General Plan Guidelines
Office of Planning and Research
October 2015
Agenda

• Introductions
• Background
• OPR update and general questions
• Break
• Targeted discussion
  • Community engagement and visioning
  • Land use, circulation, and housing
  • Open space and conservation
  • Safety and climate change
  • Other topics, elements, or themes
• Close
The significance of General Plans?
Why update guidelines?
How have they changed?
Next steps and feedback
Significance of a General Plan
A General Plan is a local government's long term blueprint for the community's vision of future growth.

- Starts with Community Vision, created through public engagement
  - Look back to identify past challenges and accomplishments
  - Examine current data and emerging data trends
  - Consider future issues, challenges, and goals
- Set goals, objectives, and policies in each element or topic area related to future growth
Significance of a General Plan

Requires all other plans to be consistent with General Plan

• Area Plans
• Specific plans
• Airport land use plans
• Local coastal plans
• Local hazard mitigation plans
• Climate adaptation plans
Significance of a General Plan

**Required Elements**

- Land use
- Circulation
- Housing
- Conservation
- Open Space
- Noise
- Safety
- Air Quality

**Additional Elements often Included**

- Healthy communities
- Climate Change
- Economic Development
- Water Management
Significance of a General Plan

**Figure 1: Examples of General Plan Layout**

- **Community identified values**
  - Element 1
  - How Element 1 will support values
  - Element 2
  - How Element 2 will support values
- **Thematic**
  - Theme 1
  - Policies to support theme 1 throughout elements
  - Theme 2
  - Policies to support theme 2 throughout elements
- **Challenges & Goals**
  - Challenge 1
  - Policies to overcome challenge 1 and achieve goals across elements
  - Challenge 2
  - Policies to overcome challenge 2 and achieve goals across elements
- **Other innovative Model**
Significance of a General Plan

Limits of general plans include:

• Visionary document, implementation accomplished through other levers (e.g., zoning, ordinances)
• In order to utilize general plan for policy, city or county must be engaged in update
• Long term process, often stretching over many years
• Can be important to help direct funding (e.g., for grants) but does not guarantee funding
Why Update Guidelines?

The last update to the General Plan Guidelines was in 2003, and there have been numerous new laws, requirements, resources, and research that affect general planning:

- SB 375- Sustainable communities strategies
- SB 5- Flood management
- SB 743-VMT
- SB 244- Island or fringe communities
- AB 52- Tribal consultation
- AB 2140- Local hazard mitigation plans
- Many more!!

The current draft does not reflect the 2015 legislative cycle, but the final draft will...
Reason for update of the GPG

Notably, SB 379 will require climate change considerations in safety element updates
Why Update Guidelines?

Incorporate State planning priorities with local needs

• Promote infill
• Protect natural and working lands
• Develop in an efficient matter
As of 2015, more than half of local jurisdictions have general plans that are over 15 years old.

The process of adopting a new general plan can be time consuming and costly.
How Have the Guidelines Changed?
Vision for the GPG Update

*a suite of tools*

1. Policy Document: General Plan Guidelines
2. Online Data Mapping Tool
3. Updated Website
Integrated Suggestions from Initial Outreach

• Vision, how-to-guide, and outreach strategies open the guidelines

• Restructured layout to be user friendly
  – Clear description and examples of multiple ways to structure GP

• Sample policies for various communities, in format that is easily modified for various contexts
Policy Document

Begins with General Plan basics, emphasis on alignment and consistency
• New chapter on public engagement and visioning process
• Required elements
• Optional elements
• Implementation
• CEQA
• Appendix and resources
Policy Document

- New sections on linkages between elements
- New tables with suggested data to consider (link directly to source where available)
- New tables with example policies from around California (link directly to source where available)
- New compendiums on infill, renewable energy, and agricultural land conservation
- Direct links to sample General Plans, resources, and tools

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations among Elements</th>
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<td><strong>Land Use</strong></td>
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- Identified in statute
- Closely related to statutory requirements
Chapters 1 & 2: Introduction and Vision

• General Plan Basics
• How to use this document
• State planning priorities and their relationship to local issues
Chapter 3: Public Engagement and Outreach

- Planning effective public participation
- Demographic considerations
- Tools and resources available
Chapter 4: Required Elements

Land Use:
Expanded section on diagrams and maps
Expanded discussion on land use types and placemaking
Additional considerations in land use
  • School siting
  • Near roadway considerations
  • Waste management
  • Agricultural land conservation
Chapter 4: Required Elements

Circulation:
Expanded section on LOS vs VMT
Expanded discussion on coordination with land use element
Additional considerations in circulation
  • Broadband and utilities
  • Complete Streets initiatives
  • Parking policies
Chapter 4: Required Elements

**Housing:**
Direct links to HCD site
Expanded discussion on displacement and affordable housing
Expanded discussion on consistency with other elements
Chapter 4: Required Elements

Conservation & Open Space:
Discussion of health and environmental impacts
Incorporation of water and climate change in to sections
Chapter 4: Required Elements

Safety:
Expanded discussion of new requirements for safety element updates
Tools and resources for gathering data on safety concerns
Connection to climate change and further environmental considerations
Chapter 4: Required Elements

Noise:
Interim update to noise guidance
Expanded consideration of construction and other types of noise, in context of infill
Appendix with last noise guidance until further update is possible
Chapter 4: Required Elements

*Air Quality:*
Direct links to San Joaquin Valley Air Quality requirements
Chapter 5: Healthy Communities

Strategies, considerations, and potential partnerships
Expanded discussion on healthy food systems
Relationship to other elements
Clear descriptions and analysis of health and its relationship to planning and equity
Focus on data and data mapping
Links to resources and models
Chapter 6: Social Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Resilience

Definitions for equity and environmental justice
Considerations in planning
Potential mitigation strategies
Breakdown of different forms of inequity
Chapter 7: Economic Development

Partnerships
Considerations related to other elements
Examples of economic engines in planning
Chapter 8: Climate Change

Explanation of benefits of aligning documents
Links to tools and data sources
Considerations for different localities
Chapter 9: Implementation

Chapter 10: CEQA

Updated to reflect current statute and practice
The new mapping tool will have layers of data from state and federal sources, and additional layers of local data can be added in to paint a more complete picture for planning purposes.
Colusa County Farmland Designations
Tool
General Plan Guidance

Next Steps
Next Steps

• Public comment and outreach
  – Draft comment closes December 18
• Integration of comments and edits
• Public release and outreach
• Continued improvement of tool and website
Draft comments and Questions

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Questions to consider

From a planner or community perspective,

• What is an issue that has come up in general planning updates or specific element updates?

• What guidance or tools from the state level would have helped address this issue?

• What data would be useful in resolving this issue?