

The Environmental Justice Planning Process

When to Prepare an EJ Element

SB 1000 requires a local government to prepare an EJ Element or integrate EJ-related policies into other elements when both of the following conditions apply:

- “The concurrent adoption or next revision of two or more other General Plan elements on or after January 1, 2018.”
- When a local jurisdiction identifies one or more disadvantaged communities within its General Plan planning area.

Alternatively, a jurisdiction may voluntarily adopt an EJ Element or integrate EJ policies into its General Plan.

A Sample EJ Planning Process

1 Conduct Introductory Public Meeting(s), Identify Disadvantaged Communities, and Document Existing Conditions. Introductory public meeting(s) should be hosted to announce the General Plan update and provide information to the public, including ways for community members to engage. Using the most appropriate tools and data, including input from the public, jurisdictions should also embark upon a process to identify disadvantaged communities.

2 Involve and Engage the Community. Early, proactive, and ongoing community engagement is critical for gathering input on EJ issues and objectives. These activities would be conducted before and during the development of EJ goals, policies, and objectives. Planners should also consider the creation of a community advisory committee.



3 Develop EJ Goals, Policies, and Objectives. Using existing conditions analyses and community feedback, planners will begin developing EJ policies for disadvantaged communities. EJ policies should provide short- and long-term strategies for addressing existing issues while also providing an implementation matrix to identify responsible actors.

4 Adopt the Element or Policies. After drafting an EJ Element and/or all affected General Plan elements, having environmental clearance is required (see California Environmental Quality Act). A successful vote for adoption by a City Council or Board of Supervisors would finalize the proposed element(s) and complete the planning process.

5 Continually Evaluate during Implementation. Achieving a truly effective EJ Element or EJ goals requires ongoing and robust implementation beyond the planning process. Thus, it is imperative to evaluate the process with community stakeholders and build in opportunities for periodic review and evaluation.



Ways to Integrate EJ into General Plans

1. The preparation of a stand-alone EJ Element demonstrates the importance of EJ and facilitates ease of access, but may not clearly outline the interrelationships and ensure consistency of EJ-related topics with other General Plan elements.
2. Integrating EJ policies throughout a General Plan can better demonstrate interrelationships and maintain consistency with other policies in each element, but EJ goals and policies may not be easily prioritized or located in the General Plan.

Related Laws and Legislation

- **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):** Requires government agencies to study and disclose the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects, and to reduce those environmental impacts to the extent feasible.

- **SB 535 - California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund:** Defines and identifies disadvantaged communities.
- **AB 1550 - Greenhouse Gases Investment Plan:** Builds upon SB 535 by defining low-income households or communities.
- **AB 170 - San Joaquin Valley Air Quality Elements:** Requires San Joaquin Valley cities and counties to adopt an Air Quality Element.
- **SB 244 - Planning for Unincorporated Disadvantaged Communities:** Provides strategies to plan for disadvantaged unincorporated communities.
- **SB 379 - Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Strategies:** Requires cities/counties to review and update the Safety Element to include climate adaptation and resiliency strategies.

Environmental Justice Planning Process Diagram

