“Community Visioning”: Where are we? Where are we going? Where do we want to be? How do we get there?

The General Plan: “...the set of policies from which all decisions flow” – F&S
1. Expression of community “vision”
2. Guide to decision making

Plan = Vision -> goals -> objectives -> policies

California Requirements: Every city and county must adopt “a comprehensive, long-term general plan for physical development” (§65300)

Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) publishes “General Plan Guidelines”

**Adoption**
Initial adoption: within 30 months of incorporation
Adoption of updates: usually every 10-15 years – state doesn’t specify timetable
Amendments: up to four times per year – usually for specific projects

**Required Elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Elements</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Use</strong></td>
<td>General location and intensity of different land uses (e.g. housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Circulation</strong></td>
<td>General location and extent of existing and proposed major roads, other transportation facilities (transit, bike/ped), public utilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td>Assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of community; affordable housing issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conservation</strong></td>
<td>Conservation, development, and use of natural resources – water, forests, soils, rivers, and mineral deposits.</td>
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<td><strong>Open-space</strong></td>
<td>Preserving open-space for natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, public health, safety, identification of ag land.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Noise</strong></td>
<td>Assessment of noise problems in community, distribution of new noise-sensitive land uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety</strong></td>
<td>Policies and programs to protect community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and wildfire hazards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GP Guidelines section on “sustainable development”: environment, economy, equity
Optional elements: e.g. air quality, community design, economic/fiscal development, energy, flood management, geothermal, parks and recreation, water, bicycles, climate change, others
Notes on terms:
- Comprehensive Plans: more general term, often used in other states
- Master plans: old term for general plan, now used for developments
- Area and Community Plans: a part of the general plan
- Specific Plans: tool for implementing the general plan, not a part of general plan

Consistency requirements: within plan, with state plans

**Land Use Element**
Land use map specifies general distribution of some uses, specific locations for others:
- General distribution: housing, business, and industry; open space and agricultural land; mineral resources; recreational facilities
- Specific locations: educational facilities, public buildings and grounds, future solid and liquid waste facilities

Key building blocks:
- Growth forecasts (e.g. population projections from California Department of Finance)
- Developable land as a function of existing land, available infrastructure, natural features

**Housing Element**
Starts with Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)
- State determine needs for state, share that each region is responsible for
- Regional Council of Governments (COG) determines share each city is responsible for
Cities must assess needs, establish policies to ensure that needs are met
- Sites available for low-income housing
- Programs to provide housing targeted to low- and moderate-income residents
State certifies cities’ Housing Elements! 5 year or 8 year schedule for updates

**General Plan Process**
Governor’s Office of Planning and Research – General Plan Guidelines: 8 step process

**City Roles**
Planning staff: prepares the plan, with help, brings it to planning commission
Planning commission: gives sign-off to the plan and sends it to city council
City Council: adopts the plan

**Public Involvement**
Must hold public hearings, publish advance notice of time and place
Citizen Advisory Committee: 20-30 members, works with staff throughout the process.

**Others**
Consultants – especially for smaller cities and certain elements
Courts – if someone challenges the plan or process, often through CEQA

**Award winning plans:** City of Brea, City of Sacramento