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Planning

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San Francisco Planning Department
General Plan Annual Progress Report
2021 Reporting Period
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Introduction

About the General Plan

California Government Code Section 65300 mandates that each planning agency prepare, and the legislative body shall adopt a General Plan for guiding physical change in the City. Chartered cities must include specific elements in the General Plan, as listed in Government Code Section 65302. San Francisco's first General Plan was adopted by the Planning Commission in 1945 as the embodiment of San Francisco's vision for the future. The General Plan is intended to serve as a living document in "the first step in the continuous process of planning,"¹ and provides a comprehensive set of objectives and policies that influence how we live, work, and move about, as well as the quality and character of the City.

The San Francisco General Plan includes objectives and policies in a series of Elements and Area Plans. Each Element deals and with a particular topic and applies citywide, while Area Plans make policies found in the Elements more precise as they relate to specific parts of the city. The San Francisco City Charter² requires the Planning Commission to update the General Plan from time to time through the process of amendments and referrals to reflect four key themes: 1) climate change; 2) economics; 3) healthy communities; and 4) equitable opportunities.³

About the Annual Progress Report

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 Housing and Community Development (HCD) by April 1 of each year. The General Plan Annual Progress Report (APR) provides local legislative bodies and the public with information regarding the implementation of the General Plan for the City.

This 2021 General Plan APR covers the period from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

This General Plan APR does not describe San Francisco's progress toward implementing the Housing Element. This information can be found in the 2021 Housing Element APR, currently being prepared.

¹ [*San Francisco General Plan, adopted December 1945.*](#)

² [*San Francisco Charter, section 4.105*](#)

³ [*California Government Code section 65302.*](#)

General Plan Amendments and Updates

General Plan Amendments

No amendments to the General Plan were adopted in 2021. The date of adoption or latest major update of each General Plan Element is given in table 1 below.

Table 1: General Plan Elements, year of adoption or latest major update

General Plan Element	Year Adopted or Updated
Recreation and Open Space	2014
Housing	2014*
Community Safety	2012*
Air Quality	1997
Transportation	1995*
Arts	1991
Environmental Protection	1988
Community Facilities	1988
Commerce and Industry	1987
Urban Design	1972

**updates underway for these elements*

General Plan Updates underway

The San Francisco Planning Department is currently developing objectives and policies that will result in major updates to several General Plan Elements, described in Table 2 below. In addition, the Department is developing an Environmental Justice Framework which will integrate environmental justice considerations throughout the General Plan.

Table 2: General Plan Updates underway

Amendments to:	Date
Housing Element	Started process; expected adoption date: 2023
Transportation Element	Started process; expected adoption date: 2025
Safety Element	Started process pursuant to SB 379; expected adoption as the “Safety and Resilience Element” date: 2022

Amendments to:	Date
Environmental Justice framework	Started process pursuant to SB 1000; expected adoption date: 2022
General Plan Amendments related to the Port's Waterfront Plan update	Started process; expected adoption date: 2022

General Plan Implementation

General Plan policies and objectives are implemented via the San Francisco Planning Code and Zoning Map, Development Agreements, and Design Guidelines, and through review and approval of private and public projects by the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and other City bodies.

Private Projects

The objectives and policies reflected in the Planning Code and Zoning Map translate the General Plan’s vision into specific rules for private development. Review and approval of private projects must also incorporate assessment of the proposed project against General Plan policies and objectives. This comes in the form of “Findings” that affirm a project’s compliance with specific objectives and policies of the General Plan, and Consistency with eight priority-planning policies in Planning Code Section 101.1(b).

Public Projects

San Francisco’s Administrative Code requires that certain actions be referred to the San Francisco Planning Department for evaluation of consistency with the General Plan prior to their consideration by the Board of Supervisors. Actions requiring finding of consistency with the General Plan include real estate transactions by San Francisco, subdivision mapping, improvements to public structures, affordable housing projects that benefit from assistance by San Francisco, Redevelopment plans or amendments thereto, changes to public right-of-way, and capital expenditure plans (San Francisco Charter Section 4.105 and San Francisco Administrative Code Section 2A.53). In most cases, an agency with jurisdiction over a particular action to be considered by the Board of Supervisors will submit a General Plan Referral (GPR) application to the Planning Department, requesting findings of consistency with the General Plan.

In 2021, the San Francisco Planning Department received 58 GPR applications, up from 45 in 2020 but roughly consistent with 54 GPR applications received in 2019, the last full pre-pandemic year.

Master Plans

Site-specific master planning efforts for several large sites are currently ongoing. These are typically mixed-use developments with mixed-income and affordable housing, open space, and community benefits such as improved mobility, sustainability and resilience. Notable sites include:

1. **Freedom West**, a 4-block cooperative housing development in the Western Addition neighborhood, built as part of the former Redevelopment project area in the early 1970s. The project aims to rebuild

and replace the existing co-op community and add substantial new housing (including additional affordable units), neighborhood-serving retail and community services, and new public open space.

2. **Potrero Yard**, a 4-acre, full city block SFMTA-owned bus yard in the northeastern Mission District. The project aims to add mixed-income housing on top of a new multi-story bus storage and maintenance facility.
3. **Stonestown**, a large indoor retail mall surrounded by surface parking, located on the west side of San Francisco adjacent to San Francisco State University. The project aims to add substantial housing and public spaces, create a more pedestrian-friendly street environment, and connect the site with the surrounding community.
4. **Railyards Working Group**, an interagency group studying and coordinating the transportation infrastructure and land use configurations and opportunities for the 20+-acre 4th/King Railyards that separates the South of Market and Mission Bay neighborhoods, where Caltrain, future CA High Speed Rail, SFMTA light rail and buses come together at a major node.
5. **Treasure Island Job Corps Site**. The Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA), in conjunction with the Planning Department and other City and Federal agencies, is exploring the redevelopment of the 37-acre Treasure Island Job Corps site to integrate it into the wider Treasure Island redevelopment effort. As currently envisioned, the existing US Department of Labor Job Corps campus would be redeveloped into a mixed-use, primarily residential neighborhood, along with consolidated new facilities for the San Francisco Job Corps.

Policy Studies

Several Citywide and District-scale Policy Studies concluded or continued in 2021. Notable studies include:

1. **Greater SoMa Community Facility Needs Assessment** – completed 2021. Building on the Southeast Framework, this study is a focused look at community facility needs in the Greater SoMa neighborhood. Final report can be viewed [here](#).
2. **Islais Creek Southeast Mobility and Adaptation Strategy (ICSMAS)** - completed 2021, funded by a grant from the California Department of Transportation. The ICSMAS outlines comprehensive flood adaptation pathways at the district and asset scale. Near - and longer-term strategies are organized by five geographic reaches to solve for 2080 flood projections. Key project deliverables include the Final Adaptation Strategy document, Implementation and Financing Report, and Economic Impacts Analysis. The project engaged the area’s environmental justice communities, suffering disproportionate pollution, social, economic, health, and climate change burdens. Community stakeholders developed five goals for all resilience planning in the district around social equity, authentic and transparent governance and engagement, robust transportation, sustainable economy, and healthy environment and ecosystem. They relate to several state policy goals, including Executive Order S - 13 - 08, EO B - 30 - 15, the California Transportation Plan 2040, the region’s 2017 RTP guidelines, and the 2017 General Plan guidelines. Next steps include working with the community and decision makers to prioritize and implement the 70+ strategies with the most community benefits; i.e. near - term resilience “wins” for all. Final report can be viewed [here](#).
3. **Citywide Retail Strategy**, considering both COVID-recovery oriented policies and programs as well as long-term policies intended to ensure that all neighborhoods provide residents with a full suite of affordable goods and services to meet their needs within close proximity to their homes and

workplaces. This effort is also looking at strategies to support the revitalization of the Union Square retail area in the wake of Covid. This project is ongoing.

4. **Citywide PDR Strategy**, an effort to create an updated, cohesive and comprehensive policy strategy, land use regulatory framework, and supporting programs to protect and grow production, distribution and repair business and jobs in San Francisco. The PDR sector is essential to the social and economic diversity and vitality of the City and to its daily functioning and resiliency. This project is ongoing.

Compliance with OPR General Plan Guidelines

Several ongoing planning efforts will increase the General Plan's compliance with OPR Guidelines:

Environmental Justice Framework

The San Francisco Planning Department is developing an Environmental Justice Framework which will integrate environmental justice considerations throughout the General Plan in accordance with SB 1000 requirements and OPR's General Plan Guidelines. The Environmental Justice Framework will include a map of Environmental Justice Communities ("Disadvantaged Communities" per SB 1000) and policy guidance on topics identified in SB 1000, including Clean and Healthy Environments (Pollution Reduction); Healthy Food Access; Physical Activity; Safe, Healthy and Affordable Housing; Equitable and Green Jobs; Healthy Public Facilities; Climate Resilience and Justice; and Empowered Neighborhoods (Civic Engagement and Prioritizing Environmental Justice Communities). We anticipate completion and adoption of this Framework in 2022. Early drafts of the Framework are informing the development of General Plan updates that are currently underway.

Tribal Cultural Resource Consultation

The San Francisco Planning Department conducts outreach, notification, and consultation with local Native American representatives for General Plan Updates, for affordable housing projects as required under Assembly Bill 168, and for tribal cultural resources per CEQA requirements. Additionally, the department notifies Native American tribal representatives of public interpretation projects. The Planning Department contacts representatives on the Native American Heritage Commission's (NAHC) list for San Francisco as well as parties on the interested local Native American representative list maintained by the department.

In 2021, the Planning Department issued 17 notifications to Native American tribal representatives on project and plans, of which, approximately 80% resulted in consultation with Native American tribal representatives. The SF Port's Waterfront Plan EIR and the Housing Element 2022 Update EIR were CEQA projects that the Department conducted significant consultation with multiple representatives. In regard to General Plan updates, notifications were sent to Native American representatives for the Housing Element 2022 Update and consultation occurred on the goals, plans, and policies. Additionally, general notification of the department's work on multiple General Plan updates was sent out and notification has been sent out for the General Plan Safety Element. The Department also conducted outreach to the NAHC list to confirm Native American tribal groups requesting tribal cultural resources notification. SF Planning also engaged with the American Indian Cultural District regarding the Housing Element 2022 Update, which is located in the Mission neighborhood and founded in 2020 to recognize, honor, and celebrate the American Indian legacy, culture, people, and contributions. Engagement consisted of a focus group with American Indian residents and approximately 5 policy discussion meetings with American Indian community organization leaders.

Housing Element

The San Francisco Planning Department is updating the Housing Element of the General Plan, with anticipated completion and adoption of the General Plan Amendment in 2023. The update will incorporate policies on environmental justice that are being identified in the Environmental Justice Framework referenced above. This update on the element is additionally focused on housing policies centered on racial and social equity, in addition to state mandated goals of Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing and ensuring sufficient sites and zoning to meet RHNA requirements.

Safety Element

The San Francisco Planning Department is updating the Safety Element to comply with OPR General Plan Guidelines Chapters 4 (required elements), 5 (equitable and resilient communities), 6 (healthy communities), and 8 (climate change) and SB 379. The update will incorporate additional and stronger content on climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience to multiple hazards including seismic, slope instability, flooding, wildland and urban fires, poor air quality, extreme weather, and pandemic. The update will include policies on environmental justice that are being identified in the Environmental Justice Framework referenced above, per Chapter 5 and SB 1000. The process was initiated in 2020. Completion and adoption of this General Plan Amendment is anticipated in 2022.

Transportation Element

The San Francisco Planning Department is updating the Transportation Element of the General Plan, last updated in 1995. The update was initiated in 2017 and anticipate completion and adoption of the General Plan Amendment in 2025. In addition to addressing statutory requirements (e.g., correlation with land use, existing and proposed transportation networks, Complete Streets), the update will include policies related to salient transportation issues in San Francisco, such as parking and curb management, emerging mobility services and technologies, and others. The update will also incorporate policies on environmental justice that are being identified in the Environmental Justice Framework referenced above.

Interagency and Intergovernmental Coordination

The Planning Department is heavily engaged in the regional Plan Bay Area process, the Bay Area's regional long-range plan focusing on the economy, environment, housing, and transportation. This plan, which is updated every four years under the auspices of the region's Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), is coordinated with agencies across nine Bay Area counties that represent 101 cities and towns of the region. The Plan Bay Area process also produces the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as required by Senate Bill 375, and the Regional Transportation Plan. The most recent plan, Plan Bay Area 2050, was adopted in fall 2021.

Strategy for Monitoring Long-term Growth

Participating in and implementing strategies in Plan Bay Area is the Department and City's primary strategy for monitoring long-term growth and the plan is the primary source of long-term population and growth projections. The Planning Department has and is working on a variety of projects to address the public service and infrastructure needs of this growth, specifically through the various General Plan updates, site-specific master plans and citywide or district-scale policy studies mentioned earlier in this report.

The Planning Department provides and refines the regional projections for use by our local infrastructure and public services agencies, including but not limited to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, San Francisco Unified School District, transit agencies (e.g. SFMTA, BART, Caltrain), Recreation & Parks Department, and public safety agencies.

Hazards and Climate Resilience Plan & Climate Action Plan

The Planning Department was a key contributor to two inter-agency action plans to address the climate crisis and protect San Francisco from the avoidable impacts of global heating: the Hazards and Climate Resilience Plan (HCR) adopted in 2020 and the Climate Action Plan released in 2022. Since the HCR is San Francisco's required Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, it triggered SB 379 which drives the 2022 Safety Element Update. This comprehensive update also incorporates the State's guidance around addressing greenhouse gas emissions reductions, equity, and community resilience across all General Plan elements.