



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning



*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*

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Director

March 13, 2014

TO: Esther L. Valadez, Chair  
 Laura Shell, Vice Chair  
 David W. Louie, Commissioner  
 Curt Pedersen, Commissioner  
 Pat Modugno, Commissioner

FROM: Connie Chung, AICP, Section Head   
 General Plan Development and Housing Section

**SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE  
 PUBLIC HEARING: PROJECT NO. 02-305 (1-5)  
 MARCH 26, 2014 – AGENDA ITEM #6**

**INTRODUCTION**

The second public hearing in the General Plan Update series will take place on March 26, 2014. This hearing will cover the Air Quality Element; Conservation and Natural Resources Element; Parks and Recreation Element; Noise Element; Safety Element; Public Services and Facilities Element; and Economic Development Element.

The General Plan Update provides the policy framework to guide development in the unincorporated areas. The current General Plan, adopted in 1980, would be replaced by this update. All elements (except the Housing Element) would be replaced, as well as all figures and maps. The update program also proposes zone changes and amendments to Title 22 to restore consistency between the Plan and its implementing documents.

**PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT**

To recap the public hearing format, the schedule below divides five hearings into discrete topics to help you manage the content of the General Plan Update, and to allow the public to attend hearings that are of specific interest to them. This schedule is a suggestion only and can be adjusted to provide additional meetings as needed.

February 26, 2014	Introduction and Planning Areas Framework; Land Use Element; Mobility Element
March 26, 2014	Air Quality Element, Conservation and Natural Resources Element; Parks and Recreation Element; Noise Element; Safety Element; Public Services and Facilities Element; Economic Development Element.
April 23, 2014	Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Program Update and SEA Ordinance, and Hillside Management Ordinance.
May 28, 2014	Zone changes and amendments to Title 22
August 27, 2014	Recap/Final EIR

After the discussion and receiving testimony from the public, staff recommends that you continue the remaining aspects of the General Plan Update to the next date, April 23, 2014, as identified in the above schedule. A continuation to a date certain is necessary to provide adequate public notice of the next hearing.

## **MARCH 26, 2014 DISCUSSION TOPICS**

### **Part III: General Plan Elements/Air Quality Element<sup>1</sup>**

The Air Quality Element summarizes air quality issues and outlines the goals and policies in the General Plan that will improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **Air Quality Element Highlights**

##### Air Quality and Land Use Coordination

A major policy issue highlighted in the Plan is the siting of sensitive uses next to major sources of air pollution, particularly freeways. To address this issue, the Element includes a discussion of the adverse health effects of living in proximity to major sources of air pollution, and the following policy:

Policy AQ 2.1 Encourage the application of design and other appropriate measures when siting sensitive uses, such as residences, schools, senior centers, daycare centers, medical centers, or parks with active recreational facilities within proximity to major sources of air pollution, such as freeways.

This policy is designed to work in conjunction with ongoing state and regional initiatives to study the adverse health effects of traffic pollution; research and develop mitigation measures; and assess the long-term benefits of transportation and land use strategies that increase electric vehicle usage and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

##### Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change

The Plan also includes a discussion of statewide and local efforts around energy efficiency, water conservation and other measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change. At the heart of this discussion is a sub-element—the Community Climate Action Plan—which includes a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and specific measures to reach the County's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals in the unincorporated areas. The Draft Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP)<sup>2</sup> was presented to your Commission as a discussion item on January 22, 2014. Outside of the March 26, 2014 public hearing on the Air Quality Element, the General Plan Update public hearing schedule does not allocate time to discuss the

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<sup>1</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Chapter8\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Chapter8_2014.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://planning.lacounty.gov/ccap/>.

CCAP. If you would like to adjust the schedule to allow additional discussion on this topic, we suggest adding June 25, 2014 to the schedule.

### **Part III: General Plan Elements/Conservation and Natural Resources Element<sup>3</sup>**

The Conservation and Natural Resources Element guides the long-term conservation of natural resources and preservation of available open space areas. Natural resources are located throughout Los Angeles County in urban and rural areas, and provide local and countywide benefits. The Conservation and Natural Resources Element addresses the following topics:

- Open Space Resources, which includes a discussion of dedicated open space that is acquired and managed by federal, state, local, and conservancies and non-profit agencies.
- Biological Resources, which includes a discussion of woodlands, coastal areas, forests, wetlands, and the Significant Ecological Areas Program.
- Local Water Resources, which includes a discussion of water quality and watershed management.
- Agricultural Resources, which includes a discussion of the Agricultural Resource Areas and sustainable agriculture.
- Mineral and Energy Resources, which includes a discussion of Mineral Resource Zones, oil and gas regulation, and renewable energy resources.
- Scenic Resources, which includes a discussion of scenic highways, hillside and ridgeline protection.
- Historic, Cultural and Paleontological Resources, which includes a discussion of historic preservation and SB 18 compliance.

### **Conservation and Natural Resources Element Highlights**

#### **Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs)**

An SEA designation is given to land that contains significant biological resources. Individual SEAs include undisturbed or lightly disturbed habitats that support valuable and threatened species, linkages and corridors to promote species movement, and are sized to support sustainable populations of its component species. SEAs are mapped in Figure 9.3.<sup>4</sup>

The SEA Program is designed to work in conjunction with many of the implementation programs in the Plan related to conservation and natural resources, including Mitigation Land Banking. For more information, see Chapter 16 General Plan Implementation Program.<sup>5</sup> The SEA Program, which includes an update to the SEA Ordinance in the Zoning Code, is on your General Plan Update public hearing schedule for discussion at the next meeting on April 23, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Chapter9\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Chapter9_2014.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_9-3\\_significant\\_ecological\\_areas.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_9-3_significant_ecological_areas.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Chapter16\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Chapter16_2014.pdf)

### Hillside Management Areas (HMAs)

HMAs are areas with a natural slope gradient of 25 percent or greater. HMAs are mapped in Figure 9.8.<sup>6</sup> The Plan includes policies to guide the design of projects in HMAs. The General Plan Update includes an update to the HMA Ordinance in the zoning code. Along with the SEA Ordinance, the HMA Ordinance is scheduled to be discussed in further detail on April 23, 2014.

### Agricultural Resource Areas (ARAs)

The Plan identifies ARAs to promote the preservation of agricultural land. The ARAs are mapped in Figure 9.5.<sup>7</sup> ARAs consist of farmland identified by the California Department of Conservation, including Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Farmland of Local Importance, and Unique Farmland. In addition the ARAs include lands that received permits from the Los Angeles County Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures. The ARAs are designed to work in conjunction with future efforts to encourage agricultural uses and ensure compatibility between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses through buffering, development standards, and design requirements. For more information, please refer to Program C/NR-5 in Chapter 16 General Plan Implementation Program.

## **Part III: General Plan Elements/Parks and Recreation Element<sup>8</sup>**

The Parks and Recreation Element provides policy direction for the maintenance and expansion of the County's parks and recreation system. The goals and policies set forth in this Element address the growing and diverse recreation needs of the communities served by the County.

### **Parks and Recreation Element Highlights**

#### Parks Needs Assessment

The Plan contains an inventory of existing regional and local parkland. Tables 10.4 and 10.5 identify gaps in the parks system, demonstrating a projected deficit of about 11,000 acres of parkland in 2035 if no new parks are built.

A more in-depth gap analysis will be conducted as part of the County's future Parks and Recreation Master Plan effort. This analysis will involve a detailed review of topics such as demographic, geographic, land use, and transportation data for each planning area to determine its park deficiencies in terms of acreage, accessibility, and suitability. For more information on the Master Plan effort, please refer to Program P/R-1 in Chapter 16 General Plan Implementation Program. Appendix F: Parks and Recreation Element Resources<sup>9</sup> also includes an inventory of all County parks.

<sup>6</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_9-6\\_natural\\_resource\\_areas.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_9-6_natural_resource_areas.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_9-5\\_agricultural\\_resource\\_policy.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_9-5_agricultural_resource_policy.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Chapter10\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Chapter10_2014.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Appendices\\_F\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Appendices_F_2014.pdf)

### Trails System

The Plan also includes a discussion on trails, including opportunities to improve trails for multiple uses. The Plan also includes a proposed Regional Trails Systems Map, as shown in Figure 10.1.<sup>10</sup> A more in-depth analysis will be conducted as part of the County's future Trails Program. For more information on the Trails Program, please refer to Program P/R-2 in Chapter 16 General Plan Implementation Program.

### **Part III: General Plan Elements/Noise Element<sup>11</sup>**

The purpose of the Noise Element is to reduce and limit the exposure of the general public to excessive noise levels. The Element sets the goals and policy direction for the management of noise in the unincorporated areas.

#### **Noise Element Highlights**

The Plan highlights the different measurements and criteria for assessing noise impacts, and the complex regulatory framework for noise that consists of federal, state and local agencies and bodies, including the Los Angeles County Airport Land Use Commission. The Plan also discusses the importance of noise impact considerations in land use and transportation planning. The goals and policies in the Plan are designed to inform the update of the Noise Ordinance in the Los Angeles County Code. For more information, please see Program N-1 in Chapter 16 General Plan Implementation Program.

State law requires that noise elements include current and project levels of noise from major sources, and noise contour maps. This information will be provided to your Commission at a future hearing date when the noise study for the EIR has been completed.

### **Part III: General Plan Elements/Safety Element<sup>12</sup>**

The purpose of the Safety Element is to reduce the potential risk of death, injuries, and economic damage resulting from natural and man-made hazards. Policies in the Element support land use planning decisions that take into account these hazards and discourage development in hazard areas.

#### **Safety Element Highlights**

##### Interagency Coordination

The Plan works in conjunction with the All-Hazard Mitigation Plan, which sets strategies for natural and man-made hazards in Los Angeles County. The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan was prepared by the Chief Executive Office-Office of Emergency Management (CEO-OEM), and has recently been approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Element

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<sup>10</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_10-1\\_regional\\_trail\\_system.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_10-1_regional_trail_system.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Chapter11\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Chapter11_2014.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Chapter12\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Chapter12_2014.pdf)

was also prepared in close cooperation with the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

### Seismic and Geotechnical Hazards

The Plan includes a discussion of seismic and geotechnical hazards. Figure 12.1<sup>13</sup> and Appendix H<sup>14</sup> describe active faults in Los Angeles County. In keeping with the state Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning and Seismic Hazard Mapping Acts, the County prohibits the construction of most structures for human occupancy adjacent to active faults until a comprehensive geotechnical study that addresses the potential for fault rupture has been completed. The Hillside Management Areas Ordinance discussed earlier, will help ensure the mitigation of soil instability and landsliding through proper siting, development standards and updated design guidelines.

### Flood and Inundation Hazards

The Plan also includes a discussion of flood and inundation hazards. Figure 12.2<sup>15</sup> shows the County's Flood Hazard Zones, which are 100-year and 500-year floodplains designated by FEMA. In addition, the Plan discusses considerations for flooding caused due to sea level rise, as shown in Figure 12.5.<sup>16</sup>

### Fire Hazards

Furthermore, the Plan discusses wildland and urban fire risks, and at-risk areas designated as Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZs), as shown in Figure 12.6.<sup>17</sup>

## **Part III: General Plan Elements/Public Services and Facilities Element<sup>18</sup>**

The Public Services and Facilities Element promotes the orderly, efficient and context-sensitive planning of public facilities and infrastructure in conjunction with land use development and growth. This Element focuses on the following:

- Drinking Water, which includes a discussion of drinking water sources and water supply.
- Sanitary Sewers, which includes a discussion of how different agencies work together to operate the sanitary sewage system for the County.
- Solid Waste, which includes a discussion of the County's solid waste management system and the capacity of existing landfills.

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<sup>13</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_12-1\\_seismic\\_hazards.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_12-1_seismic_hazards.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Appendices\\_H\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Appendices_H_2014.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_12-2\\_flood\\_zones.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_12-2_flood_zones.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_12-5\\_sea\\_level\\_rise\\_impacts.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_12-5_sea_level_rise_impacts.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_12-6\\_Fire\\_Hazard\\_Severity\\_Zones\\_Policy\\_Map\\_Responsibility.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_12-6_Fire_Hazard_Severity_Zones_Policy_Map_Responsibility.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Chapter13\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Chapter13_2014.pdf)

- Utilities, which includes a discussion of the County's utility infrastructure, including electric, telecommunication, and natural gas services.
- Early Care and Education, which includes a discussion of educational facilities and the importance of coordinating land use strategies with school districts.
- Libraries, which includes a discussion of library facility needs.

## **Public Services and Facilities Element Highlights**

### Land Use, Infrastructure and Growth Management

Unlike the existing General Plan, the Plan does not identify urban expansion areas as part of its growth management strategy. Instead, it guides growth countywide through goals, policies and programs that do the following: discourage sprawling development patterns; protect areas with hazard, environmental and resource constraints; encourage infill development in areas near transit, services and existing infrastructure; and make a strong commitment to ensuring sufficient and context-sensitive services and infrastructure. It also lays the foundation for future community-based planning initiatives that will identify additional opportunities for accommodating growth. The Plan includes a planned joint effort of the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) and the Department of Public Works to implement capital improvement plans for each of the 11 Planning Areas in the Plan. Once funding has been secured and priorities have been set, each capital improvement plan will include the following as needed: sewer capacity study; transportation system capacity study; waste management study; stormwater system study; public water system study; list of necessary infrastructure improvements; implementation program; and financing plan. For more information, please see Program PS/F-1 in Chapter 16 General Plan Implementation Program.

### **Part III: General Plan Elements/Economic Development Element<sup>19</sup>**

The Economic Development Element describes key employment sectors in Los Angeles County, as well as in each of the 11 Planning Areas. The Element also reflects the important role of land use policies in economic development and the need to create new incentives in the absence of tax increment financing.

## **Economic Development Element Highlights**

### Employment Land

The Plan discusses the need for land designated for industrial and employment-rich uses to retain and attract businesses and jobs. Los Angeles County's historic growth patterns and land use policies have resulted in the conversion of much of the available industrial land for non-industrial uses.

The County's employment preservation strategy for the unincorporated areas is designed to discourage the conversion of areas with significant industrial uses to non-industrial uses.

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<sup>19</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Chapter14\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Chapter14_2014.pdf)

Employment Protection Districts, as shown in Figure 14.1<sup>20</sup> are economically-viable industrial and employment-rich lands recommended for protection from conversion to non-industrial uses, based on studies conducted by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation and DRP. For more information on the methodology for identifying employment land, please refer to Appendix J.<sup>21</sup>

### Workforce Development

In addition to providing business incentives, the County has a coordination role to play among employers, community colleges, Workforce Investment Boards and other stakeholders to ensure that job seekers are trained for and connected with employment opportunities. The Plan discusses efforts to increasingly centralize job placement programs using “one-stop” centers that integrate state Employment Development Department programs and other County services.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT**

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is currently being prepared for this project. At this time, our anticipated release date is May 2014. A public comment period will be provided pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reporting requirements, and a Final EIR will be produced that includes all public comments. We anticipate this document being available to you in final form no later than by the suggested August 27, 2014 hearing date.

## **COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since the Plan was made available for public review on January 23, 2014, the Department has received recommendations for amendments to the aforementioned sections of the Plan. Staff will provide these comments and recommended changes in a subsequent memo submitted to you no later than Thursday, March 20, 2014.

## **NOTIFICATION**

A notice of public hearing and availability of the General Plan Update was mailed in mid-January 2014. The notice was prepared and distributed pursuant to Section 22.60.174 of the County Zoning Ordinance. Notices were mailed to more than 40,000 property owners whose parcels are located in General Plan major policy areas. Notices were also distributed to more than 3,000 stakeholder individuals and organizations, and emailed to more than 1,200 addresses. Furthermore, the Draft was made available on the DRP web site, in all County libraries, DRP field offices and other suggested locations. The notice was also published in 16 newspapers, including one Spanish language newspaper, of general circulation in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County between January 23, 2014 and January 27, 2014.

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<sup>20</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_2014-FIG\\_14-1\\_Employment\\_Protection\\_Districts\\_Policy\\_Map.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2014-FIG_14-1_Employment_Protection_Districts_Policy_Map.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp\\_2035\\_Appendices\\_J\\_2014.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_Appendices_J_2014.pdf)

Regional Planning Commission  
General Plan Update  
Public Hearing  
March 26, 2014

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The following recommendation is made prior to the public hearing and is subject to change based upon testimony and/or documentary evidence presented at the public hearing:

Staff recommends that the public hearing on the General Plan Update, referred to as Project Number 02-305 (1-5), be continued to April 23, 2014 and that the focus of that hearing be on implementation efforts for Hillside Management Areas, and the Significant Ecological Areas Program. Staff also recommends that a public hearing be added on June 25, 2014 to the General Plan Update public hearing schedule to allow sufficient time for discussion on the Draft Community Climate Action Plan.

**I MOVE THAT THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION CONTINUE THIS MATTER, THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, TO APRIL 23, 2014 AND THAT THE FOCUS OF THAT HEARING BE ON IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS FOR HILLSIDE MANAGEMENT AREAS, AND THE SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS PROGRAM.**

**I ALSO MOVE THAT AN ADDITIONAL DATE OF JUNE 25, 2014 BE ADDED TO THE PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE TO ALLOW DISCUSSION ON THE COUNTY'S DRAFT COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN.**

