




LOS ANGELES
CITY PLANNING

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Executive Team

Vincent P. Bertoni, AICP

Director of Planning

Kevin J. Keller, AICP

Executive Officer

Shana M.M. Bonstin

Deputy Director,
Community Planning Bureau

Tricia Keane

Deputy Director,
Resource Management Bureau

Arthi L. Varma, AICP

Deputy Director,
Citywide Planning Bureau

Lisa M. Webber, AICP

Deputy Director,
Project Planning Bureau

TABLE OF CONTENTS

08	EXPANDING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Approving More Housing– Increasing Housing Capacity– Creating New Zoning to Accommodate Housing– Incentivizing Affordable Housing Production– Offering More Affordable Housing Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1214152124
28	PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Adopting Stronger Environmental Regulations– Standardizing Environmental Review– Streamlining CEQA Review– Introducing New Climate Adaptive Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">32343739
46	ACHIEVING GREATER EFFICIENCIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Streamlining Project Review– Sharing Data and Analysis– Meeting Project Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none">515455
56	ADDING CAPACITY TO SUPPORT THE WORKLOAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Adding Staffing Resources– Facilitating Internal Trainings– Funding New Planning Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">606162
64	STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE WORKPLACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Supporting Opportunities for Outreach– Establishing a Consistent Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">6869
70	INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY INTO PLANNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Improving Data Reporting and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">74
76	AWARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Recognizing Achievement in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">79



Mayor’s Message

Dear Friends,

Through the hard work of City Planning, we are confronting Los Angeles’s housing crisis and taking bold steps so that every family can find a home they can afford in the City of Angels.

I set the ambitious goal of permitting 100,000 new units by 2021—and I’m proud to report we surpassed that goal more than two years ahead of schedule. Together, we have made real progress—but there is so much more to do.

I am grateful to the entire City Planning team for their dedication and hard work. The policies and programs we’ve put in place will continue to pave the way for a faster pace of housing in the years ahead. By streamlining the application process, we have made it possible for more new projects to break ground. And by kicking off an update to the Housing Element of the City’s General Plan, modernizing our zoning, and updating all of our Community Plans, we are ensuring we have adequate housing capacity across Los Angeles to address the housing crisis and accommodate future growth.

I am proud of the accomplishments in City Planning’s Annual Report, and I look forward to all that we will achieve in 2020.

Sincerely,

Eric Garcetti
Mayor



Director's Message



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As planners, we shape the built environment—the spaces that provide the setting for human activity. We approach this assignment with the utmost sensitivity to our natural environment, recognizing the demands on our resources and the realities of climate change.

The 2019 Annual Report speaks to the various ways we have incorporated principles of equitable development in order to reduce disparities while fostering a future that is healthy and vibrant for our citizens. These new programs, policies, plans, and projects have largely focused on improving the overall resilience and livability of Los Angeles.

From securing affordable housing to expanding access to open space, equity has informed many of our past and current initiatives. In this respect, 2019 was among one of our most successful years to date.

About 30 percent of the housing units proposed in Los Angeles last year were “restricted affordable,” set aside for households with income at or below the local median income. Additionally, the number of affordable housing units proposed in 2019 was nearly triple the average of the past three years, as a result of new incentives and streamlining measures we’ve set into motion.

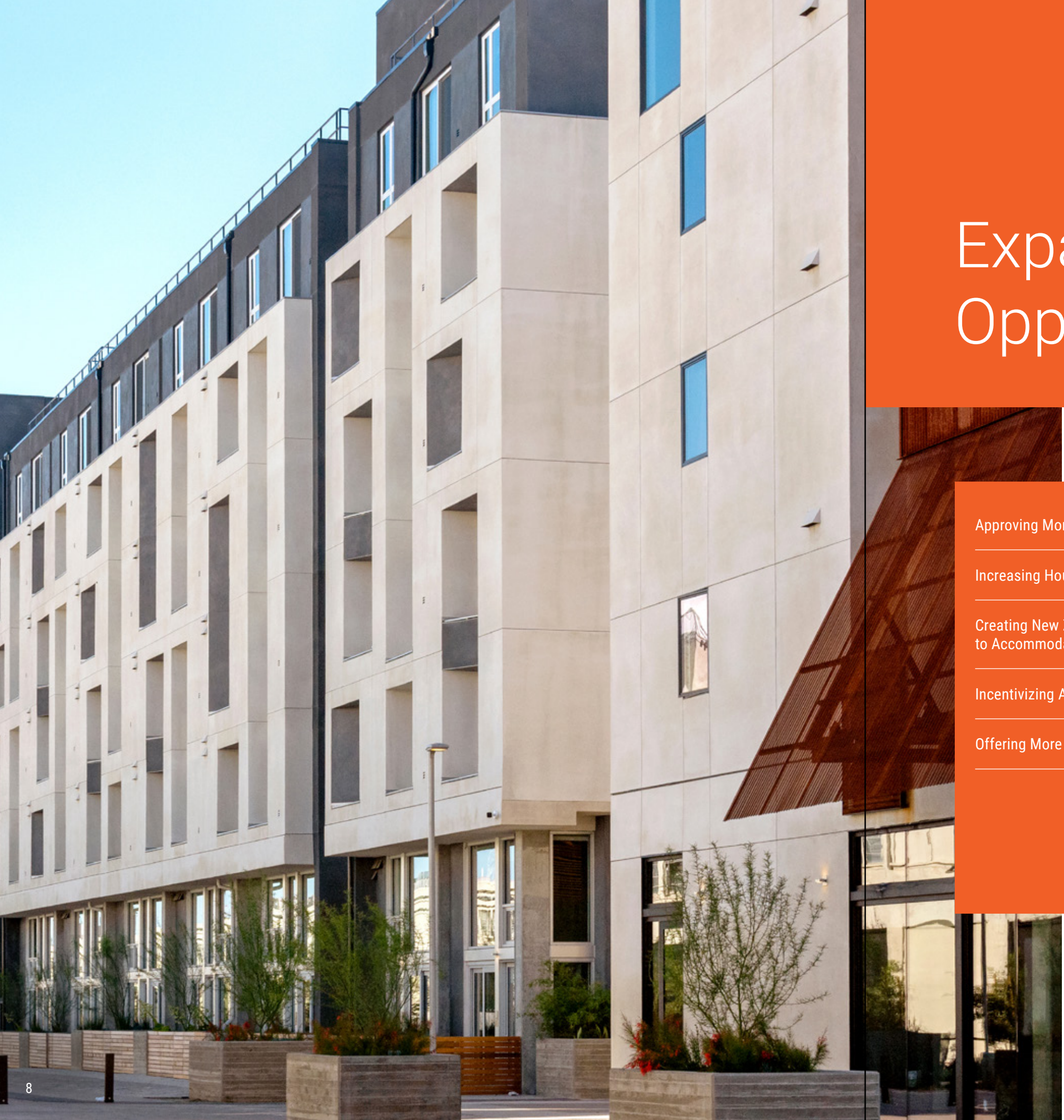
We have also strengthened our relationship with Los Angeles’s communities by taking action to improve our services. As housing applications have increased, we have identified ways to operate more efficiently—reorganizing our management structure and assembling a task force to cut down case processing times. New hires have also assisted in managing our growing workload.

One reason for our progress in these and other areas is that we continue our efforts to build trust through transparent and accountable practices—the work of dedicated teams that make information more readily available. Today, City Planning reports regularly on the outcomes of its policies, and on its workload and performance.

Thanks to the work of our dedicated staff, we are advancing a vision for a just and green Los Angeles. Together, I am confident that we will continue to extend that vision to include all who live here, as we continue on this path in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

Vince Bertoni
Director of Planning



Expanding Housing Opportunities

Approving More Housing

Increasing Housing Capacity

Creating New Zoning
to Accommodate Housing

Incentivizing Affordable Housing Production

Offering More Affordable Housing Options

Cities across the United States are facing major challenges in providing safe and adequate housing, due to population growth and high costs.

City Planning has taken steps to provide safe, secure, and affordable units for individuals and families—many of whom struggle to pay rent.

Through new programs, the streamlining of existing policies, and the approval of development projects, City Planning is advancing new housing opportunities across Los Angeles's neighborhoods.

Since 2017, the number of approved housing units has increased by 22 percent—the result of City Planning's efforts to spur production in the midst of a nationwide housing shortage.

The number of completed case applications has increased by 31 percent over the last three calendar years. During this period, City Planning approved 58,437 new units of market-rate housing and 10,877 new units of affordable housing.

Today, there are 177 planners at City Planning who are responsible for the case intake and processing of development applications. To support the increasing workload, six new planners were onboarded in 2019, with 23 additional offers made in December.

These new planners will assist with the review and approval of project applications. They will support existing programs, adding capacity to initiatives that are helping to incentivize the production of affordable housing units.

Citywide updates to Los Angeles's Community Plans are working toward the same goal. One milestone is City Planning's release of the proposed zoning for the Downtown Community Plan and the accompanying new land use regulations that would make it easier to build in the City's urban core. These tools will facilitate new housing across Los Angeles's neighborhoods.

Through the collective efforts of City Planning's staff and community partners, Los Angeles has been able to preserve, protect, and expand new housing opportunities—guaranteeing the continuing economic prosperity, well-being, and livability of its neighborhoods.



APPROVING MORE HOUSING APPLICATIONS

Comparing 2018 and 2019, affordable units proposed and approved increased by 153 percent (4,546 more affordable units proposed) and 129 percent (3,163 more affordable units approved), respectively. Market-rate units approved also increased 26 percent, reflecting City Planning's emphasis on the expedient review and approval of critical housing projects.

Of all housing units proposed in 2019, 72 percent were the result of an incentive program or Measure JJJ.

- 42% used the Transit Oriented Communities Incentive Program
- 17% took advantage of the State's Density Bonus
- 13% were subject to Measure JJJ—a local ballot initiative that instituted new labor and affordable housing requirements for certain residential projects

Three Year Comparison

		Calendar Year Totals			2019 vs 2017		2019 vs 2018	
		2017	2018	2019	Absolute Change	Percent Change	Absolute Change	Percent Change
Total	Case Processing Breakdown							
	Applications Filed	5,775	7,026	7,067	1,292	22.4%	41	0.6%
	Applications Completed	5,507	6,794	7,224	1,717	31.2%	430	6.3%
Application Breakdown	Hearings	1,179	1,176	1,095	-84	-7.1%	-81	-6.9%
	Entitlements Filed	2,172	2,028	1,732	-440	-20.3%	-296	-14.6%
	Entitlements Completed	1,980	1,925	1,846	-134	-6.8%	-79	-4.1%
	Environmental Filed	1,907	1,827	1,597	-310	-16.3%	-230	-12.6%
	Environmental Completed	1,845	1,806	1,567	-278	-15.1%	-239	-13.2%
Filed								
	Housing Unit Count							
	Units Proposed	18,665	27,336	26,679	8,014	42.9%	-657	-2.4%
	Affordable Units Proposed	2,573	2,909	7,551	4,978	193.5%	4,642	159.6%
	Market Rate Units Proposed	16,092	24,427	19,128	3,036	18.9%	-5,299	-21.7%
Approved	Units Approved	22,595	20,021	27,368	4,773	21.1%	7,347	36.7%
	Affordable Units Approved	2,754	2,461	5,662	2,908	105.6%	3,201	130.1%
	Market Rate Units Approved	19,841	17,560	21,706	1,865	9.4%	4,146	23.6%



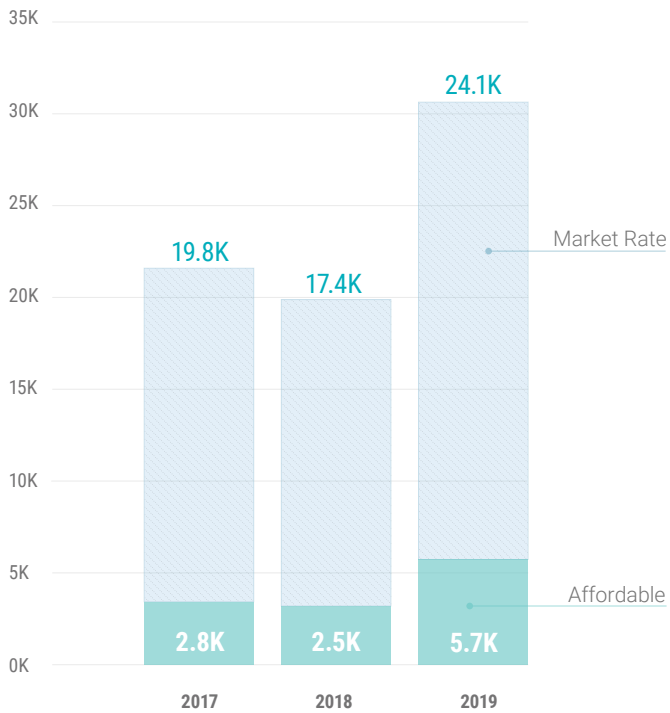
SIMPLIFYING THE PLANNING PROCESS: UPDATING SPECIFIC PLANS

In 2019, City Planning expanded the territory covered by its Specific Plan Maintenance Unit. Along with the Valley, the Unit's purview now includes the Central and East and South, West, and Harbor geographies. The goal of increasing the Unit's scope is to keep pace with development by streamlining development review processes.

In addition to the regulations found in the City's Zoning Code, Los Angeles currently has over 50 Specific Plans, 20 Community Design Overlays, and numerous other planning overlays that establish unique development regulations within certain geographies.

Many of these overlays have not been updated since their date of adoption. Often, these plans include provisions that have not kept up with recent streamlining efforts—stymying the creation of new housing and jobs.

Housing Units Approved



INCREASING HOUSING CAPACITY

General plans play an important role in shaping local housing policy in counties and cities throughout California. They establish land use designations and provide context for future zoning, determining how land may be used and City resources may be allocated. The specific goals, objectives, and programs of any city's general plan assist decision makers as they review project applications or consider policy proposals.

In California, every county and city's general plan must include seven elements, including a housing element. This section of the general plan analyzes local housing conditions to prepare for future growth and sets goals for housing production and preservation, neighborhood livability, and preventing discrimination and homelessness.

As cities adopt alternative models for housing ownership, the housing element has played an increasingly important role in local discussions.

In November, City Planning launched an update to Los Angeles's Housing Element. This policy document will play a pivotal role in housing discussions as its goals will inform future City policies.

Housing Element Update

As a citywide policy document, Los Angeles's Housing Element plays an important role in setting the City's long-range vision. The Housing Element integrates housing and growth strategies to support the City's economic interests and housing needs.

Through the implementation of the policies and programs set forth in the 2021-2029 Housing Element, the City will encourage the production and preservation of housing units and work toward meeting its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).

Past and present Housing Elements have informed the development of recent programs ranging from the Affordable Housing Linkage Fee to the Permanent Support Housing Ordinance.

Working alongside the Housing and Community Investment Department, City Planning is exploring strategies to maintain an equitable supply of housing.

These strategies may include stronger tenant protections and new investments in social housing. To gather input along the way, City Planning has assembled a task force of community leaders, local service providers, and affordable and market-rate developers. This task force will meet periodically throughout the update process to evaluate potential policy revisions to the City's zoning rules, housing production targets, and regulations on housing, tenants' rights, and homelessness prevention.

Throughout 2020 and 2021, City Planning will facilitate opportunities for community engagement.

CREATING NEW ZONING TO ACCOMMODATE HOUSING

Zoning influences the development pattern of cities and how people interact with the built environment. Through zoning decisions, Los Angeles can address the housing crisis by supporting the production of new units in locations that can accommodate growth.

City Planning is encouraging the construction of a wider array of housing types across Los Angeles to ensure a healthier distribution of homes of all shapes and sizes. The City's approach to planning is rooted in a belief that zoning should be used to create promise and opportunity.

New zoning tools have made it easier to bring more housing units online—addressing issues related to supply and affordability.

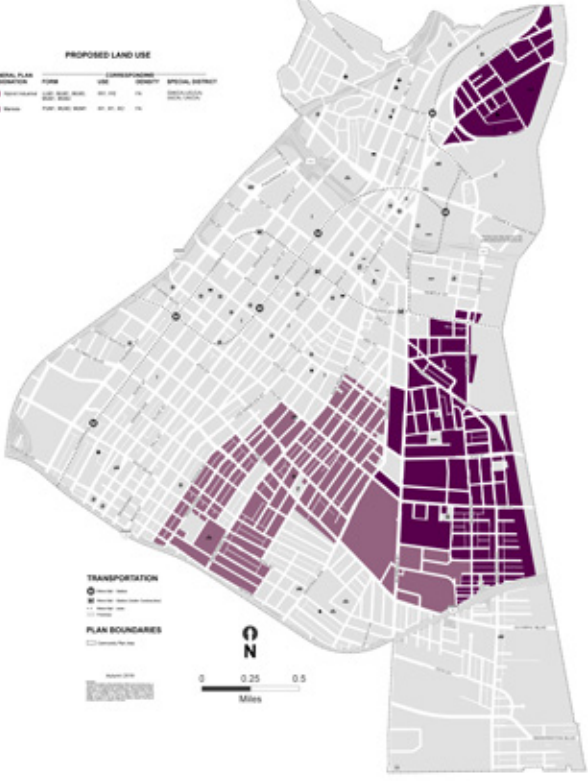
Los Angeles accommodates additional housing capacity where there are potential investment opportunities through updates to its Community Plans. To that end, City Planning unveiled new zoning in 2019 for the Downtown Community Plan Area.

In conjunction with the Community Plan updates, City Planning also released the framework for the new Community Benefits Program in 2019. The Community Benefits Program aims to incentivize the production of affordable units in Downtown. The new zoning and the Community Benefits Program are two of the ways City Planning is helping to increase housing production and put more affordable units on the market.

Industrial-Mixed Zones

In October, City Planning unveiled zoning regulations for Downtown as part of a multi-year effort to update the Downtown Community Plan. Under the proposed Plan, 60 percent of Downtown—compared to 33 percent today—would be eligible for residential uses. The proposed zoning would nearly double the area where housing can be built and expand areas for permanent supportive and affordable housing.

The housing goals and policies identified in the Downtown Community Plan are intended to promote infill development, intensifying development potential where it makes the most sense. In other neighborhoods, City Planning has limited the future scale of development, while still expanding eligible types of housing—ranging from adaptive reuse of existing buildings to the creation of additional live/work spaces.



For example, City Planning has introduced a palette of *Industrial-Mixed Zones* that would accommodate a limited amount of live/work housing within portions of the Downtown Community Plan. The areas identified for Industrial-Mixed Zones in the Downtown Community Plan are those with *Hybrid Industrial* and *Markets* General Plan land use designations.

- **Hybrid Industrial** areas prioritize space for employment for commercial and light-industrial businesses. The Industrial-Mixed Hybrid Zones in the Hybrid Industrial areas may be used for live/work housing, where residential buildings include space for commercial or light-industrial job-generating uses.
- **Markets** areas accommodate wholesale and commercial activities with limited housing. Two Industrial-Mixed Zones are applied in the Markets area of the Downtown Community Plan: one only allows live/work housing through the adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of existing structures, while the other only allows housing for units that are restricted affordable.

The Downtown Community Plan seeks to accommodate this growth through innovative land use strategies and the application of new zones that reinforce Downtown’s economic base and encourage the construction of new residential units.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROGRAM

In the fall, City Planning introduced the Community Benefits Program for the Downtown Community Plan. The program is intended to keep individuals and families off the streets by prioritizing investments in affordable housing.

Under current citywide regulations, new by-right development is required to contribute to community benefits through the Affordable Housing Linkage Fee and Quimby Fee, which support affordable housing and public open space, respectively. While these fees will continue to generate funding for affordable housing units and open space amenities, the Downtown Community Benefits Program incentivizes the provision of on-site community benefits that support the overarching policies for the proposed Plan Area.

The program has the potential to spur affordable housing production, while also improving the livability and economic well-being of Downtown.

Participating development projects can elect to exceed the base maximum building size in exchange for providing onsite community benefits, such as a publicly accessible open space or a facility such as a school or library.

Each tier, or level, includes a list of possible incentives available to project applicants based on certain eligibility requirements for residential development projects.

In developing the Community Benefits Incentive Program, City Planning crafted regulations that recapture the value gained through bonus-based incentives to further citywide investments in affordable housing production.



Community Plan Updates

Los Angeles maintains 35 Community Plans, one for each of its Community Plan Areas. The Community Plans establish neighborhood-specific goals and implementation strategies to achieve the broad objectives laid out in the City’s General Plan.

The 35 Community Plans compose the General Plan’s Land Use Element, which plays an important role in bolstering housing and job opportunities, conserving open space and natural resources, and balancing different neighborhoods’ needs.

Each Community Plan consists of a policy document and a land use map. The policy document lays out the community’s goals, policies, and programs, while the land use map identifies where certain uses (such as residential, commercial, and industrial) are permitted. Together, the policy document and land use map inform local zoning decisions and planning considerations related to housing.

Following the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2018-19 Budget, City Planning began filling the newly created positions that the Mayor and City Council authorized to accelerate the citywide update of Los Angeles’s 35 Community Plans.

At the end of 2019, there were 16 Community Plan updates in progress, covering 180 square miles—approximately 40 percent of the land area of Los Angeles.

The updates to the Community Plans assist City officials in keeping pace with the latest development trends, identifying strategies to accommodate a healthier distribution of land uses related to housing, jobs, mobility, and climate change.

Community Plan Update Program

In Progress

Central
Downtown (Central City, Central City North) | Hollywood

East
Boyle Heights

South Valley
Canoga Park - Winnetka - Woodland Hills - West Hills | Encino - Tarzana, Reseda - West Van Nuys | North Hollywood - Valley Village | Sherman Oaks - Studio City - Toluca Lake - Calhoun Pass | Van Nuys - North Sherman Oaks

West Los Angeles
Venice | Palms - Mar Vista - Del Rey | Westchester - Playa Del Rey | West Los Angeles

Harbor
Harbor-Gateway | Wilmington-Harbor City

Upcoming

Central
Wilshire | Westlake

East
Northeast Los Angeles | Silver Lake | Echo Park | Elysian Valley

North Valley
Arleta - Pacoima | Sun Valley - La Tuna Canyon | Sunland - Tujunga - Lake View Terrace - Shadow Hills - East La Tuna Canyon | Chatsworth - Porter Ranch | Northridge | Mission Hills - Panorama City - North Hills

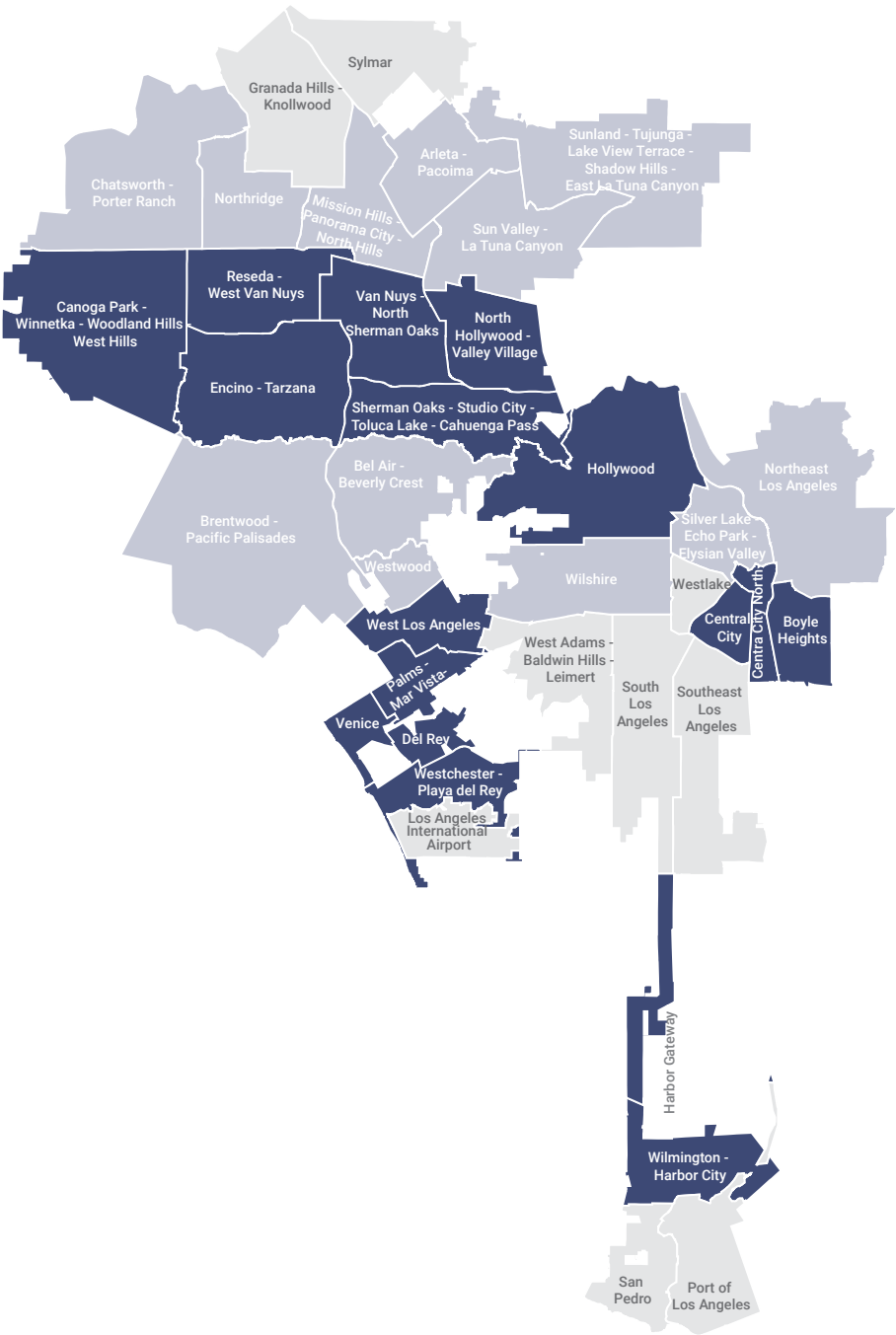
West Los Angeles
Bel Air - Beverly Crest | Brentwood - Pacific Palisades | Westwood

Completed

North Valley
Granada Hills - Knowlwood | Sylmar

South Los Angeles
West Adams | South Los Angeles | Southeast Los Angeles

Harbor
San Pedro



Recently Adopted Community Plans

The City of Los Angeles’s growth strategy has largely focused on infill development around major corridors and transit stations, primarily within commercial, multifamily, and some industrial areas. With voter approval of Measure M, the most ambitious mass transit expansion project in Los Angeles County history, the City has been concentrating housing, jobs, and economic activity around major transit nodes.

All of this investment necessitates comprehensive planning—an effort underway with updates to the General Plan and Community Plans, along with other work programs that are in progress along Los Angeles’s major transit lines.

In 2016 and 2017, the City Council adopted four new Community Plans: West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert, San Pedro, South Los Angeles, and Southeast Los Angeles. Since then, City Planning has monitored housing and development trends in these Community Plan Areas as part of a broader effort to increase data transparency and analyze policy outcomes.

The tables below detail proposed housing entitlements in each of these Community Plan Areas and demonstrate the City’s steady progress in accommodating new housing.

ABOUT PLAN CAPACITY

City Planning uses a methodology based on land use and zoning standards to determine plan capacity, or reasonable anticipated development. Projections include the level of build-out that is likely or reasonably expected in a Community Plan Area, based on factors such as:

- the acreage for each type of land use by General Plan land use designation
- allowable densities and intensities in each designation
- anticipated levels of development based on past and existing development patterns, entitled and proposed project trends, underutilized areas, and available transit infrastructure

Market factors ultimately dictate the actual level of development.

West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan
 Adopted by City Council: June 2016 | Effective Date: April 19, 2017

2030 Housing Projection in Plan Update



Housing Trends April 2017
through December 2019



San Pedro Community Plan
 Adopted by City Council: October 2017 | Effective Date: June 26, 2018

2030 Housing Projection in Plan Update



Housing Trends July 2018
through December 2019



South Los Angeles Community Plan
 Adopted by City Council: November 2017 | Effective Date: December 29, 2018

2035 Housing Projection in Plan Update



Housing Trends, January 2019
through December 2019



Southeast Los Angeles Community Plan
 Adopted by City Council, November 2017 | Effective Date: December 29, 2018

2035 Housing Projection in Plan Update



Housing Trends January 2019
through December 2019



INCENTIVIZING AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRODUCTION

Over the last few years, City Planning has expanded its operations at the public counter to better assist affordable housing developers as they navigate the process.

Increased staffing at the Housing Services Unit assists with the review of development applications and supports new work programs, many of which provide access to housing.

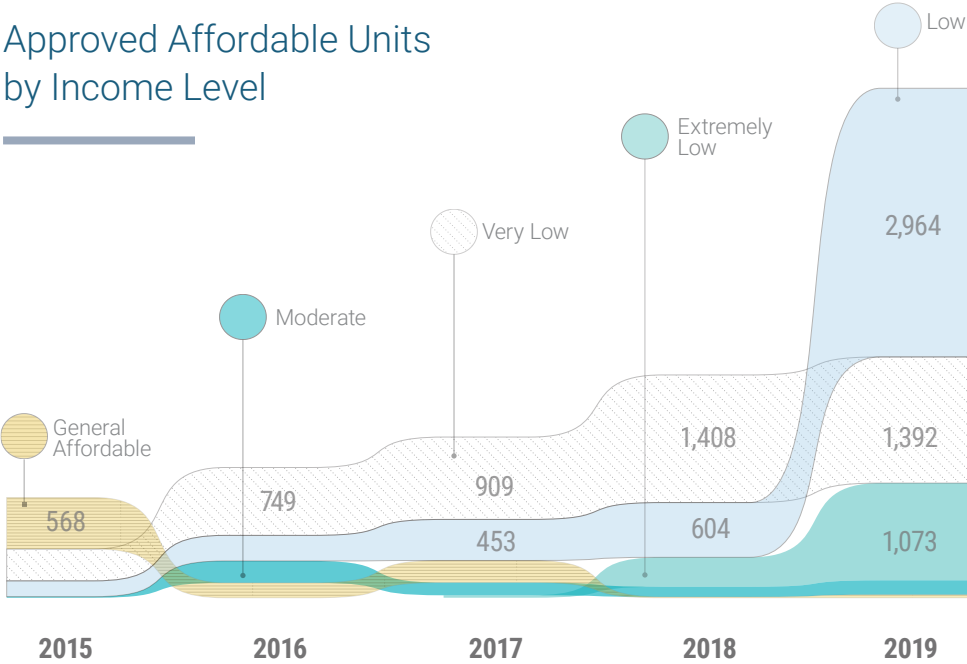
City Planning’s response to the housing shortage has been twofold: incentivizing the construction of affordable units through new policies on one hand, and streamlining approvals for mixed-income and affordable housing projects on the other.

This approach has driven housing production across the City to record highs. In 2018, the number of permitted units reached levels not seen in Los Angeles since 1986. Those numbers continued to be strong in 2019, with nearly 20,000 new units permitted.

Along with the increase in proposed housing, the number of proposed affordable units continues to grow.

City Planning approved more than 27,000 units in 2019, over 5,600 of them affordable to Angelenos in the Low Income category (those earning \$58,450 or less, for a household of one). Compared to 2018, this amounts to a 129 percent increase in affordable units—a significant uptick from 2016, when City Planning approved just 1,775 affordable units.

Fostering an equitable mix of building uses supports a thriving economy and a diverse mix of housing options. Year after year, City Planning is making progress, encouraging the production of affordable units at varying price points.





TOC Incentive Program

Housing incentive programs typically aid cities in meeting housing production targets. Depending on the city, a variety of zoning and land use incentives are available to encourage developers to build affordable units, or to reserve some units in larger development projects for low- and moderate-income households.

In Los Angeles, the Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Incentive Program has melded zoning and land use policies to increase housing production. In the last two years, the TOC Incentive Program has driven much of the housing production across Los Angeles, accounting for more than 27,500 housing units proposed since its inception in September 2017.

Nearly 4,200 of the discretionary units proposed have been affordable (21 percent), with more than a third of those affordable units (37 percent) reserved for Extremely Low Income (ELI) Angelenos (those earning \$31,300 or less, for a household of four).

On average, 16 new units have been proposed for each unit demolished, including 3.4 new affordable units. The net increase in market-

rate and affordable units highlights the program's continuing success and its ability to deliver new housing to meet Los Angeles's present needs.

In 2019, 42 percent of all housing units were proposed through the TOC Program, of which 23 percent were restricted affordable.

A portion of these units have been in higher-income neighborhoods in the Westside (10 percent), where there has traditionally been less development activity and fewer affordable units.

The TOC Incentive Program has played an important role in fostering an equitable mix of building uses and producing affordable units. Creating pathways to housing furthers the goals of the Mayor and City Council for preventing homelessness and delivering on key citywide strategies, as outlined in the Housing Element.

Priority Housing Program

City Planning offers projects with at least 20 percent affordable units prioritized case review and processing through the Priority Housing Project (PHP) Program at the Metro/Downtown Development Services Center.

The PHP Program exemplifies a customer-oriented approach to planning—one that prioritizes the production of affordable housing in alignment with other citywide goals.

To qualify, projects must set aside at least 20 percent of rental units or 30 percent of for-sale units as affordable for low- or moderate-income households. Residential projects must consist of at least 10 units to qualify for the PHP.

In 2019, 56 projects—amounting to 4,700 new units of affordable housing—took advantage of the PHP's specialized services, tripling participation in the program in 2018.

Since the program's inception, almost 100 projects have utilized PHP's services, resulting in more than 6,500 new units of affordable housing.



OFFERING MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

Facing high rents and a statewide housing shortage, Los Angeles and other cities are exploring alternative models for housing as a possible solution to the crisis.

One of City Planning's priorities is providing cheaper housing options for households that are priced out of single-family neighborhoods and the rental market.

For example, Los Angeles's recent Unpermitted Dwelling Unit (UDU) Ordinance keeps serviceable housing units on the market by establishing a process for legalizing unpermitted residences that meet certain basic standards.

Between 400 and 500 housing units are removed from the market each year as an unintended result of periodic inspection of multi-family units.

At a time when the City is facing a housing shortage, this ordinance has helped protect Los Angeles's affordable housing stock.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)—also known as “granny flats,” casitas, and guest houses—are another popular option for moderate-income renters in Los Angeles. They typically cost less than other types of housing and are a convenient choice for family members and other renters. ADUs have proven particularly popular for renters looking for accommodation in otherwise unaffordable neighborhoods.

The ADU and UDU Ordinances—along with the passage of new legislation to permit movable tiny homes in Los Angeles—illustrate the important role land use policies play in guiding the location, pattern, and design of development. These policies demonstrate how land use regulations and zoning are helping the City address its needs.

Accessory Dwelling Units

New Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations at the State and City levels have resulted in significant numbers of new rental units and assisted many families in achieving homeownership. This year alone, ADUs accounted for 23 percent of all housing permits issued in Los Angeles.

The bulk of ADUs in 2019 were additions and conversions, accounting for approximately 80 percent of the year's ADU permit applications, while new construction made up the remaining 20 percent.

The City received 5,615 permit applications for ADUs in 2019, surpassing the previous year's total of 5,430. This housing option is poised to become even more popular after new State legislation takes effect in January 2020. The new rules will allow Californians to build a third unit (or “Junior ADU”) on a single-family property and multiple ADUs on a multi-family property.

The City Council adopted its own ordinance in 2019 to further regulate the size and location of ADUs in Los Angeles. This ordinance added new rules to govern the placement and location of ADUs to promote safety in fire zones.

Unpermitted Dwelling Units

City Planning developed the Unpermitted Dwelling Unit (UDU) Ordinance to establish a process for bringing unpermitted housing units into compliance—provided that certain life safety and affordability requirements are met. The UDU Ordinance protects families from homelessness, preserving and expanding housing options for those most affected by the current housing crisis.

Most units have been removed from the market because of zoning violations. The loss of these units inadvertently contributed to the dislocation of low- and moderate-income households—a problem the UDU Ordinance directly addresses.

Residential or mixed-use buildings with UDUs must be located in a multi-family zone (R2 or above) and otherwise be in good standing with the City. The building owner must also be able to prove that the unit in question existed between 2010 and December 10, 2015, and must agree to set aside at least one unit as affordable.

Movable Tiny Homes

The tiny home movement has been on the rise nationwide—popularized, in part, by television series highlighting the design enhancements and evolutions in financing that have made it easier and more attractive to build movable tiny homes.

The low-impact, affordable nature of many of these units has led cities to legalize movable tiny homes. While they are smaller than Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), upgrades are available to make every room feel full-size and spacious—including a range of full-size fixtures and appliances, high-end finishes, and other customized features based on the individual needs of the homeowners.

In 2019, City Planning revised its Zoning Code to allow movable tiny homes as a type of ADU. The newly adopted rules define a movable tiny home as a residential unit between 150 to 430 square feet that provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons.

By allowing the construction of movable tiny homes, Los Angeles is facilitating alternative forms of housing that have shown to be effective in reducing the cost of construction and need for available land—positioning the second-largest city in the nation as a model for others to follow.

Culturally, movable tiny homes may be associated with attempts to downsize and live more modestly. Nonetheless, cities have increasingly embraced movable tiny homes, identifying their potential to help low-income and homeless individuals and families secure housing. Their smaller imprint has also helped reduce the carbon footprint associated with new construction, in keeping with citywide goals on climate change and resilience.





Promoting Sustainable Development

Adopting Stronger Environmental Regulations

Standardizing Environmental Review

Streamlining CEQA Review

Introducing New Climate Adaptive Strategies

Faced with sea level rise and global warming, cities are leading the response to climate change. Along with mixed-use projects, which make it possible for cities to grow more sustainably, cities are taking advantage of increasing opportunities for infill development.

Smart growth strategies are helping Los Angeles and other cities achieve more sustainable outcomes, and mixed-use projects play a key role.



In the past, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has inadvertently contributed to urban sprawl. More often than local planning and zoning, CEQA's method of measuring traffic impacts has hindered infill development. By requiring new projects to widen roads and increase auto capacity, previous approaches to environmental review have often encouraged the use of single-occupancy vehicles.

Recognizing the negative impact human behavior and travel can have on greenhouse gas emissions, the State has subsequently aligned land use and transportation planning strategies to promote opportunities for infill. Recent legislation in Sacramento has resulted in new energy-friendly policies aimed at producing more inclusive, equitable, and affordable housing options.

In Los Angeles, the need for additional housing has sparked citywide discussions about how to accommodate future development without worsening existing traffic conditions or undermining neighborhoods' character.

Improvements to the environmental review process also make it possible to build more infill development projects, which accommodate the City's housing needs in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner.

The policies and projects City Planning led during 2019 seek to improve Los Angeles's sustainability, in part by advancing the goals of the City's Green New Deal—an initiative that sets Los Angeles on a course to be carbon neutral by 2050.

ADOPTING STRONGER ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

CEQA regulates the environmental effects of the activities of private individuals, corporations, and public agencies.

In 2019, City Planning added two new impact categories to the Initial Study that planners must conduct when evaluating project applications under CEQA. These new categories are intended to identify additional impacts projects may have on energy and wildlife—requiring new findings and evidentiary support in City Planning’s analysis of development projects.

Additionally, following more than a year of outreach and engagement on ways to improve mobility options in Los Angeles, City Planning adopted new methods for calculating projects’ impacts on the transportation network.

Where the former methodology (“Level of Service”) treated traffic congestion as an environmental impact under CEQA, the new metric (“Vehicle Miles Traveled”) considers the distance driven as an environmental impact and favors projects with transit accessibility and a balance of jobs and housing.

These enhancements are encouraging smarter development—providing better access to housing that is close to jobs and services. This approach to planning has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by creating communities where people can live close to jobs, schools, and other destinations.

CEQA Guidelines and Appendix G

As new laws are adopted, the administrative regulations governing implementation of CEQA are revised to reflect changes in legislation, including recent court decisions.

In 2019, City Planning adopted the revised CEQA Guidelines, establishing new impact categories for discretionary projects. Specifically, the guidelines added energy and wildlife to the list of important project considerations Los Angeles must consider when evaluating planning applications for discretionary projects.

Adopting the updated guidelines as CEQA thresholds means City Planning is applying the most current requirements under State law and will automatically incorporate future updates by the State to Appendix G—keeping the City’s review process in line with the State’s goals, providing clear expectations, and preventing the thresholds from ever stagnating.

WHAT ARE THE CEQA GUIDELINES AND APPENDIX G?

The CEQA Guidelines are administrative regulations governing the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act.

The CEQA Guidelines explain how public agencies must determine if a project is subject to environmental review, the steps that are involved in the environmental review process, and the content that is required in environmental documents.

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines is the list of questions that form the basis of CEQA analysis. The initial study and questionnaire—commonly referred to as the Initial Study checklist—outline potential project impacts.

A CEQA threshold of significance for an environmental impact category defines the level above which the lead agency will consider development impacts to be significant or potentially significant.



STANDARDIZING ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

For almost 50 years, CEQA has provided cities across the State with the regulatory tools to preserve natural resources. Through CEQA, cities are able to identify ways to reduce, and possibly eliminate, unforeseen environmental impacts of development—strengthening projects’ overall quality and protecting against significant ecological harm.

However, the environmental review of project applications can stretch timelines and increase development costs. Timelines may be extended due to environmental issues, but delays can also result from internal inconsistencies or other procedural inefficiencies.

Streamlining the environmental review process can help cities avoid unnecessary delays and reduce uncertainty in development timelines.

In Los Angeles, City Planning has taken steps to standardize the environmental review procedures for project applications. As a result of recent process improvements, City Planning has been able to manage a large caseload while maintaining the high caliber of its work.

Environmental Policy Unit

The Environmental Policy Unit keeps Los Angeles’s planners apprised of changes to CEQA. The Unit is responsible for updating policies and practices at the citywide level to comply with State and local revisions to environmental law.

The unit has spearheaded revisions to City Planning’s environmental thresholds. Under CEQA, environmental thresholds define the level above which a project is considered to have a significant impact on the environment. These thresholds establish criteria for evaluating projects’ potential effects on the environment, and are updated periodically to comply with new case law.

In 2019, City Planning facilitated a number of introductory training sessions to inform planners about statewide changes to CEQA. City Planning’s Environmental Policy Unit took additional steps during the year to strengthen the environmental review of projects. At a February meeting, the City Planning Commission (CPC) endorsed the adoption of the updated CEQA Guidelines and Appendix G as City Planning’s thresholds for review under CEQA.

The Environmental Policy Unit also helped oversee the adoption of new CEQA Guidelines and Appendices in 2019. As part of this update, new impact categories—essentially, a list of environmental factors—were added to the checklist that cities must consider when reviewing project applications.



Outreach and Engagement

City Planning engages with the public year-round. In addition to the outreach that occurs during the development phase of any new planning initiative, planners also facilitate educational programs on topics of interest to the community.

This year, City Planning presented the Planning 101 training series “Planning for the Environment,” offering opportunities to learn about CEQA and the City’s efforts on sustainability.

At each meeting, City Planning staff explained how statewide and local regulations determine how environmental review is applied to different types of development projects.

The training series discussed the work of policy and project planning, and described how planning staff informs and guides applicants through the environmental review process in accordance with CEQA.

Since 2017, the Planning 101 series has served as a valuable resource for informing the public on City Planning’s work programs and building lasting relationships. More than 1,500 individuals have attended the 27 training sessions held to date.

Senate Bill 743 Implementation

In July, Los Angeles adopted revised transportation thresholds for evaluating project impacts under CEQA. These new thresholds align with statewide goals on sustainability—promoting multimodal transportation networks and a diversity of land uses aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A centerpiece of this effort was the update to the City’s CEQA transportation thresholds to comply with Senate Bill 743 (SB 743).

SB 743 requires California cities to adopt new ways of measuring transportation-related impacts. The revised thresholds improve access and mobility through a series of mitigation measures, and better ensure that transportation analysis under CEQA can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and traffic-related air pollution.

Under the previous framework, City Planning relied on congestion-based analysis using “Level

of Service” (LOS). LOS often discouraged infill and transit oriented development. The revised guidelines change the metric for transportation analysis to “Vehicle Miles Traveled” (VMT).

The move to VMT analysis is intended to encourage the development of jobs, housing, and commercial uses in close proximity to each other and to transit.

Using VMT for analyzing transportation impacts will help reduce both the distance of average trips and the number of trips to or from a development project.

It will furthermore ease the process for building new housing units near job centers where transit, biking, and walking are viable means of transportation.



STREAMLINING CEQA REVIEW

Sprawling development patterns have traditionally been the result of cities’ attempts to build more housing. This type of development has increased reliance on car travel, leading in turn to higher greenhouse gas emissions—a key driver of climate change.

California’s Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (Senate Bill 375) aligns land use and transportation planning to drive development toward transit-accessible places in order to reduce car dependency. SB 375 is part of a larger statewide strategy

aimed at responsibly accommodating population growth so it does not come at the expense of public health, the economy, and the environment.

Among other things, SB 375 reforms CEQA provisions to include a menu of streamlined review processes for qualifying Transit Priority Projects (TPPs), such as an expedited Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) and a Sustainable Communities Project Exemption (SCPE) for projects that meet specific requirements.



WHAT IS THE VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) METRIC?

VMT is a metric used to analyze transportation impacts under CEQA. It measures the per capita (or average per person) car trips generated by a project, as well as the distances cars travel to and from a project. VMT is calculated by multiplying the number of automobile trips generated by the estimated number of miles driven on each trip.

Senate Bill 375 Implementation

While CEQA is a foundational tool for environmental protection, the lengthy review process and prospect of appeals and litigation can slow the pace of housing production in Los Angeles.

Many projects delayed by the environmental review process have been infill development, proposed in communities where the majority of the City's long-term growth—areas where the need for housing is greatest.

In the past, the City often prepared Negative Declarations or Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) for projects that met the Class 32 infill exemption criteria. What were listed as mitigation measures in these environmental analyses were in reality standard building code requirements applied to all projects.

In 2008, California adopted Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), also known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act. SB 375, the first law of its kind to associate global warming with land use planning and transportation, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the State's carbon footprint and the distances traveled by vehicles.

SB 375 created new CEQA streamlining benefits for development projects identified as TPPs. TPPs must be consistent with the local Sustainable Communities Strategy, consist of at least 50 percent residential units with a calculated density of at least 20 dwelling units per acre, and lie within a half-mile radius of a major transit stop. These types of projects align with the City's goals around infill development.

Projects that qualify for streamlining benefits may qualify for an expedited review process or be exempted altogether from further CEQA review. Due to City Planning's incorporation of CEQA streamlining efforts, Los Angeles has witnessed an overall increase in Class 32 infill exemptions.

A number of high-density infill housing units proposed near transit have benefited from this streamlined review, which incentivizes sustainable and affordable development while helping Los Angeles meet the goals of the State's climate action plan.

WHAT IS SENATE BILL 375?

Senate Bill (SB) 375 ties the regional allocation of housing needs to regional transportation planning. The bill aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicular trips by changing growth patterns to reduce overall car travel.

SB 375 requires regional planning agencies, such as the Southern California Association of Governments, to create a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as part of their Regional Transportation Plan.

The SCS is intended to identify ways regions across California can meet State-mandated greenhouse gas reduction targets—offering a streamlined CEQA review for SCS-consistent projects. Projects must ultimately demonstrate compliance with the local SCS as well as local land use provisions to qualify under SB 375.



INTRODUCING NEW CLIMATE-ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES

Los Angeles is home to a dynamic workforce and a growing economy, but not all Angelenos share in these benefits.

For the City to be truly fair, just, and prosperous, it must build a sustainable future for everyone. To that end, Los Angeles is electrifying its entire bus fleet, drastically reducing emissions at the Port, and cutting oil production and consumption.

Los Angeles is also expanding access to community solar and electric car-sharing, and partnering with community groups to secure key investments in sustainability and economic growth.

Climate adaptation is part of the City's program to correct long-standing environmental injustice.

This program includes action to improve air and water quality, reduce the energy burden of low-income households, address food deserts, provide economic opportunity in the form of green jobs, and build greater access to open space.

City Planning has played a critical role in taking on these challenges. In the last three years, the department has initiated a Wildlife Pilot Study, taken up a coastal program to study sea level rise, and implemented new Citywide Design Guidelines.

In Los Angeles, planning and land use are increasingly regarded as important tools for protecting the local ecosystem, as well as addressing decades-old social inequities through improved land use regulations that strive to create more livable communities.

The work of City Planning highlights a renewed focus at the citywide level on tackling issues directly related to sustainability and climate change.



Citywide Design Guidelines

In the fall, City Planning advanced a revised set of Citywide Design Guidelines to the City Planning Commission. These guidelines include new climate-adapted design approaches aimed at improving energy usage and water conservation across the City.

The guidelines also incorporated new design principles to protect Los Angeles's natural resources and enhance the health and well-being of its citizens. The document's guidance on massing and orientation capitalizes on sunlight to reduce a project's energy usage and stormwater runoff and to cut down the City's reliance on imported water.

As part of a citywide effort to incorporate environmental considerations into project design, the Citywide Design Guidelines advance Los Angeles's goals for preserving natural resources and enhancing opportunities for on-site green spaces.

CLIMATE HERITAGE NETWORK

Los Angeles was one of the first U.S. cities to participate in the Climate Heritage Network—an international coalition of governmental and non-governmental organizations committed to addressing cultural heritage preservation and climate change.

In 2019, Los Angeles joined forces with other large municipalities, including New York and San Antonio, in order to explore best practices for sustainability and cultural heritage. These efforts will prepare Los Angeles for future threats to cultural heritage posed by sea level rise, wildfires, and other climate events.



Wildlife Pilot Study

City Planning initiated a Wildlife Pilot Study to guide Los Angeles’s efforts to manage and conserve biological resources.

The pilot area consists primarily of homes and undeveloped public land in the hillside neighborhoods of the Santa Monica Mountains between the 405 and 101 freeways. The land is currently zoned for single-family residential uses ranging from suburban residential lots to larger estates. It includes a mix of primarily low-density residential lots, undeveloped open space, and intact nature.

The study will assist City Planning in identifying other wildlife habitats throughout Los Angeles. Establishing management tools and understanding of wildlife habitats will also aid the City’s efforts to preserve natural resources.

In 2019, City Planning hired a biologist to develop new land use regulations. The biologist will help City Planning address the threats of climate change to wildlife and plants.

OPEN HOUSE

In the fall, the Citywide Policy Division hosted the second open house for the Wildlife Pilot Study. This event offered residents an opportunity to meet City Planning’s new Wildlife Ecologist, Kat Superfisky.

In her role, Kat will bring a scientist’s perspective to crafting regulations that protect species and habitats, including new wildlife-friendly rules governing setbacks, lot coverage, fencing, and landscaping.





Venice Local Coastal Program

The average global sea level has been rising since the start of the 20th century, with sea level rise playing a role in recent flooding and shoreline erosion. In many coastal cities, rising sea level has placed new constraints on infrastructure and threatened local jobs and industries as a direct result of climate change.

In response, City Planning is undertaking a multi-year effort to prepare, adopt, and certify a Local Coastal Program (LCP) for the Venice neighborhood. The Venice LCP will include development regulations and zoning measures that Los Angeles can adopt for the short- and long-term conservation and use of its coastal resources.

This update presents an opportunity to plan comprehensively for the Venice neighborhood—evaluating current and future coastal hazards, and, for the first time, taking projected sea level rise into account. The Venice LCP is Los Angeles’s opportunity to draw upon established land use strategies to address the threat of sea level rise and its consequences for residents and the waterfront.

PROGRAM BOUNDARIES

The Venice Coastal Zone is the area bounded by Marine Street on the north, the Washington Boulevard and Via Marina on the south, Lincoln Boulevard and Via Dolce on the east, and the Santa Monica Bay on the west. Its area of 2.3 square miles makes up approximately 85 percent of the land mass within the Venice Community Plan Area.

WHAT IS A LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM?

A Local Coastal Program (LCP) contains the ground rules for future development. They specify the location, type, and scale of new or changed uses of land and water.

While each LCP reflects communities’ unique characteristics, LCPs must conform with the goals and policies of the California Coastal Act, which prioritize protection of natural resources, ecological balance, and public health, safety, and welfare.



Achieving Greater Efficiencies

Streamlining Project Review

Sharing Data and Analysis

Meeting Project Milestones

Since 2016, City Planning has assumed responsibility for new programs ranging from implementation of the Home-Sharing Ordinance and updating the City's Community Plans to developing entirely new zoning for Los Angeles. To balance its workload, City Planning has made a number of internal improvements, resulting in greater efficiencies.

City Planning has been working diligently to foster a culture that values transparency and enjoys closer ties to Los Angeles’s communities.

To avoid long wait times, the Downtown Development Services Center began offering online appointments for specialized services, while the Van Nuys office launched an appointment system. The online appointment system has improved the customer experience, simplifying the filing process for project applications.

With the recent surge in cases seeking zoning entitlements, the Office of Zoning Administration (OZA) assembled a strike force to process numerous applications that were awaiting a public hearing. Having a flexible and responsive approach to workload has meant allocating resources where they are most needed—ensuring that jobs and housing production continue on an upward trajectory to support Los Angeles’s economic interests.

At a time of increased development activity, City Planning continues to identify ways to improve the overall customer experience through introducing operational efficiencies.

Project Review Task Force

The OZA is responsible for reviewing major development projects and issuing quasi-judicial approvals as prescribed by the City Charter. The OZA decides on applications, such as Conditional Use Permits and variances, along with a multitude of other discretionary applications.

In May 2019, the OZA assembled a strike force of nearly 50 planners to tackle the high number of outstanding cases seeking zoning entitlements. Over the course of three months, the assigned planners on the OZA strike force processed a total of 113 cases from City Planning’s three GeoTeams (Central and East; West, South, and Harbor; and Valley).

Of the 113 cases, 101 case projects have been scheduled for hearing, 22 have been issued letters of determination, and 12 are still outstanding. Of these outstanding 12 cases, five are Reasonable Accommodation cases, which do not require hearings, while the remaining seven are awaiting the scheduling of a hearing.

The work of the OZA strike force highlights the operational improvements City Planning has made to address case processing times during a period when workload outpaced staffing.

PROJECT BREAKDOWN

Scheduled for Hearing	101
LOD Issued	22
Outstanding	12

STATUS

GEOGRAPHIC AREA

Central	48
Valley	33
West/South/Harbor	32
TOTAL	113

STREAMLINING PROJECT REVIEW

The complexity of planning rules can unintentionally exclude residents from the local process, creating obstacles to public participation. Complex rules can also contribute to claims that the local development process is time-consuming and unpredictable, especially when it comes to building housing.

While municipalities often lack the resources to evaluate the magnitude of the project proposals before them, there is always room for greater efficiencies.

City Planning has taken steps to refine planning approval processes to ensure that they are more inclusive, equitable, and predictable.

Clear and predictable timelines are essential for both the community and the project applicant. In Los Angeles, data analysis has helped the City evaluate the impacts of proposed

projects, with new software making it easier for departments to track timelines and identify areas for improvement.

In the last three years, City Planning has incorporated new measures that have improved predictability and enhanced the level of service.

Today, an online system assists the staff of the Expedited Processing Section (EPS), making it possible to pre-screen project applications and evaluate projects' eligibility for EPS at the outset.

This new capability has strengthened the initial vetting of new projects and provided convenience for applicants, saving them time spent at City Hall.

Other divisions across City Planning made similar improvements in 2019. From the Major Projects Section to the Office of Historic Resources, City Planning's collective efforts highlight the organizational and procedural enhancements that have simplified workflow and improved customer service—demystifying the planning process while keeping it transparent and accessible.

Chief Zoning Administrator

In October 2019, Director Vince Bertoni appointed Estineh Mailian to the position of Chief Zoning Administrator.

A former urban designer for a private architecture firm, Estineh joined City Planning in October 2001 as a Planning Assistant, and eventually worked in the Major Projects, Plan Approval/Site Plan Review, and South Valley Units.

Since that time, Estineh has served as a liaison for the Housing Implementation Program Unit and led Citywide Case Management. More recently, she served as a Principal City Planner, overseeing the public counters at the Development Services Centers.

In her current role, Estineh also oversees the Expedited Processing Section (EPS). Established in 2003, EPS works closely with project applicants to ensure priority assistance for projects that further the City's housing and economic development objectives.



Expedited Processing
Section (EPS)

City Planning’s Expedited Processing Section (EPS) continues to advance Los Angeles’s objectives for housing and economic development by prioritizing the review of planning applications with affordable housing and community-serving commercial uses. In 2019, EPS approved more than 6,000 dwelling units and over one million square feet of commercial floor area.

Additionally, EPS has directly assisted applicants in staying on schedule, advancing project approvals to an initial public hearing within 120 days of acceptance.

Planners assigned to EPS are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate entitlements have been requested, carrying out the environmental analysis, conducting a public hearing, and completing a project’s determination letter. EPS’s practice of early application review has helped City Planning keep to established timelines for case processing while maintaining capacity to respond to local market demands.

Totals	Housing Units	Hotel Rooms	Non-Residential Floor Area (SF)
2016	5,686	1,822	1,707,623
2017	6,619	2,327	835,444
2018	5,337	1,370	1,516,518
2019	5,922	348	1,075,594

For example, EPS managed the review of the planning entitlements for the upgrades to Dodger Stadium in 2019. The review of the stadium’s renovation proposal—valued at \$100 million—was completed in less than four months from the initial project submission. This project, like many others EPS has reviewed, contributes significantly to the local economy and culture.

Major Projects

The EIR review process—the most lengthy and complex form of environmental review—entails the preparation of an Initial Study, a Draft EIR, and a Final EIR, all of which require public review and regular coordination between the applicant, the environmental consultant team, and the City.

In Los Angeles, EIRs are primarily managed by City Planning’s Major Projects Section. Major Projects’ focus on EIRs has contributed greatly to the documents’ quality and consistency. The work of the Major Projects Section is largely responsible for Los Angeles’s relatively short case processing times and the City’s record of producing technically compliant EIRs.

City Planning introduced new efficiencies into the process for project-related EIRs in 2019. To maintain quality control, Major Projects has moved to standardize EIR templates. Templates establish consistency in the preparation of documents and ensure that the growing number of cases does not impact the review and processing times for EIRs.

In 2019, City Planning developed a revised outline for each analysis section under the Draft EIRs. These measures aid City Planning in managing expectations and monitoring consultants’ performance.

Los Angeles published nearly 13 percent of the Draft EIRs and 80 percent of the Final EIRs in California in 2019—even though the City represents only 10 percent of the State’s population.

However, the number of published EIRs does not reflect the total number of cases processed by Major Projects. In 2019, there were over 70 active cases, which collectively could result in over 23,000 new housing units (including 1,400 affordable units), 7,100 hotel rooms, and 10 million square feet of jobs-producing floor area.

Totals	Market-Rate Units	Affordable Units	Hotel Rooms	Non-Residential Floor Area (SF)
2016	5,060	377	208	3,882,473
2017	3,429	20	910	2,259,643
2018	4,112	237	1,461	1,042,551
2019	5,988	437	2,253	2,321,167



SHARING DATA AND ANALYSIS

As part of a larger effort to increase data transparency and analysis around policy outcomes, City Planning has launched two new digital dashboards. These dashboards track housing outcomes and other relevant information at the citywide and neighborhood levels—offering a comprehensive account of the City’s efforts to incentivize housing production, especially the construction of affordable units.

Year-End Numbers

Case processing data indicates that development interest in Los Angeles remained high in 2019. Applications filed with City Planning remained consistent with totals from 2018. More applications today are filed and completed as administrative decisions without requiring planning review.

In 2019, half of all applications filed and completed were reviewed administratively. The increase in administrative decisions has resulted in faster processing times and a completion rate up 31 percent from 2017.

Fewer cases require discretionary action by City Planning, with the largest decrease in subdivision cases, down 26 percent compared to 2018.

In terms of housing, the Department of Building and Safety reports that at the end of 2019, 110,952 dwelling units had been permitted since July 1, 2013. In that same period, City Planning entitled 134,483 units. The overall number of units proposed in 2019 remained consistent with the prior year, though a significantly higher number of affordable units were proposed—testifying to the success of City Planning’s affordable housing incentive programs.

Digital Dashboards

In 2019, City Planning launched two new online metrics dashboards: the Housing Progress Dashboard and the Development Activity and Trends Dashboard.

The Housing Progress Dashboard replaces City Planning’s quarterly print publication, the Housing Progress Report, which identified trends in planning entitlements for housing projects. Using the latest data visualization technology, the Housing Progress Dashboard displays a customizable readout of market-rate and affordable housing units proposed and approved across the City.

The Housing Progress Dashboard also presents City Planning’s data on the units produced through the Transit Oriented Communities and Density Bonus programs, and the permits issued for Accessory Dwelling Units.

The Development Activity and Trends Dashboard offers a high-level assessment of City Planning’s case processing activities, including non-residential applications. It notes the number of applications filed and completed—entitlements, environmental cases, appeals, and administrative cases—as well as the actual demand for services and wait times at the three public counters.

These online dashboards further City Planning’s digital reach and demonstrate its commitment to transparency, accountability, and better customer service. Sharing data online has helped communities gain insight into many aspects of planning, including the role of land use considerations in furthering Los Angeles’s housing goals.



WHAT IS A HISTORIC PRESERVATION OVERLAY ZONE?

A Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) is a local district in Los Angeles that is designated as containing structures, landscaping, natural features, or sites having historic, architectural, cultural, or aesthetic significance. While most HPOZs are primarily comprised of residential structures, many include a mix of single-family and multi-family housing, and some even encompass commercial and industrial properties.

MEETING PROJECT MILESTONES

In Los Angeles, there are 35 historic districts called Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs). Like other overlays, an HPOZ provides an additional layer of planning control during the project review process—designed to protect communities’ distinctive architectural and cultural resources.

In 2019, City Planning implemented new internal deadlines to streamline the review of projects in HPOZs.

These changes have achieved substantial gains in on-time case acceptance and completion rates, while nearly eliminating the backlog of previous HPOZ cases—despite an increase in overall caseload.

In recent years, City Planning has made significant progress recruiting HPOZ planners with expertise in the topic of historic preservation. This increase in staffing levels, together with a strong internal emphasis on customer service, has helped to reduce case backlogs and enhance the efficiencies of the HPOZ program.

Project Review Milestones: HPOZ Workflow

In 2019, City Planning worked with the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) staff in the Office of Historic Resources to verify that project review milestones were being tracked accurately as the unit’s management implemented new workflows. The data shows improvement in the percentage of certificate cases completed within 75 days of acceptance—increasing from 50 percent in 2018 to 87 percent in 2019.



Adding Capacity to Support the Workload

Adding Staffing Resources

Facilitating Internal Trainings

Funding New Planning Initiatives

City Planning strives to enhance its employees' skill sets. Nowadays, planning departments across the nation are called upon to help address society's most complex challenges, ranging from housing affordability to homelessness.

In 2019, City Planning continued to attract and recruit a talented and diverse pool of applicants with varying backgrounds that reflect the makeup of Los Angeles’s communities.

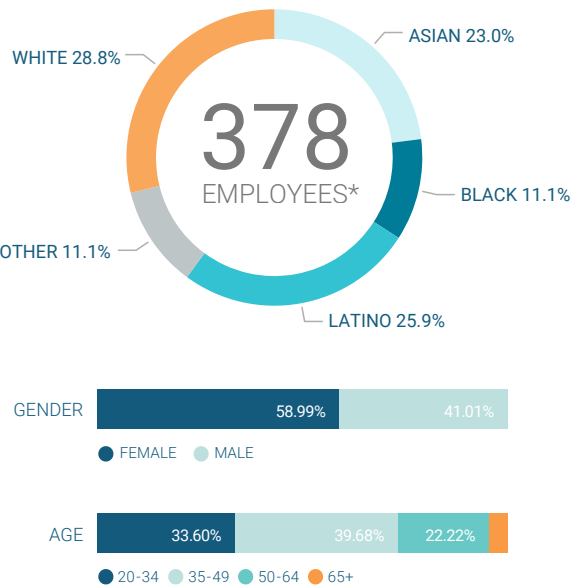


To support City Planning, the Mayor and City Council allocated additional resources in the last fiscal year’s budget, aiding new policy initiatives and assisting with the review of development projects.

Working alongside the Personnel Department, City Planning has not only stepped up recruitment efforts, but also filled vacancies—adding immediate capacity to augment existing planning-related services.

While the FY 2019-2020 budget authorized 503 position authorities, nearly 40 of these are kept vacant for salary savings and indirect costs. This leaves a total of 84 vacant positions that City Planning can actually fill.

To recruit new candidates, the Executive Office continues to develop exams in collaboration with the Personnel Department. These exams are for new hires and promotions as part of a concerted effort to add capacity.



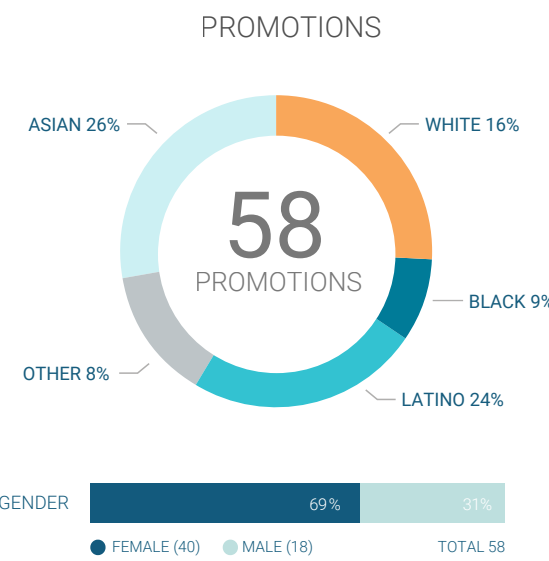
*All Employees as of December 31, 2019

ADDING STAFFING RESOURCES

Maintaining geographic equity and parity has informed the decision-making process, especially when it comes to allocating additional staffing resources.

In the last three calendar years, City Planning has focused a considerable portion of its resources on augmenting its presence in the San Fernando Valley.

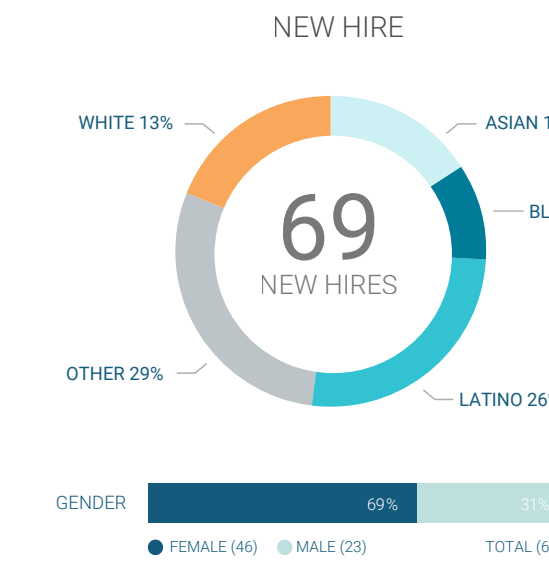
Since 2016, City Planning has assigned and filled 18 new positions to support the updates of six Community Plans in the Southwest and East Valley. The Valley Project Planning Division has also benefited from a few additional positions, based on the number of cases that are assigned to planners in this geography.



The Expedited Processing Section (EPS) also grew by six positions between 2016 and 2019 as a direct result of ongoing demand for the section’s specialized services.

Of all the services within the Project Planning Bureau, the Major Projects Section has expanded more than any other division or section. From 2016 through 2019, the section’s staffing increased by 31 percent in order to assist with the volume of project-related EIRs reviewed by City Planning.

City Planning’s hiring efforts reflect the rightsizing of a department that has historically operated with minimal resources—despite its high volume of development cases and policy initiatives.



FACILITATING INTERNAL TRAININGS

For the past two years, City Planning’s Performance Management Unit (PMU) has offered a comprehensive training program for planners and other department staff. The program includes orientations for new hires, technical training for staff, higher-level training for supervisors, and briefings on important statewide and local changes to land use and planning.

In 2019, City Planning held a total of 24 training sessions on 13 topics, with a total attendance of 1,120. These sessions provided employees with information on new procedures and enhancements—establishing clear expectations while also giving staff the tools they need to be productive and efficient in the workplace.

This year, the training program placed special emphasis on diversity and inclusion, equipping staff with tools to interact effectively with Los Angeles’s many communities and populations.

Every level of management attended a four-and-a-half-hour training facilitated by a professional team, focusing on skills and techniques for increasing engagement across cultures.



FUNDING NEW PLANNING INITIATIVES

To keep up with the steady increase in City Planning’s output, the City has allocated additional resources to the department over the last four fiscal years, from FY 2016-17 through FY 2019-20.

In the current FY 2019-20 budget, City Planning received approval and funding for 503 positions, an increase of 85 over the 418 positions approved in FY 2016–2017. The vast majority of these positions were funded to support Community Plan updates.

To maintain this level of staffing, City Planning’s budget increased to \$60.9 million. By comparison, the budget in FY 2016–2017 was \$45,608,752—approximately 34 percent less than it is today. However, the majority of the budget, roughly 75 percent, is covered by Special Funds rather than the City’s General Fund.

This increased budget has sustained the growth of certain divisions at City Planning, including Community Planning, Development Services, and Major Projects.

Of the budget’s 85 new staff positions, 67 (about 79 percent) were allocated to these three functions.

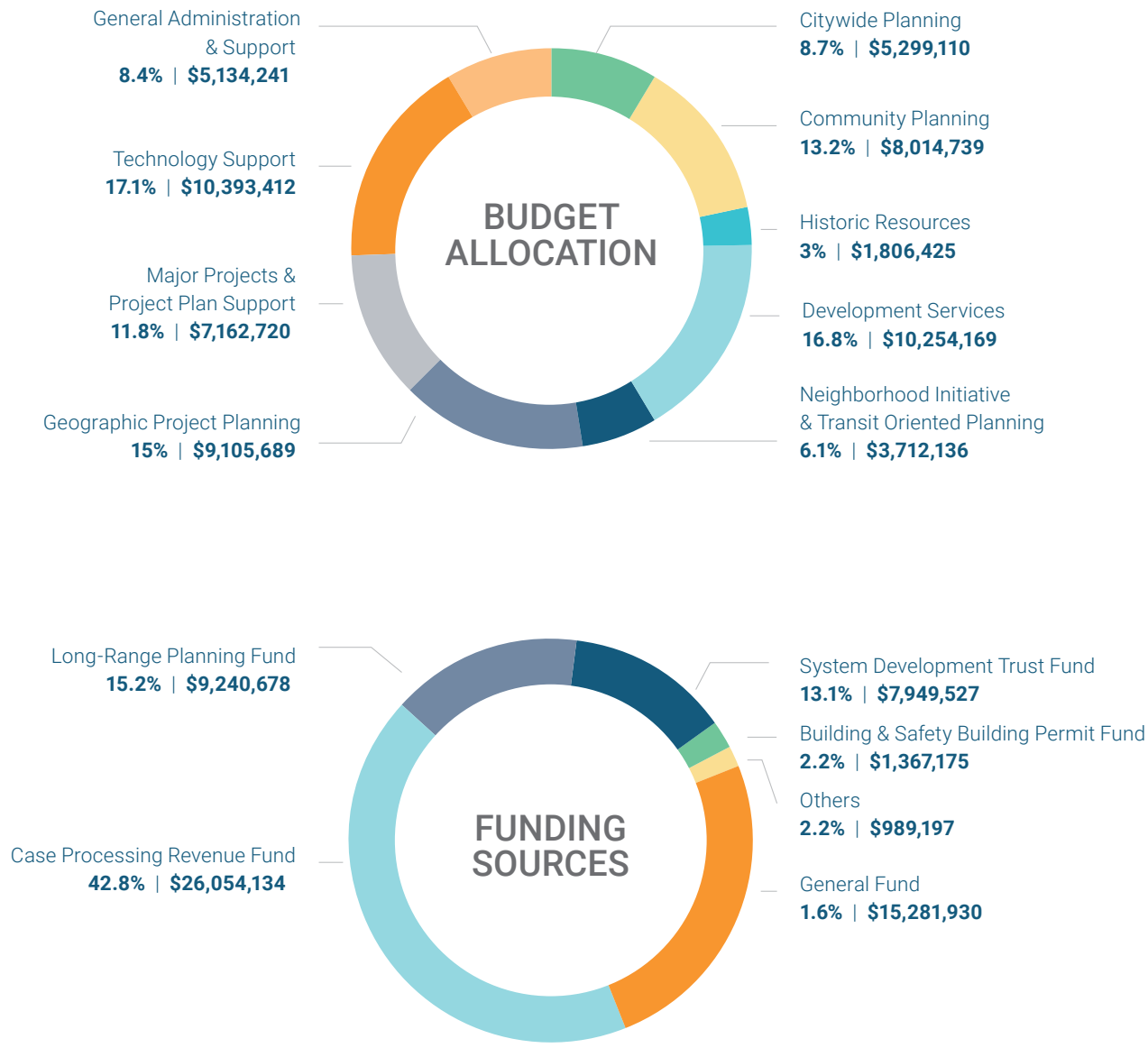
The Development Services Centers saw the most substantial growth, marked by a 66 percent increase. These 38 net new position authorities were funded by an additional \$5,298,356 added to City Planning’s budget between FY 2016-17 and 2019-20.

Staffing at Community Planning also increased by 46 percent between FY 2016-17 and 2019-20—a gain of 38 net new positions. During the same period, Major Projects picked up an additional 11 planners, a 23 percent increase.

In the months ahead, City Planning will work to fill many of these newly created positions in close cooperation with the Personnel Department.



FY2019-20 Adopted Budget



Strengthening Communication Strategies in the Workplace

Supporting Opportunities for Outreach

Establishing a Consistent Identity

Communications represents a core function of any department. For City Planning, a strong communications network has led to greater trust at the community level and more engagement with citizens.

Government agencies are increasingly leveraging new capabilities to broaden support for key programs, respond to citizens' needs, and demonstrate accountability in the workplace.



Maintaining an active presence on major communications platforms has assisted City Planning's outreach and engagement and offered the public a reliable source of information on local issues related to land use.

The main focus of City Planning's Communications Unit has been responding to and supporting media inquiries as part of a larger effort to further the clarity and accuracy of news and features about planning in Los Angeles. Additionally, the Executive Office has tasked the unit with producing monthly, quarterly, and annual reports.

In 2019, City Planning revamped its communications, building on the progress made in previous years. City Planning consolidated its websites, social media accounts, and interested parties lists to support its work programs.

Most recently, City Planning formed a Community Liaison program to bolster communications across Los Angeles's diverse neighborhoods, and to provide communities with a direct point of contact for planning-related policies and issues.

SUPPORTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTREACH

In the last two years, planners have adopted new technology and best practices to increase public participation. City Planning has also partnered with nonprofits, government agencies, and neighborhood groups to reach a broader audience.

In 2019, City Planning hosted and attended over 300 community events, in addition to facilitating 90 public hearings across Los Angeles. These events and hearings have provided meaningful opportunities for the public to engage with planning staff.

Social media provides an alternative venue for interacting with the public, and reaches individuals who may not participate in an in-person planning forum.

Building clear lines of communication with stakeholders allows City Planning to report on key milestones, share success stories, identify alternative outreach strategies, and establish measurable goals to track progress and produce results-based outcomes.

In today's world, breaking news instantly ignites social media activity. For that reason, city departments can leverage social media for the purpose of a successful messaging campaign—sharing information and providing immediate, real-time news.

Planning 101 Training Series

City Planning launched the Planning 101 training series in 2017. Intended for a lay audience, the series of presentations provides an introduction to the basic concepts of planning, zoning, and land use. These sessions have helped familiarize Angelenos with the planning profession and introduced them to the planner assigned to their geography.

To date, City Planning has hosted three Planning 101 series. The first covered long-range planning and policy implementation, while the second looked at development services and the project review process. The most recent Planning 101 covered environmental planning and the state and local regulations that inform the protection, management, and conservation of natural resources.

By facilitating these types of training opportunities, City Planning hopes to encourage more Angelenos to engage in the process. Public engagement ensures that planning outcomes reflect the aspirations of the geographically and culturally diverse City of Los Angeles.



ESTABLISHING A CONSISTENT IDENTITY

In 2019, City Planning undertook a comprehensive overhaul of its identity and communications—an identity that aspires to be visionary, inclusive, and community-focused.

For City Planning, establishing a consistent identity has led to stronger community engagement.

To that end, City Planning devoted a portion of last year to taking inventory of all its assets, reports, and communication materials.

This assignment required aggregating the existing interested parties lists and enumerating all the URLs and social media accounts City Planning has created over the years to support specific work programs.

A number of tools developed in 2019 embody City Planning's identity, including a new logo, a revamped website, a consolidated presence on social media, integrated email marketing campaigns, and a modernized look for City Planning's print publications.

Website Integration

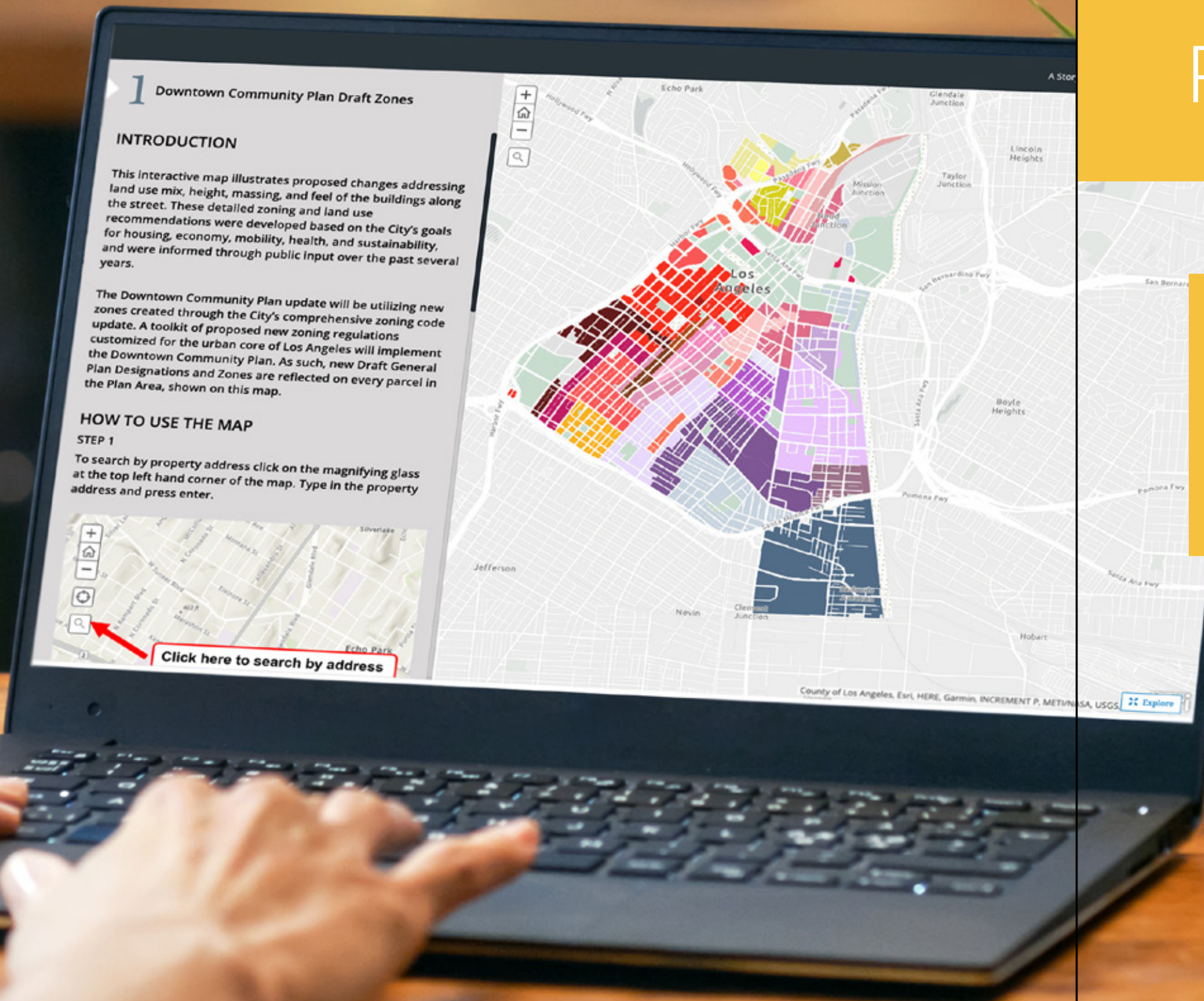
Until recently, City Planning operated 23 websites, each dedicated to a specific planning initiative.

In the fall, City Planning's new website went live, complete with improved technological enhancements and capabilities. The refresh of City Planning's website is part of a larger effort to establish a unified online presence. Planning4LA.org is a central location and destination for planning news in Los Angeles.

Migrating the content of City Planning's satellite sites to a single location has also strengthened its reporting on important projects, such as the overhaul of Los Angeles's Zoning Code, updates to the Community Plans, and preservation of the City's historic landmarks—all of which are now housed within the same digital space.

The new website includes a title menu that is functional, intuitive, and easy to navigate. Its content expands on that of the old website, offering additional narrative and context to frame programs for seasoned professionals and newcomers to planning alike.

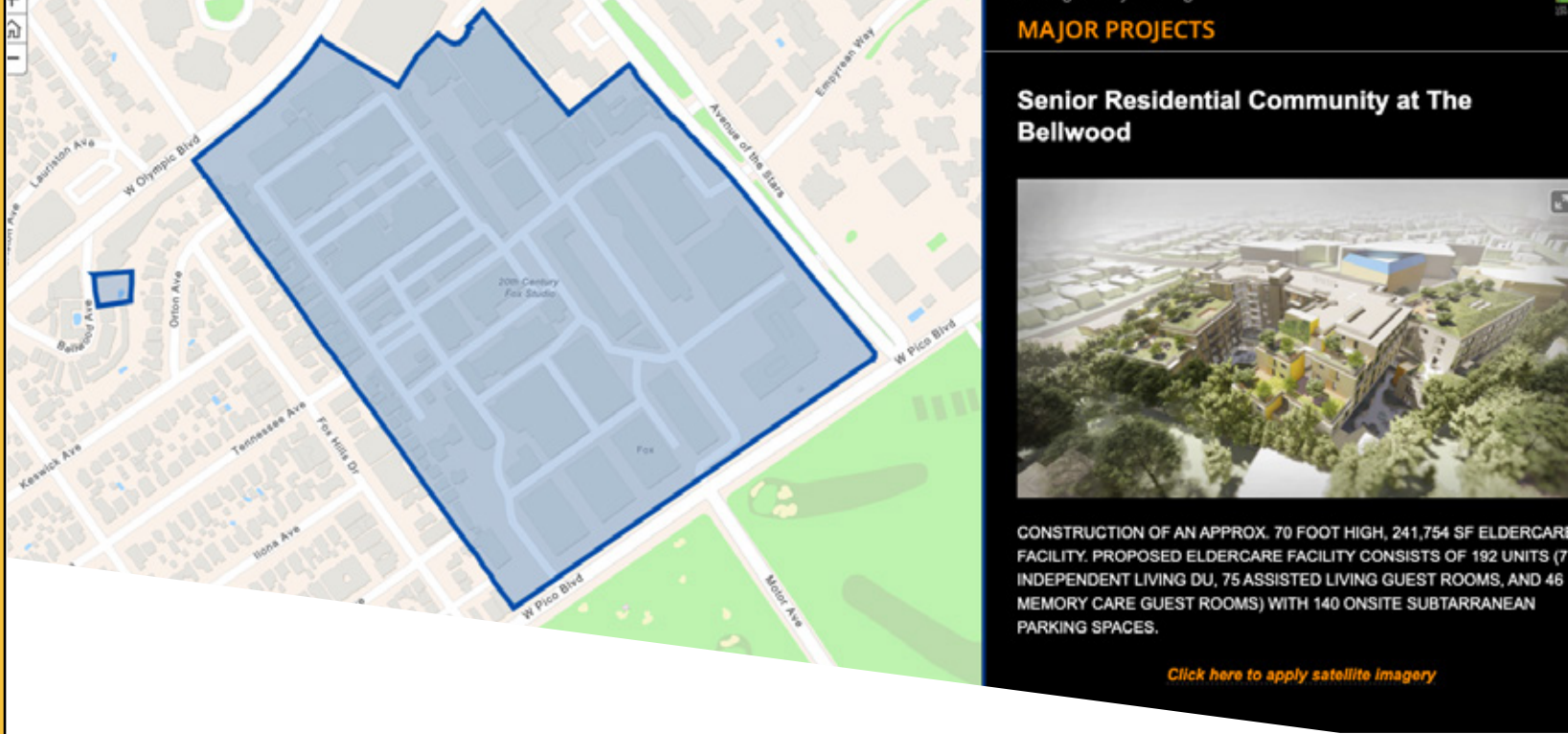
Incorporating Technology into Planning



Improving Data Reporting and Accounting

Over the years, technology has changed the way cities look at the world. Today, planning departments are using spatial analysis to evaluate projections, assumptions, and estimates. Rather than listing numbers on a spreadsheet, planners are leveraging technology to picture data using three-dimensional modeling.

GIS reveals patterns, relationships, and situations to help users make informed decisions.



Geospatial Information System (GIS) software generates visualizations of an area’s current conditions—allowing users to draw comparisons between existing and proposed plans.

GIS technology is also about gathering, managing, and analyzing data—integrating geographic information within layers of data into tables, graphs, and maps to make data more visually presentable. GIS reveals patterns, relationships, and situations to help users make informed decisions. As urban populations grow and spread, the importance of GIS lies in its ability to pull together vast amounts of information to inform competing priorities and solve problems, such as optimizing the placement of future buildings.

The use of sophisticated GIS desktop and web mapping software has also assisted City Planning in forecasting trends in population, housing, and employment growth. More recently, planners have used GIS technology to produce a series of interactive maps. These maps support critical planning functions, offering additional opportunities for collaboration and partnership with various community groups throughout the process.

These story maps reveal information that supports key planning initiatives and further City Planning’s goals on transparency and accessibility, including:

- The **Major Projects Story Map** shows the location of projects, along with the case numbers and descriptions for project-related EIRs.
- **Bi-Weekly Entitlement Case Filings** lists the locations, dates, and descriptions of discretionary cases that have been filed with City Planning in the last month.
- **Regulations Summary** displays changes to land use designations—including detailed zoning and land use recommendations—that are being proposed in conjunction with updates to the Community Plans.

Over the years, City Planning has relied on GIS technology to assess and decipher land use patterns and trends by processing geospatial data from satellite imaging, aerial photography, and remote sensors.

GIS technology has also improved public input, serving as a powerful interactive tool throughout City Planning’s decision-making process.

IMPROVING DATA REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Involving the community in decisions at the neighborhood level has been a priority of planning departments from the outset of the profession. Planners recognize that neighborhood groups—renters and homeowners, business groups, and nonprofits—help shape a city’s identity and are the core of a healthy society.

Collaborative planning on issues involving land use and development is therefore in any city’s interest, since it presents opportunities for neighborhood groups to collaborate with city agencies in envisioning the future of their neighborhoods. In Los Angeles, neighborhoods have a number of ways to interact with elected officials and City departments. Opportunities for collaboration do not merely arise in instances when neighborhood groups are responding to an issue.

On the contrary, residents and businesses have a long-standing relationship with their local government and are involved in neighborhood affairs. The City benefits from the neighborhood council system, which was established to solidify the importance of receiving local input. Planners from across the City reflect the value of community engagement when they reach out and listen to feedback.

Over the years, City Planning has developed new outlets for neighborhood groups to provide input and be involved in the local decision-making process. One example is the Entitlement Case Filings Map released in 2019.

The online map identifies the sites of recent project applications, along with their requested planning entitlements—offering the public easier access to discretionary project applications that are being proposed in their neighborhoods, in real time.

Each case includes helpful information, such as a project’s description and address, in order to keep communities up to date on local development activities. The interactive map lets users zoom in on proposed projects in their neighborhood. Layers of the map can also be turned on or off, so users can customize the information displayed based on their interests.

Additionally, the Entitlement Case Filings Map makes it possible for any member of the public to identify any proposed discretionary planning application in the City. Offering direct access to live and continuously updated data, this mapping application showcases the innovation and improvements in City services that technology offers.

City Planning created the Entitlement Case Filings Map to support the free flow of information, contributing to the democratic process through nonconventional forms of community engagement such as data-sharing. To view case information, members of the public no longer have to look up individual projects one by one, or schedule an in-person visit.

Interactive Story Maps

Interactive story maps draw on the power of maps and geography to tell a story. Many cities use them as tools to support advocacy and outreach, and planners often turn to story maps to convert static text, images, and multimedia content into a dynamic, interactive experience.

This increased degree of information-sharing has furthered City Planning’s engagement efforts, highlighting how technology can be used as a tool for understanding and collaboration.

Earlier this year, City Planning released three new story maps for the Downtown, Hollywood, and Boyle Heights Community Plans, each of which is undergoing an update. The update process proposes changes to Community Plans’ policy documents and land use maps in order to better align growth strategies to reflect local development trends.

To assist the public in visualizing the impacts associated with Community Plan updates, City Planning has developed interactive story maps to showcase the proposed changes in each Plan Area. This new capability has assisted community members in identifying change areas and understanding how the proposed policies will be implemented through new zoning.

Using geospatial data, interactive story maps have made it possible for City officials and the public to map complex datasets to inform the decision-making process.

Each interactive story map illustrates proposed changes addressing land use designations, height, massing, and the pedestrian experience of buildings along the street. Determining how a proposed update would impact a particular parcel once entailed searching through a stack

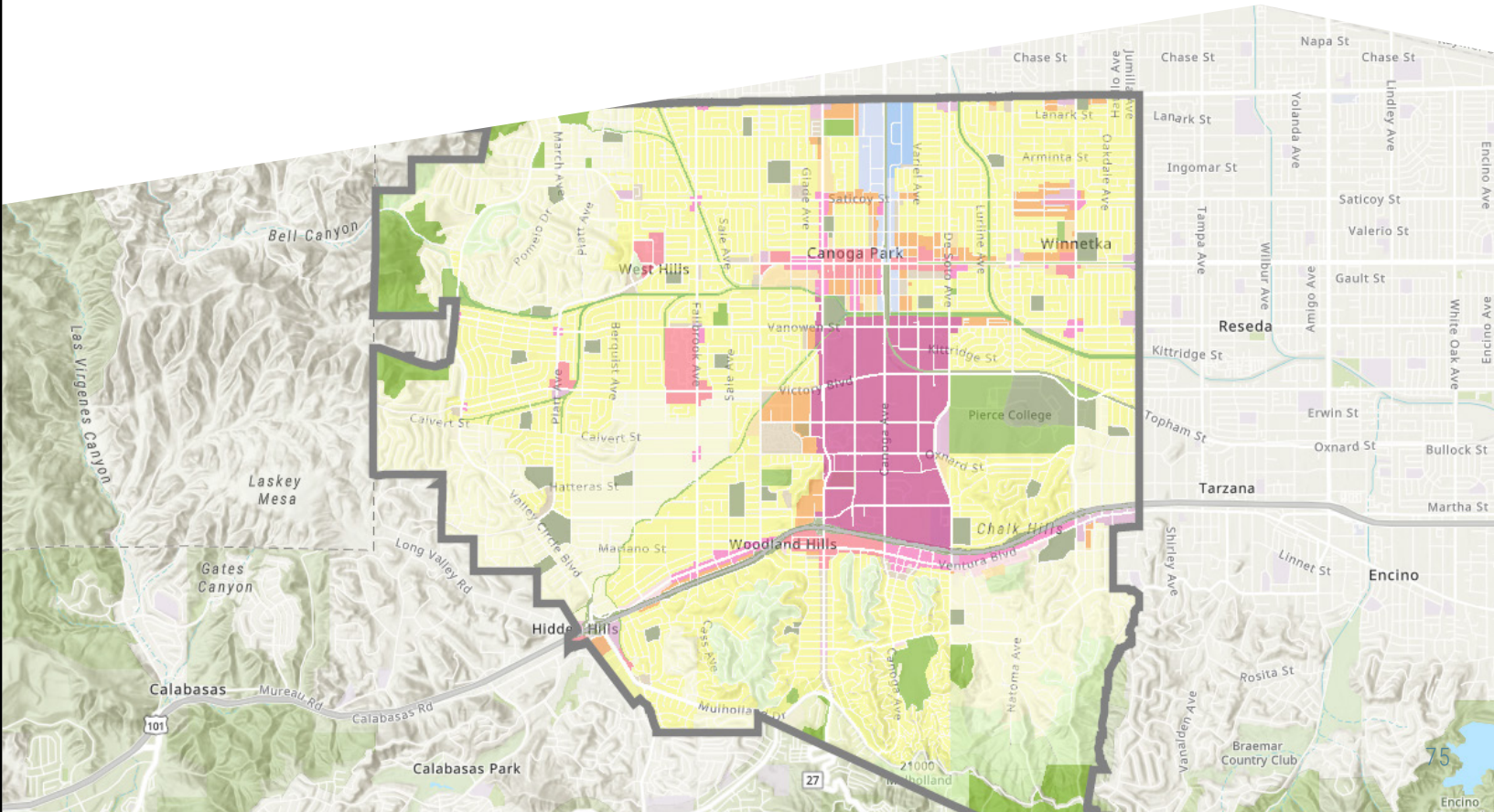
HOW TO READ AN INTERACTIVE STORY MAP

Each Interactive Story Map organizes proposed changes thematically to reflect the goals of the draft Community Plan. The themes, illustrated by photos, explain the intent behind the proposed changes.

Clicking on a subarea opens a pop-up window with information such as the proposed land use designation, zone, height, and other regulations for that subarea.

of paper maps, but with interactive story maps, users skip to the information they want by clicking on the parcel in question.

GIS technology has made it possible for users to visualize proposed changes to the City, increasing transparency, openness, and community engagement. Planners are leveraging this capability to further demystify the planning process, using technology as a tool to extend community outreach.



Awards

Recognizing Achievement in the Workplace

City Planning remains at the forefront of innovative new practices, and nationwide leaders in the planning profession have recognized its cutting-edge policies. While awards in past years honored City Planning's efforts to promote sustainable and equitable land use policies, this year's awards recognized its work on housing and communications.

These awards speak to the collective work of the planning staff and the myriad ways in which City Planning is improving the welfare and livability of Los Angeles's neighborhoods, whether through the advancement of new land use policies, the review of project applications, or recent efforts on outreach and engagement.



COMMUNITY LIAISON PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING
2019
NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
LOS ANGELES VANGUARD AWARD

From housing to communications, the awards City Planning received in 2019 highlight the professional expertise and accomplishments of its staff of nearly 400.



American Planning Association—California State Chapter

Planning Landmark Award: Los Angeles Centers Concept

The California Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized the “Los Angeles Centers Concept” with the *Planning Landmark Award*. Adopted in 1974, the Centers Concept sought to concentrate most of the future development in Los Angeles in urban centers, away from lower-density residential neighborhoods.

2019 Great Places in California: El Pueblo de Los Ángeles

The California Chapter of the American Planning Association designated El Pueblo de Los Ángeles as a “Great Place in California.” A historic district in the heart of Los Angeles, El Pueblo is the site where 44 settlers of Native American, African, and European heritage established a farming community in 1781, following a journey of more than a thousand miles across the desert from present-day Mexico. It is the oldest section of Los Angeles.

American Planning Association—Los Angeles Chapter

Best Planning Practice: Permanent Supportive Housing and Interim Motel Conversion Ordinances

The Los Angeles Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized City Planning’s Housing Policy Unit for its work to provide new housing opportunities for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. The City Council adopted two new land use regulations—the Permanent Supportive Housing and Interim Motel Conversion Ordinances—that were initiated by the Housing Policy Unit. Both of these land use regulations support the Mayor and City Council’s efforts to accommodate more permanent supportive housing units.



Hard Won Victory: Affordable Housing Linkage Fee Ordinance

The Los Angeles Chapter of the American Planning Association commended the Housing Policy Unit for establishing a permanent and self-sustaining local source of revenue for the production of affordable housing. At a time when the City is responding to severe cuts in federal spending, the Affordable Housing Linkage Fee Ordinance establishes new fees on certain market-rate residential and commercial developments in order to generate local funding for affordable housing production and preservation.

Implementation Award (Large Jurisdiction): Transit Oriented Communities Affordable Housing Incentive Program

The Los Angeles Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized the Housing Policy Unit for developing a new incentive program for affordable units, accounting for the largest share of housing units proposed from a single planning entitlement over the last two years. The TOC Incentive Program provides development incentives to residential and mixed-use housing projects located near high quality transit, in exchange for a percentage of onsite affordable housing.

Communications Initiative: Los Angeles Landmarks Video Series

The Los Angeles Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized City Planning's External Affairs Division for its work in communications, which is strengthening City Planning's engagement with diverse audiences through the use of new digital platforms, such as video production. The award-winning L.A. Landmarks video series has helped spotlight iconic, locally designated Historic-Cultural Monuments across the City.

Public Outreach: Planning 101 Training Series

The Los Angeles Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized City Planning's External Affairs Division for developing a new curriculum—the *Planning 101* training series—to support community outreach and engagement. In the last three years, more than 1,500 people attended the *Planning 101* training sessions, of which City Planning has offered nearly 30. The training series was conceived in late 2017 as a way of introducing residents and businesses to the ways planning impacts everyday life.



Los Angeles Conservancy

Preservation Award: Asian American Historic Context Statements

The Los Angeles Conservancy honored City Planning's Office of Historic Resources with a Preservation Award for its work in developing the Asian Americans in Los Angeles Historic Context Statements. The context statements—supported by a National Park Service grant—guide the identification of important places associated with the City's Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Thai American communities from the earliest days of immigration and settlement to the formation of the Asian American movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The documents lay the groundwork for future landmark designations of Asian American heritage sites.

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

Vanguard Award: Community Liaisons Program

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment presented City Planning's Community Liaison Program with the Neighborhood Council Civic Engagement Los Angeles Vanguard (NCELAV) Award. The NCELAV Award recognizes City departments and employees for their civic engagement and collaboration with Los Angeles's Neighborhood Councils. City Planner Kinikia Gardner was also honored at this year's event with the NCELAV Award for her work on the Mar Vista Community Plan Update.



ELECTED OFFICIALS

Eric Garcetti, Mayor
Mike Feuer, City Attorney
Ron Galperin, City Controller
Gilbert Cedillo, Council District 1
Paul Krekorian, Council District 2
Bob Blumenfield, Council District 3
David E. Ryu, Council District 4
Paul Koretz, Council District 5
Nury Martinez, Council District 6

Monica Rodriguez, Council District 7
Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Council District 8
Curren D. Price, Jr., Council District 9
Herb J. Wesson, Jr., Council District 10
Mike Bonin, Council District 11
John S. Lee, Council District 12
Mitch O’Farrell, Council District 13
Jose Huizar, Council District 14
Joe Buscaino, Council District 15

COMMISSIONERS

City Planning Commission
Samantha Millman, President
Vahid Khorsand, Vice President
David H. Ambroz
Caroline Choe
Helen Leung
Karen Mack
Marc Mitchell
Veronica Padilla-Campos
Dana Perlman

Cultural Heritage Commission
Richard Barron, President
Gail Kennard, Vice President
Pilar Buelna
Diane Kanner
Barry Milofsky

AREA PLANNING COMMISSIONS

North Valley
Eric Nam, President
Victor Sampson, Vice President
Martina Diaz
Yvette Lopez-Ledesma
Araz Parseghian

South Valley
Mark Dierking, President
Lydia Drew Mather, Vice President
Rebecca Beatty
Raymond J. Bishop
Anna Menedjian

West Los Angeles
Michael Newhouse, President
Lisa Waltz Morocco, Vice President
Esther Margulies
Heather Rozman
Adele Yellin

Central Los Angeles
Oliver DelGado, President
Nicholas Shultz, Vice President
Jennifer Barraza Mendoza
Jennifer Chung-Kim
Ilissa Gold

East Los Angeles
Rudy Espinoza, President
Denise Campos, Vice President
Christopher Arellano
Teri Stein
Jacob Stevens

South Los Angeles
Eric D. Bates, President
Gail Willis, Vice President
Antoinette Anderson
Jaqueline Orozco
Stevie Stern

Harbor
Esther Hatch, President
Mona Sutton, Vice President
John Bagakis
Mitchell Harmatz
Amber Sheikh Ginsberg



@Planning4LA

Planning4LA.org

This report is published annually by City Planning. Facts and figures cover January 1 through December 31, 2019, unless otherwise indicated. Address questions and comments to planning.media@lacity.org.