

# **Shaping California's Future: General Plan Guidelines Visioning Workshop (pt. 1)**

California American Planning Association Conference  
*September 30, 2025*



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Guidelines Update

# The State Clearinghouse

**Mission:** Support informed decision-making by public agencies & the public

## Roles

- CEQA implementation
- Local & regional land use planning
- Environmental Goals & Policy Report

## Provide

- Written guidance
- Tech tools & resources



# Overview of LCI's Planning Activities



# Agenda

- Welcome Presentation
  - Bill Fulton Presents *"The History of Planning in California"*
  - LCI Planning Guidelines Update Overview
- Topic-Specific Discussions
  - Introductions
  - Discussion
  - Feedback

# General Plans: History and Context



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# Brief History of General Plans

1927: First law allowing  
General Plans

1965: Major legal revision  
requiring local  
governments to prepare  
General Plans

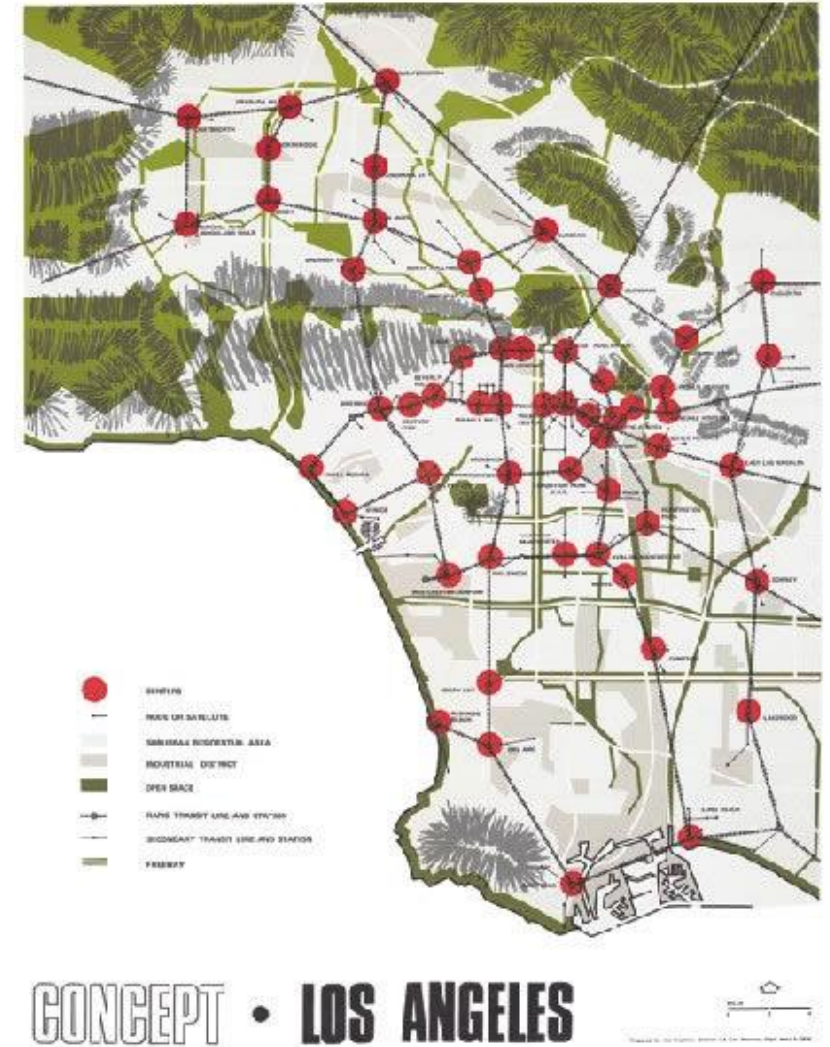


# Brief History of General Plans

1971: General Plans must be consistent with zoning.

- 7 Elements

1990: *Lescher*: The general plan is the “constitution for the future physical development of the community” and zoning must follow it.





# Recent History

- 2004: SB 18 Tribal Consultation
- 2007: AG legal settlement clarifying that General Plans must include GHG analysis and mitigation.
- 2016: SB 1000 passed, introduced environmental justice into General Plans (first new element in decades)
- 2016-present: Increased effort to using Housing Elements to increase housing production
- 2017: Last General Plan Guidelines update, which focused on climate.





# Current Issues

- Climate
- Environmental Justice / Equity
- Housing
- Tribal Consultation
- Innovative Methods of Community Engagement



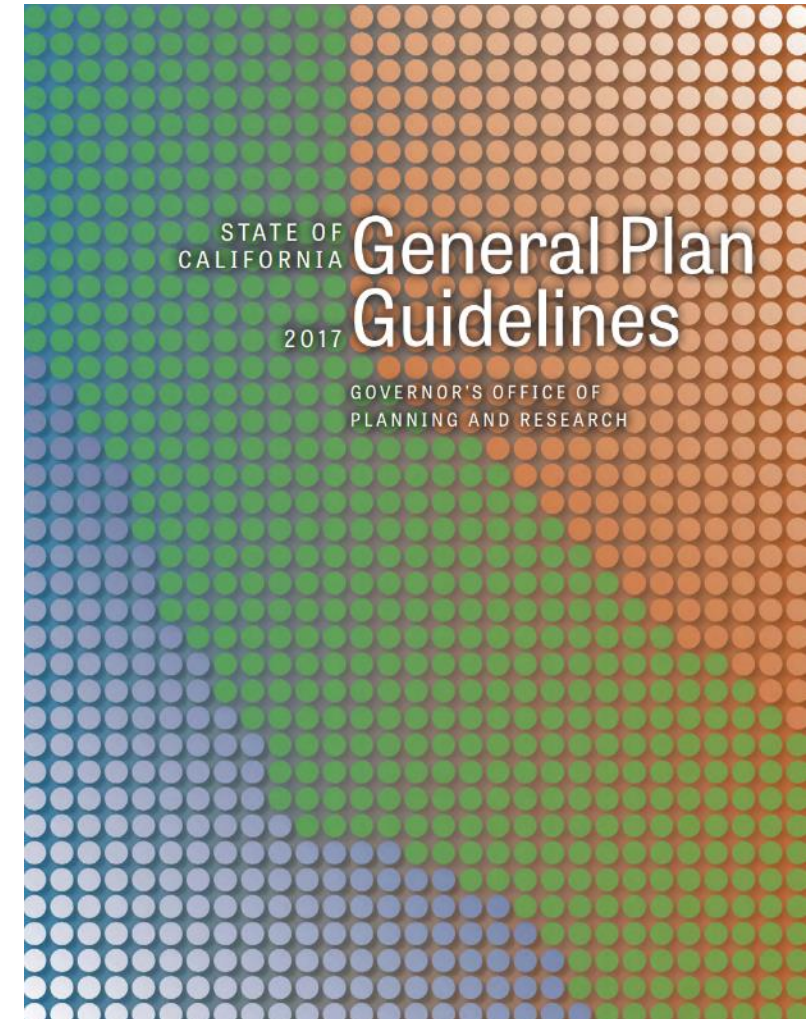
# LCI Planning Guidelines Update Overview



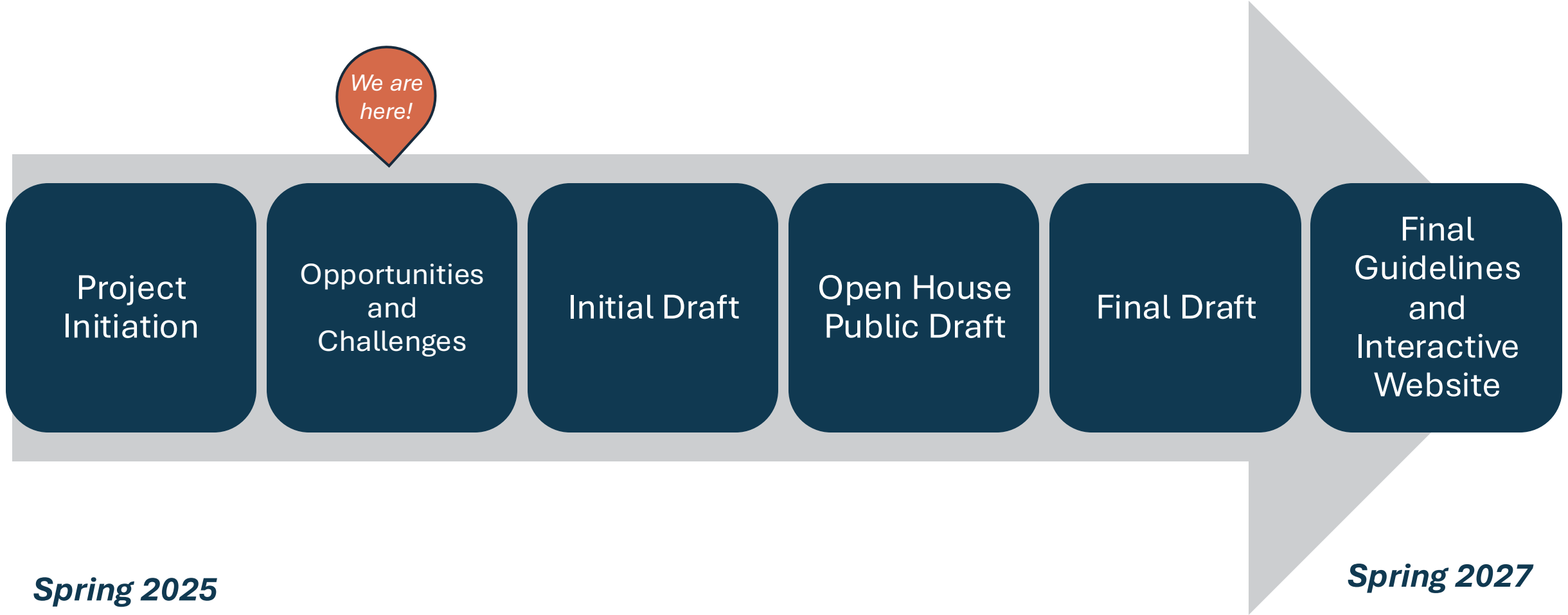
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# Project Components

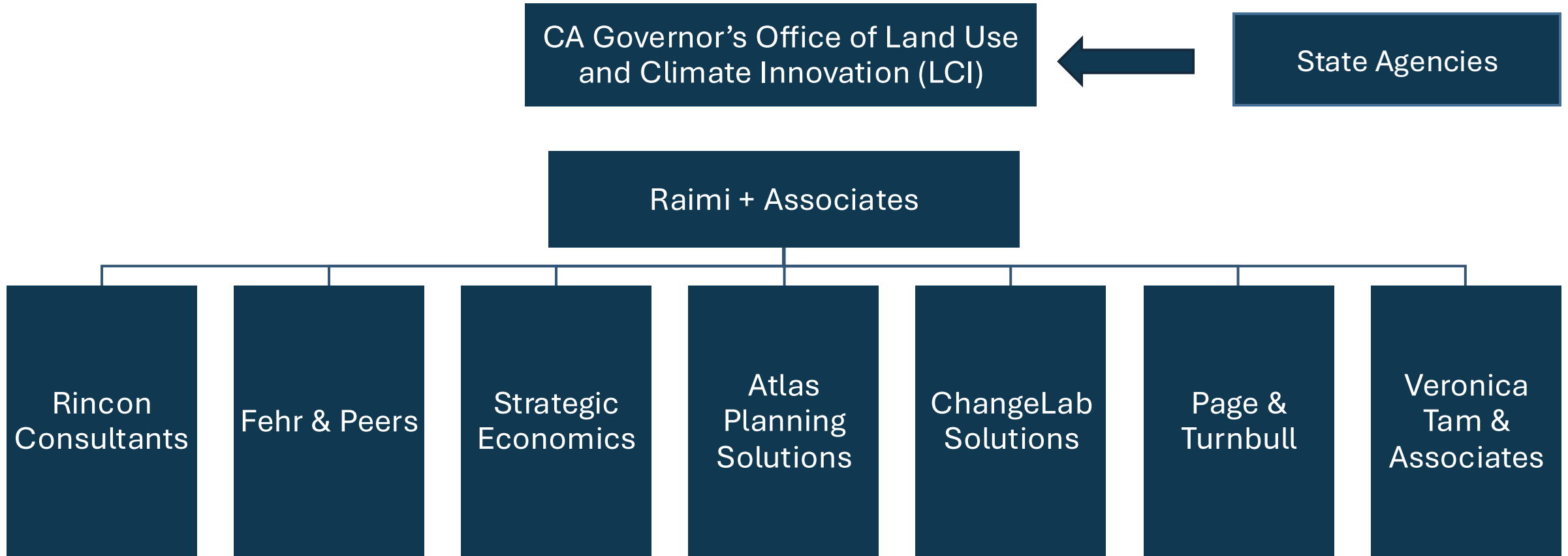
- Comprehensive updates to:
  - General Plan Guidelines (excluding Housing)
  - Planner's Guide to Specific Plans
  - Tribal Consultation Guidelines
- An interactive project website
- Complete by March 2027



# LCI Planning Guidelines Timeline



# General Plan and Specific Plan Guidelines Team





# Why is LCI updating the Planning Guidelines?

- Documents are out of date; do not include 250+ new State laws
- Organization, presentation and usability/accessibility can be improved
- Legal requirements are not explicitly identified
- Focused on large jurisdictions and not reflective of California's diversity
- Lack of tools, data, methodologies and other “nuts and bolts” of planning
- Lack of detailed implementation strategies and tools
- Insufficient information on critical themes such as equity, health, and climate change

# Planning Guidelines Updates Topics

- 9 Required Elements
- Additional Topics/Elements
  - Historic Preservation
  - Water
  - Economic Development
  - Urban Design and Placemaking
  - Agriculture and Working Lands
- Cross Cutting Topics
  - Climate Adaptation and Resilience
  - Tribal Knowledge
  - Equity and Health
  - Community Engagement





# Engagement Activities

- Project Launch Workshops *(complete!)*
- Informal Listening Sessions *(complete!)*
- Topic-specific Advisory Groups *(meeting 1 complete!)*
- In-person and virtual workshops *(round 1 complete!)*
- Online surveys and feedback forms
- Tribal Consultation and Tribal Community engagement
- Environmental Justice Community engagement
- State Interagency Advisory Group *(2 meetings complete!)*
- California APA Conference ★

# General Content Objectives and Approach



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# Structure and Organization

- Focus on practice, “how-to” guidance
- Clear and easy to navigate
- PDF and web-based Guidelines
  - PDF = Streamlined and focused on requirements
  - Web = Dynamic and interactive with searchable databases
- Guidance for California’s diversity: geography, political, community size
- Separate chapters on required and optional topics with consistent structure

# Chapter Content

- Descriptions of legal requirements and State laws
- Checklists for legal conformance
- “How to” instructions for required analysis (e.g., DAC analysis for EJ, evacuation analysis in Safety, no net loss analysis for Land Use)
- Case studies and examples
- Data and resources
- Cross-cutting topics in all chapters
- Alignment with State, regional and local plans

# Implementation and Process

- Process of updating each Element (existing conditions, policy review, policy development, plan writing, etc.)
- Guidance on clear GP language
- RFP examples
- Scopes of work for focused and comprehensive updates
- Guidance on plan writing
- KPIs and plan evaluation
- Post-adoption implementation – tools and guidance

# Planning Guidelines Cross-Cutting Themes

- **Community Engagement** - Position as a foundational principle, consolidate best practices, and tailor strategies for engaging diverse and priority communities.
- **Health** - Consistently integrate across all elements with clear definitions, data tools, and actionable policies.
- **Equity** - Consistently integrate across all elements with clear definitions, data tools, and actionable policies.
- **Climate** - Treat as a cross-cutting issue (instead of a single chapter) with callouts and best practices linking climate to all General Plan elements.
- **Tribal Knowledge**
  - Elevate Tribal knowledge and stewardship practices in a way that values local tribal communities, honors knowledge, and respects reciprocity.
  - Provide guidance on Tribal consultation and co-stewardship opportunities within land use and climate strategies.

# Small Group Discussions



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# Table Topics

- Land Use Element
- Urban Design & Historic Preservation Elements *(New/optional)*
- Circulation Element
- Safety Element
- Integrating with the Housing Element
- Open Space and Conservation Elements
- Natural & Ag/Working Lands Element *(New/optional)*
- Environmental Justice Element
- Air Quality & Noise Elements
- Economic Development *(New/Optional)*
- Water *(New/Optional)*

# Small Group Discussions

- What are the challenges you face planning for this topic?
- What information, guidance, tools/data, etc. should be included in the General Plan Guidelines to make planning easier for this topic?
- How should the cross-cutting themes be addressed within this topic?
  - Engagement
  - Equity and Health
  - Tribal knowledge
  - Climate Mitigation, Adaptation and Resilience

# Stay Involved!



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# Stay Involved!

Visit the project website for more information:

[planningupdate.lci.ca.gov/](http://planningupdate.lci.ca.gov/)

Reach out to the LCI Planning Guidelines Update team ([planningupdate@lci.ca.gov](mailto:planningupdate@lci.ca.gov)) with any questions about the project!



*Fill out the interest form to stay up to date on the project!*

# Thank you!



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