ESP 171 Urban and Regional Planning

Exercise 2: General Plans
Due Tuesday, 4/12, by noon

Purpose:
General Plans, required of cities and counties in California under state law, are in theory the guiding vision for all local planning activities. The purpose of this exercise is to have you look at and think about an actual General Plan.

Activities:
1. Think about your California home town (or another city of interest in California; Davis, for example) and the important issues this city is facing. Pick one of these issues that interests you: traffic congestion, climate change, affordable housing, access to parks, empty store fronts, parking?

2. Find the current General Plan for your city, either via the city’s website or using Google or another search engine. If you can’t find the plan for your city, pick another city of interest – the course website has several suggestions.

3. Browse the plan to see what you can find about your chosen city. Look first at the table of contents. How do the chapters match up with the elements required by the state (see readings for 4/7)? In which chapter do you think you’ll find something about your chosen issue? Look for what if anything the vision statement says about the issue, background information that helps to define the issue, goals that relate to the issue, policies that address the issue, and implementation steps for those policies. Make note of the most important or interesting things.

4. Now pick another city in California that might make an interesting comparison for your city. Find the current General Plan for that city.

5. Repeat the process of browsing the plan. Make note of the most important or interesting things, and the ways in which this plan differs from that of your first city.

6. Summarize your findings in a memo of between one and two pages, addressed to the TA. As per the memo writing guide on the course website, paragraphs should be single-spaced with an extra space between paragraphs. Be sure to include references to the two plans you analyze (OK to list them at the end of the memo rather than citing them throughout the memo). Use standard citation format and include the URL for each.

The memo should explain your choice of cities and issue, describe highlights from the first city’s plan, describe highlights from the second city’s plan, and discuss similarities and differences. We’re looking for evidence that you took the exercise seriously and thought critically about the content of the plan.

To Submit: Upload your memo on SmartSite by noon on Tuesday. No extra credit for extra length. Do not spend more than 2 hours browsing the plans.