

12. Program Level Analysis - General/Area Plans

General and area plans present unique challenges for assessing impacts. These plans often contain development strategies for 20-year, or longer, time horizons. They also provide for a wide range of potential land uses and densities that accommodate all types of development. Within this document, the term *general and area plan* refers broadly to discretionary planning activities which may include, but are not limited to the following: general plan amendments, redevelopment plans, specific plans, area plans, community plans, and annexations of lands and service areas.

California law requires all cities and counties to prepare comprehensive general plans addressing future development and conservation priorities. State law prescribes numerous issues that must be addressed within mandatory chapters, or elements. Required elements include land use, circulation, conservation, open space, housing, noise, and safety. Jurisdictions must address all issues stipulated within state law, but are free to reorganize the content of elements and to include optional elements that address local and regional priorities that relate to the jurisdiction's future planning. Although not required by state law, the District prefers that local jurisdictions include an optional air quality element to highlight the significance of air quality problems and the jurisdiction's commitment to help solve regional air quality issues. Lead agencies may refer to the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association's (CAPCOA's) Model Policies for Greenhouse Gases in General Plans available at <http://www.capcoa.org/> for additional guidance on addressing greenhouse gases in the context of general and area plans.

General plan updates and large specific plans nearly always require the lead agency to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Due to the District's nonattainment status and the cumulative impacts of growth on air quality, these plans almost always have significant, unavoidable adverse air quality impacts. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the lead agency to evaluate individual as well as cumulative impacts of general and area plans, and all feasible mitigation measures must be incorporated within the proposed plan to reduce significant air quality impacts.

The District recommends that CEQA analyses of the potential air quality impacts of general and area plans include discussion of the following:

- a) The proposed plan's consistency with the District's Air Quality Plans (Section 2.5) and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments' (SACOG's) Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which includes growth principles from the Preferred Blueprint Scenario.
- b) The proposed plan's construction-generated criteria air pollutant and precursor emissions;
- c) The proposed plan's operational criteria air pollutant and precursor emissions;
- d) The proposed plan's Toxic Air Contaminant (TAC) emissions;
- e) Potential odor exposure related to the proposed plan;
- f) The proposed plan's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions;
- g) A significance determination for each of items (a) through (f) above, without mitigation;

- h) A discussion of feasible mitigation necessary for each of items (a) through (f) above to reduce impacts; and
- i) A discussion regarding whether the proposed mitigation would be sufficient to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level, or if the impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

Other Sources of Assistance with addressing GHG in General Plans:

Office of the Attorney General's website contains information on CEQA, Global Warming, and General Plans located at: <http://ag.ca.gov/globalwarming/ceqa/generalplans.php>.

CoolCalifornia.org website is a partnership between government agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations including the California Air Resources Board, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley Institute of the Environment, California Energy Commission, Next 10, and the California Public Utilities Commission. The site provides a "Local Government Toolkit" that provides guidance and lists resources to help local governments reduce GHG emissions and save money. The website is located at: <http://www.coolcalifornia.org/local-government>.