



# ICARP

INTEGRATED CLIMATE ADAPTATION & RESILIENCY PROGRAM

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## Technical Advisory Council May 29, 2026

### Item 7: Planning Guidelines Update: General Plan, Specific Plan, and Tribal Consultation Guidelines

#### Introduction

LCI is updating the State's **General Plan Guidelines**, **SB 18 Tribal Consultation Guidelines**, and **Specific Plan Guidelines** under the umbrella of the **Planning Guidelines Update**. Development for this suite of guidelines began in 2025 and will be completed by 2027. It is the best-resourced update in the history of LCI and strives to create a comprehensive resource hub for planners across the state. The goal is to serve jurisdictions of all sizes and geographies, giving them the tools needed to plan for the future of their communities, without the need for expensive consultants and external contracts.

With the rapid increase in state laws that impact local land use planning, LCI is modernizing these guidelines so local jurisdictions have clear requirements and practical tools to plan for the long term. While the State's planning guidelines have traditionally been written as long PDF documents (the 2017 General Plan Guidelines are 400+ pages), this update will be released via an interactive website where users/planners can navigate easily to find "how-to" tools and comply with statute. This web-first approach will also allow LCI to continuously update guidance as new state laws and requirements are passed. Ultimately, the new guidelines will 1) reflect recent changes in state laws, 2) streamline tools, resources and case studies, 3) address a wider range of topics including water, working lands, and historic preservation and 4) provide specific guidance based on community type and geography.

Further, in coordination with Executive Orders S-04-10, N-16-22, B-55-18, and N-82-2, LCI has identified four Core Planning Principles to be integrated throughout the documents: 1. Climate Adaptation, Mitigation, and Resilience, 2. Equity & Health, 3. Indigenous Knowledge, and 4. Community Engagement. These principles will shape recommended policies, best practices and potential implementation mechanisms throughout the guidance.

Today, you will hear presentations about each of the three guidelines LCI is working on and their progress. Each presentation will highlight why we're updating these documents, how we're updating them, engagement completed thus far and further engagement opportunities.

# General Plan Guidelines

## Overview

As the state’s comprehensive planning agency, LCI provides the backbone guidance for how cities and counties shape their long-range plans. As such, our job is to help jurisdictions implement statewide goals while honoring the unique needs of their communities. This is where the General Plan Guidelines come in.

Since our last General Plan Guidelines update in 2017, over 250 laws have been passed that impact long-range planning at the local level. These guidelines respond to this legislative output by outlining statutory requirements, offering policy language recommendations, and providing examples of cities and counties that have adopted similar policies. Importantly, they will provide specific methodologies jurisdictions can use to meet the technical requirements in statute. These “chunks” of how-to analysis are called “Building Blocks (inspired by HCD’s Housing Element “Building Blocks”) and will walk-through different methodologies jurisdictions can use to complete the required analysis for each general plan element.

The General Plan Guidelines will provide specific guidance for each of the required elements including Land Use, Housing, Circulation (Transportation), Safety, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, Air Quality, and Environmental Justice, as well as “optional elements” like Water, Working Lands, and Historic Preservation.

## Timeline & Engagement

Outreach for the General Plan Guidelines has been statewide and extensive. We’ve reached more than 1,000 planners and consultants in regional listening sessions, convened 10 public advisory groups with more than 300+ participants that have met twice, hosted three Interagency Advisory Group meetings with 25+ partner agencies and have received more than 1,300+ comments on a framework for the guidelines. The public advisory groups are represented by rural, suburban, and urban jurisdictions, tribal communities, environmental justice representatives, and other subject matter experts.

After an initial outline and framework process, we have begun drafting the first phase of content for the guidelines, which will focus on plan alignment and required content (i.e. the Building Blocks). Later phases will provide recommended content, including policy and plan examples and implementation strategies, best practices, etc. We are planning to have a public draft for review by November of this year. The final version and interactive website for the guidelines will be released and public by late 2027. These are target dates that will need to align with Tribal Consultation.

## **Tribal Consultation Guidelines**

### **Overview**

The State's Tribal Consultation Guidelines (TCG) for local planning (SB 18) are being updated for the first time since the original SB 18 guidance was issued nearly two decades ago. This update responds to significant shifts in Tribal-State relations, major legislative and policy changes, increased expectations around meaningful consultation, and the need for clearer processes for local governments.

### **Timeline & Engagement**

Engagement for the TCG is grounded in direct communication with California Native American Tribes and shaped by sustained input beginning in 2025. We are also working with partner agencies, including NAHC and the AG. LCI initiated formal outreach with a statewide Tribal consultation invitation in September 2025, followed by a March 19, 2026 letter reaffirming LCI's commitment to meaningful government-to-government consultation and outlining several pathways for Tribal participation across all components of the Planning Guidelines Update (PGU).

Early feedback from Tribes emphasized the need for clearer guidance, improved communication, and more consistent early engagement. These themes directly informed our strategy to update the TCG and the structure of this year's engagements. Engagement includes government-to-government consultations, information sessions, conference presentations, interagency coordination, standing up a Tribal Advisory Group, and likely Tribal Consultation Roundtables. The Tribal Advisory Group is expected to convene in July 2026 and meet monthly, focusing first on the Core Planning Principle of Tribal integration, followed by TCG drafting.

## **Specific Plan Guidelines**

### **Overview**

The Specific Plan Guidelines were last updated nearly 26 years ago and require a comprehensive revision to align with current planning trends and recent state legislation like SB 79. These guidelines detail the relationship between general and specific plans, the pros and cons of creating a specific plan and/or alternate strategy and provide innovative examples of specific plans and their use. For this update, the guidelines will prioritize implementation, with an emphasis on regulations and costs, and will include robust guidance on alignment with CEQA and infrastructure entities and needs.

### **Timeline & Engagement**

LCI is currently working with contractors to create a first draft, which will be released for Advisory Group review in September 2026. The document will then be revised before being

released for public review. LCI will hold a public workshop in December 2026, which will also align with the public review period for the General Plan Guidelines. The document is currently set to be finalized in March 2027.

## Discussion Questions

- In your work, in what specific ways have the Core Planning Principles (Climate, Equity & Health, Indigenous Knowledge, and Community Engagement) been applied? We would love to hear about case studies or concrete practices that demonstrate how each principle has influenced planning decisions or outcomes.
- The General Plan Guidelines have typically been shaped with an urban audience in mind. How can state planning guidance better talk to the unique challenges rural planners and jurisdictions face?
- The Planning Guidelines Update team is dedicated to prioritizing a “how-to” approach to each of these Guidelines, where users can easily find guidance on how to meet state requirements in a way that makes sense for the particularities of their jurisdiction. What are other examples that come to mind for successful guidance that balances state priorities and local conditions?
- The General Plan Guidelines will emphasize different vertical (state and regional – local, i.e. Wildfire Resilience Plan Alignment) and horizontal (local – local, i.e. Climate Adaptation Plans) plan alignment opportunities for the general plan. From your position on the TAC, what are challenges you see when it comes to aligning different plans and what are innovative opportunities to ensure consistency?