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Governor's Office of Planning and Research



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To: All California Cities and Counties

From: Helen Campbell, AICP, Senior Projects Analyst  
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RE: General Plan Annual Progress Report Guidance

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research has updated the *General Plan Annual Progress Report Guidance*. This edition reflects the change in address for reporting to the Department of Housing and Community Development. This *Guidance* document is also available on our website at [opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/](http://opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/)

If you have questions regarding the *General Plan Annual Progress Report Guidance*, please contact Helen Campbell, AICP, Senior Projects Analyst at (916) 341-7371 or e-mail at [Helen.Campbell@opr.ca.gov](mailto:Helen.Campbell@opr.ca.gov).

## **ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS (APRs)**

Government Code Section 65400 and 65700 mandates that all cities and counties submit an annual report on the status of the General Plan and progress in its implementation to their legislative bodies, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Housing and Community Development (HCD) by April 1 of each year. The guidance that follows is intended to assist local governments with the development of the General Plan Annual Progress Report (APR). This guidance is intentionally general to allow maximum flexibility in the form and content of APRs, which may need to vary based on individual circumstances, resources, and constraints.

### **PURPOSE OF THE APR**

The APR provides local legislative bodies and the public with information regarding the implementation of the General Plan for their city or county. APRs also inform the public of the progress in meeting the community's goals. Accordingly, local agencies should make a diligent effort to include the public when preparing their APRs.

APRs must be presented to the local legislative body for its review and acceptance, usually as a consent or discussion item on a regular meeting agenda. Therefore, the APR should provide enough information for decision makers to assess how the General Plan was implemented during the 12-month reporting period, either calendar year or fiscal year. More specifically, APRs should explain how land use decisions relate to adopted goals, policies, and implementation measures of the General Plan. The APRs should provide enough information to identify necessary "course adjustments" or modifications to the General Plan and means to improve local implementation. It is important for local governments and their legislators to legislative bodies to engage stakeholders and the public in sharing APRs and in making adjustments necessary to reach local planning goals.

### **HOUSING ELEMENT APR**

State law requires that all General Plans include a Housing Element which provides a plan for accommodating future housing production needs. State law further requires that all cities and counties create an annual progress report that describes that community's progress toward implementing their Housing Element. The Housing Element APR must be delivered to OPR and HCD by April 1 of each year and must cover the previous calendar year<sup>1</sup>. As of 2018, charter cities must submit a Housing Element APR. Legislation passed in 2017 added new data requirements for the Housing Element APRs beginning with calendar year 2018. Updated instructions and standardized forms for

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<sup>1</sup> The General Plan APR 12 month reporting period can be either a fiscal or calendar year, but the Housing Element APR 12 month reporting period must be a calendar year.

submitting the Housing Element APR can be found at the following HCD website: <http://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml>).

The Housing Element APR fulfills statutory requirements to report certain housing information, including: the local agency's progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs (i.e., applications, entitlements, permits and certificates of occupancy), certain rezoning activities, actions taken towards completion of housing element programs, and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to the development of housing (Government Codes Section 65584.3(c) and 65584.5(b)(5)). California's housing element law acknowledges that in order for the private market to adequately address the state's housing needs, local governments must adopt plans and regulatory systems that provide opportunities for, and do not unduly constrain, housing development. As a result, housing policy rests largely on the effective implementation of local general plans and housing elements.

### **HOW THE STATE USES THE GENERAL PLAN APR and HOUSING ELEMENT APR**

The General Plan APR gives OPR the opportunity to identify statewide trends in land use decision-making and how local planning and development activities relate to statewide planning goals and policies. APRs may also inform modifications to OPR's *General Plan Guidelines*. In addition, OPR is able to track progress on a local jurisdiction's comprehensive General Plan update using information provided in the APR. Whether a jurisdiction has submitted a recent Housing Element APR is a threshold requirement for several State funding programs.

### **FORMAT GUIDANCE FOR THE GENERAL PLAN and HOUSING ELEMENT APR**

There is no standardized form or format for the preparation of the General Plan APR. The following recommendations serve as guidance in developing an APR that is useful to your specific jurisdiction. The APR prepared for your city or county is not required to incorporate all of the elements suggested and need not be an elaborate and time-consuming task. Instead, the APR may make use of available sources of information that may contain information pertinent to General Plan annual reporting such as: "annual reports," "performance reports," "budget reports," or "state of the city/county reports." OPR encourages jurisdictions to include these types of reports or portions thereof in the APR so long as they specifically address implementation of the General Plan. This approach enables General Plan implementation to be discussed in the broader context of the jurisdiction's overall programs and activities, including redevelopment, economic development, and other topics.

Reporting on planning activities related to the General Plan is required even when a city or county may be undertaking a General Plan comprehensive update. Therefore, status on

these activities should still be reported to local legislative bodies and to both OPR and HCD.

## **General Contents**

Each jurisdiction should determine what locally relevant issues are important to include in the General Plan APR. The following are suggested contents for the report:

1. Introduction.
2. Table of Contents.
3. Date of presentation/acceptance by the local legislative body (agenda item or resolution).
4. Measures associated with the implementation of the general plan with specific reference to individual element.
5. Housing Element APR reporting requirements – Each jurisdiction is required to report certain housing information in accordance with state housing law (refer to Government Code Sections 65400, 65583 and 65584) and HCD’s housing element guidelines (see <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml> or email [APR@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:APR@hcd.ca.gov) for more information).
6. The degree to which the General Plan complies with OPR’s General Plan Guidelines, including environmental justice considerations, collaborative planning with the military lands and facilities, and consultation with Native American tribes.
7. The date of the last update to the General Plan<sup>2</sup>.
8. Priorities for land use decision making that have been established by the local legislative body (e.g., passage of moratoria or emergency ordinances).
9. Goals, policies, objectives, standards or other plan proposals that need to be added or were deleted, amended, or otherwise adjusted.
10. One or more lists of the following, including reference to the specific general plan element or policy, status (i.e., approved/denied, initiated/ongoing/completed, etc.), and brief comment on how each advanced the implementation of the General Plan during the past year:
  - a. Planning activities initiated – These may include, but are not limited to, master plans, specific plans, master environmental assessments, annexation studies, and other studies or plans.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Government Code Section 65040.5(a) and (b), OPR is tasked with notifying a city or county if a general plan has not been revised within eight years and will notify the Attorney General if a general plan has not been revised within ten years.

- b. General Plan amendments<sup>3</sup> – These may include agency-driven as well as applicant-driven amendments.
- c. Major development applications processed

## **Additional Content**

The following are additional suggestions to make the APR a more comprehensive tool for illustrating planning and development activities within the jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions may not have the resources to address them annually. However, they are mentioned here as examples of how some jurisdictions have effectively incorporated other types of information into their APRs. Cities and counties should feel free to incorporate this information into their APRs, where available and as deemed appropriate.

1. Review of:
  - a. Interagency or intergovernmental coordination efforts and identify areas for improvement. This may include participation in a regional blueprint or partnerships with State or Federal programs.
  - b. The implementation of mitigation measures from the General Plan Final Environmental Impact Report or Negative Declaration.
  - c. Equity planning considerations of the General Plan, such as impacts on particular ethnic or socioeconomic population groups (i.e., environmental justice issues).
2. Summarize efforts to:
  - a. Promote infill development, reuse, and redevelopment particularly in underserved areas while preserving cultural and historic resources.
  - b. Protect environmental and agricultural resources and other natural resources
  - c. Encourage efficient development patterns
3. Describe the jurisdiction's strategy for:
  - a. Economic development – Depending on the needs of your jurisdiction, this analysis could include information on the ratio of jobs to dwelling units, tax revenues, demographics, census information, etc.
  - b. Monitoring long-term growth – For example: population growth, employment growth, land use development, and the provision of adequate supporting public services and infrastructure.
4. Other actions:

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<sup>3</sup> Except as provided in Government Code Sections 65358(c) and (d), no mandatory element of the General Plan may be amended more than four times during a calendar year.

- a. Outline department goals, objectives, activities and responsibilities, as they relate to land use planning.
- b. Perform a regional or sub-regional outlook of population growth, housing, job generation, and other socioeconomic trends.
- c. Summarize the comments of other boards and commissions on the general plan implementation.
- d. Identify and monitor customer service improvements and methods to encourage public involvement in planning activities.
- e. Review and summarize grant administration for land use planning activities.
- f. Provide a technology review such as implementation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or establishment of web sites.

## **SUBMITTING THE GENERAL PLAN APR**

Jurisdictions must submit a General Plan APR and a Housing Element APR to both OPR and HCD by April 1 of each year.

*To OPR:* Submit the APR as an attachment in an MS Office application or PDF to [opr.apr@opr.ca.gov](mailto:opr.apr@opr.ca.gov). A printed copy of the APR can be mailed to the State Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 3044, Sacramento, CA 95812-3044, or 1400 10th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. If your city or county posts the APR electronically, please notify OPR of your website address so that we may review it online.

*To HCD:* A copy of the APR should also be submitted as an attachment in an MS Office application or PDF to [apr@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:apr@hcd.ca.gov). A printed copy of the APR can be mailed to the Housing and Community Development, Housing Policy Development Division, 2020 West El Camino Ave., Sacramento, CA 95833.

## **SUBMITTING THE HOUSING ELEMENT APR**

*To OPR and HCD:* Submit the new APR form via email to [opr.apr@opr.ca.gov](mailto:opr.apr@opr.ca.gov) and [apr@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:apr@hcd.ca.gov). Send the APR form as an Excel workbook attachment, do not send a scanned or PDF version of the new form via email. The HCD has developed an online portal system as an alternative to emailing the APR. To use the online system, email [apr@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:apr@hcd.ca.gov) and request login information for your jurisdiction.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

OPR welcomes suggestions on how to make this guidance more meaningful and useful to local planning agencies. Please contact Helen Campbell, AICP, Senior Projects Analyst at (916) 341-7371 or e-mail at [Helen.Campbell@opr.ca.gov](mailto:Helen.Campbell@opr.ca.gov)