

State of California

**GENERAL
PLAN
GUIDELINES**

November 1990



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Legislative Milestones In California's Planning Laws

- 1907 First Subdivision Map Act enacted.
- 1915 Cities authorized to create planning commissions.
- 1917 Initial zoning law enacted.
- 1927 Cities and counties authorized to prepare master plans (general plans).
- 1929 Adoption of master plans made mandatory for those cities and counties establishing planning commissions (based largely on the 1928 U.S. Department of Commerce Model Standard City Planning Enabling Act). Subdivision Map Act revised enabling local government to require dedication of improvements.
- 1937 All cities and counties required to adopt master plans. Cities and counties authorized to prepare "precise plans" (similar to specific plans of today) to implement the master plan.
- 1951 Planning law recodified into Government Code Sections 65000 et seq.
- 1955 Land use and circulation elements required in the general plan.
- 1965 Planning and Zoning Law reorganized. Cities and counties authorized to prepare "specific plans."
- 1967 Housing element required in the general plan (effective July 1, 1969).
- 1970 Conservation and open-space elements required in the general plan.
- 1971 Seismic safety, noise, and scenic highway elements required in the general plan. Zoning and subdivision approvals required to be consistent with the adopted general plan, this elevated the importance of planning in California.
- 1974 Subdivision Map Act recodified from the Business and Professions Code into the State Planning and Zoning Law.
- 1975 Safety element required in the general plan. Legislative intent added clarifying internal consistency in the general plan.
- 1980 Detailed content standards and adoption procedures added to the housing element requirement (effective October 11, 1981).
- 1984 Planning statutes substantially revised, seismic safety and scenic highways elements dropped as required elements, seismic safety merged with safety element (AB 2038, Chap. 1009).

This summary does not include other major planning and land use statutes that have been important in shaping local planning, such as the California Environmental Quality Act, the Williamson Act, the California Coastal Act, the California Timberland Productivity Act, and the Cortese-Knox Local Government Reorganization Act of 1985 (see Appendix D for a list of major state planning statutes).