

Planning Commission 101:

The Nuts and Bolts of Planning



Cal Cities 2022: Planning Commissioners' Academy | March 16, 2022

Panelists

- » **David Early**, AICP, Senior Advisor, PlaceWorks
- » **Marc Roberts**, City Manager, City of Livermore
- » **Anders Hauge**, Partner, Hauge Brueck Associates
Planning Commissioner, Placer County

My Topics

- » Source of Power to Regulate Land Use
- » General Plans
- » Zoning
- » California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- » Role of the Planning Commission

Land Use Regulation

- » Arose from “good government” movements as a response to unsanitary urban conditions
- » Embodied desire to rein in private market excesses through government regulation
- » Based on local government’s Police Power:
health, safety and welfare



Key Milestones -- Nationwide

- » 1909 Los Angeles imposes first zoning ordinance limiting industrial uses (not comprehensive)
- » 1916 New York imposes first comprehensive zoning ordinance
- » 1922 Standard State Zoning Enabling Act (SZA)
- » 1926 Euclid v. Ambler – upholds constitutionality of zoning



Key Planning Milestones -- California

- » **California has long been a leader in planning and land use regulation:**
 - 1927 California passes law requiring that cities and counties have a Master Plan
 - 1928 Standard City Planning Enabling Act (SPEA)
 - Zoning and planning laws have changed faster in California than the rest of the country due to rapid growth

Land Use Regulation Today

- » **Only two plan types are defined in California law:**
 - **General Plans** lay out a jurisdiction's future development plans through a series of policy statements in text and map form
 - **Specific Plans** are a special set of development standards that apply to a particular geographical area
- » **Zoning provides detailed land use and design regulation.**
- » **Other planning documents include Master Plans, Area Plans, Vision Plans, etc., but these are not defined in the law.**

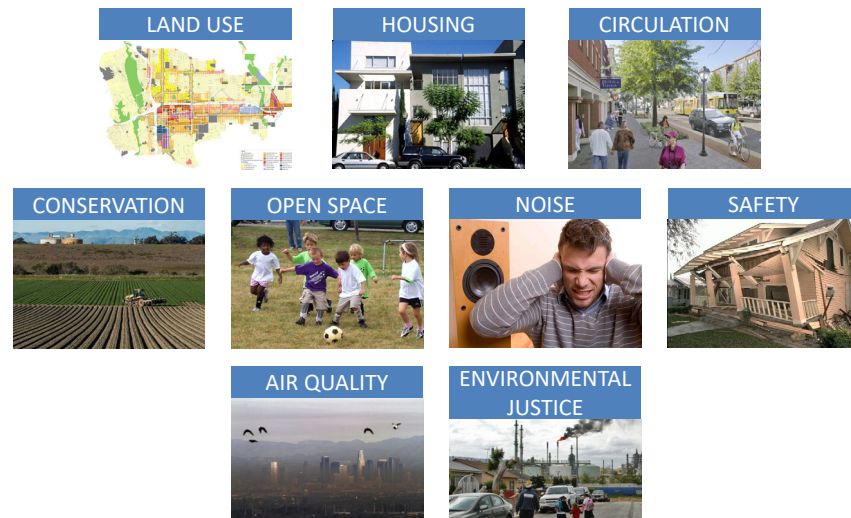
Policy Plans and Regulations



General Plans

- » Bedrock of California planning.
- » Required by State Law
- » The “constitution” for planning, development and conservation
- » Provides long-range vision (20-30 year horizon)
- » Basis for local land use decisions and other policies
- » Identifies important community issues
- » Sets the ground rules

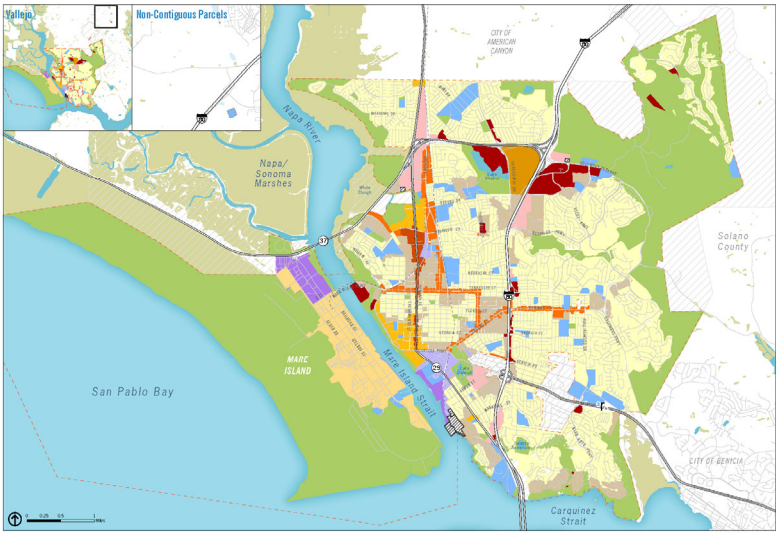
Required General Plan Elements



General Plan Content



Typical General Plan Land Use Plan



Typical General Plan Circulation Map



Housing Element

- » Updated based on schedule in State law (4 or 8 years)
- » Certified by the State's Department of Housing and Community Development
- » Annual report to the State on implementation
- » Required Contents
 - Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)
 - Housing need by income category
 - Specific sites zoned for housing at appropriate densities
 - Policies to facilitate housing development
 - Actions to remove barriers to housing production

Zoning

- » **Ordinance that implements and is consistent with General Plan policies**
- » **Prescribes allowable land uses and development standards including:**
 - Building uses.
 - Building size (height, lot coverage and setbacks).
 - Landscaping.
 - Signs and billboards.
 - Parking requirements.
 - Other performance standards.

Zoning

- » **Traditional “Euclidean” Zoning**
 - Based on identification and separation of uses.
 - Focuses on:
 - Uses
 - Intensity
 - Setbacks
 - No emphasis on building form

Form Based Zoning

- » Based on building form and design.
- » Focuses on:
 - Building design and mass.
 - Building scale, type and context.
 - Relationship of buildings to public space.
 - Design of streets and public realm.
- » Key Components
 - Building form.
 - Building frontage.
 - Building type.
 - Roadways.
 - Public spaces.
 - Architectural detail.

Detailed Home

A detailed home is a residential structure occupied by a single family.

Lot Dimensions

- Width: 30 ft to min. 40 ft to max.
- Depth: 100 ft to max.

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- The main entry to a home shall be through the front street frontage.
- No home served by an alley shall have access to the home and be provided through the alley unless desirable.
- Side or rear garages may be attached to or detached from the main structure.

Landscaping

- A pathway shall be provided from the public sidewalk to the front entry of the home.
- Maximum percentage of yard area landscaped with impervious surface: 10%.
- Maximum amount of impervious surface in front and rear yards: 10%.

Height and Scale

- Building height shall be oriented towards the front street.
- Building height shall be varied through horizontal lines, as needed, through car windows, doors and other variations in roof form and vertical planes or setbacks.
- Facades shall be oriented into smaller components through elements such as window void, niches, balconies, loggias, terraces and stepped-back upper stories.
- Minimum setback of garage from primary front facade of home: 3 ft.

Permitted Single-Family Residential

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Draft Downtown Burbank Development Standards | City of Burbank

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Goals

- » Inform decision-makers about environmental effects.
- » Identify ways to avoid environmental damage.
- » Prevent avoidable environmental damage.
- » Disclose to the public why a project is needed, even if it results in environmental damage.

Types of CEQA Documents

» Negative Declaration (ND)

- If project found to have no significant effect on the environment.

» Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)

- Specifies revisions to project plans that can avoid or mitigate effects.

» Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

- If project would have significant effects that cannot be eliminated through redesign or mitigation.

Role of the Planning Commission

» Long Range Planning:

- Creation and Amendment of Plans and Regulations

» Current Planning:

- Project Review
- CEQA Review
- Project Approval



Thank You!

David Early

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