



San Francisco
Planning

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San Francisco Planning Department
General Plan Annual Progress Report
2020

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Introduction

About the General Plan

California Government Code Section 65300 mandates that each planning agency prepare, and the legislative body shall adopt a General Plan for guiding physical change in the City. Chartered cities must include specific elements in the General Plan, as listed in Government Code Section 65302. San Francisco's first General Plan was adopted by the Planning Commission in 1945 as the embodiment of San Francisco's vision for the future. The General Plan is intended to serve as a living document in "the first step in the continuous process of planning,"¹ and provides a comprehensive set of objectives and policies that influence how we live, work, and move about, as well as the quality and character of the City.

In addition, the San Francisco City Charter² requires the Planning Commission update the General Plan from time to time through the process of amendments and referrals to reflect four key themes: 1) climate change; 2) economics; 3) health communities; and 4) equitable opportunities.³

Purpose of the Annual Progress Report

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 Housing and Community Development (HCD) by April 1 of each year. This General Plan Annual Progress Report (APR) provides local legislative bodies and the public with information regarding the implementation of the General Plan for the City. APR's also inform the public of the progress in meeting the community's goals.

General Plan Implementation

The City's General Plan includes elements and area plans. Within these documents are policies and objectives. Situations in which the General Plan policies and objectives are implemented include private and public projects before the Planning Commission that require review or approval (Variances, Conditional Use Authorizations, Discretionary Reviews, etc.), Planning Code and Map amendments, Development Agreements, and Urban Design Guidelines.

Private Projects – General Plan Findings and Consistency

The objectives and policies reflected in the Planning Code and Zoning Map translate the General Plan's vision into specific rules for private development. Review and approval of private projects must also incorporate assessment of the proposed project against General Plan policies and objectives. This comes in the form of Findings that affirm a project's compliance with specific objectives and policies of the General Plan, and Consistency with eight priority-planning policies in Planning Code Section 101.1(b).

Public Projects – General Plan Referrals

San Francisco's Administrative Code requires that certain approval actions by the Board of Supervisors be formally found to be consistent with the General Plan by the Planning Department (San Francisco Charter

¹ [*San Francisco General Plan, adopted December 1945.*](#)

² [*San Francisco Charter, section 4.105*](#)

³ [*California Government Code section 65302.*](#)

Section 4.105 and San Francisco Administrative Code Section 2A.53).⁴ The Planning Department refers to these as “General Plan Referrals” and are generally required when the City is proposing to make changes to its right-of-way and other municipally owned property; they are also required for City assisted affordable housing project, amendments to existing Redevelopment Plans, and annual and long term capital improvement plans and funding measures. General Plan Referrals assure these City-related and large-scale projects are provided with additional scrutiny to assure consistency with the City’s General Plan.

In most cases, an agency with jurisdiction over a particular action before the Board of Supervisors will submit an application to the Planning Department so the Department can conduct a review and analysis as to whether the subject action is consistent with the General Plan.

Over the past three years, Planning staff has completed these reviews at a rate of about every one to two weeks. Of the 176 such reviews Planning has conducted since 2018, most have been concerned with changes and improvements to the right-of-way assuring that proposed changes are aligned with recent policies that emphasize multimodal accessibility, and pedestrian and bicycle safety. Planning has also conducted numerous consistency reviews of affordable housing, whether the City is providing financing, partnering with a non-profit to purchase land, or other affordable housing-related transactions. Various other City actions, where the City is conducting real estate transactions, also require a General Plan Referral.

OPR General Plan Guidelines Compliance

Environmental Justice Framework

The Department has initiated a process to develop an Environmental Justice Framework, which will integrate environmental justice considerations throughout the General Plan in accordance with SB1000 requirements and OPR’s General Plan Guidelines. The Environmental Justice Framework and associated General Plan policies will focus on policy topics that include the minimum topics identified in SB1000, including: Clean and Healthy Environments (Pollution Reduction); Healthy Food Access; Physical Activity; Safe, Healthy and Affordable Housing; Equitable and Green Jobs; Healthy Public Facilities; Climate Resilience and Justice; and Empowered Neighborhoods (Civic Engagement and Prioritizing EJ Communities). The Department has also developed a draft Environmental Justice Communities Map to identify “Disadvantaged Communities” in accordance with General Plan Guidelines.

Tribal Cultural Resource Consultation

The Department will begin Tribal Cultural Resource consultation, including SB-18 outreach, for the current round of General Plan updates that commenced in 2020 and 2021, starting in April 2021. The Department is undertaking updates to the Housing, Community and Resilience, Transportation, and Commerce and Industry Elements and is preparing an Environmental Justice Framework to inform all future policy development. Due to the volume of policy work underway and the desire to communicate the intersectionality of these efforts to our stakeholders, the Department will propose consultation on all of the Elements simultaneously. Broader outreach to the Native American and American Indian community is also planned for Spring 2021 in order to reach residents that are not members of federally recognized tribes. This broader outreach effort aligns with

⁴ actions include real estate transactions by San Francisco, subdivision mapping, improvements to public structures, affordable housing projects that benefit from assistance by San Francisco, Redevelopment plans or amendments thereto, changes to public right-of-way, capital expenditure plans

the Department’s racial and social equity goals to center the needs of San Francisco’s American Indian population and other people of color in our work.

Transportation Element

San Francisco’s existing Transportation Element was adopted in 1995 and is currently being updated. In the course of doing this, the Planning Department will integrate environmental justice considerations, coordination with the Housing Element update, collaborative planning with the military lands and facilities, and consultation with Native American tribes, where applicable.

Safety and Resilience Element

The Safety and Resilience Element (or “Safety Element,” “SE”) is being updated to comply with OPR General Plan Guidelines Chapters 4 (required elements), 5 (equitable and resilient communities), 6 (healthy communities), and 8 (climate change) and SB379. The updates will incorporate additional and stronger content on climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. The Safety Element will address resilience to multiple hazards, including seismic, slope instability, flooding, wildland and urban fires, poor air quality, extreme weather, and pandemic. It will incorporate policies on environmental justice, per Chapter 5 and SB 1000, and coordinate with the Environmental Justice Framework.

Date of the Last Update to the General Plan

General Plan Element	Year Updated
Recreation and Open Space	2014
Housing	2014*
Community Safety	2012*
Air Quality	1997
Transportation	1995*
Arts	1991
Environmental Protection	1988
Community Facilities	1988
Commerce and Industry	1987
Urban Design	1972

**updates underway for these elements*

Land Use Decision-Making Priorities

The following designations and initiatives are described per OPR’s Annual Progress Report Guidance Memo, which asks for “Priorities for land use decision making that have been established by the local legislative body (e.g., passage of moratoria or emergency ordinances).”

Plan Bay Area Designations

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors [approved several key Plan Bay Area designations](#) on January 14, 2020 for the city of San Francisco: Priority Development Areas (PDA’s), Priority Conservation Areas (PCA’s), and Priority Production Areas (PPA’s). Plan Bay Area is the Bay Area’s regional transportation plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy. The plan was revised for adoption in 2021 with a time horizon of 2050. These

designations are areas of San Francisco prioritized to accommodate growth in housing and jobs; protect or invest in agricultural, recreational, or environmental resources; and promote middle-wage jobs and support the region's economy through its industrial sector.

Proposition H

San Francisco voters passed [Proposition H – Save Our Small Businesses Initiative](#) in November 2020. The initiative ordinance shifts the approval action for many small business uses from a conditional use authorization from the Planning Commission to an over-the-counter administrative approval. The initiative also eliminates neighborhood notification for storefront land use changes in the Neighborhood Commercial Districts and provides existing businesses with greater flexibility to adapt their operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the shifting retail landscape. Through the initiative, review and approval processes for small businesses are streamlined to 30-days.

Recovery Strategies

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, former Board of Supervisors President Norman Yee and Mayor London N. Breed created the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force. The Task Force is charged with guiding the City's efforts through the COVID-19 recovery to sustain and revive local businesses and employment, mitigate the economic hardships already affecting the most vulnerable San Franciscans, and build a resilient and equitable future.

One of the outcomes of the Task Force takes the form in the city's [Recovery Strategies](#) effort. The Recovery Strategies team, which includes the Planning Department, will approach and implement strategies related to Housing Recovery, Small Business Recovery, Neighborhood Life, and Work Spaces.

Advancing Implementation of the General Plan

Planning Activities Initiated

Site-specific master plans were initiated in 2020 or are ongoing as of the end of 2020, for several large sites to accommodate mixed-income housing and mixed-use development, open space, and community benefits such as improved mobility, sustainability and resilience and affordable housing. Examples include:

1. **Freedom West**, a 4-block cooperative housing development in the Western Addition neighborhood, built as part of the former Redevelopment project area in the early 1970s. The project aims to rebuild and replace the existing co-op community and add substantial new housing (including additional affordable units), neighborhood-serving retail and community services, and new public open space.
2. **Potrero Yard**, a 4-acre, full city block SFMTA-owned bus yard. The project aims to add mixed-income housing on top of a new multi-story bus storage and maintenance facility.
3. **Stonestown**, a large indoor retail mall surrounded by surface parking. The project aims to add substantial housing and public spaces, create a more pedestrian-friendly street environment, and connect the site with the surrounding community.
4. **Railyards Working Group**, an interagency group studying and coordinating the transportation infrastructure and land use configurations and opportunities for the 20+-acre 4th/King Railyards, where Caltrain, future CA High Speed Rail, SFMTA light rail and buses come together at a major node.

Citywide or District-scale Policy Studies Initiated or Ongoing as of the End of 2020

1. **Southeast Framework for Community Facilities**, a holistic analysis of the level of service and potential needs for a variety of community facilities to serve existing and future population in the quadrant of the City seeing the most concentrated growth and change.
2. **Greater SoMa Community Facility Needs Assessment**, building on the Southeast Framework, a focused look at community facility needs in the Greater SoMa neighborhood.
3. **Citywide Retail Strategy**, considering both COVID-recovery oriented policies and programs as well as long-term policies intended to ensure that all neighborhoods provide residents with a full suite of affordable goods and services to meet their needs within close proximity to their homes and workplaces.
4. **Citywide PDR Strategy**, an effort to create an updated, cohesive and comprehensive policy strategy, land use regulatory framework, and supporting programs to protect and grow production, distribution and repair business and jobs in San Francisco. The PDR sector is essential to the social and economic diversity and vitality of the City and to its daily functioning and resiliency.

General Plan Amendments

Amendments to:	Master Plan Project	Date
Central Waterfront Plan	Potrero Power Station Mixed-Use Project	4/24/2020
Market Octavia Area Plan, Arts Element, and Housing Element	The Hub Rezoning around the intersection of Market Street and Van Ness Avenue	8/31/2020
Balboa Park Station Area Plan, Recreation and Open Space Element, and the Land Use Index	Balboa Reservoir	8/28/2020
Housing Element	-	Started process; expected adoption date: 2023
Transportation Element	-	Started process; expected adoption date: 2025
Community Safety and Resilience Element	-	Started process pursuant to SB379; expected adoption date: Fall 2021
Environmental Justice framework	-	Started process; expected adoption date: Winter 2022

Interagency or Intergovernmental Coordination

The Planning Department is heavily engaged in the regional Plan Bay Area process, the Bay Area's regional long-range plan focusing on the economy, environment, housing, and transportation. This plan is coordinated with city agencies across nine Bay Area counties that represent 101 cities and towns of the region. The Plan Bay Area process also produces the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as required by Senate Bill 375, and the Regional Transportation Plan.

Strategy for Monitoring Long-term Growth

Plan Bay Area is the department and city's primary strategy for monitoring long-term growth and source of long-term population and growth projections. The Planning Department has and is working on a variety of projects to address the public service and infrastructure needs of this growth, specifically all the site-specific master plans and citywide or district-scale policy studies mentioned earlier in this report.

The Planning Department provides and refines the regional projects for local use by our local infrastructure and public services agencies, including the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and San Francisco Unified School District.

Hazards and Climate Resilience Plan & Climate Action Plan

The Planning Department is a key contributor to both of these inter-agency action plans to address the climate crisis and protect San Francisco from the avoidable impacts of global heating citywide. The HCR was adopted in 2020 and the CAP will be adopted Spring 2021. Since the HCR is San Francisco's required Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, the 2021 Safety and Resilience Element Update is driven by SB379. However, this comprehensive update also incorporates the State's guidance around addressing greenhouse gas emissions reductions, equity, and community resilience across all General Plan elements.

Equity Planning Considerations of the General Plan

Centering Planning around Racial and Social Equity

The San Francisco Planning Department launched a department-wide Racial and Social Equity Initiative and Action Plan (REASP) Phase I in 2016. This action plan is updated and monitored consistently. The [2020 Phase I Action Plan](#) includes the following racial and social equity considerations pertaining to the General Plan:

- Explicitly incorporate RSEAP into long-term planning such as the general plan and area plans and explore opportunities to remove exclusionary zoning throughout the city.
- Implement Planning Commission Resolution Number 20738 and Preservation Commission Resolution Number 1127 by amending the General Plan to explicitly prioritize racial and social equity.

On June 11, 2020, the San Francisco Planning Commission adopted [Resolution Number 20738](#) centering the Planning Department's work program and resource allocation on racial and social equity. On June 15, 2020, the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission adopted [Resolution Number 1127](#) centering Preservation Planning on racial and social equity. The resolutions acknowledge that the current General Plan includes multiple Area Plans where people of color have settled (Chinatown, Mission, East and West SoMa, etc.). A part of the resolution directs the Planning Department to amend the General Plan to incorporate policies that explicitly prioritize racial and social equity for American Indian communities, Black communities, and communities of color.

The Department will develop amendments to the General Plan to address racial and social equity in coordination with the Environmental Justice Framework, in acknowledgment that American Indian, Black, and people of color communities are most likely to be impacted by environmental justice.

Other General Plan elements that started the update process in 2020 (Transportation, Safety, and Housing) are also incorporating equity, as required.

Planning Department Community Equity Division

Following the resolution, the San Francisco Planning Department developed a Community Equity Division in September 2020. Three teams comprise this new division:

1. **Equity Planning:** provides guidance on addressing equity within the Planning Department and in services and plans, including the Racial and Social Equity Action Plan, and Environmental Justice and Equity policies for the General Plan.
2. **Community Engagement:** ensures community in Planning Department work, particularly from American Indian, Black, and other communities of color.
3. **Policies and Strategies:** leading key city projects with high equity impact, including Housing Element update, Cultural Districts, and recovery strategies.

Customer Service Improvements and Methods to Encourage Public Involvement

New Planning Department Community Engagement Team

As part of the Planning Department's new Community Equity Division, the newly formed Community Engagement team will deepen Planning Department engagement, specifically focused on priority and vulnerable communities.

Child and Youth Engagement

The Planning Department continues to grow its Youth Engagement Program. Planning Department staff led virtual in-class sessions with San Francisco Unified School District students at Malcolm X Academy and Balboa High School in fall 2020 and spring of 2021. These sessions and projects informed youth about the General Plan and included open discussions for students to share what Environmental Justice means to them. The results of these discussions will inform the upcoming Environmental Justice framework update to the General Plan.

Housing Element Updates

The Housing Element update process began in August 2020. Many methods of encouraging public engagement improved upon and enhanced existing outreach methods:

- Creating a public video about the update;
- Forming a Housing Policy Group;
- Presenting at standing community meetings;
- Organizing stand-alone community meetings;
- Online survey;
- TV and radio announcements in multiple languages; and,
- Coverage on the local news.

Implementation of Geographic Information Systems and/or Websites

The San Francisco Planning Department has been using the following mapping, analysis, and review tools in our work:

- **ArcGIS Urban:** 3D Analysis to review State Density Bonus impacts
- **ArcMap:** analysis of individual and groups of sites around the city
- **ArcGIS online suite:** ArcMap, ArchGIS Pro, StoryMaps for Resilience and Sustainability and Community Planning
- **BlueBeam:** official procedure change for intake of projects for department review

Grants

Caltrans Grant for Islais Creek Southeast Mobility and Adaption Strategy

Islais Creek Southeast Mobility and Adaptation Strategy (ICSMAS) is a 2.5-year community planning process in the Islais Creek area that will develop actionable strategies to address sea level rise and combined coastal and inland flood risk through a robust public engagement process. Building on the Resilient by Design proposal and other city and regional efforts, the Islais Creek Adaptation Strategy will develop a long-range vision for the Islais Creek shoreline, asset-specific solutions for public infrastructure, and a prioritized funding and implementation strategy that increases the resilience of the community and provides improved transportation networks and new open space. It is funded by a Caltrans grant matched with City staff resources.