



Gavin Newsom  
Governor

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Governor's Office of Planning and Research



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To: All California Cities and Counties

From: Helen Campbell, AICP, Senior Planner  
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RE: General Plan Annual Progress Report Guidance

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research has updated the *General Plan Annual Progress Report Guidance* for 2020. This edition reflects the change in address for reporting to the Department of Housing and Community Development. This *Guidance* document is also available on our website at [opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/](http://opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/)

If you have questions regarding the *General Plan Annual Progress Report Guidance*, please contact Helen Campbell, AICP, Senior Planner at (916) 341-7371 or e-mail at [Helen.Campbell@opr.ca.gov](mailto:Helen.Campbell@opr.ca.gov).

## **ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS (APRs)**

Government Code Section 65400 and 65700 mandates that all cities and counties submit an annual report on the status of the General Plan and progress in its implementation to their legislative bodies, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Housing and Community Development (HCD) by April 1 of each year. The guidance that follows is intended to assist local governments with the development of the General Plan Annual Progress Report (APR) and is not intended to be construed as legal advice. This guidance is intentionally general to allow maximum flexibility in the form and content of General Plan APRs, which may need to vary based on individual circumstances, resources, and constraints. Please also note that although OPR provides this guidance, HCD provides separate guidance for the Housing Element APR (HE APR) and specifically certifies the compliance of a local agency's housing element (see HE APR section below).

### **PURPOSE OF THE APR**

The APR provides local legislative bodies and the public with information regarding the implementation of the General Plan for their city or county. APRs also inform the public of the progress in meeting the community's goals. Accordingly, local agencies should make a diligent effort to engage the public when preparing their APRs. It is important for local governments, their legislators and legislative bodies to engage stakeholders and the public in sharing APRs and in making adjustments necessary to reach local planning goals.

APRs must be presented to the local legislative body for its review and acceptance, usually as a consent or discussion item on a regular meeting agenda. Therefore, the APR should provide enough information for decision makers to assess how the General Plan was implemented during the 12-month reporting period, either calendar year or fiscal year. More specifically, APRs should explain how land use decisions relate to adopted goals, policies, and implementation measures of the General Plan. The APRs should provide enough information to identify necessary "course adjustments" or modifications to the General Plan and means to improve local implementation.

OPR is aware of current difficulties in scheduling and holding public meetings. While APRs may be submitted to State agencies before conducting a public hearing, the Department encourages jurisdictions to seek alternatives and a variety of methods to keep the community engaged in the annual progress of the implementation of the general plan.

OPR does not require that the APR be approved by the legislative body or commented on by the public prior to submittal. If, after holding the public meeting, changes need to be made to the APR, your jurisdiction may submit a revised APR at any time.

Furthermore, Governor Newsom has issued an executive order that addresses the Brown Act, stating that public meetings can be conducted telephonically or electronically and waives any express or implied rules about physical presence. For more information, please see the following website: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/12/governor-newsom-issues-new-executive-order-further-enhancing-state-and-local-governments-ability-to-respond-to-covid-19-pandemic/>. For the full text of Executive Order N-25-20 (dated March 12, 2020), please see this link and specifically paragraph 11: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.12.20-EO-N-25-20-COVID-19.pdf>. The executive order remains in effect until further notice.

## **HOUSING ELEMENT APR**

State law requires that all General Plans include a Housing Element which provides a plan for accommodating future housing production needs. State law further requires that all cities and counties create an APR that describes that community's progress toward implementing their Housing Element. The Housing Element APR must be delivered to OPR and HCD by April 1 of each year and must cover the previous calendar year<sup>1</sup>. Effective 2019, all jurisdictions, including charter cities must submit a General Plan APR and Housing Element APR. Updated instructions and standardized forms for submitting the HE APR can be found at the following HCD website: <http://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml>).

The Housing Element APR fulfills statutory requirements to report certain housing information, including: the local agency's progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs (i.e., applications, entitlements, permits and certificates of occupancy), certain rezoning activities, actions taken towards completion of housing element programs, and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to the development of housing (Government Codes Section 65584.3(c) and 65584.5(b)(5)). California's housing element law acknowledges that in order for the private market to adequately address the state's housing needs, local governments must adopt plans and regulatory systems that provide opportunities for, and do not unduly constrain, housing development. As a result, housing policy rests largely on the effective implementation of local general plans and housing elements.

## **HOW THE STATE USES THE GENERAL PLAN APR and HOUSING ELEMENT APR**

The General Plan APR gives OPR the opportunity to identify statewide trends in land use decision-making and how local planning and development activities relate to statewide planning goals and policies. APRs may also inform future modifications to OPR's *General Plan Guidelines*. In addition, OPR is able to track progress on a local jurisdiction's comprehensive General Plan update using information provided in the APR. Similarly, the HE APR allows HCD to track the progress of the implementation of

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<sup>1</sup> The General Plan APR 12 month reporting period can be either a fiscal or calendar year, but the Housing Element APR 12 month reporting period must be a calendar year.

a jurisdiction's Housing Element and requires its submission as a threshold requirement for several State housing funding programs.

## **FORMAT GUIDANCE FOR THE GENERAL PLAN and HOUSING ELEMENT APR**

There is no standardized form or format for the preparation of the General Plan APR. The following recommendations serve as guidance in developing an APR that is useful to your specific jurisdiction. The APR prepared for your city or county is not required to incorporate all of the elements suggested and need not be an elaborate and time-consuming task. Instead, the APR may make use of available sources of information that may contain information pertinent to General Plan annual reporting such as: "annual reports," "performance reports," "budget reports," or "state of the city/county reports." OPR encourages jurisdictions to include these types of reports or portions thereof in the APR so long as they specifically address implementation of the General Plan. This approach enables General Plan implementation to be discussed in the broader context of the jurisdiction's overall programs and activities, including redevelopment, economic development, and other topics.

Reporting on planning activities related to the General Plan is required even when a city or county may be undertaking a General Plan comprehensive update. Therefore, status on these activities should still be reported to local legislative bodies and to both OPR and HCD.

### **General Contents**

Each jurisdiction should determine what locally relevant issues are important to include in the General Plan APR. The following are suggested contents for the report:

1. Introduction.
2. Table of Contents.
3. Date of presentation/acceptance by the local legislative body (agenda item or resolution).
4. Measures associated with the implementation of the general plan with specific reference to individual element.
5. Housing Element APR reporting requirements – Each jurisdiction is required to report certain housing information in accordance with state housing law (refer to Government Code Sections 65400, 65583 and 65584) and HCD's housing element guidelines (see <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml> or email [APR@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:APR@hcd.ca.gov) for more information).

6. The degree to which the General Plan complies with OPR’s General Plan Guidelines, including environmental justice considerations, collaborative planning with the military lands and facilities, and consultation with Native American tribes.
7. The date of the last update to the General Plan<sup>2</sup>.
8. Priorities for land use decision making that have been established by the local legislative body (e.g., passage of moratoria or emergency ordinances).
9. Goals, policies, objectives, standards or other plan proposals that need to be added or were deleted, amended, or otherwise adjusted.
10. One or more lists of the following, including reference to the specific general plan element or policy, status (i.e., approved/denied, initiated/ongoing/completed, etc.), and brief comment on how each advanced the implementation of the General Plan during the past year:
  - a. Planning activities initiated – These may include, but are not limited to, master plans, specific plans, master environmental assessments, annexation studies, and other studies or plans.
  - b. General Plan amendments<sup>3</sup> – These may include agency-driven as well as applicant-driven amendments.
  - c. Major development applications processed

### **Additional Content**

The following are additional suggestions to make the APR a more comprehensive tool for illustrating planning and development activities within the jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions may not have the resources to address them annually. However, they are mentioned here as examples of how some jurisdictions have effectively incorporated other types of information into their APRs. Cities and counties may incorporate this information into their APRs, where available and as deemed appropriate.

1. Review of:

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<sup>2</sup> According to Government Code Section 65040.5(a) and (b), OPR is tasked with notifying a city or county if a general plan has not been revised within eight years and will notify the Attorney General if a general plan has not been revised within ten years.

<sup>3</sup> Except as provided in Government Code Sections 65358(c) and (d), no mandatory element of the General Plan may be amended more than four times during a calendar year.

- a. Interagency or intergovernmental coordination efforts and identify areas for improvement. This may include participation in a regional blueprint or partnerships with State or Federal programs.
  - b. The implementation of mitigation measures from the General Plan Final Environmental Impact Report or Negative Declaration.
  - c. Equity planning considerations of the General Plan, such as impacts on particular ethnic or socioeconomic population groups (i.e., environmental justice issues).
2. Summarize efforts to:
- a. Promote infill development, reuse, and redevelopment particularly in underserved areas while preserving cultural and historic resources.
  - b. Protect environmental and agricultural resources and other natural resources
  - c. Encourage efficient development patterns
3. Describe the jurisdiction's strategy for:
- a. Economic development – Depending on the needs of your jurisdiction, this analysis could include information on the ratio of jobs to dwelling units, tax revenues, demographics, census information, etc.
  - b. Monitoring long-term growth – For example: population growth, employment growth, land use development, and the provision of adequate supporting public services and infrastructure.
4. Other actions:
- a. Outline department goals, objectives, activities, and responsibilities, as they relate to land use planning.
  - b. Perform a regional or sub-regional outlook of population growth, housing, job generation, and other socioeconomic trends.
  - c. Summarize the comments of other boards and commissions on the general plan implementation.
  - d. Identify and monitor customer service improvements and methods to encourage public involvement in planning activities.

- e. Review and summarize grant administration for land use planning activities.
- f. Provide a technology review such as implementation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or establishment of web sites.

## **SUBMITTING THE GENERAL PLAN APR**

Jurisdictions must submit a General Plan APR and a Housing Element APR to both OPR and HCD by April 1 of each year.

*To OPR:* The APR should be submitted electronically as an attachment in an MS Office application or PDF to [opr.apr@opr.ca.gov](mailto:opr.apr@opr.ca.gov). ***Please note, beginning in 2021, OPR will no longer accept APRs if they are mailed in.***

*To HCD:* A copy of the APR should also be submitted through the HCD APR online portal. To use the online system, email [apr@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:apr@hcd.ca.gov) and request login information for your jurisdiction. It can also be submitted electronically as an attachment in an MS Office application or PDF to [apr@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:apr@hcd.ca.gov).

## **SUBMITTING THE HOUSING ELEMENT APR**

*To HCD and OPR:* The HCD prefers submittal of the HE APR via an Excel workbook through its online portal system. You can also submit the HE APR via email to [apr@hcd.ca.gov](mailto:apr@hcd.ca.gov) and [opr.apr@opr.ca.gov](mailto:opr.apr@opr.ca.gov) as an Excel workbook attachment, do not send a scanned or PDF version of the form via the portal or via email.

Please note, submitting the HE APR to HCD will count as submission to both agencies. OPR does not certify the accuracy of the submission of the HE APR to HCD or OPR.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

OPR welcomes suggestions on how to make this guidance more meaningful and useful to local planning agencies. Please contact Helen Campbell, AICP, Senior Planner at (916) 341-7371 or e-mail at [Helen.Campbell@opr.ca.gov](mailto:Helen.Campbell@opr.ca.gov) to make suggestions on improving the General Plan Annual Progress Report guidelines or if you have any questions regarding the submission process.