



LOS ANGELES  
CITY PLANNING



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Executive Team

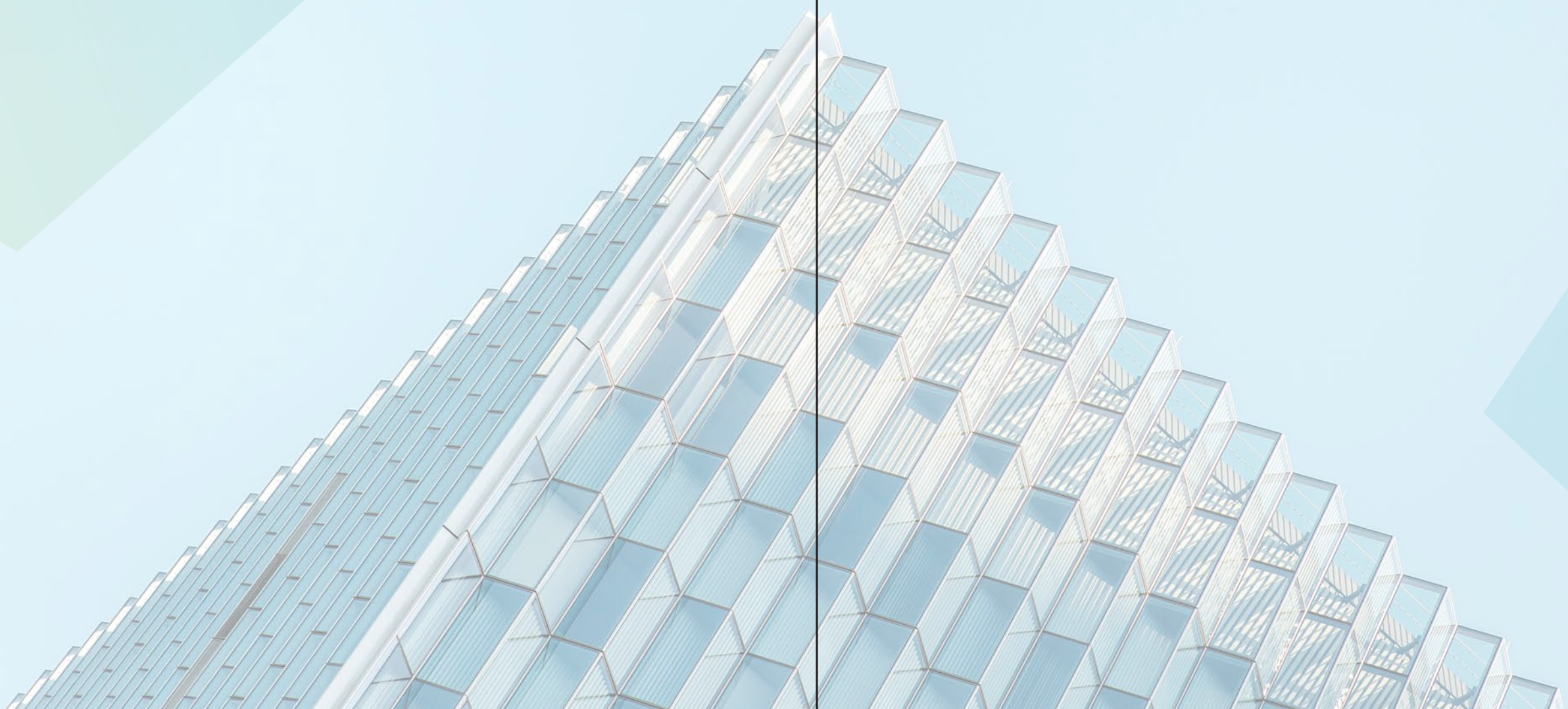
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## Mayor's Message



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

In 2020, we celebrated 100 years of Los Angeles City Planning. The Department marked this milestone by rising to meet this year's extraordinary challenges—from establishing the Office of Racial Justice, Equity, and Restorative Planning to address the legacy of racism in planning practices to volunteering to support Angelenos hit hardest by the COVID-19 crisis and proposing policies to assist small businesses in the economic recovery ahead.

This year, City Planning also retooled its operations to support contactless, online services and facilitate virtual public engagement, so that critical development processes, board meetings, public hearings, and outreach could continue safely and ensure equitable access for our diverse communities.

Despite the pandemic, City Planning continued to process record levels of housing, and implement new regulations to ensure the preservation of existing affordable housing. The Department also advanced the long-range planning efforts that will play a key role in addressing our housing crisis and achieving our sustainability goals, including updates to our Community Plans and the Housing Element of the City's General Plan.

I am proud of City Planning's accomplishments during a challenging year, and I look forward to all that we will achieve together in 2021. I send my best wishes for continued success.

Sincerely,

Eric Garcetti  
Mayor





## Director's Message



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

In 2020, we were confronted with stark realities that forced us to face systemic injustice: the tragic death of George Floyd and a virus that devastated the lives of countless Americans. As planners, we respond to these events by examining our own profession. We envision ways our work can produce more equitable outcomes, not only by correcting historical wrongs such as redlining, but also by developing policies that affirmatively embody a just and equitable City.

This past year, City Planning devoted resources to reevaluating our goals, reassessing our priorities, and identifying ways to put our community first. While no one initiative can rebuild Los Angeles's economy in the aftermath of COVID-19, or even begin to undo the systemic racism embedded in our lives, 2020 was a year of awakening for us all and a call to action for our Department.

We held more online forums this year than during all previous years combined. Recognizing the importance of open communication, especially during times of crisis, we expanded access to translation services and multilingual publications. We even started accepting planning applications, referral forms, and fee payments online. In addition to safeguarding the health of our citizens, these enhancements have simplified Angelenos' interactions with the City.

At the core of all these efforts is our desire to be more inclusive and accountable so that our work represents the diversity of voices, people, and interests in Los Angeles. In difficult times, we must be strong. Above all, we must let our resilience shine. At City Planning, 2020 has served as an opportunity to further demonstrate our commitment to Los Angeles, the people who call the City home, and all those who contribute to this City in their own unique ways.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vince Bertoni".

Vince Bertoni  
Director of Planning



## PLANNING DURING COVID-19

Throughout 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic altered everyday life in Los Angeles, underlining the importance of maintaining a sense of community, both as Americans and as Angelenos.

Thanks to the integrity and professionalism of City Planning staff, normal operations quickly resumed in the immediate weeks after the pandemic, preparing the way for Los Angeles's economic recovery. Facing a public health crisis unparalleled in the Department's 100-year history, City Planning took action to protect the health and safety of all Angelenos, including the residents and business owners who frequent the public counters and the Department's nearly 400 employees.

In addition to these temporary measures, City Planning made improvements that will continue to serve the City for years to come, simplifying processes, modernizing operations, and expanding digital outreach.



## BEING RESPONSIVE, ADAPTING TO CHANGE

### Workplace Modifications

Nearly 90 percent of City Planning staff telecommuted during the initial days after the outbreak of COVID-19, minimizing any impact on response times or workload.

### Online Public Hearings

The City Planning, Cultural Heritage, and Area Planning Commissions held virtual meetings, allowing planners to continue to advance development approvals for new housing projects to City Council.

### Digital Engagement

Compared to turnout before the pandemic, participation levels have increased by four to six times, with more Angelenos attending virtual webinars, workshops, and open houses in English and Spanish.

### Online Project Filings

City Planning began offering online payment and digital filing for certain applications.

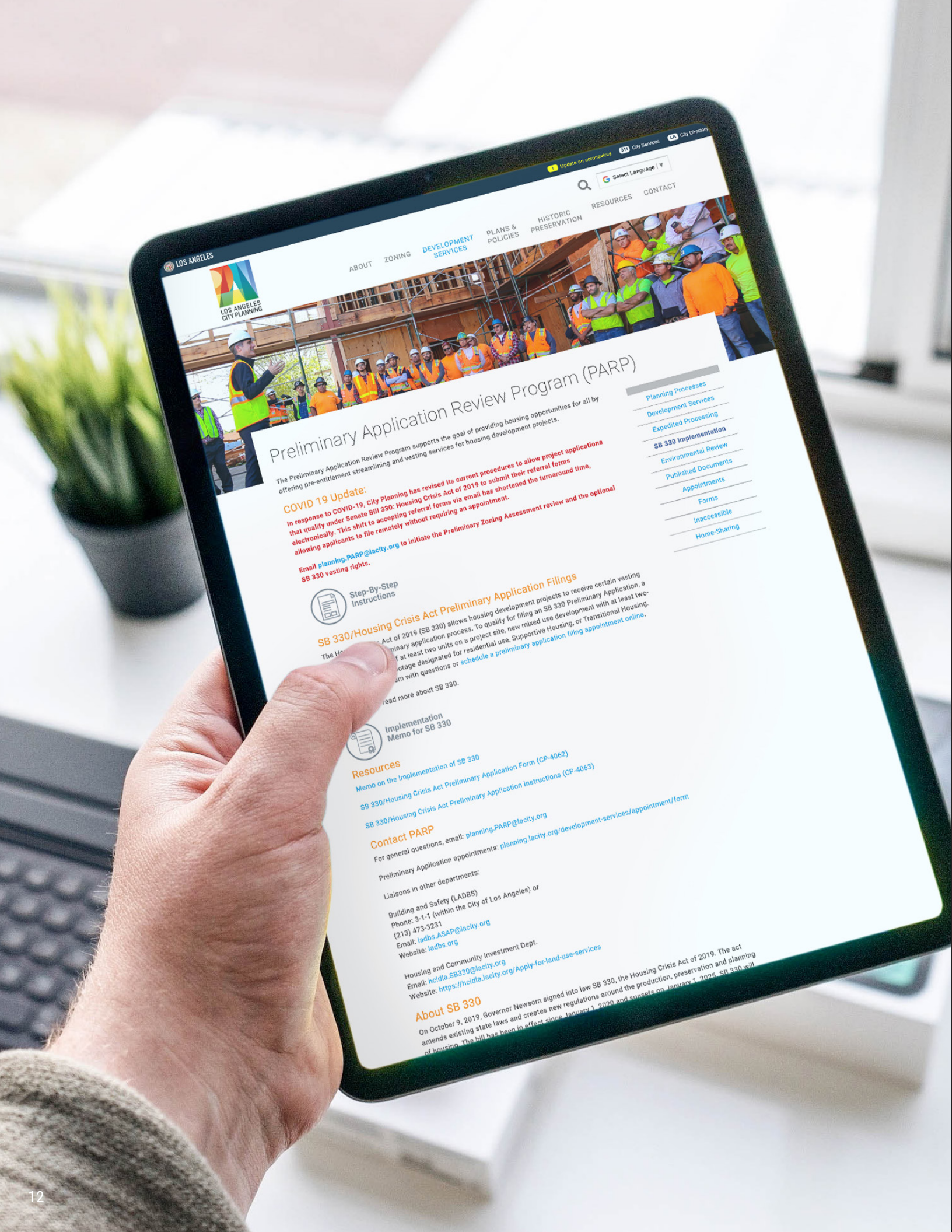
### Neighborhood Notifications

The Department started uploading digital copies of case filing applications to its website and making more case-related files available online, improving stakeholders' access to public information about projects in their neighborhoods.

### Volunteer Service

During the pandemic, the Department helped others through the City's Disaster Service Worker Program, responding to Mayor Garcetti's call to action. Volunteers brought meals to the elderly, staffed temporary homeless shelters, and helped set up the City's contact tracing infrastructure.





# Improving Operational Efficiency

Expanded Opportunities for E-Filing

Streamlined Project Sign-Offs

Lowered Business Costs

Enhanced Data Tracking

Facilitated Internal Trainings

In 2020, City Planning initiated a number of operational enhancements to realize new efficiencies in the workplace.

From expanding the range of applications that can be filed online to creating specialized units that combine the expertise of seasoned planners, these improvements have reduced processing times and supported the jobs and housing agenda of the Mayor and City Council.



City Planning has advanced new housing opportunities across Los Angeles's neighborhoods through cutting-edge new policies that have streamlined development review, bringing more units online.

## EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR E-FILING

City Planning increased the number of project-related applications available for digital filing in 2020. Electronic filing has simplified the application process for high-demand services, including housing applications that qualify under Senate Bill 330, case filings for exterior renovations of locally registered historic properties, and the filing of project appeals.

### Online Payment

In August, City Planning began accepting online payment for project applications. Today, customers can request an invoice by email, then pay through the Department's secure payment system. The remote payment option has supported social distancing during the pandemic, while also improving the overall customer experience.

The public can now pay for administrative clearances and discretionary planning entitlements through a secure online portal, avoiding the hassle of an in-person visit.

Along the lines of improving customer service, the Department started accepting online submission of several types of project applications. Applications for Conditional Use permits for the sale and service of alcohol, Tier Verifications for qualifying Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) projects, and wireless pre-applications may be submitted online.

The broader effort to accommodate the online submission of project applications will continue into 2021 as City Planning moves toward an entirely digital filing system, achieving a more sustainable and customer-friendly business model for City departments.





# STREAMLINED PROJECT SIGN-OFFS

City Planning provides streamlined types of entitlement pathways for qualifying projects. The entitlement pathway best suited to a given project depends on the level of review required to assess its compatibility with the Zoning Code.

## Administrative Applications

Unlike discretionary applications, administrative applications can move through an accelerated project review process that advances compliant projects into the development pipeline at a significantly faster rate. Because they involve the objective review of development projects and do not require environmental analysis or a formal public hearing, the timeline for administrative applications is often months shorter than the turnaround for discretionary entitlement applications.

The number of administrative applications processed by City Planning has grown steadily over the last two years, rising from 2,769 in 2018 to 4,146 in 2020.

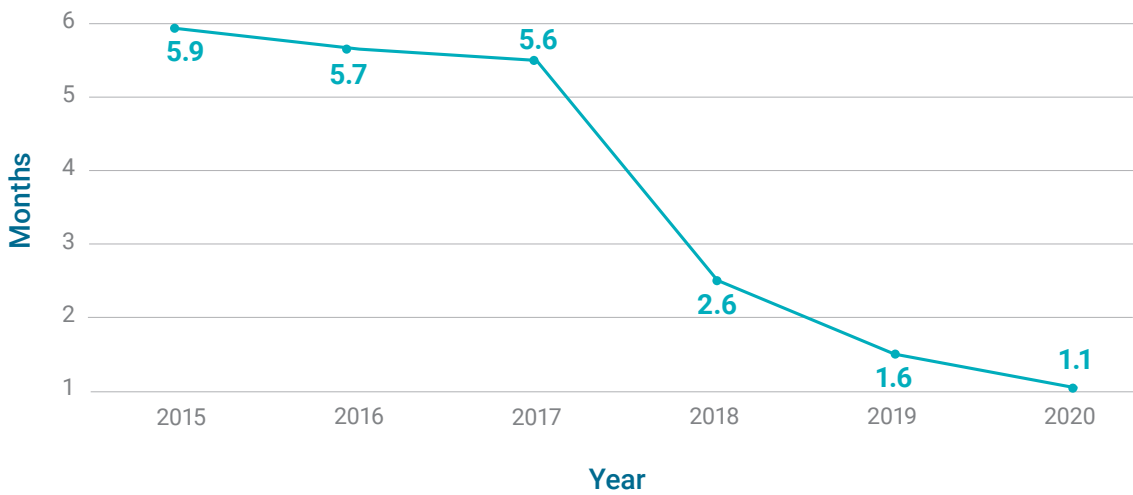
On average, administrative approvals were issued within 13 days of submission, and the sustained growth in these types of case filings indicates a strong, continued demand for new development throughout the City.

In 2018, only three out of every eight cases were filed as administrative applications. Today, three out of every five applications filed are administrative.

The median processing time for an administrative case is 14.7 times faster than for a typical entitlement.

Over the last five years, these projects have generated nearly 2,000 units of affordable housing and more than 450,000 square feet of commercial and industrial space.

Median Time from Filing to Completion  
(Entitlements + Administrative Cases)



## Three-Year Comparison

		Calendar Year Totals			2020 vs 2019		2020 vs 2018	
		2020	2019	2018	Absolute Change	Percent Change	Absolute Change	Percent Change
Total	Case Processing Breakdown							
	Applications Filed	5,855	5,224	4,830	631	12.1%	1,025	21.2%
	Applications Completed	5,435	5,361	4,455	74	1.4%	980	22.0%
Application Breakdown	Discretionary Applications							
	Discretionary Filed	1,277	1,730	2,026	-453	-26.2%	-749	-37.0%
	Discretionary Completed	1,492	1,867	1,929	-375	-20.1%	-437	-22.7%
	Administrative Applications							
	Administrative Filed	4,578	3,494	2,804	1,084	31.0%	1,774	63.3%
	Administrative Completed	3,943	3,036	2,526	907	29.9%	1,417	56.1%

		Calendar Year Totals			2020 vs 2019		2020 vs 2018	
		2020	2019	2018	Absolute Change	Percent Change	Absolute Change	Percent Change
Filed	Housing Unit Count							
	Total Units Proposed	18,802	25,783	27,332	-6,981	-27.1%	-8,530	-31.2%
	Affordable Units Proposed	4,508	7,539	2,909	-3,031	-40.2%	1,599	55.0%
Approved	Market Rate Units Proposed	14,294	18,244	24,423	-3,950	-21.7%	-10,129	-41.5%
	Units Approved	24,117	26,465	20,018	-2,348	-8.9%	4,099	20.5%
	Affordable Units Approved	4,790	5,646	2,461	-856	-15.2%	2,329	94.6%
	Market Rate Units Approved	19,327	20,819	17,557	-1,492	-7.2%	1,770	10.1%

## PROJECT REVIEW

In Los Angeles, project applications vary in scale and complexity. The approvals required are determined by the description of the project, its location within the City, and the application request. There are three tracks for project review: ministerial, administrative, and discretionary.

- **By-Right or Ministerial Approvals.** If a project meets the development standards and zoning regulations outlined in the Zoning Code and does not require additional or formal planning approvals, it is a by-right project, and the applicant may proceed directly to the Department of Building and Safety to request a building permit.
- **Administrative Approvals.** The By-Right/Ministerial permitting process may require an applicant to obtain an Administrative Approval to verify compliance with existing zoning regulations or guidelines, often for projects that are located within an overlay (e.g., a local historic district).

Sign-off for these approvals is based on objective standards and is non-discretionary. Review can be conducted at the public counter, or by a planner assigned to a specific geography, before an applicant files for a building permit.

- **Discretionary Approvals.** If a development project is determined not to be in compliance with the Zoning Code, or if its proposed size, use, or location triggers additional formal review, staff at the public counter will instruct the applicant to file for and request a discretionary entitlement.

This type of project involves a discretionary entitlement application process, and may require a public hearing before City Planning issues a recommendation or a determination letter.



# Senate Bill 330 Preliminary Application and Updated Case Filing Requirements

In response to COVID-19, City Planning revised its filing procedures for projects that qualify under Senate Bill 330, the “Housing Crisis Act of 2019.” The Department now accepts preliminary applications electronically instead of requiring an in-person appointment.

City Planning developed filing instructions that outline the process for applicants and reflect the new requirements for Senate Bill 330 projects, including the preliminary zoning assessment and criteria for the replacement of housing units as determined by the Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department.

The Preliminary Application Review Program (PARP) benefits applicants by front-loading the review of qualifying projects before their initial filing, allowing applicants to determine which entitlements are required at the outset. The PARP has helped the City evaluate and mitigate project risks before the start of construction.

The PARP has facilitated the approval of dozens of housing projects, each one critical to reaching Los Angeles’s housing goals. Close coordination between applicants and City Planning’s dedicated staff has allowed the program to proceed uninterrupted during the pandemic. There were 497 PARP applications filed and 440 PARP applications completed in 2020.

# SENATE BILL 330: HOUSING CRISIS ACT OF 2019

Senate Bill 330, the “Housing Crisis Act of 2019,” was signed into law by the Governor of California and went into effect in January of 2020. The bill was intended to speed up the discretionary review process for future housing projects, while also providing additional protections to existing tenants in affordable units.

- The bill prevents zoning actions that would reduce housing capacity, including provisions to mandate the replacement of residential units that have been removed or demolished.
- The bill requires that protected units be replaced with units of equivalent size on a one-for-one basis (e.g., replacing a two-bedroom unit with something comparable).
- The bill provides occupant protections, including the right to return, relocation benefits, and a right to live in the existing unit up to six months prior to the start of construction.
- The bill requires that historic status designation be determined at the time an application for a discretionary action is deemed complete to avoid halting housing projects midway through the entitlement process.



**Sarah Molina-Pearson**  
Senior City Planner  
Enhanced Case Management

Sarah is the Senior City Planner responsible for overseeing Enhanced Case Management, consisting of City Planning’s Case Management, Preliminary Application Review, and Housing Services Units. Sarah manages the pre-development review of complex development proposals, including projects that qualify under Senate Bill 330.

Previously, Sarah worked in City Planning’s Major Projects and Expedited Processing Sections, where she processed and approved countless housing and commercial projects. Due to her extensive experience in project planning, she was selected to assist the Department in implementing the Mayor’s Executive Directive 13—an initiative that streamlines the review of housing projects that set aside a percentage of units as affordable.

Sarah holds a bachelor’s degree in architecture and a master’s degree in urban planning from USC. Previously, she oversaw the Department’s Urban Design Studio and was responsible for implementing the Professional Volunteer Program (PVP) for the Valley geography.

# WHAT IS AN ENTITLEMENT?

An entitlement is a planning approval granted to an applicant for the construction, modification, or use of a building or parcel of land. The approval of an entitlement involves a formal application process, followed by a planning determination to either approve or deny the application and the eventual construction of the project.





Online Appeal Filings

In the months after the pandemic struck, City Planning constructed an online application system to accept project-related appeals. From a user’s perspective, the online application system saves time, energy, and a trip to the public counter.

The accelerated shift to digital is just one of the many ways the Department has made the planning process more transparent, even in the midst of a global pandemic.

ONLINE APPEAL  
FILING INSTRUCTIONS

Project-related appeals can be filed online by following two simple steps. Please note that applications must be submitted and paid for by 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time on the last day to appeal.

Step 1: Fill out the Appeal Application

- Complete and electronically sign the Appeal Application (CP-7769), or
- Complete and electronically sign the CEQA Appeal Application (CP-7840)

Step 2: Submit the Appeal Application for Review

- Download the signed version of the Appeal Application
- Click the link to submit the completed Appeal Application



Maya Zaitzevsky  
Principal City Planner  
Development Services Centers

Maya Zaitzevsky was promoted to Principal City Planner in 2020. In her new role, she oversees the public counter operations at the three DSCs, including the services offered by the Housing Services and Case Management Units.

Maya has over 25 years of professional planning experience. From 2008 to 2019, in her role as Associate Zoning Administrator, she reviewed and acted on discretionary, revocation, and nuisance abatement cases. Before that, she worked in the Expedited Processing Section processing planning entitlements, such as the adaptive reuse of the Eastern Columbia Building.

Maya holds a bachelor’s degree in environmental analysis and design from UC Irvine. In 2020, she helped modernize case filings for project applications and oversaw numerous improvements to the Department’s case intake, review, and processing functions at the DSCs.

Online Services for Historic Projects

To address the challenges of COVID-19, the Office of Historic Resources (OHR) introduced new technology into the review of proposed projects within historic districts, commonly referred to in Los Angeles as Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs). In 2020, City Planning created a new system for electronic plan stamping, transforming project review from a paper-based process into a digital one.

The HPOZ Unit also began processing cases through a new online portal that serves as a one-stop shop for applicants. The unit processed over 750 projects this year, facilitating continued construction activity during the economic downturn while ensuring the preservation of significant historic neighborhoods.

City Planning’s HPOZ program has included a system of citizen-led boards since 1983, bringing the City’s historic preservation programs out of City Hall and into local neighborhoods. Shortly after the start of the pandemic, these HPOZ boards began to meet by video conference.

Streaming technology has boosted public participation and made it possible for the OHR to accommodate more than 150 virtual meetings in the months following the Safer at Home orders.



Shannon Ryan  
Senior City Planner  
Office of Historic Resources

Following her promotion to Senior City Planner, Shannon Ryan now oversees the Office of Historic Resources (OHR), which is responsible for the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone Program, Historic Places LA, and the processing of Historic-Cultural Monument nominations throughout Los Angeles.

After beginning her career at the Los Angeles Conservancy, Shannon accepted a position at the OHR, where she implemented preservation plan guidelines and assisted with the adoption of two local historic districts. Before her recent promotion, Shannon was responsible for the review of development applications at the Project Planning Bureau.

Shannon received her master’s degree in planning from UCLA. She also spent two years working in the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development, managing initiatives and work programs for City Planning and other development functions.



# LOWERED BUSINESS COSTS

Shortly after the pandemic hit, City Planning took a series of actions to support small businesses. From improving case processing times to providing new incentives to local restaurateurs, these initiatives aim to speed Los Angeles’s short- and long-term economic recovery.

## Restaurant Beverage Program

The City Planning Commission (CPC) approved the proposed framework for the Restaurant Beverage Program in 2020. If adopted by the City Council, it would permit eligible sit-down restaurants to serve alcohol through an administrative application process that could save businesses time and money.

The program is designed to offer new investment pathways for brick-and-mortar establishments, balancing business interests with community desires for stronger enforcement measures.

After CPC’s consideration, this program advanced to the Planning & Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee of the City Council. There, new measures were incorporated to provide greater community protections, in keeping with the overall intent of the policy framework.

These measures include establishing a one-year provisional review period, limiting the program to only beer and wine for the first year, and allowing the City Council to opt-out of areas that have an excess of onsite alcohol licenses.

The strict standards of the Restaurant Beverage Program would restrict eligibility to bona fide restaurants and hold participants accountable through inspections by the Department of Building and Safety. At the same time, the program aims to provide opportunities for new and existing small businesses that would benefit from a more straightforward entitlement process.

## KEY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Any restaurant in violation of these standards may be suspended from the program and may be subject to corrective actions by the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control or the City.

- Must be a restaurant with an operational kitchen and full menu
- Hours of operation must be limited from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- Food must be served during all operating hours
- No live entertainment, dancing, karaoke, or DJs allowed
- On-duty manager must agree to be present at all times
- No outdoor TV monitors or music permitted
- Restaurant must offer seated dining; no take-out or delivery-only
- Restaurant cannot be a drive-through or fast food establishment



## Hagu Solomon-Cary

Senior City Planner  
Code Studies Division

In 2020, Hagu Solomon-Cary was promoted to manage the Code Studies Division as the newly appointed Senior City Planner. In her current role, she oversees targeted amendments to Los Angeles’s Zoning Code, including the research and outreach for each of these initiatives.

Before taking on her current role, Hagu oversaw the Venice Local Coastal Program, which focuses on issues related to sea level rise. She also spearheaded the passage of Clean Up Green Up (CUGU)—an award-winning initiative that aims to address long-standing environmental justice issues in economically underinvested communities throughout the City.

Before joining City Planning, Hagu worked at a national environmental nonprofit where she focused on the intersection of sustainable urbanism and social justice. A native of the Bay Area, Hagu received her master’s degree in urban planning from UC Berkeley.

## LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION

In 2020, City Planning approached its centenary as an occasion to reflect on its history and approach its policies through the lens of equity and inclusion.

The overconcentration of permits for on- and off-site alcohol-selling establishments in South Los Angeles is a prime example of persistent inequity, and a recurring issue that has not received due attention from the City. While the Restaurant Beverage Program aims to bring investment into neighborhoods that have long suffered from historical underinvestment, and the ordinance proposes the strictest eligibility criteria for participants, dialogue around the program has

brought up unresolved issues related to enforcement, nuisance abatement, and overconcentration of alcohol establishments in underinvested communities.

In response, City Planning has prioritized listening to and affirming the experience of communities of color, a process that allows planners to better understand the compounding effects of seemingly innocuous policies.

Weighing compounding considerations exposes the concerns of South Los Angeles residents, as well as those of other communities, and helps City Planning create policies that address neighborhoods’ needs.







## Redevelopment Plans

In 2020, there were 1,343 redevelopment plan project applications filed, contributing to upwards of 2,084 (proposed and approved) new housing units. Of these units, 30 percent were reserved as affordable for those earning less than 80 percent of the area median income (\$90,100 or less for a family of four).

Like City Planning's other specialized units, the Redevelopment Plan Unit has provided increased protection for communities and more certitude for the development community. It has also increased efficiency by avoiding a duplicative review process and the need for multiple sign-offs from various government agencies, resulting in faster turnaround times for project approvals.

City Planning established the Redevelopment Plan Unit to assist with the land use plans and functions that the Mayor and City Council transferred from the former redevelopment agency to the Department in 2019.

## CALIFORNIA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

For over 60 years, the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) carried out redevelopment activities, including land use oversight in redevelopment plan areas. During that time, the CRA/LA helped foster housing, commercial, and other catalytic projects by focusing economic development in communities that suffered from blight or underinvestment.

With the dissolution of the CRA/LA in 2011, Los Angeles has taken on an increasingly prominent role in retaining local land use control within the former redevelopment plan areas, while still working to ensure that its economic goals are carried out as originally intended.



# Specialized Services

In 2020, the Beverage and Entertainment Streamlining (BESt) Unit started offering consultation services to restaurants trying to keep their doors open during the pandemic, in light of the changing regulatory environment. These service enhancements have helped small businesses navigate through their approvals along with other State and local agencies.

Similarly, the Department's Wireless & Telecommunications Unit also augmented its services over the course of the year. The unit partnered with wireless companies to provide reliable internet coverage for businesses and schools to support remote learning and work. These changes speak to the innovation of the Department and staff's efforts to support Los Angeles's short- and long-term economic recovery.



The **Home-Sharing Program** accepts applications for the short-term rental of a primary residence, evaluating each submission for eligibility.



The **Wireless and Telecommunications Unit** considers project applications pertaining to the placement of wireless telecommunications facilities on public and private property.



The **Redevelopment Plan Unit** handles applications for projects located within the former redevelopment project areas, reviewing and signing off on land use approvals.



The **Beverage and Entertainment Streamlining (BESt) Unit** is responsible for the initial intake and sign-off of condition clearances for projects requesting stand-alone alcohol permits.



The **Map Processing Services Unit** guides applicants through City approvals for lot line adjustments and private street dedications.



The **Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Program (MViP)** coordinates with the Department of Building and Safety to monitor and enforce the conditions of approval for stand-alone alcohol permits.



**Robert Z. Duenas**  
Principal City Planner  
Specialized Services

Following his promotion to Principal City Planner in 2018, Robert Duenas was assigned to oversee Specialized Services at Figueroa Plaza. There, he oversees case intake and processing for the tailored consultation services for a number of industries, such as hospitality and telecommunications.

Robert has over 35 years of experience in the planning profession. He has worked in numerous divisions on a variety of projects, from reviewing entitlement requests to streamlining the process for the issuance of building permit clearances.

Robert graduated from Cal Poly Pomona with a bachelor's degree in urban and regional planning. Recently, he led the charge in creating and staffing the Home-Sharing Unit.





# ENHANCED DATA TRACKING

In 2020, City Planning took steps to improve workforce productivity, data reporting, and project timeline accounting through enhanced data tracking. In addition to improving internal operations, the Department’s use of metrics has helped with measuring policy and project outcomes and increasing efficiency.

## Case Processing Analytics

City Planning provides accurate, timely analyses of the Department’s case processing timelines so that stakeholders have access to reliable information about the development pipeline. In the last year, case processing analytics have also allowed management to identify bottlenecks in City Planning’s internal practices.

For example, by making use of data analytics software, the Department has been able to monitor and report on key indicators over the course of the year, from case processing workloads and housing production levels.

While the second quarter of 2020 represented a low point in the number of affordable units proposed, the Department observed a 61 percent increase—equating to 1,134 new units—in the number of affordable units proposed in the third quarter.

Despite the extraordinary events of 2020, the Department approved affordable housing units at a rate comparable to that of recent years, even with the pandemic.

Taken together, these metrics indicate a sustained demand for new development throughout the City and highlight the adaptability of planning staff, who have stepped up in 2020 to advance new housing opportunities across Los Angeles.



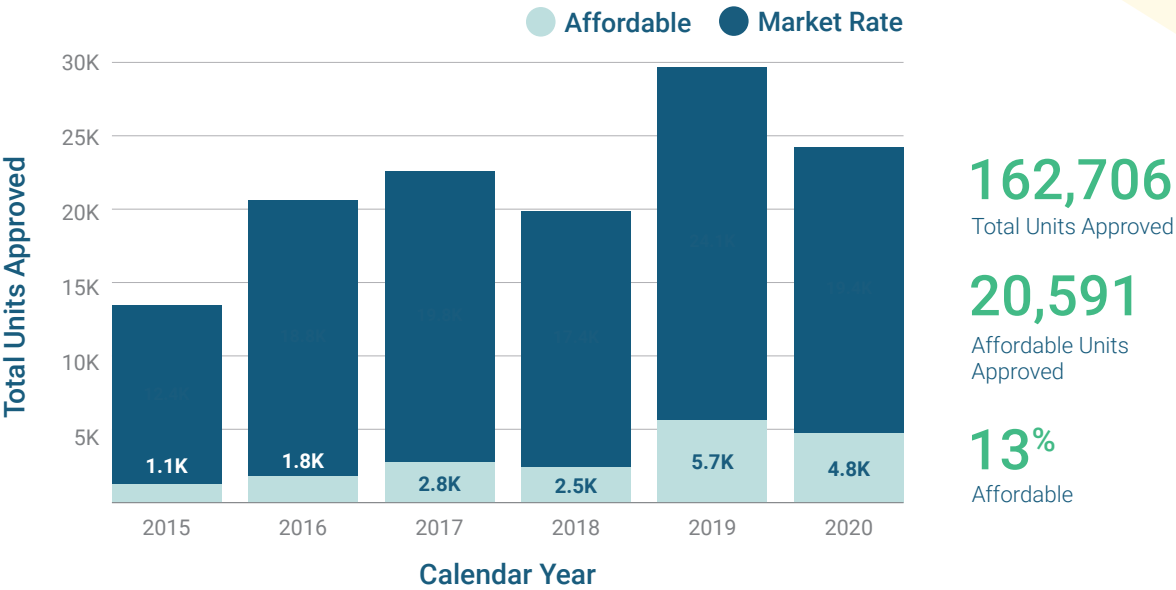
**Roy Samaan**  
Planning Assistant  
Performance Management Unit

Since joining the Performance Management Unit in 2019, Roy has developed new interactive, web-based tools using analytics software to report and share data, showcasing the critical role the Department plays in addressing Los Angeles’s need for new affordable housing. Before taking his current role, he served as a project planner for South and Southeast Los Angeles.

Roy worked in the nonprofit sector for 10 years before joining City Planning. His experience has contributed to his understanding of a number of important policy considerations, including how short-term rentals affect the housing market.

Roy received his master’s degree in urban and regional planning from the Luskin School of Public Affairs and his bachelor’s in history and LGBT studies from UCLA. He has been recognized as a “40 Under 40 Emerging Civic Leader” by the Empowerment Congress of South Los Angeles.

Units Approved by Year & Totals  
(from 2015 to 2020)





# Environmental Impact Reports’ Review Criteria and Performance Standards

City Planning’s Major Projects Section has developed new criteria and performance standards for the review of project-related Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs). Standardizing the template for project-related EIRs strengthens the quality of these environmental documents while also ensuring a streamlined process

The EIR review criteria and performance standards have been implemented for EIRs which have not yet submitted an Initial Study or a Draft EIR, and for those cases in which a Final EIR has not yet been submitted for planning review.

## EIR CASE PROCESSING TIMELINES

As of December 2020, the Department is processing and reviewing 66 active EIRs. On average, each EIR takes approximately 23 months to get from the initial filing to the City Planning Commission’s consideration of the final documents.

The EIR process—the most lengthy and complex form of environmental review—entails the preparation of an Initial Study, a Draft EIR, and a Final EIR, which require public review and regular coordination among the applicant, the environmental consultant team, and the City. Generally, these documents spend only six to nine months of the process, or 30 to 50 percent of the total processing time, under the Department’s review.

During the majority of the process, the preparation of an EIR is in the hands of the applicant and consultant team, who work together to produce technical reports and respond to the Department’s comments leading up to Council consideration.



**Luciralia Ibarra**  
Principal City Planner  
Major Projects Division

In 2020, Luciralia “Luci” Ibarra was assigned to oversee the Major Projects Section. There, she is the Principal City Planner responsible for managing the City’s largest and most technically complex development proposals, which require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Under Luci’s leadership, City Planning took additional measures this year to standardize the environmental review procedures for project-related EIRs. She has also guided the Department in implementing changes related to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Luci holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology and organizational studies from Pitzer College and a master’s degree in city planning from UC Berkeley. Throughout her career, Luci has helped shepherd catalytic projects through the approval process—projects that have resulted in housing and job development in many underinvested neighborhoods.



## EIR DASHBOARD

In 2020, City Planning unveiled a new online dashboard that monitors, tracks, and reports the workload and case processing times for development projects that require the preparation of an EIR. These are some of the most diverse and large-scale projects in Los Angeles.

The dashboard presents a number of metrics related to both active and completed EIRs. It allows Angelenos to explore ongoing and completed EIRs, presenting data in a user-friendly, interactive format with filters for the location, date, and phase of the EIR process.

By creating a new portal accessible to all interested stakeholders, City Planning hopes to foster a more transparent work environment.



# FACILITATED INTERNAL TRAININGS

Recognizing the need to better cross-train staff, City Planning offers a comprehensive training program for planners and other Department staff. More than just an introductory orientation for new hires, the curriculum includes technical instruction for staff and supervisors, as well as briefings on important statewide and local changes to land use and planning regulations—created specifically to empower planners to be successful in their day-to-day operations.

## Planning Ethics

Planners are responsible for exemplifying fairness, objectivity, and equity throughout the planning process. In 2020, the Department provided staff with detailed instruction and training on ethics laws in planning.

### Ethics for the Planning Civil Servant

In coordination with the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission, City Planning facilitated an introductory course on ethics for planning. The session apprised Department staff of key governmental ethics and lobbying laws, and other local policies that regulate business interactions with developers and applicants.

### Creating and Sustaining an Ethical Culture

To complement the introductory training on ethics, the Department retained the services of a nationally renowned expert to expand on best practices and strategies for working out real-life ethical issues in planning, along with tips for creating and sustaining an appropriate culture in the workplace.



Ryan Ly

Planning Assistant  
Performance Management Unit

Ryan Ly was appointed to the Performance Management Unit in 2020 to manage the Department’s training program. In this role, he is charged with developing curriculum and materials to improve the operational efficiency of City Planning and its staff of nearly 400 employees.

Ryan started his career at Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), where he worked in the Executive Office under the leadership of the CEO. At LAWA, he supported special projects related to airport development, infrastructure, and sustainability.

Ryan holds a master’s degree in public policy and administration from Cal State Long Beach. Throughout the year, he helped expand the educational and professional resources offered by the Department.

## Staff Training Data



Scheduled **49 remote** and **11 in-person** training sessions



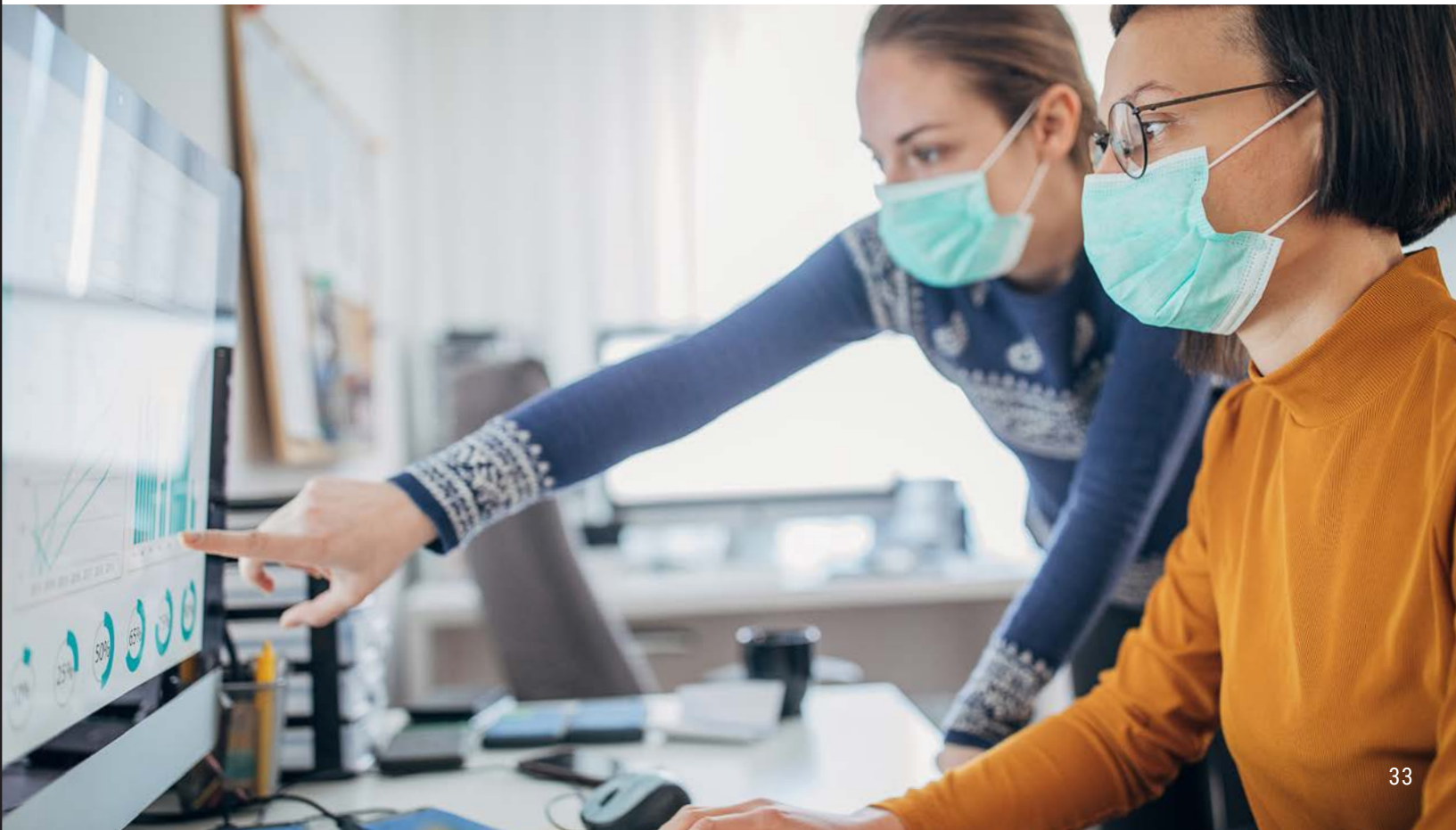
Facilitated **21 technical** trainings on specific work programs and issues



Administered **seven core** training sessions



Offered **five supervisorial** trainings for newly hired or promoted supervisors





Racial Justice and Equity

Along with City Planning’s mandatory staff training on racial justice and equity, the Department took steps this year to continue the work of confronting implicit bias and structural racism and empowering the voices of minorities.

Many past land use policies and zoning practices have reinforced racial segregation, environmental injustice, and poor health outcomes. To address these issues, City Planning appointed Faisal Roble as its first Chief Equity Officer.

In his new role, Faisal is responsible for crafting City Planning’s Racial Equity Action Plan, guiding citywide discussions on outreach and engagement, and partnering with the community and stakeholders to make culture-shifting decisions. Upon completion, the action plan will support new strategies to support the Department’s overall outreach and policy recommendations.



**Faisal Roble**  
Chief Equity Officer and Principal City Planner  
Office of Racial Justice, Equity, and  
Restorative Planning

“The current national movement has shed light on a systemic racism that permeates every sphere of our civic lives, including, but not limited to, climate events, housing, health disparities, inequitable zoning practices, and lack of economic development in communities of color. I look forward to guiding the Department in more racially equitable practices.”

— Faisal Roble

For more than 30 years, Principal City Planner Faisal Roble has worked in planning circles as both a leader and an advocate committed to social justice. In 2020, the Director of Planning appointed Faisal to serve as the Department’s first Chief Equity Officer.

During his time at City Planning, Faisal has worked alongside local neighborhood groups and nonprofits throughout the South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, and West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan areas addressing issues related to racial injustice, equity, and economic disinvestment.

Throughout his career, Faisal helped oversee numerous projects of significance in South Los Angeles, including the redevelopment of Jordan Downs from a 700-unit public housing project into a 1,073-unit, mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood with a full-service grocery store, commercial and community services, and more than five acres of parks and open space.

Additionally, Faisal is a highly regarded academic, who has provided critical political analysis on Horn of Africa politics, history, and society. He is a contributing editor for the academic journal entitled The Horn of Africa Journal and a frequent guest at VOA and BBC. Throughout his career, he served as the former Director of Research for the Institute for Horn of Africa Studies and Affairs (IHASA) and has published more than 150 of his essays and opinion pieces.

Faisal received his bachelor’s degree from the Somalia National University and a dual master’s degree in Afro-American Studies and urban and regional development from UCLA.



Project-Related Transmittals

Early in 2020, in an effort to improve quality control, City Planning partnered with the City Clerk and City Attorney’s office to standardize the procedures and instructions for project-related transmittals.

Department managers participated in a training session on the current rules for preparing the transmittal of ordinances, conditions of approval, findings, and environmental documents. In addition to providing tips for troubleshooting, the curriculum walked newly assigned project planners through the legislative process in Los Angeles.

The preparation and submittal of application material and environmental studies make up an integral part of the planning process in Los Angeles. Each week, planners are entrusted with uploading and updating documentation for the Planning & Land Use Management Committee and City Council—a critical step in the process of reviewing and approving housing projects.

ABOUT THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

The External Affairs Division was established to support the Department in strategic messaging, communications, and community engagement. The Division oversees three core units: Communications, Government and Civic Engagement, and Graphics.

The Communications Unit serves as the central point of contact for inquiries from the media, providing clarity and accuracy in news and features that highlight planning in Los Angeles. In addition to media outreach, the unit is responsible for producing monthly, quarterly, and annual reports and publications.

The Government and Civic Engagement Unit handles a number of related priorities that support City Planning’s communications and outreach, including fostering strategic partnerships with nonprofits, neighborhood groups, and local business chambers to elevate local engagement and present on local planning initiatives.

The Graphics Unit combines art and technology to express ideas through the use of images and visual aids, overseeing the design and preparation of promotional materials (e.g., brochures, reports, and boards), in addition to translating statistical data into easy-to-understand maps, charts, and illustrative slides that explain planning concepts and terminologies.



Community Engagement

In the initial days of the pandemic, City Planning’s External Affairs Division organized a webinar on the topic of virtual gatherings and how best to leverage the digital space to support community participation during the planning process.

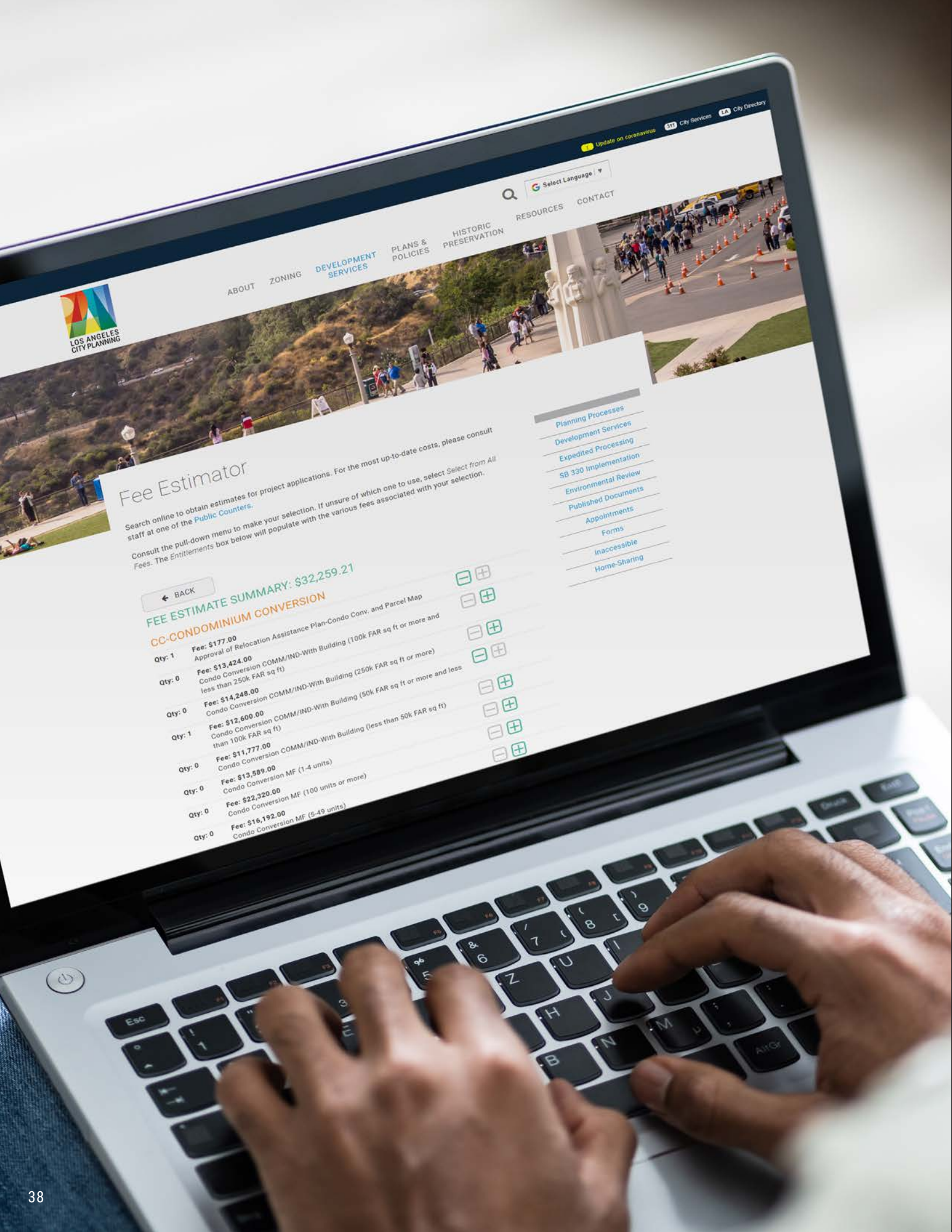
About 175 people joined this training session to learn about best practices from other local agencies and organizations in the public and private sectors. Since then, the Department has deployed a number of new strategies to augment existing engagement efforts and include more representatives of business and neighborhood groups in the decision-making process.

Webinars and other digital applications were already integral parts of City Planning’s outreach efforts when COVID-19 made them a necessary alternative to in-person meetings.

The use of digital platforms is just one of the many ways that the Department has increased awareness of and engagement in important planning considerations, involving more Angelenos in local land use conversations.







# Expanding Technology in the Workplace

Launched A New Online Compliance System

Established Online Payment for Project Submittals

From launching the new automated compliance system that prevents illegal short-term rentals to moving more services online, City Planning's use of technology has strengthened enforcement and provided easier access to planning resources.



Technology has assisted the Department in maximizing staff time and resources and achieving better outcomes.



## LAUNCHED A NEW ONLINE COMPLIANCE SYSTEM

In August, City Planning launched a first-of-its-kind Home-Sharing compliance system that identifies and takes down illegal short-term rental listings. The online system has automated the collection and verification of host data and streamlined the takedown of many illegal home-sharing listings.

### Application Programming Interface

The safe and secure Application Programming Interface (API) enables City Planning to monitor home-sharing activity more efficiently by searching and verifying information across data sources including zoning maps, property ownership records, and City-issued citations that the City maintains. As a result, the API has helped Los Angeles protect the City's housing stock from being unlawfully converted to a short-term rental property.

Since the start of enforcement in November 2019, the City witnessed an 82 percent decrease in short-term listings.

Thanks to these new enforcement measures, the City has reduced the number of short-term listings in Los Angeles to 6,454 as of December 2020.

## ABOUT THE HOME-SHARING PROGRAM

The City Council set up the Home-Sharing Program to prevent the wholesale conversion of homes into rental properties. This program established a regulatory framework to restrict short-term rentals to hosts' primary residences, provided that they register through the City's online portal and adhere to all of the requirements specified in the adopted ordinance.



# ESTABLISHED ONLINE PAYMENT FOR PROJECT SUBMITTALS

City Planning created a new online payment system to simplify the project submission process. Instead of requiring an in-person visit, the new process allows applicants to file and pay remotely. This new system has allowed applicants to submit project applications remotely, in addition to requesting pre-application assistance virtually.

The new payment system automatically records receipt information in the Department's planning case tracking system, generating a single invoice that is easy to track across departments.

## Online Application Portal

The Department's in-house Online Application System (OAS) has made it possible for City Planning to deliver on its core services, even in the midst of the pandemic.

The OAS has provided applicants with a safe and convenient means of conducting development services virtually. Not only has it enabled applicants to submit certain planning requests from their own computers, it has also allowed residents and small business owners to monitor project status and upload digitally supporting files for certain entitlements.

The system enables applicants to administer their applications from their own computers, allowing them to submit and pay online, monitor project status, upload supporting files, and view project summaries remotely.

The following planning applications are currently offered through the OAS. Other services will come online in the months ahead.

- Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Tier Verifications and Planning Entitlements
- Wireless Pre-Application Review and Building Permit Clearances
- Redevelopment Plan Referrals and Permit Clearances
- Pre-applications for Senate Bill 330 Vesting Cases
- HPOZ Conforming and Non-Conforming Sign-Offs
- Non-Applicant Appeals (Entitlements + CEQA)
- Community Plan Implementation Overlay (CPIO) Clearances

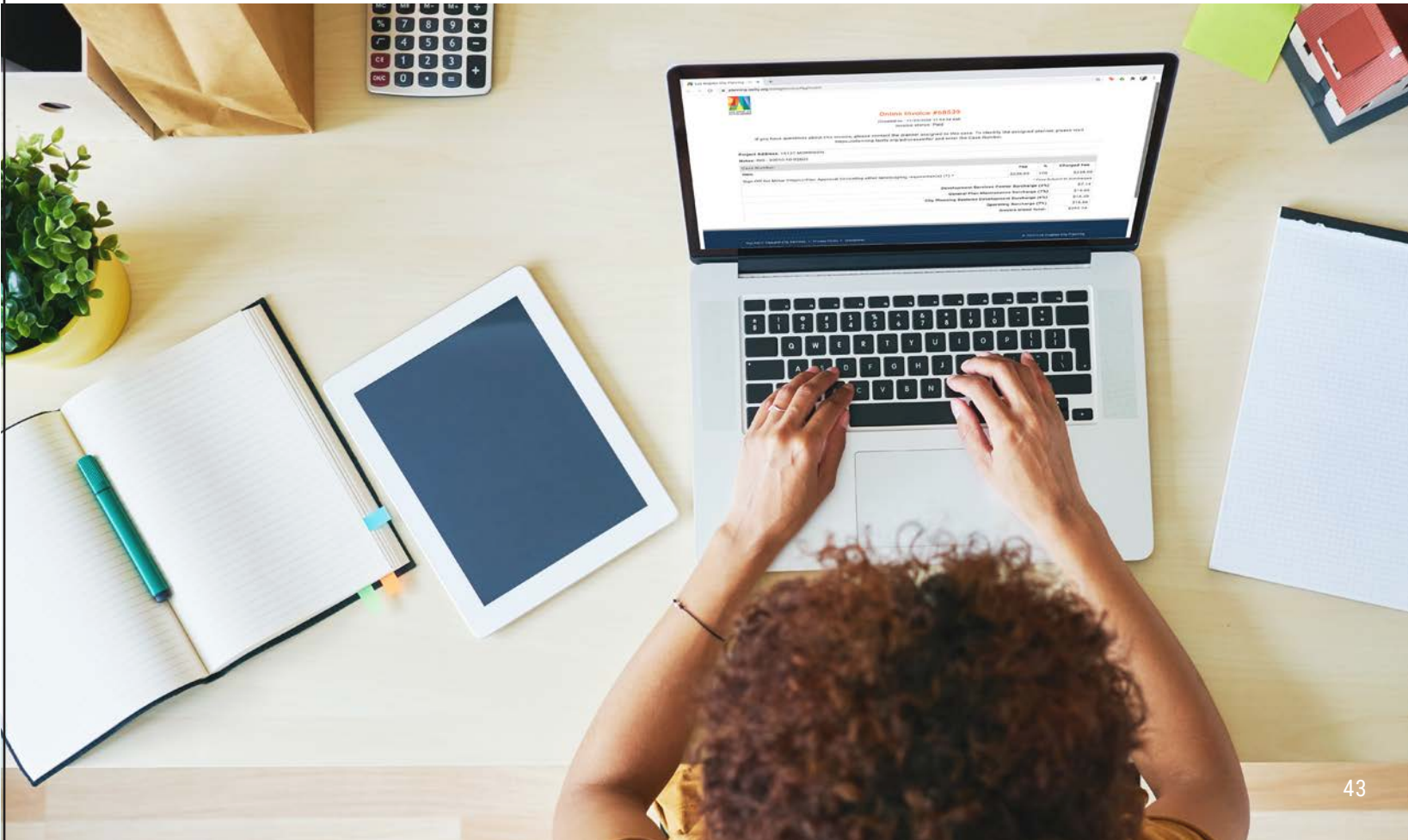


**Mony Patel**  
Director of Systems  
Information Technology Division

Mony joined City Planning as the Director of Systems in the Information Technology Division. In his first year, he oversaw the implementation of new technological upgrades, such as moving to accept online payments and submissions for planning approvals and entitlements.

In response to COVID-19, Mony and his team made a number of changes that introduced smart technology. In addition to making project-related files electronically accessible, he improved City Planning's internal case tracking process by digitizing certain records to improve the Department's record-keeping operations.

Mony holds a bachelor's degree in electrical and electronics engineering from Cal State Long Beach.







# Increasing Openness and Transparency

Improved File-Sharing and Document Management

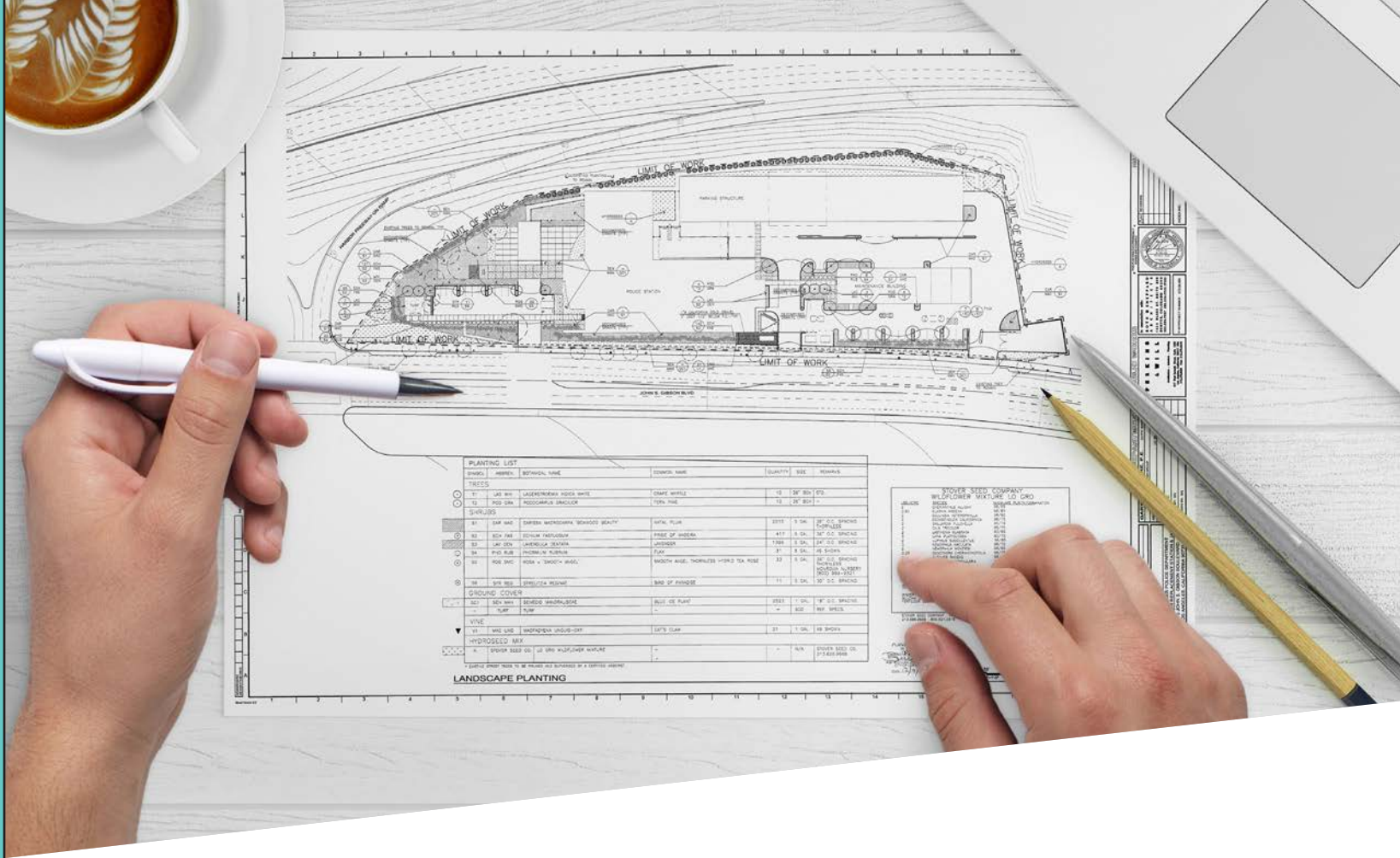
Streamlined Rules for Future Development Projects

Simplified Housing Project Approvals

City Planning has fostered a culture that values public engagement. From standardizing noticing procedures to making outreach more inclusive, the Department's efforts have increased its visibility and reach across Los Angeles.



Throughout 2020, City Planning stepped up its information-sharing and outreach efforts, using new media to keep Angelenos informed.



## IMPROVED FILE-SHARING AND DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

To keep neighborhoods up to date, it has been City Planning's long-standing policy to mail planning documents on proposed development projects to interested parties.

### Early Notification System

Throughout 2020, City Planning updated its early notification process for project submittals to allow the public the ability to receive real-

time updates. At each step in the process, the Department has taken measures to strengthen its communications, recognizing that Los Angeles's neighborhoods stand to benefit from having immediate access to the latest information.

Los Angeles's residents have embraced these changes, noting the benefits of having immediate access to information, especially for projects being proposed in their neighborhoods.



Project Submittals

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, City Planning changed its internal protocols to enable the immediate upload of project-related documents to the Planning Document Information System (PDIS)—the Department’s database for case summaries and information on project submittals. Offering these materials online gives the public the option to share input during the early stages of the review process.



Bi-Weekly Case Filings and Cases Completed

In order to integrate processes and share information across systems, City Planning established direct links between PDIS and its bi-weekly case filings reports. To keep Angelenos informed, City Planning also debuted a new report showcasing the completed discretionary cases that have been approved or denied by the Department. These changes allow neighborhood councils and others to obtain project information online, without having to contact the assigned planner.



Email Notifications

In addition to paper mailings, City Planning has begun emailing hearing notices and LODs. Applicants, interested parties, relevant council offices, and certified neighborhood councils now receive planning documents directly in their inboxes.



Hearing Notices and Letters of Determination

Recognizing the value of PDIS, the Department has started to post all public hearing notices and Letters of Determination (LODs) on its website as soon as they are mailed out—eliminating the need to appear in person to review a case file or wait until the corresponding documents have been mailed.



Web-Based Mapping

Several years ago, City Planning debuted an interactive map displaying the locations of projects that have filed applications for planning approvals. Due to popular demand, the Department expanded the capabilities of this web-based mapping application to also display a list of all projects that have been approved or denied within the last 18 months.



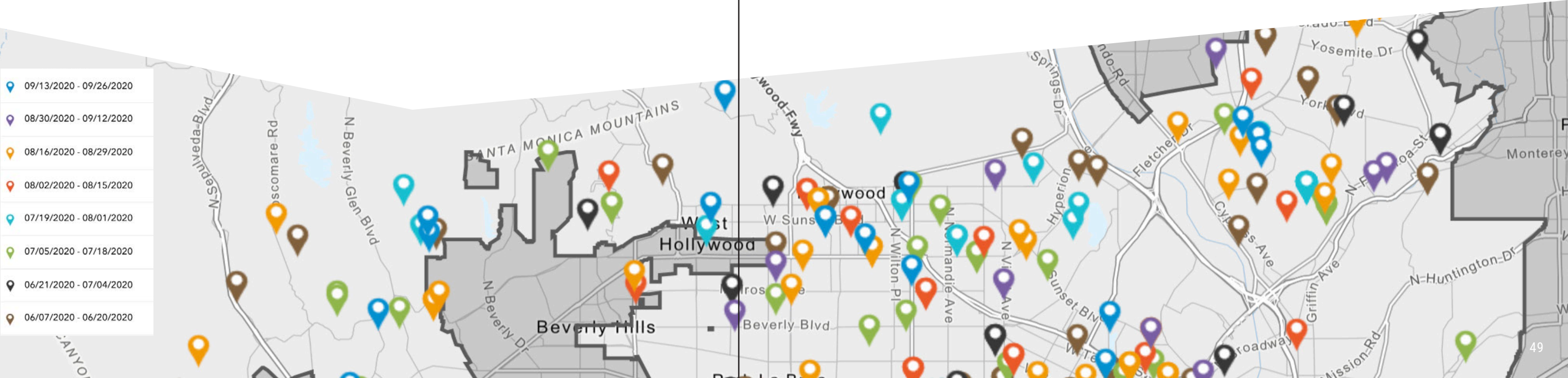
Jenna Monterrosa

Senior City Planner  
External Affairs Division

Jennafer “Jenna” Monterrosa was promoted to Senior City Planner in 2020. In her new role, she oversees the External Affairs Division’s Government and Civic Engagement Unit. She joined City Planning in 2007. In her previous assignment in the Expedited Processing Section, she oversaw the review of housing and commercial development projects.

During her time in External Affairs, Jenna has advanced Department-wide changes that have focused on more equitable and inclusive strategies. This year, she spearheaded the update to the public hearing notices, incorporated translation services into the Department’s outreach efforts, and strengthened communications with neighborhood councils.

A Los Angeles-area native, Jenna studied culture and politics at Georgetown University prior to receiving a bachelor’s degree in urban studies from Loyola Marymount University. In addition to helping with community engagement, Jenna is the Department’s liaison to the City Council.





# STREAMLINED RULES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In 2020, City Planning took strides toward updating Los Angeles’s Zoning Code. In addition to developing specialized zoning for certain communities, the Department released a draft framework for the new Code.

## Processes and Procedures Ordinance

This modern framework takes into consideration the impact of uses and the character of buildings in relation to their surroundings. With the release of the draft Processes and Procedures Ordinance, the Department was able to advance a contemporary Code that further clarifies existing rules for future development projects.


By grouping entitlements with similar procedures into the same approval path, the ordinance

removes redundant variations and reduces the number of processes for project review by almost half (from nearly 120 to about 60). From a community perspective, these changes will clarify the path for planning approvals, simplifying the procedures for both businesses and residents.


The Processes & Procedures Ordinance strives to make the Zoning Code easier to understand and, as a result, expand opportunities for public participation—bringing more neighborhood groups, residents, and businesses into the fold.

Several years ago, City Planning set out to create a responsive and efficient zoning system for Los Angeles. The Processes and Procedures Ordinance marks an important milestone in advancing a more user-friendly framework for Los Angeles’s new Code.

## Key Provisions

- 

**Standardization**  
Lays the groundwork for a more consistent set of regulations

  - 24-day advance notice for public hearings
  - 15-day filing period for project-related appeals
- 

**Consolidation**  
Reduces existing processes for project review to about 60

  - Consolidation of multiple variations of Director-level decisions into one standardized Director Determination process
  - Consolidation of multiple variations of overlay adjustments into one standardized Project Adjustment process
- 

**Centralization**  
Locates different processes for project review in one section

  - Relocates the processes and procedures that are scattered throughout the Zoning Code in a single section, so the rules are easy to find



**Bonnie Kim**  
City Planner  
Code Studies Division

Bonnie Kim is a City Planner in the Code Studies Division. In her current role, she oversees a team responsible for preparing Zoning Code amendments, including regulations that affect hillside development, tree protections, and temporary signs.

Over the years, Bonnie has advanced long-term initiatives that have increased the transparency and accessibility of planning. In particular, she managed the effort to improve and reorganize the Zoning Code’s processes and procedures, so that the rules for reviewing projects and providing opportunities for public participation are clear to all stakeholders.

Bonnie received a bachelor’s degree in urban studies from Brown University. Among other accomplishments, she has assisted with the adoption of the General Plan’s Health Element.

## New Zoning Framework





# SIMPLIFIED HOUSING PROJECT APPROVALS

As a part of the ongoing update to the Downtown Community Plan, the Department proposed the new Community Benefits Program in 2020. As the centerpiece of the new zoning system, the program creates new opportunities for projects that wish to build beyond their base zoning in portions of the plan area that allow for more Floor Area Ratio or height as bonus incentives.

## Community Benefits Program

The core purpose of the Community Benefits Program is to incentivize the production of affordable units. The new zoning and the Community Benefits Program are two of the ways City Planning is looking to increase housing production in Downtown and put more affordable units on the market.

The program offers one other major benefit: it establishes a more predictable and transparent process for applicants requesting additional allowances to support denser and taller projects.

Currently, the transfer of floor area rights (TFAR) is the City's main tool for linking development with community benefits in Downtown. However, TFAR applies to less than 25 percent of Downtown, and its approval process can be lengthy.

By contrast, the Community Benefits Program creates a menu of public benefits and identifies affordable housing as its first priority. It establishes clear rules for how those benefits need to be provided, how those projects seeking additional development rights will be processed, and how much benefit must be provided for a set amount of development rights.

In essence, the program links growth and development with tangible benefits for surrounding residents and the Downtown community.

## ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE

By 2040, Downtown's population is projected to increase by 125,000 residents, representing 20 percent of the City's population growth in just 1 percent of its land area. The plan would accommodate this growth through new land use strategies aimed at reinforcing Downtown's economic base, strengthening linkages between neighborhoods, and incentivizing residential units.

The plan update nearly doubles the area where residential uses are permitted in Downtown, increasing it from 33 percent to 60 percent of the total Plan area, while also encouraging other creative and affordable types of housing (i.e., micro-units, live-work spaces, supportive housing, and adaptive reuse projects).



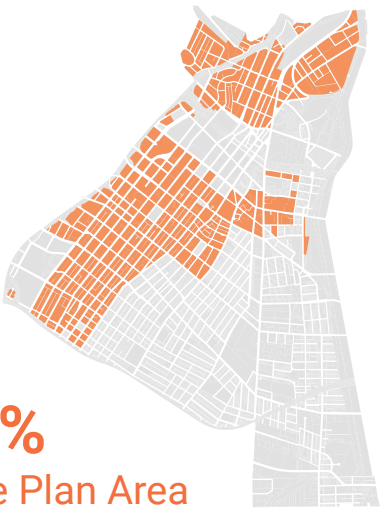
**Valerie Watson**  
Senior City Planner  
Community Planning Bureau

Valerie Watson is a Senior City Planner in the Community Planning Bureau, where she oversees the Downtown Los Angeles Community Plan, along with other targeted amendments to plan overlays in the Central and East geographies of the City.

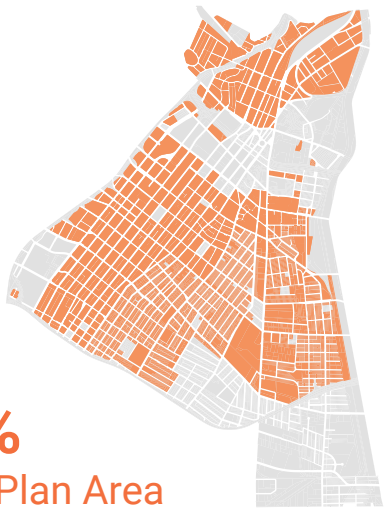
Valerie brings over 15 years of experience in urban design and planning in Los Angeles and Southern California to her role. Before joining City Planning in 2020, Valerie worked for the Department of Transportation (LADOT) as a Supervising Transportation Planner, developing and implementing policies and projects to improve safety and connectivity for people walking, bicycling, and accessing transit. Previously, she worked in the private sector on a variety of planning and urban design efforts, from general and specific plans to streetscape design and community engagement.

Valerie holds an undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Georgia and a master's degree in urban and regional planning from UC Irvine.

## Permitted Downtown Residential Uses Today



## Proposed Permitted Downtown Residential Uses







# Strengthening the Lines of Communication

Expanded Digital Outreach and Engagement

Provided New Spanish Translation Services

Redesigned Hearing Notices

Upgraded Web Presence and Services

City Planning has augmented its communications through the use of technology and information-sharing, doubling down on its outreach efforts and presence on digital platforms.



Planners are increasingly leveraging new tools to broaden support for key programs, respond to citizens' needs, and collect input to represent the diverse voices across the City.



## EXPANDED DIGITAL OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a crucial part of City Planning's service as a local government agency. During the last few years, the Department has stepped up its online outreach efforts, building an all-new website and establishing a social media presence.

Recognizing the importance of bridging the digital divide and educating everyday Angelenos on important planning issues, the Department was able to expand public participation over the course of this year, by incorporating additional outreach strategies.

Through these online forums, the Department increased by five fold attendance and participation on planning topics.



Digital Engagement Tools

**Webinars**  
Provides a forum for facilitating online presentations, discussions, and live Q&A sessions on housing and other community-specific topics

**Social Media**  
Offers an ability to share news and discussion around upcoming events and public hearings accessible via smartphone, table, or PC

**Website**  
Centralizes information for planning initiatives and work programs, both past and present

**StoryMaps**  
Hosts multimedia presentations that use text and graphics to make zoning and other regulations easy to understand

NONPROFIT DATABASE

To broaden the scope of its outreach efforts, City Planning has assembled a list of approximately 20,000 charities and nonprofit organizations. Today, planners can search this list to identify and engage with community-based organizations in targeted neighborhoods across Los Angeles.

The database is intended to amplify the voices of Los Angeles’s many grassroots organizations, which possess valuable understanding of the communities they represent and established relationships within those neighborhoods. Communicating with these organizations ensures that new policies reflect local priorities.

Community Liaisons

In 2018, City Planning formed a Community Liaison program to bolster communications across Los Angeles’s diverse neighborhoods and establish a direct point of contact for planning-related policies and issues. The Department’s three current Community Liaisons have contributed to City Planning’s outreach, bringing more Angelenos into discussions about important neighborhood planning considerations.



**Jaime Espinoza**  
Planning Associate | Central/East Areas

Jaime Espinoza started working at City Planning in the Code Studies Division, where he helped draft targeted Code amendments and the new Zoning Code, before joining the External Affairs Division. In addition to developing new guidelines for digital outreach, Jaime developed the Department’s first-ever language interpretation and translation guides.



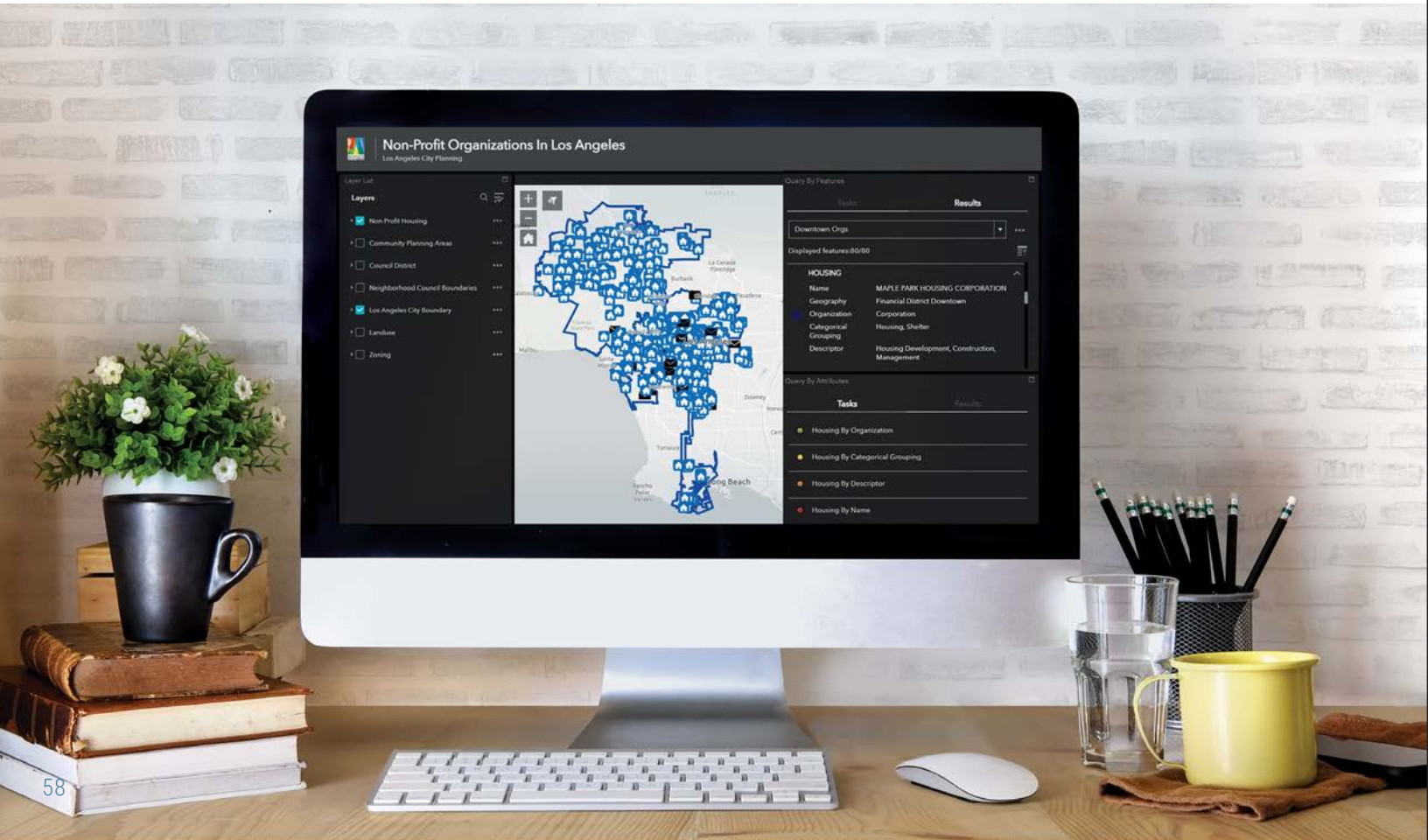
**Fipe Leilua**  
Planning Associate | West/Harbor/South Areas

Fipe Leilua started working at City Planning at the Metro (Downtown) public counter, where she assisted with the review of major development projects prior to issuance of their permit clearances. Since joining the External Affairs Division, Fipe has spearheaded the Department’s efforts to increase the online availability of project files for easier public access.



**Ariel Jones**  
Planning Assistant | North/South Valley Areas

Ariel Jones recently joined City Planning to assist with improving community participation. Previously, Ariel worked for Councilmember Harris-Dawson, helping secure the City’s largest single active transportation grant. This year, Ariel oversaw the creation of a nonprofit database to support local stakeholder engagement and outreach.





# PROVIDED NEW SPANISH TRANSLATION SERVICES

To remove the language barriers that prevent Limited English Proficient (LEP) Spanish speakers from fully participating in the planning process, City Planning developed a Spanish Translation Style Guide to standardize the translation of public documents and a Language Interpretation Guide to enhance the quality of interpretation at public meetings.

## Spanish Translation Style Guide

Los Angeles is home to more than 700,000 residents—17 percent of the City’s population—who identify themselves as LEP Spanish speakers. “Limited English Proficient” is the US Census Bureau’s term for individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

The Spanish Translation Style Guide provides a set of guidelines for orthography, grammar, and vocabulary to bolster the consistency and quality of translated documents. As part of this effort, the Department consulted planning literature from across Latin America to ensure the accurate translation of more than 800 planning terms included in the translation guide.

Inspired by California’s Court Interpreters Program, the Language Interpretation Guide informs City

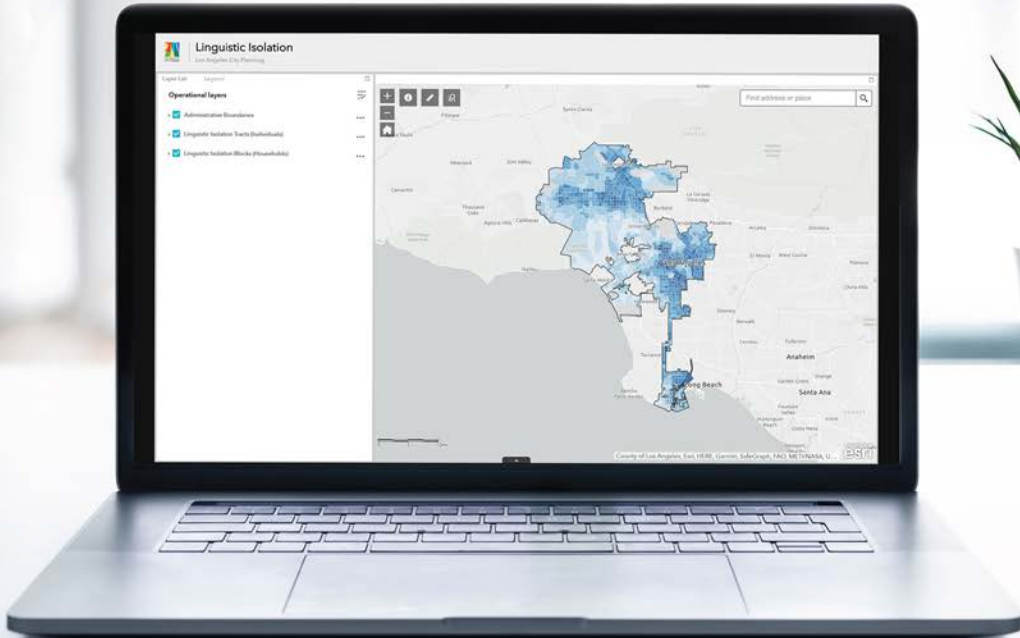
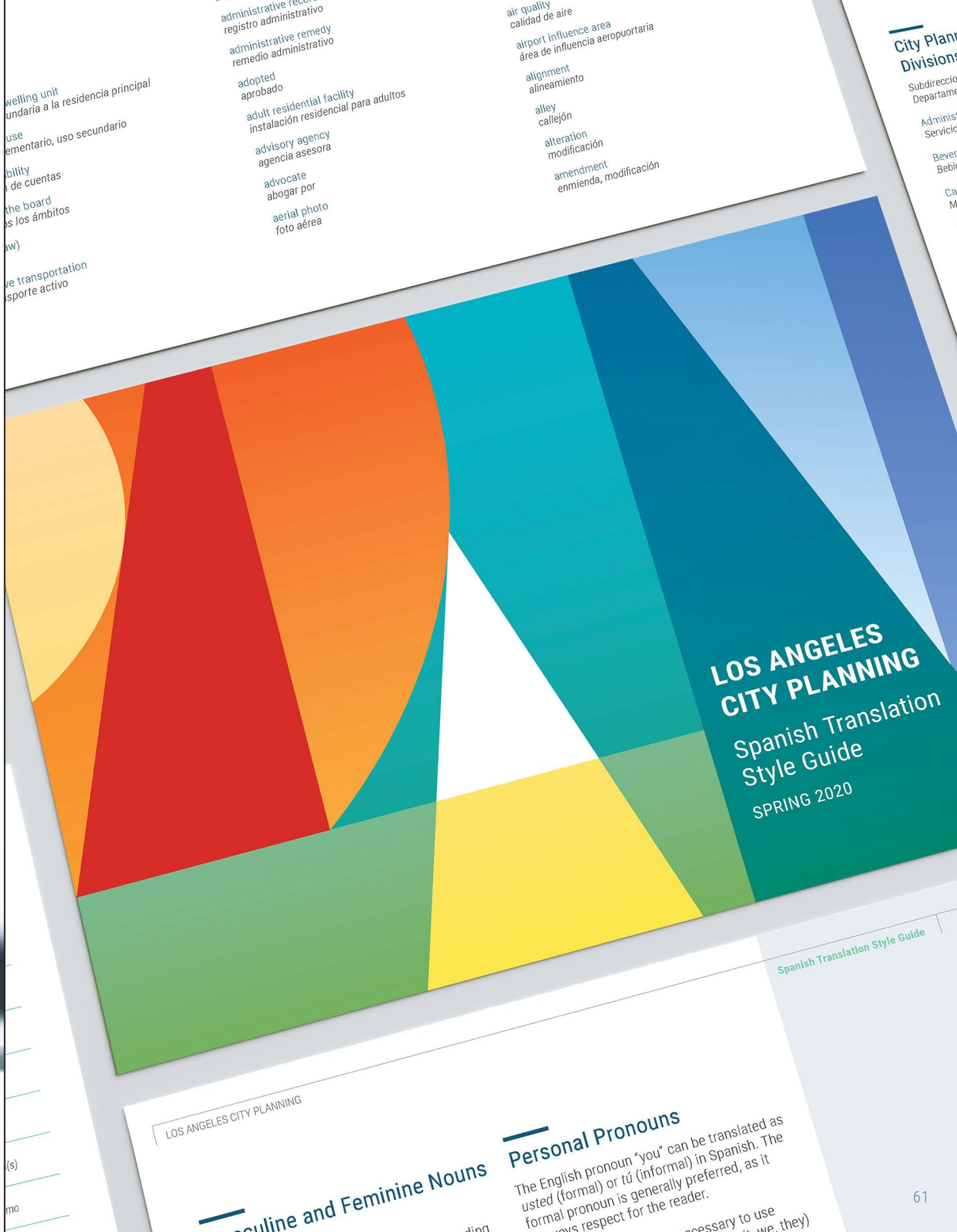
Planning’s interpreters of their professional responsibilities so that they are able to interpret accurately without omitting or editing any comments, in addition to ensuring access to public meetings and hearings for LEP speakers.

Through this monumental effort, City Planning produced the first comprehensive translation and interpretation guides in its 100-year history. Moving forward, the Department intends to develop translation guides for other languages spoken by Angelenos to continue its mission of inclusive and equitable planning.

## Linguistic Isolation Map

To assist planners in identifying when public information should be translated or interpreted in Spanish or other languages, City Planning’s GIS Division helped build the Linguistic Isolation Map using publicly available data from the American Community Survey. This interactive map lets planners view linguistic isolation data for the 12 languages most spoken by Angelenos.

Users click on census tracts and blocks, singly or in groups, to view an area’s linguistic isolation results, including Armenian, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese.





# REDESIGNED HEARING NOTICES

To cut through technical language and better engage with Los Angeles’s residents, the Department adopted an attractive, modern design for its project-related hearing notices. The new design standardizes the format of the notices, ensuring they provide clear and consistent information across divisions.

## Project-Related Hearings

The hearing notices’ new design incorporates graphic elements to emphasize and clarify key pieces of information, such as the location of the proposed project, the planning entitlements being requested, and the time and venue of the public hearing. They also feature an image or rendering of the proposed project. Project-related hearing notices are official communications from the City.

In order to increase the Department’s reach, City Planning has provided translation of the public hearing notices in Spanish and other non-English languages, including Armenian, Korean, Chinese, and Tagalog.

### ABOUT PUBLIC HEARING NOTICES

They inform neighborhood residents and businesses of future development projects that are either requesting or renewing certain planning entitlements from the Department.

Discretionary land use applications that require a public hearing must notify local residents and property owners when the hearing is scheduled. Public hearing notices provide the date, time, and location of the hearing. They also include a description of the proposed project and a list of the approvals required from City Planning.



### Shakeh Boghoskhanian

Graphic Supervisor  
External Affairs Division

Shakeh Boghoskhanian is a supervisor in the External Affairs Division. She manages the Graphics Unit, overseeing both the workflow of the unit and the creative art direction for the entire Department. Shakeh is in charge of the design and preparation of all brochures, reports, and other promotional materials, including print and digital assets and communications materials that drive meaningful engagement.

Since joining the Department in 2006, Shakeh has supported the Executive Team in improving its communications through the development of new protocols for digital engagement and the redesign of the Department’s public hearing notices, which she personally spearheaded.

Shakeh received her bachelor’s degree in graphic design from Woodbury University. Before joining the City, she worked in the private sector supervising projects for Unocal 76, Tacori, the Catholic Education Foundation, and Hollywood Burbank Airport, among other reputable companies.





# UPGRADED WEB PRESENCE AND ONLINE SERVICES

In 2020, City Planning continued to revise and improve its website, turning the Planning4LA.org domain unveiled into a mobile-first, accessible platform. Additionally, in an effort to keep residents apprised of the latest updates, the Department redesigned the site's Zoning menu, adding information on the new zoning framework.

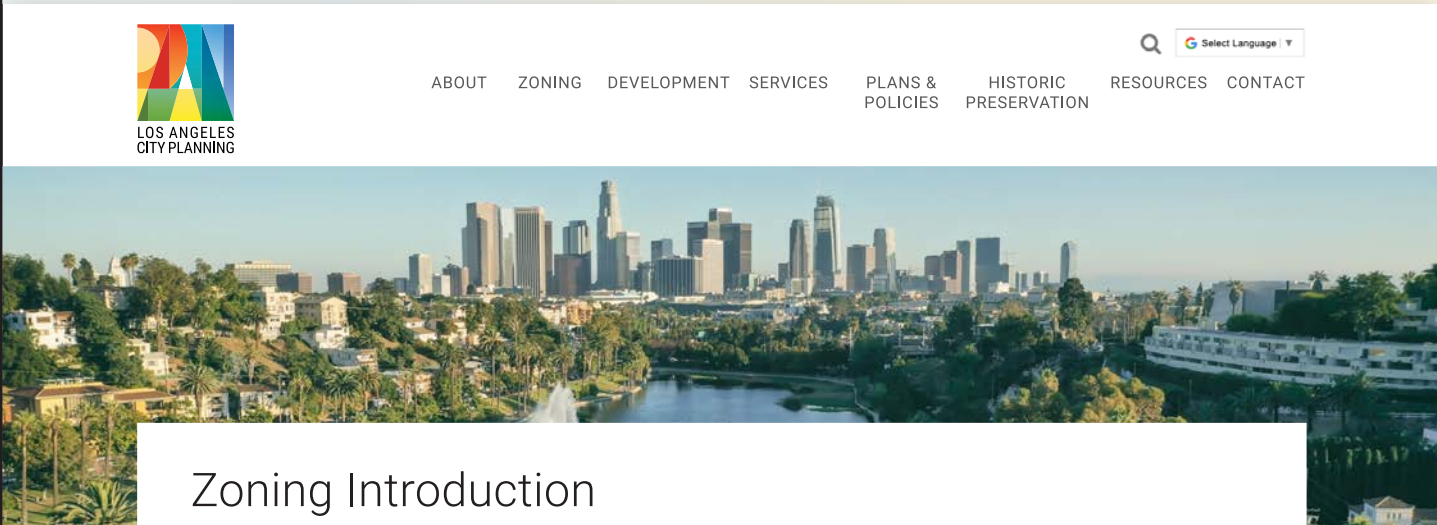
## Zoning Menu

With the release of Downtown's new zoning, City Planning's website was redesigned to create dedicated pages for zoning-related documents. From a communications standpoint, keeping the website up to date furthers the Department's goal of making planning-related information readily available.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Until 2019, City Planning operated 23 independent websites, each dedicated to a stand-alone planning initiative. In order to establish a unified online presence for the Department and a centralized location for local planning news, City Planning consolidated these websites into one.

The new website is a reliable source of information on the full scope of City Planning's work programs. In addition to news about upcoming community events and hearings, *Planning4LA.org* provides the latest details on the Department's ongoing projects, such as the overhaul of Los Angeles's Zoning Code, updates to the Community Plans, and the preservation of the City's historic landmarks, among other efforts.



## Zoning Introduction

If cities were living organisms, zoning would be their genetic code.

Through the use of zoning regulations, city governments are able to translate broad land use goals and policies into property-specific development standards and requirements. In Los Angeles, zoning regulations determine the uses (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial) that are allowed on any given site, in addition to regulating the possible size and scale of development projects. Zoning can also regulate and restrict the size and scale of future development across the City, including requirements for open space, parking, and signage.

### New Zoning Code

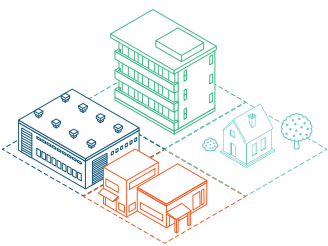
Zoning has evolved over the years as new approaches to planning have emerged and local priorities have shifted. City Planning is currently in the process of developing a new and innovative approach to regulating the use and form of buildings throughout Los Angeles.

The new zoning approach aims to better regulate a building's character in relation to its surroundings, by governing attributes relating to the size and scale of buildings and their relationship to the street front. New land use tools are being developed through the **Community Plan Updates** to provide tailored regulations that reflect the local architecture and character of Los Angeles's neighborhoods.

To learn more, visit the **New Zoning Code** webpage.

### Major Approaches to Zoning

The various approaches to zoning can each be classified under one or more of the following broad categories: Euclidean, Performance, Incentive, Form-Based, and Hybrid Zoning.



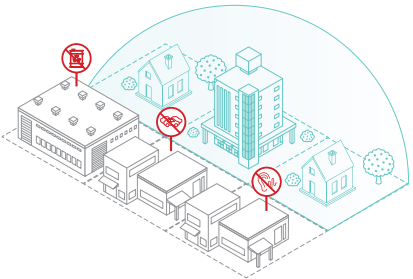
#### Euclidean Zoning

The most common form of land use regulation in the United States is known as Euclidean Zoning. This type of zoning is characterized by the separation of land uses, classified under broad categories such as agricultural, residential, commercial, or industrial, among others.



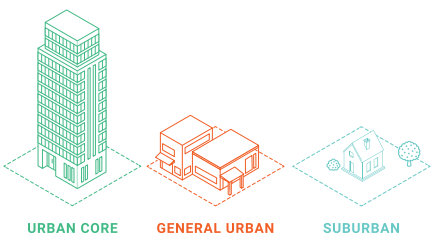
#### Incentive Zoning

Similar to Performance Zoning, Incentive Zoning uses Euclidean Zoning as a baseline. Incentive Zoning, however, enables projects to exceed certain limitations (e.g., Floor Area Ratio or Density) in



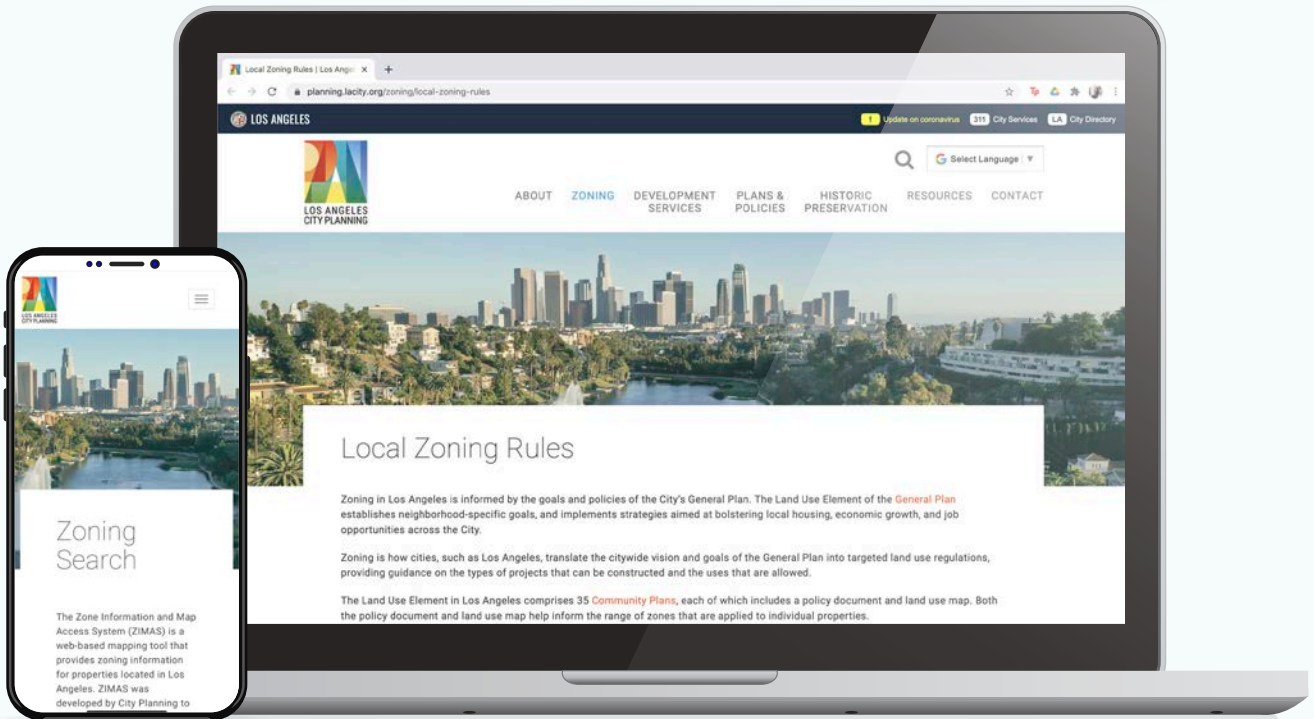
#### Performance Zoning

Often blended with Euclidean Zoning, Performance Zoning accommodates a wider range of land uses. It establishes a set of quantifiable performance standards to regulate the permitted activities onsite in order to prevent adverse impacts on neighboring sites (e.g., noise, traffic, pollution, etc.).



#### Form-Based Zoning

Form-Based Zoning regulates development not by land use but by examining the scale, design, and placement of buildings, in order to advance a more pedestrian-friendly environment.



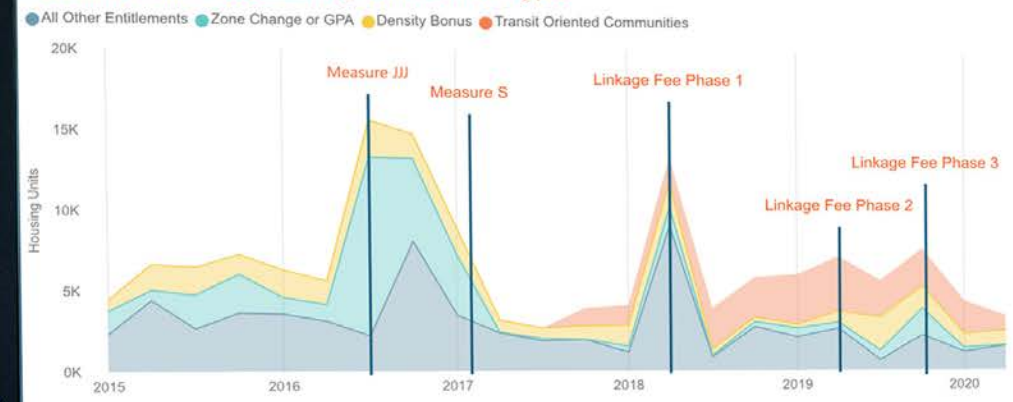




# Housing Proposed through Planning Entitlements

January 2015 - June 2020

## Housing Units Proposed by Entitlement Type

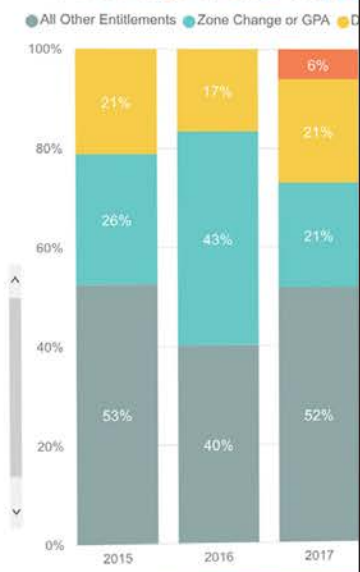


Year	All Other Entitlements	Zone Change or GPA	Density Bonus**	Transit Oriented Communities	Total Units Proposed*
2016	17,075	18,387	7,062	0	42,524
2015	13,096	6,570	5,264	0	24,930
2019	7,623	3,234	4,501	11,321	26,679
2017	9,749	3,972	3,959	1,127	18,807
2018	13,866	1,969	3,552	7,949	27,336
2020	2,700	200	1,000	2,000	7,900
Total	64,117	34,430	26,163	23,429	148,139

Summary totals do not include Hotels, Motels, and Hostels

\*Summary totals do not include projects where the Density Bonus was not requested in combination with a Zone Change or GPA

## Percentage of Units Proposed by Entitlement Type



PREPARED BY LOS ANGELES CITY PLANNING | PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

# Investing in Accurate Data Reporting

Improved Analysis of Housing Production Trends

Increased Revenue for Affordable Housing

To support the overarching goals of the Department, City Planning has turned increasingly to performance metrics to monitor and report on key outcomes.



Through innovative policies and plan updates, City Planning has advanced additional opportunities for housing that will benefit a larger cross-section of Angelenos.



## IMPROVED ANALYSIS OF HOUSING PRODUCTION TRENDS

Over the year, City Planning approved a total of 24,223 housing units. This is the second-highest number of total housing units approved in a single calendar year between 2015 and 2020.

**One in every five units approved in 2020 was restricted affordable.**

The 4,790 affordable housing units approved during the year included 1,058 reserved for Extremely Low Income households of four (earning \$33,800 or less), 1,190 reserved for Very Low Income households of four (earning \$56,300 or less), and 2,348 for Low Income households of four (earning \$90,100 or less).

### Housing Trends

While the total numbers of approved units for Low and Very Low Incomes declined from their 2019 peaks, the number of approved units for Extremely Low Incomes remained essentially unchanged, dropping just 1.8 percent year-over-year.

Over 158,000 housing units were proposed in Los Angeles during the six-year period ending in 2020. The majority of all units proposed were generated by a combination of the Transit Oriented Communities (37 percent) and Density Bonus (17 percent) Incentive Programs.

Nearly one-quarter of all these proposed units were restricted affordable. This includes 921 units for Extremely Low Income households, 1,246 units for Very Low Income households, and 2,216 units proposed to serve Low Income households. Eighty-six percent (3,883 units) of all affordable housing proposed in 2020 was for buildings entirely comprised of affordable units.



# INCREASED REVENUE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Affordable Housing Linkage Fee (AHLF) is a relatively new program developed by City Planning to fund affordable housing in Los Angeles. Since 2017, the AHLF has generated revenue to support housing construction for working Angelenos.

## Affordable Housing Linkage Fee

With the dissolution of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) and significant cuts to federal housing programs, Los Angeles lost most of its funding for affordable housing production. To offset this loss, Los Angeles drafted an ordinance to establish a permanent, dedicated source of revenue for housing at deeper levels of affordability.

Today, developers pay a fee that ranges from \$3 to \$5 per square foot for commercial development and \$8 to \$15 per square foot for residential development, depending on the market. The AHLF is assessed on all development projects that result in additional units of market-rate housing, including additions to existing single-family homes of more than 1,500 square feet, new non-residential floor area, and the

conversion of non-residential structures into residential units.

The fee was phased in gradually to give developers time to factor in the associated costs in their pro formas. The full cost schedule took effect in the summer of 2019.

Since taking effect, the AHLF has brought in nearly \$35 million for new affordable housing units, serving as an important local funding source to help house homeless and at-risk residents. As of December 31, 2020, the AHLF has been assessed on 7,681 projects.

These projects are distributed across the City, with 53 percent of the AHLF generated within the following Community Plan areas: Brentwood-Pacific Palisades, Palms-Mar Vista-Del Rey, Wilshire, West Los Angeles, Encino-Tarzana, and Hollywood—contributing to more affordable housing in parts of the City that have traditionally been out-of-reach to many individuals and families.

As Los Angeles recovers from COVID-19, programs such as the AHLF play a vital role increasing access to housing.

Linkage Fee (Generated by Project Type)

Type of Project	Number of Projects	Percentage of Projects	Revenue Generated	Percentage of Revenue
1 or 2 Family Dwelling	5,348	69.6%	\$26,554,796	75.6%
Apartment	1,116	14.6%	\$4,931,333	14.0%
Commercial	1,217	15.8%	\$3,631,973	10.4%
Grand Total	7,681	100%	\$35,118,102	100%



## HOMELESS POLICY INITIATIVES

Los Angeles has taken bold steps to provide housing opportunities for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. In the last few years, the City Council adopted new legislation to house the most vulnerable and at-risk populations, ranging from homeless families and youth to veterans and mothers. City Planning led these efforts in order to develop land use legislation that would streamline and incentivize more housing options for the at-risk population.

Among the ordinances adopted was the **Permanent Supportive Housing Ordinance**, which streamlines the production of permanent supportive housing units by reducing the time it takes to secure planning approvals from a matter of years to months. The City also adopted the **Interim Motel Conversion Ordinance** to allow the temporary use of underutilized motels and hotels for transitional and supportive housing.

These initiatives build upon the efforts of the Mayor and City Council to leverage local funds to finance the construction of additional supportive housing projects with onsite services.

City Planning has not only spearheaded legislation to bring additional affordable housing units online

but also assisted with securing new sources of local revenue. The **Affordable Housing Linkage Fee (AHLF) Ordinance** is perhaps the most notable planning initiative to date that has resulted in a dedicated funding stream for homeless housing.

The effects of the pandemic on the local economy have made the need for affordable housing more urgent than ever before. Gaps between rents and incomes remain high, prompting the Department to secure alternative pathways to housing that are aligned with the needs of everyday Angelenos.

Along with the AHLF Ordinance, the Department's **Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Incentive Program** has played an important role in fostering an equitable mix of building uses and affordable units. The TOC Incentive Program has incentivized housing production at deeper levels of affordability than any other planning entitlement since the program's inception.

These two planning initiatives (AHLF and the TOC Program) have paved the way forward for how Los Angeles will, in part, address its responsibility for people experiencing homelessness.





# Planning for the Future

Fostered New Housing Opportunities

Assisted with Housing Affordability

In Los Angeles, the Housing Element and Community Plans are regarded as the cornerstone of the City’s long-range planning efforts, guiding policy decisions on issues relating to climate change to access to quality housing.



Planning has played an increasingly important role on land use issues, laying the groundwork for new policies and identifying solutions to the City's housing shortage.



## FOSTERED NEW HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

As cities expand alternative models for housing ownership, the housing elements of their general plans have played an increasingly important role in directing those discussions.

In California, the general plan has provided a foundational guide for local governments by establishing land use designations that inform future zoning rules. A county or city's general plan outlines how land should be used and how resources should be allocated.

### Housing Element

The housing element is one component of the general plan California requires each county and city to update every eight years. Each update to a general plan's housing element analyzes local housing conditions and informs future land use policies.

While cities may not control the cost of land, labor, and materials that influence market conditions related to development, they do wield a powerful tool—namely, zoning—for designating enough sites for housing.



# The Plan to House LA

This year, City Planning unveiled its draft policy concepts for the 2021-2029 Housing Element update, more commonly known as the “Plan to House LA.” The proposed update prioritizes anti-displacement and housing stability, as well as promoting housing access to higher-resource neighborhoods. Planners will continue to refine these draft policy concepts before advancing a final set of recommendations to the City Planning Commission and the full City Council.

As a citywide policy document, Los Angeles’s Housing Element has played an important role in setting the City’s long-range vision. The Housing Element integrates housing and growth strategies to support the economic interests and housing needs of Los Angeles’s residents—outlining goals, objectives, and programs that will meet the demand for housing identified in the new Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).

## MAJOR COMPONENTS OF A HOUSING ELEMENT

The major components of an update to any city or county’s Housing Element include:

- a statement of goals, objectives, and policies, as well as a full list of programs to implement the Housing Element’s vision
- a review of the local government’s progress in implementing its housing policies and programs
- an analysis of the county or city’s demographic, economic, and housing characteristics
- a comprehensive analysis of constraints to producing and preserving housing
- a list of sites that could accommodate new housing to demonstrate compliance with the city’s Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

### Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

The State requires Los Angeles to plan to accommodate 455,000 housing units over the next eight years, amounting to nearly 57,000 units each year—more than two-and-a-half times the current rate of about 20,000 units per year. Of those units, about 40 percent should be affordable for lower-income households.

	2013 - 2021 Allocation (in units)	2021 - 2029 Draft**
SCAG Region*	421,137	1,341,827
Los Angeles	82,002	455,577**
Los Angeles: Lower Income Units	32,862	184,270**

\* The SCAG (Southern California Association of Governments) region encompasses six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura) and 191 cities.

\*\* All City 2021-2029 figures are estimated, based on the September 3, 2020, draft allocation. A final allocation is expected in February 2021.

# Draft Policy Concepts

City Planning has developed the following six policy concepts to guide the 2021-2029 Housing Element Update, based on public feedback and comments the Department received. These policy concepts will inform the strategies of the Housing Element Update. Racial equity, fair housing, and affordability were among the overarching considerations that informed these policy concepts.



### Housing Stability & Anti-Displacement

Protect Angelenos—especially people of color—from indirect and direct displacement and ensure stability of existing vulnerable communities



### Access to Opportunity

Increase access to opportunities and proactively desegregate the City by planning for more affordable and mixed-income housing in high resource areas



### Built Environment

Design and regulate housing to promote health and well being, increase access to amenities, contribute to a sense of place, foster community and belonging, and plan for a sustainable future



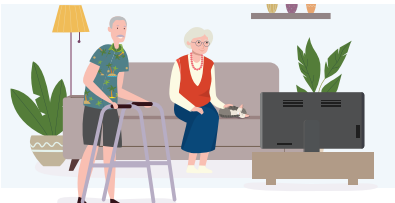
### Housing Production

Bolster the production of new housing, particularly affordable units



### Homelessness

Prevent and end homelessness in a manner that centers human dignity and respect by developing early interventions, significantly expanding permanent housing options and providing appropriate services and support



### Meeting the Needs of all Angelenos

Build, operate, and maintain welcoming and accessible housing for Angelenos with unique needs, including those with disabilities, large families, older adults, and other people facing housing barriers



# Housing Element Project Timeline



## Fall 2019-Summer 2020 Phase 1: Launch and Vision Phase

- Conducted initial outreach through in-person and digital workshops
- Facilitated meetings with Task Force members



## Fall 2020-Winter 2021 Phase 2: Concepts

- Held virtual meetings and webinars with community groups and nonprofits
- Launched a digital concept survey to gather feedback on the proposed concepts



## Spring-Summer 2021 Phase 3: Draft

- Develop a Draft Housing Element for public review and feedback
- Prepare environmental analysis
- Hold additional outreach events with groups throughout the City



## Summer-Fall 2021 Phase 4: Adopt

- Organize additional Open Houses and Public Hearings
- Finalize environmental analysis
- Present staff recommendation to City Planning Commission
- Advance final policy changes to City Council for adoption

## HOUSING ELEMENT TASK FORCE

At the end of 2019, City Planning initiated an update to the City’s Housing Element. Working alongside the Housing + Community Investment Department, City Planning formed a Housing Element Task Force to help guide the update process. The 63-member Task Force is a diverse group of housing-related professionals and community leaders that assists the City in evaluating the viability and impact of potential new and updated policies related to housing preservation and production, tenants’ rights, homelessness prevention, zoning, and other housing issues.



**Matthew Glesne**  
Senior City Planner  
Housing Policy Unit

Matthew Glesne was promoted to Senior City Planner in the Housing Policy Unit, where he oversees citywide housing policies, including the current update to the City’s Housing Element.

In the last three years, Matthew has led the charge in advancing legislation that has helped the City produce and preserve new affordable housing units. Notably, he drafted the Affordable Housing Linkage Fee, Home-Sharing, and Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinances. He also advised on the development of the Permanent Supportive Housing Ordinance, which has streamlined the review and approval of new supportive housing projects.

Matthew received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and his master’s degree in urban planning and policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Before joining the Citywide Policy Unit in 2012, he worked in the Department’s Office of Historic Resources.





# ASSISTED WITH HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Through updates to Los Angeles’s Community Plans, City Planning develops new zoning tools to accommodate future housing. These zoning tools are informed by the plans’ policies, which guide land use decisions—ensuring that resources are allocated appropriately to support sites for residential, commercial, industrial, and open space. From a citywide perspective, these plans have supported new investment opportunities in balance with the needs of Los Angeles’s neighborhoods.

## Community Plan Milestones

Los Angeles’s 35 Community Plans make up the Land Use Element, which is one of the seven required elements of the City’s General Plan. The elements of the General Plan prescribe policy goals and objectives that shape and guide the physical development of the City.

In its current form, Los Angeles’s Community Plan program began in the 1960s. At that time, the plans, often called “broad­sides,” were large fold-out maps with supplementary policy text. Over time, the program evolved as more extensive analyses, goals, and policies emerged.

Today’s Community Plans consist of an in-depth policy document and a land use map. The policy document lays out the community’s goals,

policies, and programs, while the land use map identifies where certain uses (such as residential, commercial, and industrial) are permitted. Together, the policy document and land use map inform local zoning decisions.

As neighborhoods evolved, keeping the Community Plans’ policies up to date took on renewed importance. With the support of the Mayor and City Council, City Planning secured additional resources in 2017 to support a citywide update to the 35 plan areas.

In total, there are 16 Community Plan updates underway, covering 180 square miles across 40 percent of the City.

Among the plan updates that advanced closer to adoption during 2020 were Downtown, Boyle Heights, and Hollywood.

While each plan reflects the different features of the community it applies to, all designate new areas for housing, with a particular focus on providing incentives for affordable units in resource-rich neighborhoods near transit.





Boyle Heights Community Plan Update

In the fall, City Planning unveiled a new plan that would expand housing opportunities in Boyle Heights while also safeguarding existing units. The plan update would apply new zoning tools to protect existing housing, improve access to local amenities, and preserve the cultural legacy of Boyle Heights.

The plan’s proposed policies address many long-standing issues related to equity and access, balancing the preservation of existing households with the need to provide new housing opportunities. In keeping with that goal, the Department has developed stronger development standards to minimize possible displacement pressures.

Specifically, the plan prioritizes new housing along mixed-use corridors, incentivizing units for a range of income levels—including units reserved exclusively for Extremely Low Income households (those earning \$31,300 or less, for a family of four).

In addition to bolstering affordable housing, the proposed plan strengthens local business and job growth potential along major corridors such as First Street and Whittier Boulevard.

Through new zoning regulations, the plan would limit the size of commercial spaces to support mom-and-pop-style businesses, as opposed to big-box stores and chains. These zoning standards would help promote corner shops, or *tienditas*, that provide fresh groceries and household goods within walkable distance of surrounding neighborhoods.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROGRAM

The Boyle Heights Community Plan Update proposes new zoning that would implement a base and bonus development rights system for additional Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and, in some places, height, in exchange for affordable housing in a project. The system aims to facilitate affordable housing for multigenerational households and families.

The Community Benefits Program is part of the zoning incentive system. Through the Community Plan Implementation Overlay (CPIO), the program offers a path for development projects to exceed the *base* development rights, up to the maximum *bonus* allowable development rights, in exchange for providing affordable housing.

To qualify, projects must consist of five or more units and agree to set aside at least 11 percent of the total units for Extremely Low Income households, 15 percent for Very Low Income Households, or 25 percent for Low Income Households. Projects that are 100 percent affordable would be eligible for additional incentives. Only projects that contribute to the City’s affordable housing supply qualify for these incentives.



Kiran Rishi

City Planner  
Community Planning Bureau

Kiran Rishi was recently promoted to the position of City Planner, entrusted with managing the Boyle Heights Community Plan update. In her current role, Kiran channels community input and feedback into a policy vision for Boyle Heights. In addition to policy development, Kiran leads the plan’s public engagement activities, which are the foundation of its proposed land use and zoning changes and affordable housing plan.

Kiran joined City Planning to contribute to a more just, equitable City for all Angelenos, and is particularly passionate about addressing issues of food access and environmental justice in her planning work. Before stepping into her current role, Kiran worked in the Valley Project Planning Division, reviewing project cases and conducting public hearings in the San Fernando Valley.

Kiran received her bachelor’s degree in urban and environmental policy and Spanish literary studies from Occidental College.





# Downtown Community Plan Update

In 2020, the newly updated zoning for the Downtown Community Plan was released. Like Boyle Heights, the Downtown Community Plan includes a *base* and *bonus* system for floor area rights. To exceed the base floor area, a project would need to include residential units and set aside a specified number of those units as covenanted affordable housing.

In terms of zoning, the Downtown Community Plan nearly doubles the area where housing (including permanent supportive and affordable housing) is permitted, expanding from 33 percent to 60 percent of the plan area. Additionally, it permits adaptive reuse in new places and creates options for live-work housing, as part of a larger strategy to accommodate a variety of living situations, lifestyles, income levels, and age groups.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVES

As part of the Downtown Community Plan's incentive-based Community Benefits Program, a project can achieve a 35 percent increase in floor area by providing affordable housing. To obtain more floor area, a project must agree to set aside additional on-site housing units as covenanted affordable at one of the following minimum percentages:

- 5 percent Deeply Low (earning \$16,900 or less, for a household of four)
- 8 percent Extremely Low (earning \$33,800 or less, for a household of four)
- 11 percent Very Low (earning \$56,300 or less, for a household of four)
- 20 percent Low (earning \$90,100 or less, for a household of four)
- 40 percent Moderate (earning \$92,750 or less, for a household of four)

# Hollywood Community Plan Update

The Hollywood Community Plan update reached an important milestone in 2020 with the updated release of a draft Community Plan Implementation Overlay (CPIO) District. The CPIO addresses three main goals: encouraging the production of mixed-income and 100 percent affordable housing near transit, safeguarding historic resources, and improving urban design.

The Hollywood CPIO's tailored incentives accommodate additional housing opportunities in transit-accessible central Hollywood, while restricting the use of other incentives, such as height, in historic and low-scale neighborhoods. In addition to its focus on housing, the plan embraces Hollywood's role as the center of the film industry and a source of well-paying jobs through new zoning tools.



Priya Mehendale

Senior City Planning  
Community Planning Bureau

Priya Mehendale was recently promoted to Senior City Planner in the Community Planning Bureau, where she oversees the updates to the Hollywood and Boyle Heights Community Plans. Over the years, she has helped shepherd several community plans through the adoption process, including Sylmar, Granada Hills-Knollwood, and San Pedro.

Previously, Priya worked on the environmental review and zoning for the updates to the Hollywood and Boyle Heights Community Plans. During her six years in the Valley Project Planning Division, she advanced cases through the entitlement process, from project consultations to the issuance of letters of determination.

Priya received her bachelor's degrees in anthropology and Japanese language and literature and a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Michigan.

## COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION OVERLAY (CPIO)

A Community Plan Implementation Overlay (CPIO) is a zoning tool that implements the policy goals and objectives associated with a Community Plan. Customized to fit the needs of an individual neighborhood, it regulates various aspects of a project, such as its design and scale.





# Community Plan Update Program

City Planning has revisited some of the proposed policies and zoning for other Community Plan areas to make sure they reflect new priorities for housing and the environment. These plan updates present opportunities for planners to work closely with neighborhood groups, coming up with ideas that will guide and shape future development considerations across the entire City.

## Central/East Geography

The Central/East region consists of eight community plan areas. Currently, there are updates underway to four of the region’s plan areas: Hollywood, Boyle Heights, Central City, and Central City North—the latter two areas comprising the Downtown Plan.

Following adoption of the Hollywood Community Plan, City Planning will begin updates to the Wilshire and Westlake Community Plans. Upon completion of the Downtown and Boyle Heights Community Plans, City Planning will then begin updates to the Northeast Los Angeles and Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plans.

## Valley Geography

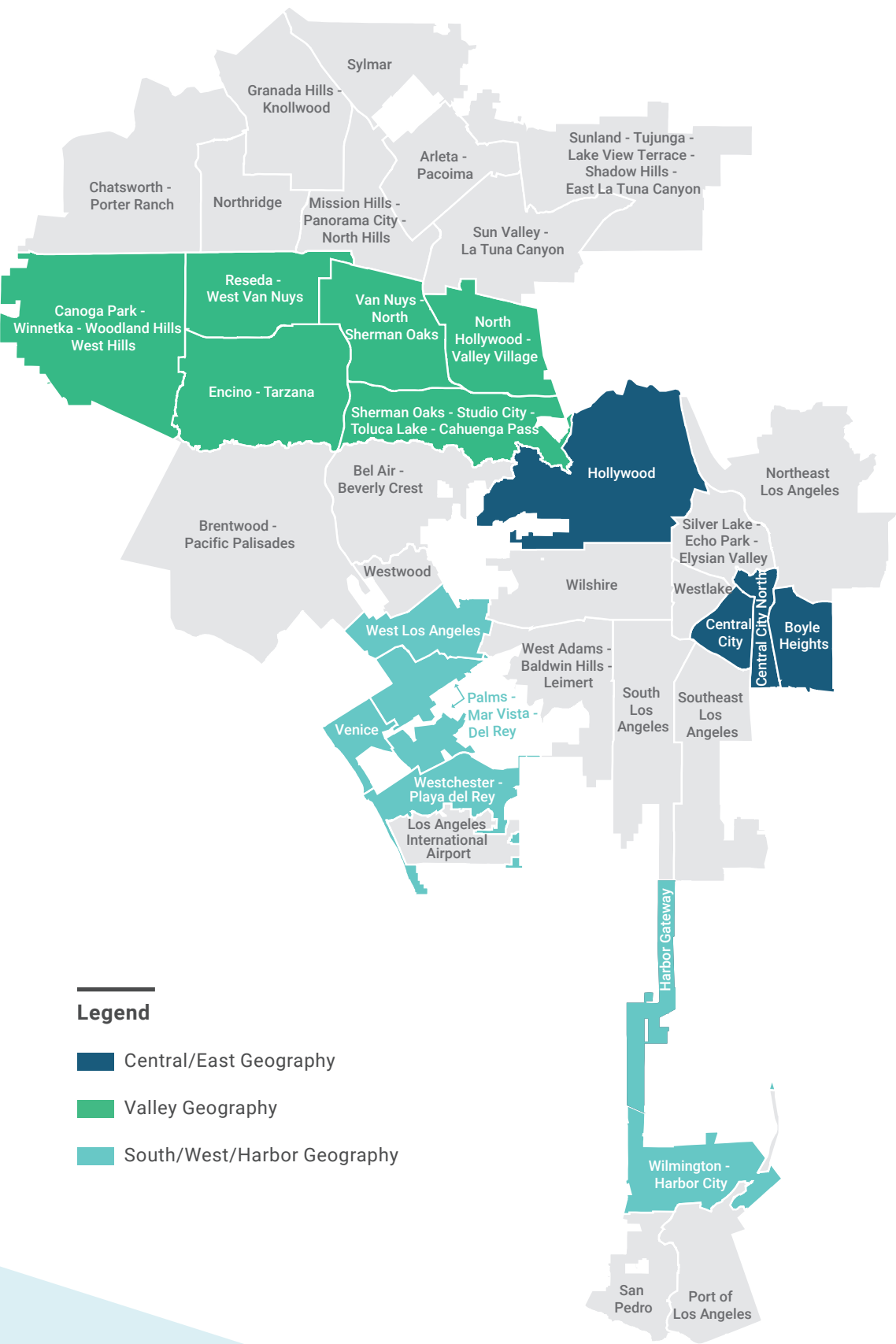
The San Fernando Valley region consists of 14 plan areas. Two of the region’s Community Plans, Sylmar and Granada Hills-Knollwood, were recently updated. During the 2017 calendar year, City Planning initiated updates to three plans in the Southwest Valley: Canoga Park-Winnetka-West Hills-Woodland Hills, Reseda-West Van Nuys, and Encino-Tarzana. Updates to three Community Plans in the Southeast Valley (Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass, Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks, and North Hollywood-Valley Village) commenced the following year.

After these are completed, updates to the eight Community Plans for the North Valley will commence. These updates will include the plan areas of Sylmar, Granada Hills-Knollwood, Chatsworth-Porter Ranch, Northridge, Mission Hills-Panorama City-North Hills, Arleta-Pacoima, Sun Valley-La Tuna Canyon, and Sunland-Tujunga-Lake View Terrace-Shadow Hills-East La Tuna Canyon.

## South/West/Harbor Geography

The South/West/Harbor region consists of 12 plan areas. Four of the region’s plan areas have been updated: three covering South Los Angeles (West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert, South Los Angeles, and Southeast Los Angeles), and one comprising a portion of the Harbor (San Pedro). In 2018, the Department commenced updates to four plans in the Westside and two Community Plans in the Harbor area.

In the Westside, the plans undergoing updates are West Los Angeles, Palms-Mar Vista-Del Rey, Venice, and Westchester-Playa del Rey; in the Harbor, they include the Harbor Gateway and Wilmington-Harbor City. City Planning will update the remaining Westside plans (Westwood, Bel Air-Beverly Crest, and Brentwood-Pacific Palisades), once these plans are completed.







Craig Weber

Principal City Planner | Central/East Geography

Craig Weber manages the Department's updates to the Hollywood, Boyle Heights, and Downtown Community Plans. In his role as Principal City Planner, he is also responsible for updates to the Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan. During his 15 years at City Planning, Craig has spearheaded the adoption of a number of plans and policies, including Community Plans for the South and Southeast Los Angeles communities, as well as 18 preservation plans across Los Angeles's Historic Preservation Overlay Zones.



Haydee Urita-Lopez

Principal City Planner | South/West/Harbor Geography

Haydee Urita-Lopez was promoted to Principal City Planner to preside over the updates to the Community Plans for the Westside and Harbor areas. Previously, she led the Department's effort to update the Boyle Heights Community Plan, engaging local youth and numerous others. Haydee joined City Planning in 2006. She has worked at the State and City level on policy and major public facilities projects, including schools and parks. More recently, she helped create green zones for the Clean Up Green Up (CUGU) Ordinance and served as the Department's Neighborhood and Council Liaison. She lived and studied abroad in Mexico City and Brazil, and graduated from UCLA with a dual master's degree in urban planning and Latin American studies. For the past decade, she has taught ethnic studies as adjunct faculty at the Los Angeles Community College District.

CENTRAL/EAST GEOGRAPHY

Boyle Heights Community Plan

- Initial Outreach: 2013-2014
- Draft Concepts Release: Spring 2014
- Draft Plan and Zoning Release: Fall 2017
- Updated Zoning, Draft Plan, and Community Benefits Program Release: Fall 2020
- Next Step: Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) Release

Downtown Community Plan

- Initial Outreach: Winter 2014
- Draft Concepts Release: October 2016
- Draft Community Plan Release: July 2019
- Draft Zoning Release: October 2019
- Draft EIR Publication: Summer 2020
- Updated Zoning, Draft Plan, and Community Benefits Program Release: November 2020
- Public Hearing: December 2020
- Next Step: City Planning Commission Consideration

Hollywood Community Plan

- Initial Outreach: Spring 2016
- Draft Concepts Release: Summer 2017
- Draft Zoning Release: Summer 2017
- Draft EIR Publication: November 2018
- Partially Recirculated Draft EIR Publication: October 2019
- Open House/Public Hearing: December 2020
- City Planning Commission consideration in March 2021

VALLEY GEOGRAPHY

Southeast Community Plans

- Initial Outreach: September 2018
- Draft Land Use Concepts Release: Summer 2019
- Next Step: Release of General Plan Land Use Map

Southwest Community Plans

- Initial Outreach: Spring 2017
- Draft Concepts Release: Winter 2018
- Draft Land Use Map Release: December 2020
- Next Step: Release of Draft Zones and EIR

WEST/SOUTH/HARBOR GEOGRAPHY

Westside Community Plans

- Initial Outreach: July 2018
- Draft Concepts Release: July 2020
- Next Step: Summarize Outreach Comments and Prepare for EIR Scoping Meeting

Harbor Community Plan

- Initial Outreach: Fall 2018
- Draft Concepts Release: May 2019
- EIR Scoping Meeting: August 2019
- Next Step: Release of Draft Community Plan and Zones



Rebecca Valdez

Principal City Planner | Valley Geography

Rebecca Valdez is the Principal City Planner responsible for overseeing the updates to the six Community Plans underway in the Valley, where she was recently assigned to elevate the profile and visibility of the Department and its outreach around its core values. Rebecca has more than 15 years of experience in urban planning. More recently, she managed the West/South/Harbor Division of the Community Planning Bureau and, in its inaugural year, the Performance Management Unit (PMU), which supports the Department's operations and resources through the application of quantifiable metrics and internal workforce training.





# Budget and Operations

Reduced Reliance on General Fund

Reassessed Revenue Projections

Hired and Promoted Personnel

Like other cities confronted with the global outbreak of COVID-19, Los Angeles has found ways to do more with fewer resources, supporting critical citywide development functions that have generated housing and jobs.



In response to citywide fiscal challenges, City Planning has carefully managed its finances and expenditures to close the budget gap.



## REDUCED RELIANCE ON GENERAL FUND

Shortly after the Mayor's State of the City address, Los Angeles declared a fiscal state of emergency, including a hiring freeze across most departments to help achieve a balanced budget.

### Hiring Freeze

For City Planning, the hiring freeze meant that nearly 90 unfilled authorized positions would stay vacant for at least the next fiscal year, as Los Angeles reels from the economic impacts associated with COVID-19.

The Department reallocated resources to minimize impacts to public-facing functions at the Development Services Centers (DSCs) and other

high-priority policy programs, such as the Housing Element Update and other targeted citywide code amendments.

In the long term, the Department is exploring alternative ways to reduce its reliance on the General Fund, such as revisiting case processing fees, in addition to adjusting the surcharge fee on building permits to fund ongoing updates to the General Plan.



# The Path to Economic Recovery

Understanding the financial ramifications of COVID-19, the Department has begun to reassess its revenues to identify short- and long-term measures that will allow City Planning to offer uninterrupted services without any major disruptions to existing staffing levels.

In 2020, the Department released a revised comprehensive fee update for City Council's consideration. Once adopted, this revised update to planning case-processing fees would close the revenue gap by more than one-half—ensuring that the Department's annual revenues accurately account for the staff time it takes to process and review the current volume of project applications.

Over the last few years, the Department has relied on a steady increase in administrative applications and State clearances, shortening case-processing timelines for everything from affordable housing to mixed-use projects.

While City Planning continues to review an average of 6,000 applications each year, the distribution of application types has shifted significantly.

The rise in administrative cases and decline in planning entitlements are among the reasons why City Planning is right sizing its case processing fees, in order to accurately reflect the cost of project planning services based on new trends and data collected since the last fee ordinance was adopted in 2018.



## Adapted and Modernized Operations

- Reduced the need for in-person visits by making project information available online
- Began to offer online payment and submission of project applications
- Automated the process for receiving regular news updates on topical planning issues
- Introduced more translation services and opportunities for digital engagement
- Expanded outreach by partnering with community-based organizations and nonprofits



## Improved Process Efficiencies

- Expedited the review of affordable projects that support the City's housing needs
- Shifted to offering more administrative application processes
- Incorporated new CEQA streamlining measures to move qualifying projects forward
- Crafted a new policy that was designed to help struggling restaurant owners stay afloat
- Released the framework for a new Zoning Code that simplifies the review process



## Prioritized Fiscal Responsibility

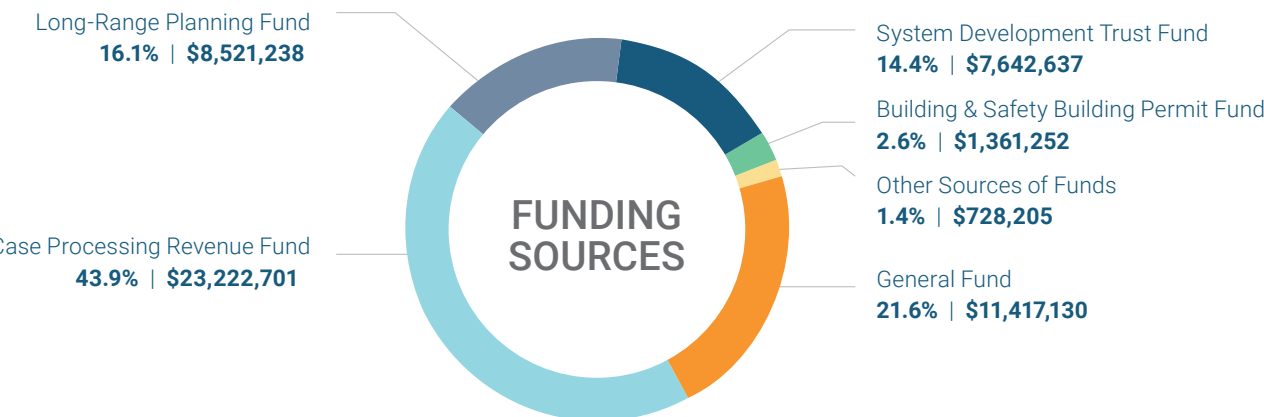
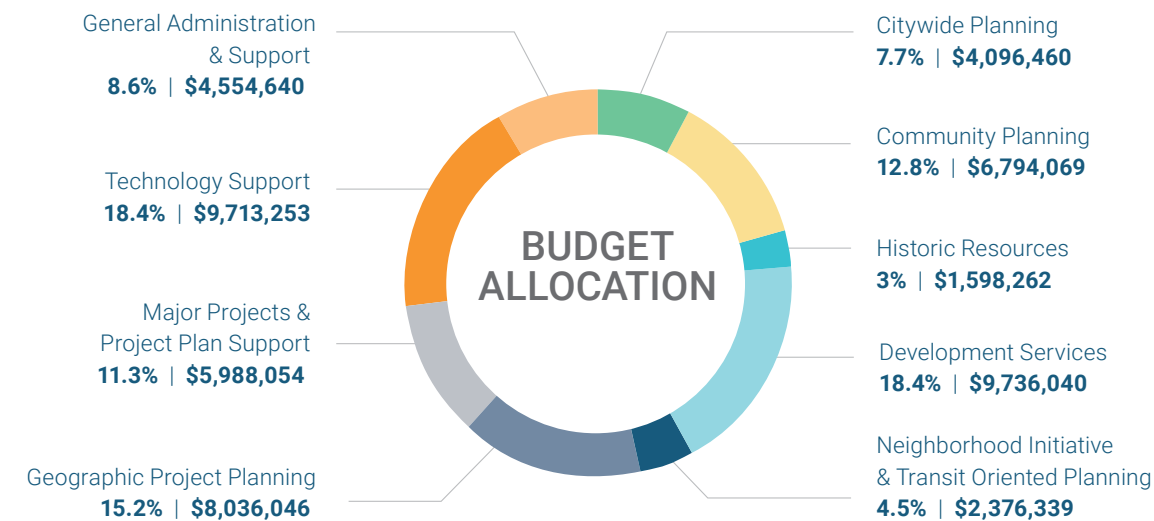
- Drafted a per night Home-Sharing fee to cover monitoring and enforcement costs
- Revised current processing fees to account for staffing times and services' costs
- Developed a citywide sign ordinance to generate new revenue
- Reduced reliance on the Department's General Fund to close the budgetary gap
- Reallocated staffing across divisions to support critical functions



# REASSESSED REVENUE PROJECTIONS

The Department has positioned itself for economic recovery by exercising fiscal stewardship and making necessary adjustments to its operations. Working alongside the Personnel Department, City Planning has not only strengthened recruitment efforts, but also filled and promoted vacancies—adding capacity to augment existing planning-related services, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget



**Raoul Mendoza**  
Chief Management Analyst  
Administrative Services

Raoul recently joined City Planning as Chief Management Analyst. In this role, he oversees all aspects of administration, including the budget, fiscal management and accounting, contracts, records management, personnel, and the Commission Office. Prior to joining the Department, he spent over two years at the Board of Public Works, where he managed their budget and administration.

Raoul was responsible for the launch and implementation of the Board of Public Works' Mobile Pit Stop Program, which provides public restroom and shower facilities for homeless populations. He also spent three years with the Office of the City Administrative Officer as a senior administrative analyst, making recommendations for departmental budgets and capital projects.

Raoul graduated from UCLA with a bachelor's degree in neuroscience.





# HIRED AND PROMOTED PERSONNEL

In 2020, City Planning continued to attract and recruit a talented and diverse pool of applicants. Before the hiring freeze in March, 33 new personnel with varied backgrounds joined the Department.

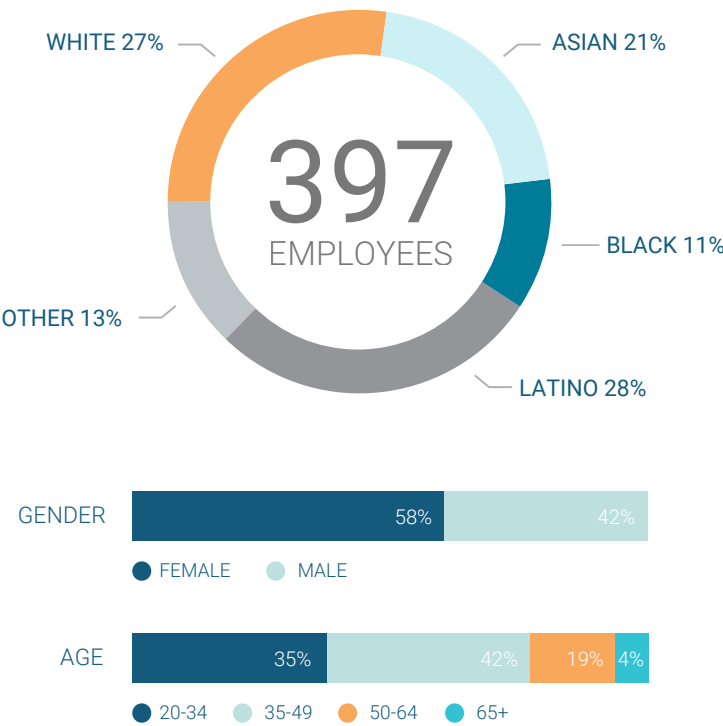
## Staffing Resources

Even in the midst of a pandemic, City Planning was able to leverage new staffing resources to support the administration of critical programs, such as enforcement for Home-Sharing, and to augment services in the Major Projects and Citywide Policy Divisions. Those additional resources have supported efforts to standardize the review of project-related EIRs and embark on a citywide update to the City's Density Bonus program.

Compared to the adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2019-20, the position authorities for City Planning did not decrease significantly from the prior fiscal year.

In total, 414 position authorities were funded, amounting to a modest 2 percent decrease.

The Department's budget allocation also decreased by 13 percent (\$7,989,478) in Fiscal Year 2020-21, compared to Fiscal Year 2019-20; however, City Planning adjusted resources to minimize service disruptions. In terms of filled positions, the Department concluded the 2020 calendar year with 397 employees—even with the hiring freeze, early retirements, and outside promotional opportunities.



## A DIVERSE TEAM TO SERVE A DIVERSE CITY

City Planning's leadership continues to invest in building a staff that better reflects the demographic composition of Los Angeles. Today, 73 percent of the staff identify as non-White, with 58 percent identifying as female. Of the 53 new hires in 2020, 19 percent identified as White, 28 percent as Latino, 17 percent as Asian, 15 percent as Black, and the remaining 21 percent as other.







**LOS ANGELES CITY PLANNING MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

Dear Angelenos:

As the largest planning department in the United States, we stand in solidarity with the Black community in Los Angeles and across the nation. We are devastated and hurt by the senseless deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others.

We all play a role in either perpetuating or calling out systemic racism. Many land use policies and zoning practices over time have reinforced racial segregation, poverty, environmental injustice, disinvestment, and poor health outcomes that we still live with today. We cannot hope to right these wrongs without acknowledging the planning profession's shameful role in contributing to them over the decades.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the Department's founding. Looking back at our history forces us to reckon with the often painful legacy of planning in Los Angeles and its contributions to the disparities we struggle with today. Many of us, including the younger planners who represent the next generation of the profession, joined the Department in order to address these very inequities. As a Department, we are taking steps to reflect on our work within this diverse City and confront issues of structural racism and implicit bias.

I invite you to read our [full statement](#) on the course we are charting for a more fair, just, and equitable Los Angeles in the years to come.

Sincerely,

  
Vince Bertoni,  
Director of Planning

For the announcement from SCAG, the **Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)** **Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Incentive Program** with its 2020 award, Awards of Merit in the categories of Urban Design and Opportunity & Diverse Campus, respectively.

Our work on the Exposition Corridor also took home three Awards of Excellence. Our work on the Exposition Corridor Transit Neighborhood Plan won the Award of Excellence for Neighborhood Planning, while the overhaul of our print and digital publications won for Communications Initiative. Most gratifying of all, Los Angeles City Planning won the Award of Excellence for Planning Agency.

Please join me in commending our staff for their creativity, hard work, and dedication to public service.

Together, we are Planning for LA.

  
Vince Bertoni,  
Director of Planning

**DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES**

**Home-Sharing Ordinance Amendment**

Planning released a draft ordinance to regulate the City's Home-Sharing Ordinance.

**LOS ANGELES CITY PLANNING MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

**DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES**

**Second Court of Appeal Rules in Favor of City of Los Angeles's Housing Practices**

In a decision published on June 15, the Second Court of Appeal affirmed a trial court's ruling in a high-profile case brought by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF). In a lawsuit against the City, the AHF alleged that Los Angeles had violated the federal Fair Housing Act.

Ultimately, the Court of Appeal sided with the City, having found that AHF failed to state a cause of action for violation of the Fair Housing Act. The court also found that the approval of the four projects named in the lawsuit (Crossroads Hollywood, the Palladium, Sunset and Gordon, and 6400 Sunset) add affordable housing units to the area's existing supply, and therefore does not present an "artificial, arbitrary, and unnecessary barrier" to housing for minorities. Moreover, the Court of Appeal held, "declaring the City's approval of the Projects void will serve only to reduce the number of existing income-restricted units, rather than provide greater affordable housing, as the AHF claims."

# Awards

American Planning Association, California Chapter

American Planning Association, Los Angeles Section

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

Adobe Government Creativity Awards

At the State and local level, industry leaders have recognized City Planning's cutting-edge policies. These awards highlight the expertise and accomplishments of the Department's dedicated staff in areas ranging from housing to communications.



City Planning continues to be at the forefront of innovative new practices, commended by leaders in the planning profession for its cutting-edge policies.



## AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION, CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

**Award of Merit: Economic Planning and Development,  
Award of Excellence**

### ***Exposition Corridor Transit Neighborhood Plan (TNP)***

The Exposition Corridor TNP was recognized for its work in rezoning nearly 250 acres of land along a five-mile stretch of the Expo Line. The project elevated the profile of transit planning and showed how it can foster sustainable development in line with other citywide goals on climate change.



# AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION, LOS ANGELES SECTION

## Award of Excellence: Planning Agency

### *Los Angeles City Planning*

City Planning received the Planning Agency award for its efforts in furthering housing production and preservation, and for its continued work to expand housing affordability and access for individuals and families at varying income levels.

## Award of Excellence: Communications Initiative

### *Digital and Print Publications*

This award celebrated City Planning's work in communications. Starting with the launch of its annual report in 2016, City Planning has embarked upon a multi-year overhaul of its communications. From launching a new website to developing Spanish translation guidelines, these efforts have helped the Department in building new relationships, as well as solidifying existing ones.

## Award of Merit: Urban Design *Citywide Design Guidelines*

City Planning's Urban Design Studio organized the Citywide Design Guidelines around three design approaches: Pedestrian-First Design, 360-Degree Design and Climate-Adapted Design, providing a clear, flexible, and up-to-date framework for the City's evaluation of future project designs.

## Award of Merit: Opportunity and Empowerment

### *LGBT Center's Anita May Rosenstein Campus*

The world's largest provider of dedicated services to the LGBTQ+ community, the Los Angeles LGBT Center also offers global advocacy addressing a range of issues. With the Center's new campus, new affordable housing for seniors, supportive housing for youth, and beds for the Center's transitional living program will be provided onsite.

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS (SCAG)

## Award of Merit: Housing Innovation Category

### *Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Incentive Program*

SCAG recognized the Housing Policy Unit for spearheading the creation of the Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Incentive Program. Since September 2017, nearly 40 percent of all Affordable Units proposed came from TOC.

## Award of Merit: Efficient and Sustainable Land Use

### *Modernizing Transportation Analysis Program*

SCAG commended City Planning and the Department of Transportation for revising the thresholds for evaluating project-related transportation impacts on the environment. These updated transportation thresholds aim to improve mobility options citywide, informing the City's work on transportation alternatives and mitigating the effects of climate change.

# ADOBE GOVERNMENT CREATIVITY AWARDS

## Web Design (Finalist)

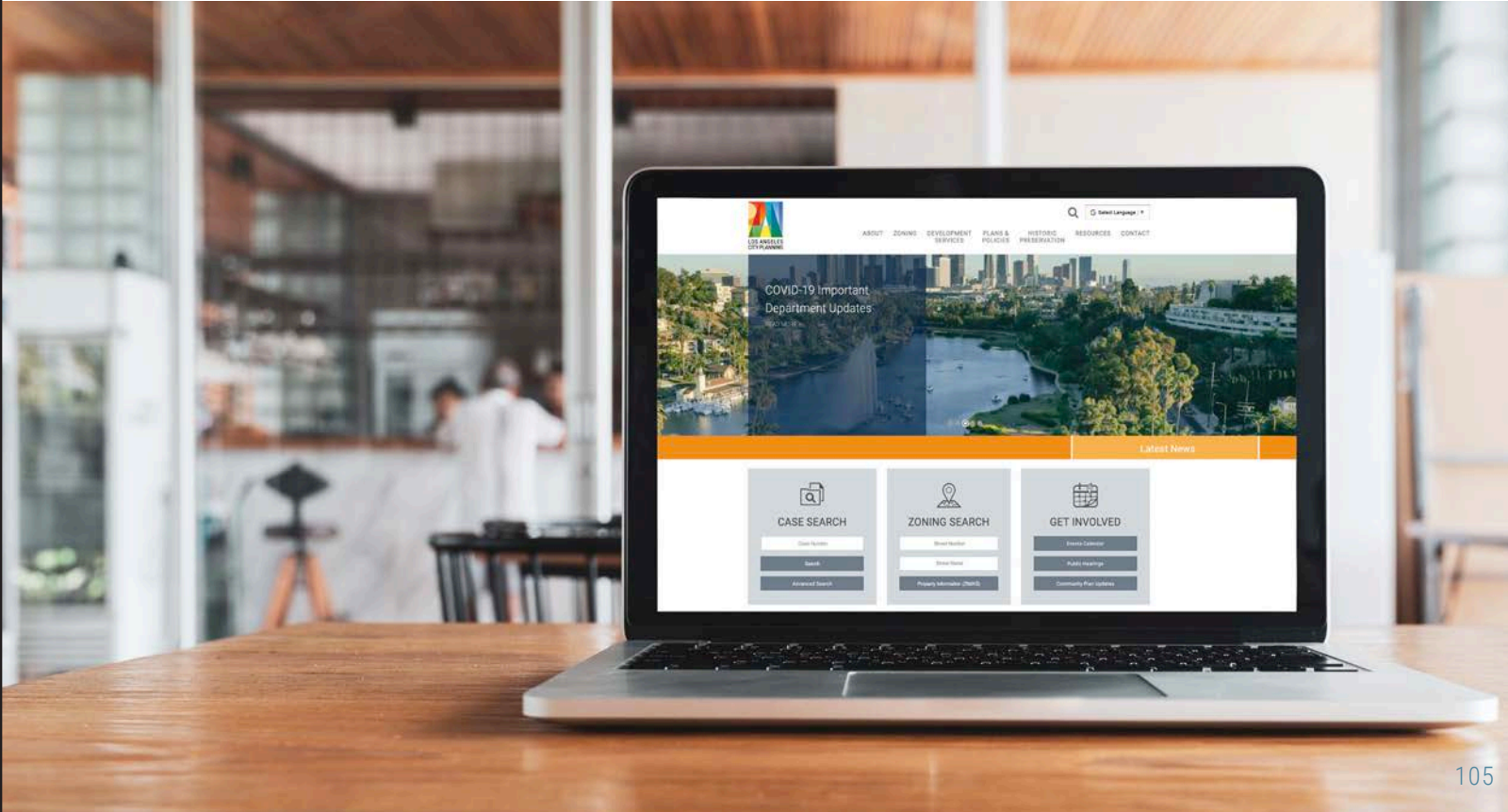
### *Los Angeles City Planning Website Redesign*

City Planning's new website, Planning4LA.org, was selected as a finalist in the category of web design. Planning4LA.org gathers everything Angelenos need to stay informed about and participate in the planning process, using graphic elements and clear prose to explain the Department's policies and work programs. The new website also incorporates the use of interactive GIS maps and other technological innovations.

## Graphic, Print Design, or Illustration (Finalist)

### *Downtown Community Plan*

The Downtown Community Plan was a finalist for best graphic, print design, or illustration. City Planning's Graphics team developed an extensive visual guide to represent the plan's vision for Downtown, helping residents picture how the new zoning tools introduced by the proposal would accommodate future jobs and housing.







# ELECTED OFFICIALS\*

- Eric Garcetti, Mayor

Mike Feuer, City Attorney

Ron Galperin, City Controller

Gilbert Cedillo, Council District 1

Paul Krekorian, Council District 2

Bob Blumenfield, Council District 3

Nithya Raman, Council District 4

Paul Koretz, Council District 5

Nury Martinez, Council District 6
- Monica Rodriguez, Council District 7

Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Council District 8

Curren D. Price, Jr., Council District 9

Mark Ridley Thomas, Council District 10

Mike Bonin, Council District 11

John S. Lee, Council District 12

Mitch O’Farrell, Council District 13

Kevin de León, Council District 14

Joe Buscaino, Council District 15

## COMMISSIONERS

- City Planning Commission**

Samantha Millman, President

Caroline Choe, Vice President

David H. Ambroz

Jenna Hornstock

Helen Leung

Yvette Lopez-Ledesma

Karen E. Mack

Dana M. Perlman

Ajay Relan
- Cultural Heritage Commission**

Richard Barron, President

Gail Kennard, Vice President

Pilar Buelna

Diane Kanner

Barry Milofsky

## AREA PLANNING COMMISSIONS

- North Valley**

Eric Nam, President

Martina Diaz, Vice President

Araz Parseghian

Victor Sampson

Vacant
- South Valley**

Mark Dierking, President

Lydia Drew Mather, Vice President

Rebecca Beatty

Anna Menedjian

Juana Torres
- West Los Angeles**

Michael Newhouse, President

Lisa Waltz Morocco, Vice President

Alexis Laing

Esther Margulies

Adele Yellin
- Central Los Angeles**

Oliver DelGado, President

Ilissa Gold, Vice President

Jennifer Chung-Kim

Maleena Lawrence

Adrienne Lindgren
- East Los Angeles**

Jacob Stevens, President

Denise Campos, Vice President

Christopher Arellano

Rudy Espinoza

Sarah Rascon
- South Los Angeles**

Eric D. Bates, President

Gail Willis, Vice President

Antoinette Anderson

Jaqueline Orozco

Stevie Stern
- Harbor**

Esther Hatch, President

Mona Sutton, Vice President

John Bagakis

Mitchell Harmatz

Amber Sheikh Ginsberg

\* These are the elected officials and commissioners as of March 1, 2021.





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Planning4LA.org

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#### Credits

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This report is published annually by City Planning. Facts and figures cover January 1 through December 31, 2020, unless indicated otherwise. Email questions and comments to [planning.media@lacity.org](mailto:planning.media@lacity.org).

*Paul B. Miller*  
2020  
THE WALL THAT DIVIDES US