

PLAN CALIFORNIA



American Planning Association
California Chapter

Creating Great Communities

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM 2023-2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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PLAN CALIFORNIA 2023-2024 Legislative Platform for APA California

Professional planners have a responsibility to comprehensively implement practical solutions to pressing issues that balance the needs of California’s diverse population, environments and economies. Planners focus on a broad range of topics and issues such as land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, environmental and human health, social equity, and economic vitality. Our pivotal role in the decision-making process at the local, regional, and state levels provides unique insight to help shape the policy landscape and ongoing debate on planning-related issues. This effort requires planners in California to monitor shifts in statewide policy and identify planning solutions in the context of local, state, and national trends.

To address the planning issues facing our state and set the standard for our profession, APA California adopts a Legislative Platform prior to the start of each California two-year legislative session titled “Plan California”. The Platform outlines our positions on priority issues on behalf of the California planning community broadly. Ultimately, the Platform functions as a tool to help APA California enhance its role in advocacy of statewide planning excellence, consistent with the vision, mission, goals, and strategies outlined in the Chapter’s [2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#).

The Platform is designed to:

- Serve as the guiding document for the Chapter’s lobbying efforts in Sacramento and for advocacy positions taken by the Chapter on legislative and policy matters at both the State and National levels
- Be flexible enough to address the unanticipated issues that inevitably arise during the legislative session, while also establishing a proactive framework for advocacy and policy change where it is appropriate.
- Inform and educate policymakers, Chapter members, and the broader public regarding the Chapter’s priority issues and general positions.

- Provide a framework for local advocacy efforts by the Chapter's eight Sections. While the Chapter does not take positions or advocate for or against local planning issues, this does not preclude individual Sections from getting involved in such issues consistent with the Platform.

Collaboration between Sections on advocacy positions and sharing advocacy experiences is also encouraged. On statewide issues where the Chapter has not taken a position, Section advocacy is permitted if positions are consistent with this Platform. Before taking a position on state legislation, regulations, or ballot initiatives, please contact the Chapter President, Vice President for Policy and Legislation, and Chapter Lobbyist to ensure Section advocacy plans are consistent with the Chapter positions.

The Platform is organized according to the following **seven sections** based on priority issues of interest to the Chapter.

- Housing
- Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice
- Climate Resilience and Hazard Mitigation
- Infrastructure, Services, and Fees
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- Neighborhood Vitality and Healthy Communities
- Coordinated Planning

Under each section, a brief set of general **planning principles** have been articulated, followed by a list of **actions** that are consistent with these principles and are intended to convey actionable policy positions on specific issues and guide the Chapter's advocacy efforts.

HOUSING

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Designate sufficient sites for all types of residential development**
- **Encourage objective development standards and the provision of sufficient infrastructure to facilitate affordable housing.**
- **Ensure adequate state and federal funding and financing mechanisms are available to help meet the demand for a range of affordable housing types and supporting infrastructure and services.**
- **Preserve and rehabilitate existing housing stock**
- **Minimize constraints to housing production, including state policy constraints.**
- **Plan for higher densities in urbanized areas with a range of housing types, especially in infill areas, near transit, and near destinations and services such as retail, amenities, parks, schools, and day care.**

ACTIONS

1. Advocate for the state to provide new sources of funding or financing mechanisms required to build infrastructure and provide services and adequate schools that meet the needs of planned future housing growth.
2. Support higher densities in infill/growth areas linked to transit and infrastructure, protecting against displacement, and continuing to provide some flexibility for communities to decide the mix of housing types to meet local needs and increase density.
3. Expand use of by-right housing in residential and mixed-use zones at permitted densities, including state-mandated density bonuses, without a use permit or other discretionary entitlement, while preserving local government's ability to apply written, objective development and design standards.
4. Support enhanced fiscal incentives for local housing production and retention, including calculation of more state funding on a per capita basis, and prioritizing infrastructure and other funding for entitled and "shovel ready" projects that are consistent with adopted plans designed to meet RHNA targets. Consider also supporting disincentives for jurisdictions who are not doing their fair share.
5. Support state efforts to streamline funding and financing programs to reduce requirements and administrative burdens on local governments and affordable housing developers.

6. Support state funding and legislative authority for local funding mechanisms for housing element implementation, such as authorization for a 55 percent vote for local housing bonds and special taxes or a tax-increment redevelopment replacement option to provide a permanent source of local housing funding.
7. Support duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes in single-family zones that are consistent with the footprint and massing permitted for single-family housing.
8. Discourage downzoning and other development review practices that reduce housing production and encourage sprawl.
9. Encourage local infill plans or policies with incentives to encourage and allow developers to build at higher densities and on commercial properties with a range of housing types.
10. Encourage zoning and development standards to facilitate new affordable and workforce housing projects, such as simplifying small lot subdivisions or providing incentives for developing smaller units in a range of styles and configurations.
11. Leverage relaxed ADU laws to create additional housing development opportunities, and support changes in ADU law that would allow jurisdictions to enforce allowable uses of ADUs for residential purposes as dwellings and not for other uses.
12. Support strategies to reduce the adverse effects of short-term rentals on housing supply and affordability.
13. Support strategies to build homeowner equity, especially for first-time homebuyers and long-term residents in disadvantaged communities.
14. Support state model programs and funding to address the unhoused population and expand rapid housing solutions such as Project HomeKey and permanent supportive housing.
15. Address state farmworker housing needs, including through streamlining programs specifically designed for rural housing types.
16. Apply statewide housing policies and mandates to the Coastal Zone where no adverse impacts to coastal natural resources or public access are likely, and advocate for more efficient processing of Local Coastal Program amendments.
17. Protect affordable mobile home parks from conversion to non-affordable parks or from closure without adequate relocation or replacement conditions.
18. Support increased density and affordability standards near major transit stops, along with strong protections for existing housing and tenants to avoid displacement risk; and allow each jurisdiction with some flexibility to determine how best to meet those standards, accounting for regional and geographic differences around the state while also upholding commitments to fair share and affirmatively furthering fair housing.

EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Support policies and programs that advance inclusiveness and acknowledge and reflect diversity in California communities – including race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and geography.**
- **Actively promote and create equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist planning policies, programs, and practices that acknowledge past harms, address current inequities, and empower communities toward a more just future.**
- **Support policies, tools, and resources to conduct inclusive and meaningful public outreach and engagement throughout planning, development review, and implementation processes.**

ACTIONS

1. Advocate for state policy solutions for housing, infrastructure, jobs and economic growth, climate change and other priority issues that provide proportionate or greater benefits to and limit financial and environmental impacts on low income, minority and disadvantaged communities.
2. Support increased policies and funding to maintain or replace outdated or failing infrastructure, amenities, and services in underserved communities. This may include (but is not limited to) high-quality public transit, pedestrian, and bikeway systems that efficiently serve the needs of transit-dependent and/or car-free residents; parks, open space, tree canopy, and recreational amenities; clean and safe drinking water; and other critical needs.
3. Support funding, resources and guidance for implementation of SB 1000, which requires environmental justice elements in general plans for communities containing disadvantaged communities to address disproportionate health burdens.
4. Protect and provide resources for residential and commercial tenants and property owners to prevent and discourage displacement, both because of planned redevelopment and for those experiencing economic hardships.
5. Include policies and programs in general plans to implement AB 686, the California-based affirmatively furthering fair housing statute, to ensure that natural systems, the built

environment and social services address the entire community, and all people are treated fairly and equitably.

6. Expand affordable housing supply in high opportunity areas in proximity to schools, jobs, parks, transportation, and other critical amenities and resources.
7. Support policies and programs that encourage new investment and development in under-resourced and disadvantaged communities. Such policies and programs should incorporate strategies for capacity building of impacted populations, preserve cultural assets, expand minority business ownership, and manage externalities that could overwhelm vulnerable populations.
8. Continue to consider potential impacts to tribal cultural resources when adopting new plans and reviewing development projects.
9. Expand public participation beyond traditional outreach efforts to meaningfully engage those that historically may have been excluded from planning or have had difficulty participating in the planning process, and actively increase participation from underserved populations.
10. Encourage developers and local entities to provide early community consultation and comment before an application is deemed complete, especially for large projects.
11. Apply lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to allow expanded use of email notification, postings on agency websites, publicizing at community groups, and/or other methods of outreach available to the local agency. Use city and county websites and social media to provide a venue for public outreach and comments on projects and proposed legislative actions.
12. Encourage both remote/virtual participation and in-person participation options (as public health guidelines allow). In-person participation is especially critical for those who are unable to participate in virtual online meetings and hearings because of lack of adequate or affordable broadband access, and for those who otherwise prefer in-person participation.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND HAZARD MITIGATION

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Prepare and maintain emergency management and operation plans, hazard mitigation plans, disaster recovery plans, and other related response strategies for natural disasters, pandemics, and extreme weather events.**
- **Increase adaptive capacity and resilience-building to address the growing impacts and risks associated with climate change and related stressors.**
- **Promote climate equity and justice by addressing the needs of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in climate mitigation and adaptation and building resilience in frontline communities.**

ACTIONS

1. Support CEQA exemptions or streamlining approaches for hazard mitigation and climate resilience projects in flood and wildfire prone areas that involve proven low-impact practices and ongoing environmental monitoring.
2. Support additional resources to plan and implement forest and wildland-urban interface (WUI) area management and hazard mitigation
3. Support additional resources for evacuation planning for emergency access and public safety in and adjacent to areas subject to hazards pursuant to new and evolving general plan requirements.
4. Support additional resources and funding for local evaluation and mitigation of hazards and risks associated with climate change (e.g., fire, extreme heat, flooding, sea-level rise).
5. Adopt measures and support increased funding to reduce wildfire risk and create fire-adapted communities, including WUI area fuel reduction and defensible space, hardening existing buildings and infrastructure, consideration and mitigation of hazards and risks when new development is proposed in the WUI, and prepare for and mitigate potential mudslides or other cascading hazards and impacts following wildfires.
6. Encourage regional housing need allocations and housing element sites pursuant to these allocations that encourage infill and/or more compact forms of development appropriate to local development contexts, and steer growth away from important natural resources and areas

prone to high or extreme hazards, towards already-developed areas with capacity for more resilient growth.

7. Support increased flood protection in urban areas not already covered by SB 5 200-year flood requirements, beyond the current 100-year standard, using prioritized hazard analysis developed with state leadership and funding.
8. Ensure that the 100+-year flood risks are fully understood and properly mitigated through the CEQA process, with affirmative findings by the local government at the time new development and infrastructure is approved.
9. Support changes to funding eligibility and financing requirements to allow funding/financing of resilient design features in affordable housing and community infrastructure.

INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND FEES

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Maintain and modernize the quality of infrastructure through ongoing planning and investment**
- **Support cohesively planned and managed community infrastructure and services**
- **Promote a balanced, integrated multi-modal circulation system that is efficient and safe**
- **Support state-funded financing to supplement impact fees to pay for infrastructure, community benefits and services to reduce housing development costs**
- **Ensure adequate and equitable funding and investments in streets, water, wastewater, and parks, especially in under-served and disadvantaged communities.**

ACTIONS

1. Support redevelopment-like processes to facilitate equitable community development focused on infrastructure to support housing, job creation and improved jobs/housing balance, infill, and improved conditions/opportunities for disadvantaged communities.
2. Advocate for the use of state infrastructure funds as an incentive for sustainable growth, including efforts to remove infrastructure deficiencies in communities committed to sustainable growth principles of mixed use, increased densities, walkable communities, and infill development.
3. Advocate for investments in green infrastructure and nature-based solutions to ensure new development is planned to minimize negative effects on climate change.
4. Support increased per capita state subventions and property tax equalization for infrastructure maintenance and updates to improve equity for low-tax-revenue communities.
5. Support state authority for cities and counties to pass infrastructure bonds and special taxes with a 55 percent vote.
6. Support implementation of Complete Streets initiatives to increase mobility options and safety, as well as advocate for resources to complete both planning and implementation of new

statutory requirements to update general plan circulation elements to address bicycle and pedestrian safety and traffic calming.

7. Support the implementation of next generation telecommunication infrastructure, including expanded access to wireless and broadband internet in communities that lack reliable internet access, while protecting reasonable local control over aesthetics, impacts to surrounding properties and fees for the use of local government property.
8. Support flexible park, open space, school, parking, and road standards to facilitate infill development.
9. Support coordination of regional housing needs and population forecasting with water and other utility service providers to ensure regional facility and network expansions occur in a timely fashion. Accordingly, support regional housing needs allocation processes and methodologies that are paired with supportive State investments in critical regional infrastructure needed to support buildout of planned housing.
10. Support efforts to provide greater transparency surrounding mitigation fees by providing including tools to estimate a project's fee stack and post-approval evaluation of fees actually imposed.

CEQA

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Support effective land use planning with consistent and reliable CEQA requirements and outcomes**
- **Encourage streamlined and consistent environmental review**
- **Use CEQA to promote other state policy objectives**
- **Encourage the use of CEQA solely for its intended purposes and eliminate CEQA abuse.**

ACTIONS

1. Amend CEQA statute to provide a threshold of significance for climate change impacts that lead agencies can rely upon in preparing CEQA documents.
2. Continue to allow lead agencies to determine appropriate environmental thresholds of significance and defer to lead agencies to determine what constitutes substantial evidence.
3. Reform CEQA to streamline and reduce litigation exposure while maintaining the core environmental protections embodied in the Act.
4. Support changes in state law to limit ballot box project initiatives that circumvent CEQA or fail to meet standards set by state legislative waivers for high profile projects (i.e., sports stadia).
5. Amend CEQA to maximize the use of tiering to encourage up-front review of environmental impacts to limit or avoid project-by-project CEQA review.
6. Support change in state law to require climate change analysis in CEQA at the plan level and for other large projects, not for small and infill projects.
7. Focus CEQA on measurable physical environmental effects, not socioeconomic issues that should be addressed in another venue; for example, urban decay or minor nuisances and inconveniences (e.g., dogs barking or noisy students) should be eliminated as an environmental issue should be analyzed under CEQA.
8. Amend CEQA statute or guidelines to provide more robust infill exemptions that are easier to use and cannot be easily challenged, to create more certainty accelerate priority housing projects that are consistent with general plans and zoning and meet local housing element and RHNA obligations.

NEIGHBORHOOD VITALITY AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Encourage community design and a mix of uses at the neighborhood scale that enhances public health and safety and provides economic stability.**
- **Encourage local health-focused awareness, collaboration and community-based implementation or intervention**
- **Reduce private and public sector costs to provide a stronger foundation for environmental sustainability and resiliency**
- **Promote development practices that are environmentally responsible**

ACTIONS

1. Support local plans that include design standards and land use patterns that encourage active and healthy lifestyle choices by increasing opportunities for pedestrian, bicycle and other non-motorized transportation, and active recreation.
2. Encourage building massing and open space design that provides air flow and ventilation and reduces the impacts of extreme heat, particularly in common public and quasi-public spaces.
3. Support local, regional and state programs that reduce the use of fossil fuels and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) through more compact and efficient development patterns or sustainable design features; expansion of transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and other new or emerging forms of mobility; reducing or eliminating minimum off-street parking standards and pricing public parking; transportation demand management; or other community-based reduction and offset programs.
4. Support funding to enable adequate and ongoing maintenance of existing schools, parks, recreation facilities, and open space at the neighborhood, community and regional levels.
5. Advocate for funding and guidance for new general plan open space element update requirements per SB 1425 (Stern, 2022) to address equitable open space access, climate resilience and other co-benefits correlated with the safety element, and rewilding opportunities.
6. Support cost-effective green building and electrification programs implemented at the local, regional and state levels, including both regulations and incentives to increase the number of development projects with sustainable components and to reduce or eliminate fossil fuel usage and associated air pollution in buildings. Promote incentive-based systems developed to

facilitate retrofitting development to reduce energy and water use and increase resource reuse and recycling.

7. Adopt educational programs to inform property owners, builders and community members on the benefits of sustainable development and the options and resources available. Educate planners on sustainable design so that they can advocate for green building to applicants, clients and the public.
8. Incorporate sustainability and resilience policies, objectives and actions in general and specific plans and other local planning documents.
9. Encourage planning strategies to reduce carbon emissions and facilitate adaptations to the effects of climate change that are effective and equitable.
10. Support urban agriculture, subject to local control to ensure scale and nature of such uses are safe and compatible (such as point of sale issues) with surrounding uses.
11. Protect and preserve important agricultural lands and other natural and working lands.
12. Support local, regional and state programs that encourage remediation and redevelopment of brownfield and gray field sites.
13. Support incentives for strategic deployment of small and large scale solar power generation.
14. Encourage training for planners and public officials to understand how to better apply principles of health equity in planning for communities.
15. Improve access to health care by strengthening transportation links to existing facilities; and supporting the development of treatment and educational centers in underserved areas, in areas accessible by transit and active transportation networks, and in nontraditional settings for health care such as community centers or schools.
16. Support healthy neighborhood retail and business districts that provide critical access to goods and services, provide access to fresh and healthy foods, and create job and business ownership opportunities.

COORDINATED PLANNING

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

- **Recognize that planning requires the collective effort of all strategic partners to implement sustainable growth**
- **Support better coordination of local, regional and state planning efforts**

ACTIONS

1. Encourage comprehensive programs to identify, protect and restore significant historic and cultural resources, including participation in and implementation of the state's historical resource Certified Local Government practices.
2. Incentivize regional planning and collaboration around issues that tend to be more effectively addressed at the regional or sub-regional level – such as affordable housing, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, regional transportation, hazard mitigation and climate adaptation, and water management and flood control.
3. Advocate state support to improve alignment between local general plans and regional planning under SB 375 and other state sustainable growth statutes, including technical information, best practices and adequate funding for both local general plans and regional Sustainable Community Strategies.
4. Discourage new mandatory general plan elements, allowing cities and counties the flexibility to determine how to include new mandatory subject matter.
5. Oppose major new mandates on cities and counties unless funding sources are provided and recognize that fee disclaimers for new mandates in legislation in many cases do not provide adequate resources.
6. Encourage local general plans to be consistent with Sustainable Communities Strategies and identify potential incentives and disincentives that could be used to encourage consistency.