines Document" and a button to "Download the Full Guidelines Document". At the bottom, there is a section titled "GUIDELINES BY SUBJECT" with four columns: "General Plan Basics" (Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2: A Vision for Long-Range Planning), "Community Engagement" (Chapter 3: Community Engagement and Outreach), "Required Elements" (Chapter 4: Required Elements, 2020 Update: Chapter 4, Section 8: Environmental Justice Element), and "Implementation and Environmental Review" (Chapter 9: Implementation, Chapter 10: CEQA).

General Plan Guidelines and Technical Advisories

Our site was recently updated on June 24, 2020. Please redownload any General Plan Guidelines documents obtained before that date so that the content remains current. If you have trouble viewing these changes, be sure to clear your browser's cache, as it may have saved the old version.

[2020 Updated Environmental Justice Element](#) [Draft Fire Hazard Planning TA Update](#)

OPR is required by Government Code Section 65040.2 to adopt and periodically revise the State General Plan Guidelines (GPG) for the preparation and content of general plans for all cities and counties in California. The GPG serves as the "how to" resource for drafting a general plan.

The GPG was last updated comprehensively in 2017, and OPR continues to monitor relevant legislation and new general plan requirements that have become effective since that time. OPR will continue to issue technical advisories that supplement the GPG to reflect new information or requirements.

Please sign up for the [General Plan Guidelines E-List](#) to hear about updates and workshops related to the GPG. Also, for questions about the 2017 GPG, please refer to our [General Plan Frequently Asked Questions Document](#).

Complete Guidelines Document

[Download the Full Guidelines Document](#)

GUIDELINES BY SUBJECT

General Plan Basics	Community Engagement	Required Elements	Implementation and Environmental Review
Chapter 1: Introduction	Chapter 3: Community Engagement and Outreach	Chapter 4: Required Elements	Chapter 9: Implementation
Chapter 2: A Vision for Long-Range Planning		2020 Update: Chapter 4, Section 8: Environmental Justice Element	Chapter 10: CEQA

California Department of Housing and Community Development RHNA and Housing Element Website

<https://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml>

The screenshot displays the official website of the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The header features the CA.GOV logo, the department's name, and navigation links for CONTACT, ABOUT, JOBS, and NEWSROOM. A search icon is also present. Below the header, a secondary navigation bar includes links for Home, Grants & Funding, Manufactured & Mobilehomes, Building Standards, Planning & Community Development, and Policy & Research. A language selection dropdown and a Google Translate link are also visible.

The main content area is titled "Regional Housing Needs Allocation and Housing Elements". It includes a sidebar with links to various resources: Public Lands for Affordable Housing Development, Regional Housing Needs Allocation and Housing Elements (highlighted), Award-Winning & Exemplary Housing Elements, Building Blocks, Housing Element Webinars, HCD Memos, Accountability and Enforcement, Disaster Mitigation and Resiliency, Disaster Recovery, Community Development, and Community Acceptance.

The main text explains that since 1969, California has required local governments to plan for housing needs. It states that general plans serve as the local government's "blueprint" for growth and development, including seven elements: land use, transportation, conservation, noise, open space, safety, and housing. The law mandates that housing be included as an element of each jurisdiction's general plan, known as "housing-element law."

California's housing-element law acknowledges that, in order for the private market to adequately address the housing needs and demand of Californians, local governments must adopt plans and regulatory systems that provide opportunities for (and do not unduly constrain) housing development. As a result, housing policy in California rests largely on the effective implementation of local general plans and, in particular, local housing elements.

A list of links is provided for further information:

- Background
- Regional Housing Needs
- Housing Elements
- Annual Progress Reports
- Building Blocks: A Comprehensive Housing-Element Guide
- Technical Assistance and Resources

The footer contains several sections: ABOUT, CONTACT (with address and phone number), CONNECT WITH US (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), CAMPAIGNS (Register to Vote, Save Our Water, Flex Alert, Real ID, HOUSING IS KEY, CALIFORNIA ALL COVID-19 UPDATES, and a Vaccinate logo), and LEADERSHIP (Governor Gavin Newsom, Lourdes M. Castro Ramirez, Secretary Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency, and Gustavo Velasquez, Director).

California Planning Roundtable Reinventing the General Plan

<http://reinventingthegeneralplan.org/models/>

Reinventing the General Plan

A Project of the California Planning Roundtable

With support from the American Planning Association, California Chapter

Catalog of Models

[View Map of Model Locations](#)

Riverside County

Publication Date: Jan. 21, 2014

The Riverside County Healthy Communities Element is the first optional Health Element incorporated into a County's General Plan in the State of California. This model highlights three of the most innovative aspects of the Healthy Communities Element:

- **Changing the Narrative.** The Element process acted as a catalyst for the County of Riverside Department of Public Health's role as a major driver for making health an important consideration in planning.
- **Catalyst for Collaboration.** The Element served as the means to convene non-traditional partners for collaboration in planning.
- **Results across the Region.** Since the Element's adoption, cities across Riverside County and other local and regional agencies have become more receptive to considering health as part of their decision-making processes, resulting in tangible changes on the ground.



[View Riverside County...](#)

City of Fullerton

Publication Date: April 24, 2013

The Fullerton Plan is a model for how a plan can be developed in a tight economy and still tackle the big issues. The Fullerton Plan is both driven by vision and grounded in implementation.

- The planning process defined a community vision that drives the Fullerton Plan, and the Plan is designed for usability.
- The Plan identifies objectives for focus areas in the Vision statement and prioritizes placemaking rather than land use decisions. This approach produced a streamlined, succinct plan and allowed the Plan to focus both on bigger picture issues and quality of life.
- The Plan acknowledges that Fullerton is a player in the region, but does not have control over issues outside its boundaries, and includes policies for different levels of geography -- from the region down to the project level.



The Catalog

Our catalog contains a number of General Plan "Great Model" examples. [Browse the entire catalog](#)

Browse by Principle

- [Create a Vision](#)
- [Manage Change](#)
- [Make Life Better](#)
- [Build Community Identity](#)
- [Promote Social Equity and Economic Prosperity](#)
- [Steward and Enhance the Environment](#)
- [Engage the Whole Community](#)
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