

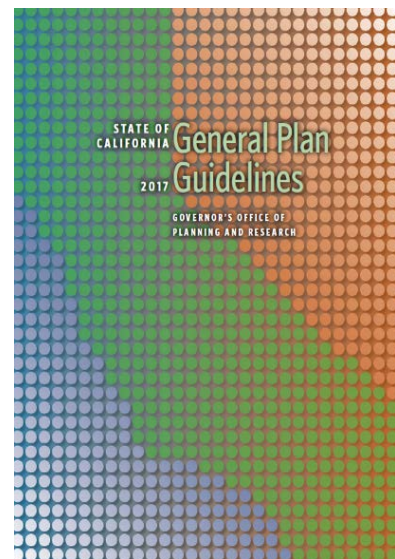
General Plan Guidelines, 2017

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has been engaged in a thorough update of the General Plan Guidelines (GPG). OPR is statutorily required by Government Code Section 65040.2 to adopt and periodically revise State guidelines for the preparation and content of local general plans for all cities and counties in California. This 2017 edition is the first comprehensive update to the guidelines since 2003. Legislative changes, new technical advisories, guidance documents, and additional resources have been incorporated into this new GPG. Additional information is on the OPR General Plan Guidelines website: https://www.opr.ca.gov/s_generalplanguidelines.php

The new GPG contains significant changes to the previous General Plan Guidelines, making it easier to navigate and utilize.

Major changes include:

- Reformatted sections on the mandatory elements, including a new section on environmental justice
- Statutory checklists for all mandatory elements
- Updated and expanded sections on visioning and community engagement
- New sections on healthy communities, equitable and resilient communities, economic development, and climate change
- Incorporation of existing legislative changes and guidance
- Links to additional online tools and resources
- Recommended policies in cut and paste format, with examples of adopted policy language
- Infill compendium
- Renewable energy compendium
- Model template for mitigation of agricultural land conversion
- General Plan Mapping Tool, enabling free, easy access to helpful data for cities and counties



For mandatory and common optional elements of the general plan, the GPG sets out each statutory requirement in detail, provides OPR recommended policy language, and includes online links to city and county general plans that have adopted similar policies. Each chapter contains a sample selection of policies as well. Users can also click the links provided for more detailed policies and plans. All of the referenced policies as well as additional policies are compiled in an appendix.

As more resources become available, they will be added to the GPG. The new online platform will allow OPR to add updated text, links, and information directly to the GPG, and announce any additions through the GPG listserv and on the OPR website.

A general plan is the local government's long-term blueprint for the community's vision of future growth. The GPG serves as the "how to" resource for drafting a general plan. The GPG is a resource to help planners accomplish their respective community's priorities and vision while meeting larger state goals, increasing community collaboration, and potentially improving competitiveness for funding opportunities.

The new GPG has been informed by extensive outreach and collaboration. The public comment draft of the update to the GPG for the State of California was posted in October 2015. OPR held multiple community outreach events and public workshops in 2015 for the draft GPG update. Planners, practitioners, and community members were invited to attend and learn about the updated guidelines, ask questions, and share their feedback. The update was informed by comment letters, agency and public input, and thorough research and collaboration.



Image by Urban Advantage, Contra Costa County, CA

OPR will conduct workshops around the State over the next year to update communities on the new GPG. Additionally, OPR plans to next update the GPG with additional guidance for communities interested in creating a water element, as well as communities who will be affected by SB 1000 (see below for more information on SB 1000).

Environmental Justice and General Plans

In 2016, the Legislature passed and Governor Brown signed Senate Bill 1000 (Leyva, Chapter 587), requiring cities and counties that have disadvantaged communities¹ to incorporate environmental justice (EJ) policies into their General Plans, either in a separate EJ element or by integrating related goals, policies, and objectives throughout the other elements. This update, or revision if the local government already has EJ goals, policies, and objectives, must happen “upon the adoption or next revision of two or more elements concurrently on or after January 1, 2018.”

The General Plan Guidelines (GPG) contains the statutory requirements for SB1000, but since the legislation passed after the public comment concluded for the GPG, the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research will be soliciting more focused feedback with related state and local agencies as well as local jurisdictions and partners to learn more about the process to do these new updates, discuss data use, promising policies, and case examples to share with other jurisdictions across California. This new guidance will be made available in the coming year on the OPR website. Stay tuned on upcoming meetings in local areas across CA.

If your local jurisdiction is currently doing an update or you have inquiries related to SB 1000, please e-mail Elizabeth Baca at SB1000@opr.ca.gov.

¹ For purposes of SB 1000, “Disadvantaged communities” means an area [identified](#) by the California Environmental Protection Agency Pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code OR an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation” (Gov. Code § 65302(h)(4)(A)).

The statute further defines “low-income area” to mean “an area with household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income OR with household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Developments list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093” (Gov. Code § 65302(h)(4)(C)).