

CLIMATE CHANGE TASK FORCE

PLANNING POLICY PRINCIPLES

FOR

CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE

*September 2007*



CALIFORNIA CHAPTER -  
AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION



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# PLANNING POLICY PRINCIPLES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE

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The California Chapter of the American Planning Association (CCAPA) represents over 6,000 public and private-sector planners in California. California planners are the professionals responsible for formulating community planning policy and conducting local government review of proposed development projects. The purpose of this paper is to present CCAPA's perspective on the most important policy principles to guide the planning-related actions needed to effectively respond to greenhouse gas emission and climate change challenges.

Land use patterns, transportation/land use relationships, and urban design all substantially influence energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) generation. To achieve the carbon reduction goals of AB 32, a multi-faceted response will be necessary that incorporates both traditional strategies and new approaches to reduce emissions. Community planning and land development policies emphasizing sustainable planning and design will be essential as part of the carbon-reduction response in California, particularly in light of the State's continued population growth. The current CCAPA Legislative Platform already promotes sustainable communities, green building design, and reduced use of fossil fuels. This paper provides further details specifically addressing greenhouse gas emissions.

Adaptation to the consequences of climate change is another critical community planning challenge. Cities and counties must consider how to protect their communities from the potentially increased environmental hazards and impacts related to sea-level rise, coastal storms and erosion, modified flood hydrographs, increased stress on levees, wildfire risks, and growing demands for water supply while the Sierra snowpack shrinks. The CCAPA Legislative Platform promotes safe and healthy communities and wise use of natural resources. This paper provides further details specifically addressing adaptation to climate change.

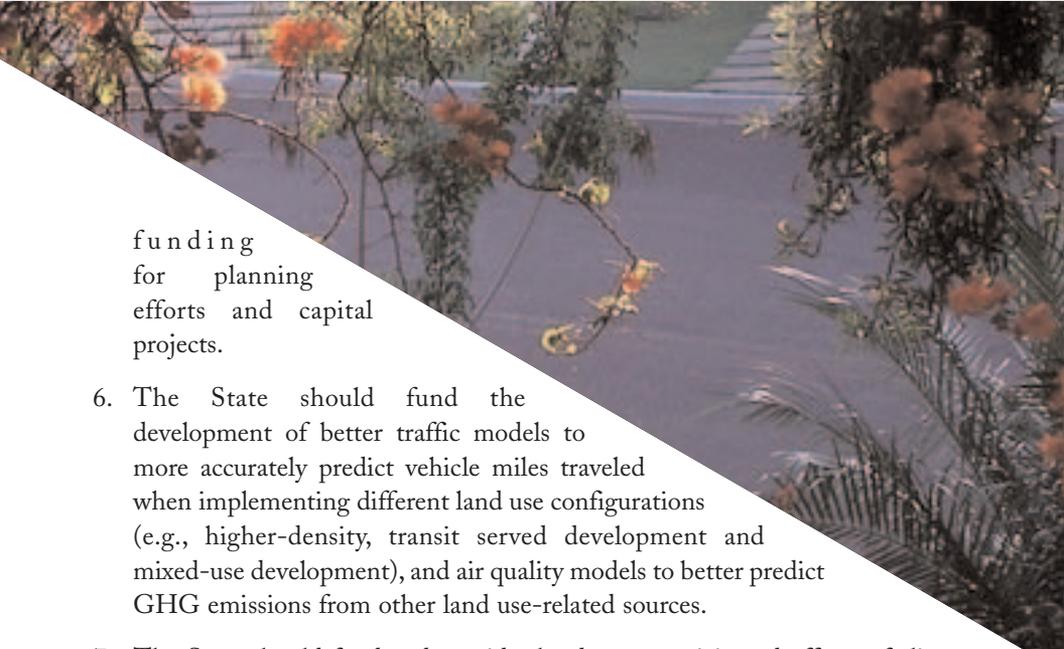


The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) also plays an important, complementary role in the State's response to climate change. Its purpose is to disclose information about potential environmental impacts so public agencies can make better, more informed decisions on proposed projects. Coverage of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation issues in CEQA documents for appropriate projects is consistent with CEQA's policies and can be beneficial in helping agencies take specific actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect communities from climate change impacts. The CCAPA Legislative Platform promotes effective and streamlined implementation of CEQA. This paper provides recommended approaches for CEQA's role in implementation of climate change strategies.

The following policy principles are offered for consideration by the Governor, Legislature, State agencies, regional government, and local agencies when developing planning-related policies and actions that address climate change issues.

## STATE ROLES

1. The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) should assume its long-established statutory role of developing guidance and coordinating comprehensive land use planning efforts by state, regional, and local agencies to address climate change issues and land use planning. The State should provide OPR with the direction, funding, staffing and authority commensurate with this task.
2. The State should clearly define and simplify the role that regional planning agencies play in responding to climate change challenges, consistent with the principles outlined for regional agencies in the next section.
3. The State should fund and empower regional planning bodies to address climate change issues in comprehensive, regional land use and transportation plans. State-funded projects consistent with regional plans that address climate change should be given high priority.
4. OPR should lead the State process for adoption of guidelines for climate change provisions in both regional plans and local general plans. Guidelines should be completed within one year.
5. The State should offer incentives for local governments to cooperate in preparation of regional climate change strategies. Incentives should include



funding  
for planning  
efforts and capital  
projects.

6. The State should fund the development of better traffic models to more accurately predict vehicle miles traveled when implementing different land use configurations (e.g., higher-density, transit served development and mixed-use development), and air quality models to better predict GHG emissions from other land use-related sources.
7. The State should fund and provide the data on anticipated effects of climate change (e.g., flooding, sea level rise, temperature change impacts on crops and habitat, water supply) for regional agencies and local governments to use in developing land use polices for adaptation to those effects.
8. California Air Resource Board's (CARB's) establishment and allocation of GHG reduction measures to be achieved from land use should not unfairly burden regions and jurisdictions that experienced rapid development between 1990 and 2007, and should recognize that regions with the greatest future development have a greater ability to contribute to reducing GHG emissions.
9. The State should adjust tax policies related to land use planning and development to promote sustainable communities.

## REGIONAL AGENCY ROLES

1. Regional planning agencies should act as the clearinghouse for information regarding GHG emissions mitigation and climate change analysis by providing a conduit between local governments, air districts, and the State. As such, regional agencies should:
  - Work with stakeholders (including the State and local governments) in an open and transparent process to develop regional goals for GHG emission reductions.
  - Develop a regional plan to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to climate change effects. The regional plan should be approved using a Program Environmental

Impact Report (EIR) that can be used by local agencies for tiering when approving plans and projects that are consistent with the regional plan.

- Coordinate various efforts to reduce GHG emissions between local governments, air districts, the State and other stakeholders.
  - Provide technical assistance to local governments to understand the requirements and options developed by the State and provide technical assistance to local governments that choose to implement changes in their land use plans consistent with the region's goals and policies for meeting GHG emissions reductions and adapting to climate change effects.
2. Local government implementation of land use and infrastructure plans consistent with regional plans should remain voluntary, but regional agencies should provide incentives to local governments to cooperate, such as priority for receiving State funding administered by regional agencies. Regional agencies should develop a variety of options that local governments can choose to use or modify to meet local requirements for GHG emissions reductions.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLES

1. Local jurisdictions should reduce GHG emissions by adopting land use and capital improvement plans that accommodate and encourage people to travel by walking, bicycling, ridesharing and transit, as opposed to driving alone and that encourage green and sustainable development. Specifically:
  - Land use plans and codes should encourage mixed land use, higher densities (especially around transit), affordable housing, compact form, non-motor vehicle circulation, water and energy conservation, microgeneration of electricity in a manner compatible with surrounding uses, and low-carbon resources for building materials, among other carbon-reduction strategies.
  - Local governments should provide incentives for development projects that meet climate change response policies, such as CEQA and permit streamlining.
  - Local governments should adopt building codes that require silver LEED certification or better (or equivalent standards, if developed by the State).
2. Local governments should accommodate all modes of transportation and make them attractive and convenient. Specifically:
  - Road standards in newly developing areas should result in highly connected streets with small blocks.



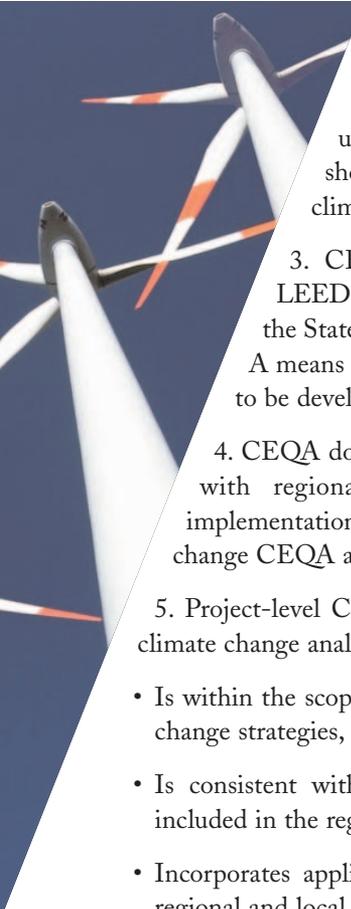
- Local streets should accommodate users of all transportation modes throughout their communities wherever practical.
  - Local jurisdictions should coordinate with regional efforts to plan and accommodate transit and bicycling.
- Where appropriate and practical, local jurisdictions should accommodate transit with needed infrastructure, plan for complete networks of bikeways, ensure that streets have safe and inviting sidewalks and street crossings, provide park-and-ride facilities and plan shared parking where appropriate.
3. Local plans and policies should be developed to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to climate change effects in a manner consistent with corresponding regional plans. When approving development projects, local governments should require land uses and other development characteristics that are consistent with local and regional climate change response strategies.

## ROLE OF CEQA

1. The Resources Agency and OPR, in consultation with CARB and California Energy Commission (CEC), should revise the CEQA Guidelines to provide acceptable methodologies for climate change analysis, significance thresholds, and mitigation measures. The Guidelines should recognize that CEQA climate change analysis consists of two parts: impacts of the project on GHG emissions, and impacts of climate change on the project (e.g., increased flooding, reduced water supply). The Guidelines revision, or an accompanying technical paper, should identify “best practices” for the following topics:
  - Methods for quantifying GHG emissions, and projects for which qualitative analysis is sufficient.
  - Defining baseline conditions and significance thresholds.
  - Acceptable mitigation measures for energy conservation and microgeneration, alternative energy sources, trip reduction, and other topics.
  - Criteria for streamlining project-level climate change analysis, e.g., through tiering, finding a project “within the scope” of a carbon reduction program, or use of CEQA’s “partial exemption” provisions (Section 21083.3).

The CEQA Guidelines revisions should be completed within one year.

2. The Legislature should require CEQA climate change analysis only for large projects, and exempt small and infill projects from this requirement. For instance, limiting the requirement for climate change analysis to projects of statewide,

A photograph of several white wind turbines with orange-tipped blades, set against a clear blue sky. The turbines are positioned on the left side of the page, with their blades extending towards the right.

regional, or area wide significance should be used as a starting point for the definition. General plans, general plan updates, regional transportation plans, and specific plans should also be included in the definition of projects requiring climate change analysis.

3. CEQA documents for projects that qualify for LEED or LEED-ND certification, or equivalent certification, if developed by the State, should not be required to include a climate change analysis. A means for qualifying a project early in the CEQA process will need to be developed for this recommendation to be feasible.

4. CEQA documents prepared for local general plans that are consistent with regional climate change strategies should focus on local implementation measures and incorporate by reference the regional climate change CEQA analysis.

5. Project-level CEQA documents need not provide additional project-level climate change analysis or mitigation if the project meets all of the following:

- Is within the scope of applicable regional and local plans that include climate change strategies, and that have certified program EIRs.
- Is consistent with applicable regional and local climate change strategies included in the regional or local plans for which an EIR was certified.
- Incorporates applicable project-level mitigation measures from the certified regional and local plan EIRs.

*CCAPA will continue to review recommendations of agencies and organizations that are also developing strategies that use planning tools to respond to climate change at the state, regional and local levels, and will update this document to reflect the latest thinking on this issue. Of critical importance is that any recommendations be flexible, with a menu of possible options, to ensure the wide variety of local conditions can be accommodated in meeting the AB 32 carbon reduction goals. CCAPA looks forward to helping shape the state's climate change response and welcomes comments and feedback on this document.*