

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE GENERAL PLAN

(Rev. 9/2023)

## Introduction

Environmental justice is defined in state law as the “*fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.*” The principle of environmental justice ensures equitable protection from environmental and health hazards, while giving people fair and equal access to the planning and decision-making process. To advance this principle, Los Angeles City Planning is embarking on a comprehensive effort to centralize and strengthen environmental justice policies in the City’s General Plan. This background material provides an overview of the General Plan.

## What is the General Plan?

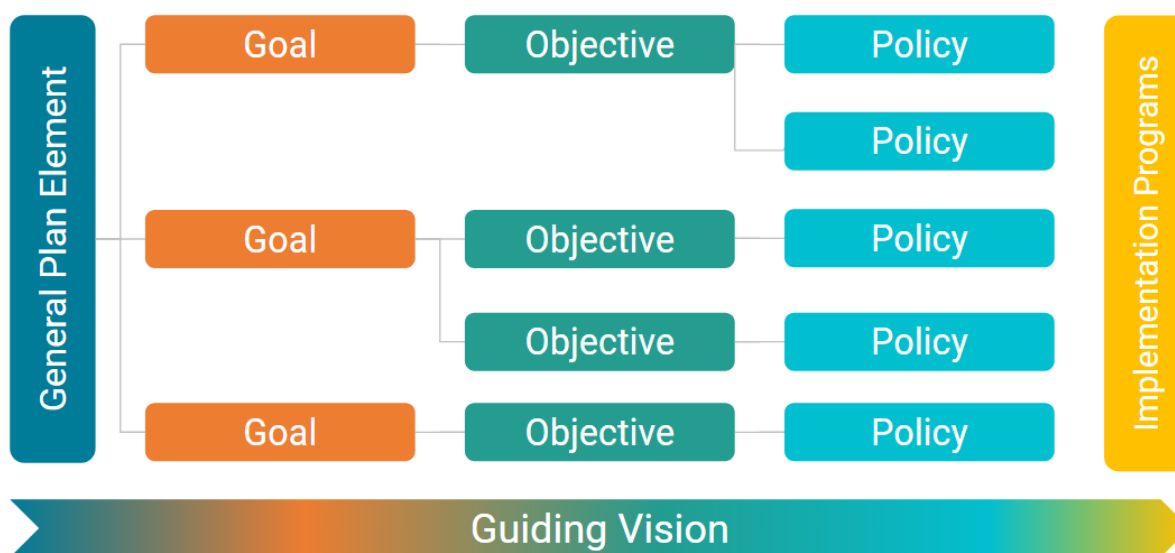
The General Plan is a comprehensive policy document that informs the future growth and development of a city. State law requires certain topics, or elements, be covered within a General Plan. These elements include land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, safety, and for some cities like Los Angeles, environmental justice and air quality. Each City can customize and contextualize their General Plan to address local needs and conditions. The General Plan helps guide decisions about land use, including but not limited to, infrastructure, the built environment and open space design, the provision and conservation of housing, support for public and human services, and emergency preparedness.



## Structure of the General Plan

The structure of each element within the General Plan consists of a grouping of components that are guided by a common vision. These traditionally consist of goals, objectives, policies, and implementation programs, however each element might vary in structure.

### Traditional Structure of the General Plan



**Goals** are defined as a broad statement that describes the future condition or “end state”. Goals are outcome oriented and achievable over time.


**Objectives** are defined as an aspirational measure of goal attainment.

**Policies** are defined as a clear statement that guides a specific course of action for decision-makers to achieve a desired goal.

**Implementation Programs** are a proposed action, procedure, program, or technique that may be utilized to further General Plan goals, objectives, and policies. Decisions to implement specific programs are discretionary and governed by program cost, available funding, staffing, feasibility and similar considerations.

## Environmental Justice in the General Plan

The General Plan includes existing policy language to direct that the benefits of growth and investment be distributed equitably, while also ensuring that the costs are not disproportionately borne by vulnerable and underserved groups. However, many communities, particularly low-income communities of color, continue to be more likely to live next to noxious land uses and other environmental hazards. Combined with underserved social and economic environments, many communities face the cumulative burden of risk and impact that may be



mitigated through a focus on public health and environmental justice. A commitment to environmental justice also involves ensuring community participation in the planning process to promote equity and representation for underserved communities.

The City's commitment to environmental justice is reflected across the General Plan's numerous goals, objectives and policies, along with their associated implementation programs. The **Health Element** serves as the primary location of goals and policies linking land use to health, wellbeing, equity, and environmental justice, emphasizing meeting the needs of vulnerable communities.

Health and environmental justice issues are also broadly addressed throughout other elements in the General Plan.

The **Mobility Element**, which primarily provides the policy foundation for achieving accessible state of the art transportation systems that balances the needs and safety of all road users while accommodating increasing demand, includes goals that combine transportation and public health policy to address historic inequities that have limited the quality of life in many communities.

The **Safety Element** provides a high-level overview of the comprehensive scope of citywide emergency planning and disaster response. Several policies point to issues related to environmental health with a focus on vulnerable communities.

The **Housing Element** presents a vision where housing in Los Angeles is ample and affordable, where tenants and affordable housing are protected and preserved and where proactive efforts are made to reverse the legacies of discriminatory and racist policies.

In Los Angeles, the Land Use Element consists of 35 **Community Plans** which establish specific goals and implementation strategies that are tailored to the needs of a community, aimed to achieve the broader objectives of the General Plan.

The **Framework Element**, which serves as the City's growth strategy, contains policies that require the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and education levels with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of policies and includes language to ensure that affirmative efforts are taken to involve communities in the planning process.

Additional information about the General Plan can be found at:  
<https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/general-plan-overview>

Additional information about the Environmental Justice Policy Program can be found at:  
<https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/environmental-justice>