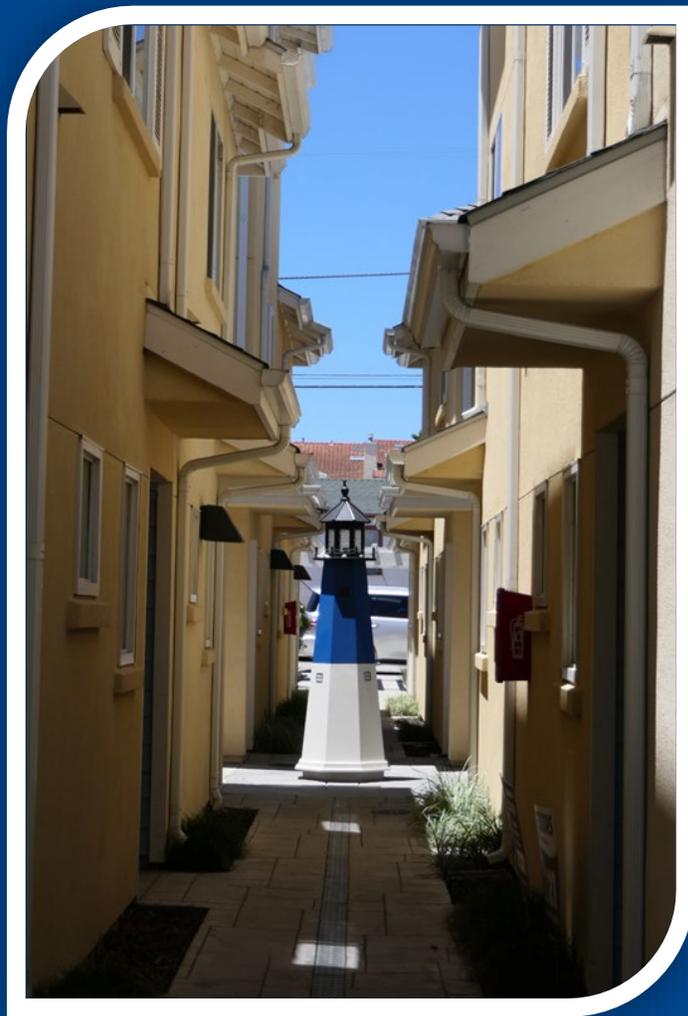


# SMART GROWTH PLANNING & PERMITTING IN THE COASTAL ZONE



*Pismo Creek Bungalows, courtesy of Peoples' Self Help Housing*

California Coastal Commission

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## 1. Key Takeaways

The primary takeaways of this smart growth guidance memo can be summarized as follows:

- Smart growth is a key strategy for achieving the statewide goal of carbon neutrality by 2045. The Commission and local governments can play an important role in achieving this goal in the coastal zone. (See [Sections 2 and 4](#))
- Smart growth is also a key strategy for addressing the disproportionate effects that climate change has on environmental justice communities. (See [Sections 4, 6, and 6.3](#))
- Smart growth principles align and intersect with Coastal Act mandates such as those relating to concentrating development, reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and advancing environmental justice. (See [Sections 2 and 3.1](#))
- There is an ever-growing list of state laws intended to facilitate methods for achieving the state's GHG emission reduction targets that need to be addressed in LCP amendments to harmonize with Coastal Act mandates. (See [Section 3.3](#))
- Smart growth strategies should be incorporated into certified LCPs and applied in CDP reviews in a manner that is suited to the local context and consistent with the Coastal Act. (See [Section 4](#))
- Past Commission actions can provide insight into how the Commission has harmonized smart growth-related LCP amendments and CDP applications with Coastal Act requirements in the past. (See [Section 5](#))
- Proactively updating LCPs to align with the smart growth and climate resiliency goals of other planning documents (e.g., general plans, climate action plans, sustainable communities strategies) will help local governments to ensure that smart growth strategies become routinely considered and consistently applied in all local planning efforts. (See [Section 6.1](#))
- When reviewing an LCP amendment or CDP application, it is important for Coastal Act decision makers to be able to identify 1) proposed smart growth strategies, 2) opportunities to enhance an LCP amendment or development project using smart growth strategies, 3) the range of potential Coastal Act issues associated with those strategies, and 4) information needs to determine how to address those issues. (See [Section 6.2](#))
- Smart growth also has the potential to raise Coastal Act consistency issues and impact coastal resources. It is always important to analyze Coastal Act consistency on a case-by-case basis to consider the project details, setting, and applicable Coastal Act issues. (See [Section 6.3](#))
- Early consultation with the Commission's staff is imperative to the success of any smart growth planning or permitting project in the coastal zone. (See [Section 6.4](#))

## 2. Introduction & Purpose

Smart growth is becoming widely recognized and applied through state, regional, and local planning efforts as a key strategy for achieving the state's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals, slowing the pace of climate change, and addressing the state's housing crisis. In the coastal zone, smart growth can further Coastal Act goals of improving climate change resiliency and reducing the impacts that climate change is having on coastal resources and public coastal access. Smart growth can support low-income residents and communities of color by addressing historic inequities resulting from decades of exclusionary housing practices, existing disproportionate burdens, and disproportionate climate change impacts on these environmental justice communities. The Commission and local governments can play a significant role in furthering these efforts by incorporating and facilitating smart growth in coastal planning and permitting.

In this memo, **smart growth** is generally defined as *a set of development and conservation strategies that lead to sustainable urban and rural growth through concentrating development, preserving open space, reducing vehicle dependency, and maximizing diversity and equity.*

The term “**environmental justice communities**” refers to low-income communities, communities of color, and other underrepresented populations with higher exposure and/or sensitivity to climate change impacts due to historical marginalization, discriminatory land use practices, and/or less capacity to mitigate adverse impacts.

This memorandum is intended to provide an overview of what smart growth means in the Coastal Act context and discuss how Commission and local government staff can apply smart growth principles to meet land use planning and coastal resource protection requirements in the Coastal Act. More broadly, the goals of this memo are to discuss how the Commission and local governments can support and enhance smart growth planning that leads to GHG emission reductions and advances environmental justice.

To achieve these goals, this memorandum includes a review of relevant Coastal Act policies, state laws, and local and regional planning efforts that relate to smart growth; discussion of various smart growth concepts and strategies through a Coastal Act lens; examples of past Commission actions related to smart growth; and options for how to address common challenges with applying smart growth strategies in the coastal zone in a manner consistent with the Coastal Act.

This memo is intended for use by the Commission, local governments, CDP applicants, and others when developing or reviewing coastal development permits (CDP) and local coastal program (LCP) amendments. It also aligns with the Commission's [Sustainability Principles](#), which encourage smart growth strategies as a way to advance climate change mitigation, coastal resiliency, and environmental justice.

The [Smart Growth Network](#), a partnership of government, business, and civic organizations that support smart growth, is widely recognized for developing ten principles that provide a framework for smart growth planning and development. These ten smart growth principles include:

**Smart Growth Network's 10 Principles of Smart Growth**

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

As discussed further below, these ten principles align with Coastal Act policies in various ways and can be applied through a Coastal Act lens to improve smart growth planning and development in the coastal zone.

### 3. Background

This section describes Coastal Act policies and Commission documents, state legislation, and local, regional, and state planning efforts that are connected to smart growth planning and development.

#### 3.1 Relevant Coastal Act Policies

The Coastal Act contains a number of forward-looking policies that were a forerunner of smart growth concepts and strategies. These policies generally seek to balance the need to protect coastal resources with the need to provide development and infrastructure to serve residents and visitors by limiting the environmental impacts of such development and infrastructure in the coastal zone. As a result, much of California's coastline has been developed in concentrated land use patterns rather than uncontrolled suburban sprawl.

The most prominent smart growth policy, **Coastal Act Section 30250**, requires new development (with the exception of hazardous industrial development) to be located within or in close proximity to existing developed areas with adequate public services to accommodate the new development or, if that is not feasible, in other areas with adequate public services and where it will not have significant adverse effects on coastal resources. By encouraging this concentration of new development in existing urbanized or otherwise developed areas, Section 30250 serves to limit urban sprawl, encourage densification in appropriate urban settings, and protect undeveloped lands outside urban centers from conversion to urban uses. Relatedly, **Section 30254** limits Highway 1 to a scenic two-lane road, which has helped to concentrate development in

more urban areas and prevent lane expansions of Highway 1 that could increase vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) and GHG emissions.

Another area of smart growth principles that overlaps with the Coastal Act relates to improving multi-modal access and providing a variety of transportation choices. **Coastal Act Section 30252** specifically states that new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by facilitating public transit services, providing commercial facilities in residential and other areas, providing non-automobile circulation options, providing adequate parking or access via public transit, assuring the potential for public transit with new high-density uses, and providing sufficient recreational facilities to not overload nearby coastal recreation areas. Section 30252 thus complements Section 30250 with its emphasis on providing a variety of non-automobile transportation opportunities and a mix of services and land uses to reduce vehicle dependency in concentrated developed areas. Section 30252 also complements **Coastal Act Section 30210** and other Coastal Act provisions that call for maximizing public access to the coast for all people, which can be achieved in part through facilitation of multi-modal transportation options.

Smart growth strategies also relate to and can facilitate implementation of **Coastal Act Section 30253**. This section requires new development to minimize risk to life and property in environmentally hazardous areas, minimize VMT and energy consumption, and be consistent with requirements imposed by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). First, minimizing risk in hazardous areas often translates to concentrating new development away from high fire, flood, and geologic hazard areas, which relates to Section 30250 provisions and smart growth principles for limiting urban sprawl. Second, reducing VMT directly connects to Coastal Act requirements to concentrate development in existing developed areas and provide a mix of land uses and transportation options in those areas. As the transportation sector (gas-powered vehicles in particular) is currently responsible for nearly half of California's GHG emissions, applying Section 30253 to reduce VMT and associated GHG emissions through planning and permitting is crucial to achieving effective climate change mitigation and resiliency statewide (CARB, 2022). Third, at the land use scale, minimizing energy consumption is a by-product of concentrating development and reducing VMT as they result in a reduced reliance on vehicles and petroleum. Lastly, CARB is responsible for guiding the state's path forward to carbon neutrality through five-year updates to the [Climate Change Scoping Plan](#), which translates the latest climate science and projection modeling into a range of economically and technologically feasible actions to achieve GHG reduction targets. Thus, as CARB has set broad goals to reduce GHG emissions and achieve carbon neutrality (as required by state legislation), Section 30253(c) can be applied to require development to reduce GHG emissions consistent with CARB's Scoping Plans. Smart growth strategies are a necessary and effective means to achieve those emission goals.

Smart growth principles related to concentrating development and protecting open space, farmlands, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas also relate to a number of other Coastal Act policies. Specifically, these include Coastal Act policies requiring protections for the marine environment, environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA), coastal waters, agricultural lands, timberlands, and scenic coastal areas

**(Coastal Act Sections 30230, 30231, 30233, 30240, 30241, 30242, 30243, 30251, and 30253(e))**. By concentrating new development in existing developed areas, natural and working lands can be protected for their carbon sequestration and other values. In many areas of the coast, especially northern California, the protection of existing agricultural lands has been critical in concentrating development and preserving open space. Coastal visual protections have also served to preserve areas of natural beauty. Importantly, Coastal Act provisions related to ESHA and wetlands have frequently been applied to create, enhance, and restore natural and working lands, resulting in similar carbon sequestration and smart growth benefits.

Smart growth principles also overlap with **Coastal Act Section 30270**, which requires the Commission to take the effects of sea level rise into account in planning and permitting activities. As sea level rise is one of the many adverse results of anthropogenic GHG emissions and associated global temperature increases, it is crucial for the Commission and local governments to consider land use policy and development decisions that will minimize GHG emissions, and therefore minimize sea level rise and its related impacts to coastal resources. As discussed further in this guidance, this may include policies, development standards, permit processes, or other incentives that facilitate smart growth.

Smart growth principles also intersect with Commission goals for environmental justice. **Coastal Act Section 30013** requires that the Coastal Act shall be applied in a manner that advances environmental justice and equity, and **Coastal Act Section 30604(h)** provides the Commission and local governments with the authority to consider environmental justice and equitable distribution of environmental benefits in CDP actions. Together, these policies relate to smart growth strategies that support public participation, healthy and inclusive communities, diverse housing options, and fair development decisions. More broadly, these policies support the need to mitigate the existing disproportionate burdens and disproportionate impacts from climate change on environmental justice communities.

Finally, although the Legislature removed the Coastal Act mandate to protect and provide for affordable housing in 1981, the Commission retained the authority and duty to encourage affordable housing. **Coastal Act Section 30007** states that the Coastal Act does not exempt local governments from meeting state and federal requirements to provide lower income housing, replacement housing, relocation benefits, or other housing obligations. Although **Coastal Act Section 30500.1** states that no LCP shall be required to include housing policies and programs, **Coastal Act Section 30604(f) and (g)** states that the Commission shall encourage housing opportunities for persons of low and moderate income and that it is important for the Commission to encourage the protection of existing and the provision of new affordable housing opportunities for persons of low and moderate income in the coastal zone.

**Table 1** provides examples of how the Smart Growth Network's ten smart growth principles can connect to Coastal Act policies. These connections fall into three high-level topics: concentrating development, reducing VMT, and advancing environmental justice.

Smart Growth Network's 10 Principles of Smart Growth	Related Coastal Act Policies
<p><b>Green = Advancing EJ    Blue = Concentrating development    Orange = Reducing VMT</b></p>	
1. Mix land uses	§§ 30210, 30250, 30252, 30253(d)
2. Take advantage of compact building design	§§ 30250, 30252, 30253(d)
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices	§§ 30007, 30210, 30604(f), (g), (h)
4. Create walkable neighborhoods	§§ 30210, 30250, 30252, 30253(d)
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place	§§ 30250, 30251, 30252, 30253(e)
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas	§§ 30230, 30231, 30233, 30240, 30241, 30242, 30243, 30250, 30254, 30270
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities	§§ 30210, 30250, 30252, 30253(d), 30254
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices	§§ 30210, 30252, 30253(d)
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective	§§ 30013, 30604(h), 30610, 30624, 30624.7
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions	§§ 30013, 30210, 30503, 30604(h)

Table 1: Relationship between Smart Growth Principles and Coastal Act Policies

### 3.2 Relevant Commission Documents

The Commission is also supportive of smart growth principles and practices, as explained through policy documents and guidance memorandums, including:

<p><b><u>2021-2025 Strategic Plan</u></b></p> <p>Particularly Objective 4.5, calling for Commission actions to protect coastal resources and enhance coastal resiliency to climate change through GHG reduction measures in LCPs, CDPs, and other efforts</p>	<p><b><u>Sustainability Principles (2023)</u></b></p> <p>Encouraging smart growth practices as a way to advance climate change mitigation, coastal resiliency, and environmental justice</p>
<p><b><u>Environmental Justice Policy (2019)</u></b></p> <p>Describing the Commission's commitment to providing a wide range of housing types and affordability levels to maximize public access to the coast for all people</p>	<p><b><u>LCP Update Guide (Section 1) (2017)</u></b></p> <p>Encouraging LCPs to be updated with policies that expand non-automotive transportation opportunities and California Coastal Trail connectivity</p>

<p><a href="#"><u>LCP Update Guide (Section 6) (2013)</u></a></p> <p>Encouraging LCPs to be updated with policies that further smart growth strategies in a manner compliant with the Coastal Act</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Resources for Addressing Environmental Justice through Local Coastal Programs (2024)</u></a></p> <p>Provides background on the historical context of environmental justice; information on how changes in the Coastal Act and adoption of the Commission’s EJ Policy intersect with LCPs; and examples and best practices on priority topic areas, such as ways to integrate environmental justice into LCPs, meaningful engagement with environmental justice communities, and equitable coastal access</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Updated Guidance Memo on the Implementation of New ADU Laws (2022)</u></a></p> <p>Discussing how accessory dwelling unit (ADU) laws can be harmonized with Coastal Act obligations to promote more affordable coastal housing options</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Implementation of New SB 9 Housing Laws in Sea Level Rise Vulnerable Areas Memo (2022)</u></a></p> <p>Discussing how housing laws added by SB 9 (2021) can be harmonized with Coastal Act obligations to consider where increasing residential density may or may not be appropriate in areas vulnerable to sea level rise</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Implementation of AB 2097 Relating to Minimum Parking Requirements Near Major Transit Stops (2023)</u></a></p> <p>Discussing application of AB 2097 (2022) in the coastal zone and alternatives to minimum vehicle parking requirements that can harmonize Coastal Act and LCP obligations to maximize coastal access opportunities</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance (2018 Science Update)</u></a></p> <p>Recognizing smart growth as a sea level rise adaptation strategy by concentrating new or relocating existing development away from coastal hazard areas</p>

### 3.3 Relevant State Laws and State, Regional, and Local Planning Efforts

**State Legislation.** The State of California has passed multiple pieces of major legislation with ambitious targets to reduce the GHG emissions that drive the current climate trajectories. In 2006, the state enacted the landmark AB 32 Global Warming Solutions Act, which required a reduction in GHG emissions to the 1990 level by 2020 and to 80 percent below the 1990 level by 2050 ([Nunez, Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006](#)). With the 2020 goal achieved, a new interim target set by SB 32 requires a 40 percent reduction below the 1990 level by 2030 ([Pavley, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2016](#)). Most recently and progressively, California set a goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 paired with a requirement to reduce GHGs to at least 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045 ([AB 1279, 2022](#)). Emerging from these big-picture emission reduction targets is an ever-growing list of laws intended to facilitate methods for achieving them. Although most of these laws do not directly amend the Coastal Act or

regulate the Commission, they do set forth numerous requirements for local governments to address in LCP amendments or local permit actions, and these requirements may also apply to CDP applicants. Local governments may need to consider how to harmonize these laws with Coastal Act requirements, and in some cases, may need to update their LCPs to implement the requirements of state law.<sup>2</sup> Many of these laws also set broad policy goals that can be read in conjunction with the Coastal Act and applied to support smart growth strategies that further Coastal Act mandates. State legislation that enables smart growth planning and development is grouped by topic in [Appendix 1](#) of the Appendix.

**State, Regional, and Local Planning Efforts.** There are a number of state, regional, and local plans that support smart growth in alignment with or to carry out the state legislation discussed above. These plans are grouped by planning body in [Appendix 2](#) of the Appendix. LCPs can be updated to incorporate smart growth policies and strategies from these plans where they are consistent with the Coastal Act to help ensure effective implementation at the development project level through CDP review. [Section 6.1 Plan Alignment](#) below provides recommendations for aligning other smart growth-related plans with LCPs.

#### 4. Smart Growth Topics through a Coastal Act Lens

This section reviews three key smart growth topics through a Coastal Act lens: 1) concentrating development, 2) reducing VMT, and 3) advancing environmental justice.



For each topic, there is a subsection with an overview of related smart growth strategies and a subsection with an overview of related Coastal Act co-benefits. Some examples of past Commission actions are provided alongside the relevant smart growth strategy, and other cross-cutting examples of past Commission actions that involved multiple smart growth strategies are provided in [Section 5 Examples of Past Commission Actions](#) below. Overall, these strategies may be considered for Commission and local government review of permit applications, LCP updates or amendments, or future policy development. Specific Coastal Act recommendations and common challenges related to

<sup>2</sup> For example, SB 9 requires local governments to ministerially consider lot splits and proposals to develop 1-2 residential units in the coastal zone. The Commission's [Implementation of New SB 9 Housing Laws in Sea Level Rise Vulnerable Areas Memo](#) recommends that local governments update their LCPs to harmonize SB 9 and Coastal Act requirements. See [Section 4.2.1](#) and [Appendix 1](#) for more information. Some laws may impact how local governments can implement their LCPs, such as [AB 2097](#). For more information on AB 2097, see the Commission's [Implementation of AB 2097 Relating to Minimum Parking Requirements Near Major Transit Stops](#) and [Sections 4.2.1](#) and [6.3](#), and [Appendix 1](#).

these smart growth topics are primarily addressed in [Section 6 Coastal Act Considerations and Recommendations](#) below.

#### **4.1 Concentrating Development**

A historic emphasis on the single-family dwelling as the ideal American home has facilitated suburban subdivisions and sprawl across the United States. With the expansion of highway systems and the growing popularity of the private car following the industrial revolution, people were able to live in suburban communities with larger single-family lots that were farther away from jobs, public transit options, and urban centers. This sprawl has led to environmental degradation and fragmentation, inefficiencies in infrastructure and transportation systems, and a heavy reliance on automobiles, which directly contributes to GHG emissions and climate change.

More recent urban planning practices have recognized the impacts of suburban sprawl and are moving towards smart growth practices that focus development towards urban centers. While there is significant work left to do, this practice is particularly supported in the California coastal zone, where the Coastal Act generally requires new development to be concentrated in existing developed areas with adequate public services (Coastal Act Section 30250). Statewide, concentrating development is acknowledged as a crucial strategy for reducing GHG emissions and lessening the widespread impacts of climate change, including through CARB's [2022 Scoping Plan](#) and numerous legislative actions that facilitate and incentivize new development in urban infill areas.

A number of core smart growth principles are key to concentrating development, including mixing land uses, taking advantage of compact building designs, creating walkable neighborhoods, and directing development towards existing communities. There are many different policy, zoning, and other implementation tools focused around concentrating development that can support these smart growth principles in the coastal zone, as discussed further below.

##### **4.1.1 Smart Growth Strategies for Concentrating Development**

The following section highlights smart growth strategies related to concentrating development that may be relevant to Commission and local government CDP reviews or LCP planning efforts.

#### **Accessory Dwelling Units**

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are smaller residences that can be accommodated on sites with existing single- or multi-family residential developments. ADUs can be detached or attached to the primary structure or can be converted from habitable or non-habitable space. Junior ADUs (JADUs) are a type of ADU that are converted from habitable space with a smaller size limit. When used for housing, ADUs and JADUs help to increase housing stock in existing neighborhoods that are already serviced by roads, water, and sewer infrastructure. As such, ADUs and JADUs can facilitate infill development and concentrate new residential units in existing developed areas. Due to their smaller size and use of existing infrastructure, ADUs and JADUs can also be more cost effective to construct and thus can be more affordable to rent. Many local jurisdictions have updated their LCPs to reflect the standards and streamlining provided

by new state ADU law in a manner consistent with Coastal Act. For example, see [City of Santa Cruz LCP No. LCP- 3-STC-20-0015-1-Part A \(Accessory Dwelling Units\)](#). Also see the Commission's [Implementation of New ADU Laws Memo](#) for more guidance on this topic.

### **Adaptive Reuse**

Adaptive reuse is a type of redevelopment or change of land use that transforms obsolete or historic structures from their original or most recent use to a new use. Examples include adapting vacant office buildings into residential buildings, or adapting old manufacturing sites or warehouses into restaurants, apartments, or retail space. Adaptive reuse promotes development within already developed areas and can help reduce vehicle dependency by locating desirable land uses near residential areas, job centers, public transportation, and community amenities. Local governments can incorporate standards into their LCPs that guide and facilitate adaptive reuse projects. For example, see City of Long Beach [LCP No. LCP-5-LOB-16-0004-1 \(Adaptive Reuse Standards\)](#).

### **Affordable Housing**

One of the ten smart growth principles is to create a range of housing opportunities and choices. Affordable housing is a particularly important type of housing that is made available to families at certain income levels (namely, extremely low, very low, low, or moderate income).<sup>3</sup> Local jurisdictions have obligations to plan for and facilitate a certain amount of affordable housing units through their housing elements, as guided by their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and overseen by the California Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD). Providing affordable housing in urban and suburban areas allows for people of different socioeconomic backgrounds to live in the same communities, contribute to the local economy and culture, and have equitable access to neighborhood amenities, environmental benefits, job centers, transit options, and more. Furthermore, providing affordable housing near transit and jobs reduces the need to drive, thereby reducing VMT and associated GHG emissions.

There are a variety of ways that local governments can provide for and incentivize affordable housing. For example, local governments may have inclusionary housing requirements and density bonus provisions in their certified LCP. Inclusionary housing requirements generally require developers to set aside a certain percentage of new housing developments or subdivisions of a certain size for lower income residents; density bonus provisions are discussed below. LCP policies and regulations can also encourage more affordable housing through overlay zones (discussed below), permit streamlining options, reduced development standards such as decreased parking requirements, and incentives such as reduced development impact fees for affordable housing. For example, see [City of San Diego LCP No. LCP-6-SAN-18-0048-1 \(Affordable Housing Regulations\)](#). An informational briefing on housing held at the Commission's [December 14, 2023 hearing](#) includes additional information and

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<sup>3</sup> For additional information on State income limits and rents, see HCD's [Income Limits](#) website.

examples on how local governments in the coastal zone can encourage housing.<sup>4</sup> The Commission's [Affordable Housing](#) webpage provides additional information and examples on housing in the coastal zone.

### **Density Bonus**

Density bonuses incentivize developers to build housing by waiving certain development standards for projects that provide a certain percentage of housing for moderate and lower income households or certain demographics such as seniors. The [State Density Bonus Law \(DBL\)](#), codified at Government Code Section 65915, allows developers to build a residential or mixed-use housing project at a higher density than is permitted by the underlying zoning when the project includes a certain percentage of affordable housing, senior housing, common interest development, transitional housing, or student housing. In addition, DBL requires a city or county to provide a certain number of “incentives” or “concessions” to any project that qualifies for a density bonus, depending on the percentage of affordable units provided. Incentives/concessions are defined jointly to include reductions in height, setback, square footage, and parking requirements; approval of mixed-use zoning; or any other proposal that would enhance the financial viability of the project. A developer is also entitled to have any development standard waived or reduced in order to accommodate any density bonus or incentive/concession allowed by DBL. Examples of waivable development standards include lot coverage, open space requirements, public amenities, setbacks, and architectural design standards. DBL requires local governments to adopt an ordinance specifying how they will comply with the law, which can be integrated into LCPs to ensure such standards are applied in the coastal zone in harmony with Coastal Act obligations. For example, see City of Carlsbad [LCP Amendment No. LCP-6-CAR-20-0078-2 \(Density Bonus Update\)](#).

### **Increased Densities (Upzoning)**

Increasing the allowable density of an area is another strategy to concentrate development. This strategy is also called upzoning, where certain lands or parcels are changed to a different zoning district that allows for greater building density. For example, a zone can be changed from a single-family residential to a multi-family residential zone or from a commercial zone to a mixed-use zone to allow developers to build more housing units in a certain area. Upzoning can also be implemented through an overlay zone that increases density allowances beyond that of the underlying zoning district. As with concentrating development in general, upzoning is most appropriate in areas near transit options, job centers, and neighborhood services. Upzoning can also trigger inclusionary housing requirements, which helps to ensure that affordable housing is available to communities. Local governments often consider and implement upzoning to meet their RHNA requirements, which requires an LCP amendment for coastal zone areas. For example, see [City of Encinitas LCP No. LCP-6-ENC-19-0014-1 \(Housing Element Update\)](#).

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<sup>4</sup> A video recording of the informational briefing on housing, including panelist presentations is available on the Cal-Span archives [here](#).

## Lot Retirement Programs

Lot retirement programs are a way to reduce or mitigate the development impacts associated with new subdivisions, particularly areas not near urban cores. To achieve this, lot retirement programs generally require an equivalent number of legal parcels to be permanently retired from development potential as the number of new parcels that are proposed to be created through a lot split or subdivision. Lots selected for retirement of development potential typically contain sensitive habitat areas, environmentally hazardous areas, or other coastal resource constraints. Thus, lot retirement programs serve to protect and minimize impacts to coastal resources and concentrate development away from such areas. Lot retirement programs can also function as a growth control strategy to limit the cumulative impacts of new developable lots on public services (e.g., wastewater treatment) and roadway capacity. For example, see [City of Half Moon Bay Land Use Plan \(LUP\) Policy #2-21](#).

## Lot Splits

A lot split is a subdivision that divides a single lot into multiple lots. Lot splits are a form of development in the coastal zone that have historically been used to increase single-family housing, especially in areas with large agricultural parcels. In the coastal zone, lot splits typically require a CDP and are reviewed to ensure that the split is consistent with the Coastal Act and not, for example, increasing single-family housing at the expense of natural resources or agricultural lands. In some cases, lot splits can help transform large single-family zoned parcels into multiple parcels to allow increased density in areas where densification is appropriate, such as near transit stops or job centers, and thus can be used as a smart growth strategy. Recent legislation provides for ministerial reviews of lot splits in single-family residential zones within designated urban areas. LCPs can include standards for such lot splits in the coastal zone in a manner consistent with the Coastal Act. For example, see [City of Pismo Beach LCP No. LCP-3-PSB-22-0012-1 \(SB 9\)](#). Also see the Commission's [Implementation of New SB 9 Housing Laws in Sea Level Rise Vulnerable Areas Memo](#) (2022) for more guidance on this topic.

## Minimum Densities

Minimum densities, typically defined by number of units per acre, can be established for land use designations or zoning districts to set a floor for the amount of new development that can occur. Setting minimum densities can therefore ensure efficient use of land with new development and limit the amount of new low-density, suburban-style development in areas that are appropriate for medium or high-density development. A typical example of this is prohibiting new single-family residences in areas zoned for multi-family housing. Minimum density requirements can help create vibrant, pedestrian-oriented communities by encouraging densification in appropriate locations. For an example of incorporating minimum densities into a certified LCP, see [City of Carlsbad LCP No. CAR-MAJ-3-12A \(Minimum Densities\)](#).

## **Mixed-Use Zoning**

Mixed-use zoning directly supports the smart growth principle of mixing land uses. Mixed-use zoning can allow for multiple functions within a building, set of buildings, or area instead of single-use development that traditionally separates housing from jobs and commercial centers. Mixed-use zoning typically allows a blend of residential and non-residential uses such as office, retail, manufacturing, restaurant, or public services. Mixed-use development can promote live-work spaces, reduce urban sprawl and vehicle dependency, and enhance the community feel of the area. Mixed-use zones are often appropriate in downtown areas and in transitional areas between commercial centers and neighborhoods where residential uses can be integrated immediately adjacent to or within walking distance of goods and services. Local governments can establish different types and areas of mixed-use zoning to meet development needs and fit the local context through LCP maps, land use designations, and zoning district provisions. For example, see [City of San Diego LCP No. LCP-6-SAN-19-0163-3 \(Mixed-Use Zones\)](#).

## **Overlay Districts**

An overlay district is an additional zoning district that is superimposed over one or more zoning districts. Overlay districts, also called overlay zones, are used to provide additional permitted land uses, standards, or regulations to an area(s) which also have underlying base zones and base zoning regulations. The additional standards can be area-specific to protect unique resources such as ESHA, or can be used to promote residential development, affordable housing, workforce housing, visitor serving uses, and more. For an example of incorporating an overlay district into a certified LCP, see [City of Pismo Beach LCP No. LCP-3-PSB-20-0037-1 \(Residential Very High Density Overlay\)](#).

## **Priority Development Areas**

Priority Development Areas (PDAs) are areas within communities that have been identified and approved by local governments for future growth. PDAs already have existing infrastructure including roads, transit, and utilities to support future growth. This land use strategy concentrates development, reduces vehicle dependency, minimizes development impacts on communities and the environment as a whole, and promotes equity by increasing access to housing, economic and cultural opportunities. Areas that meet certain criteria can be identified and designated as PDAs by local governments through their regional planning agency (for example, see MTC/ABAG's [Plan Bay Area 2050](#)), then incorporated into other planning documents including LCPs to facilitate growth within the PDA. Metropolitan planning organizations may also offer funding and technical assistance to local governments for PDA planning efforts.

## **Transfer of Development Rights Programs**

Transfer of development rights (TDR) programs, also known as transfer of development credit (TDC) programs, create a market for selling development rights from one area to another. The rights are transferred away from areas where the development or environmental impacts are undesirable (such as sensitive habitat areas, hazardous

areas, or prime agricultural lands) towards areas that are deemed able to accommodate more development with minimal environmental, social, and aesthetic impacts. TDR programs can therefore promote land preservation and steer development to areas appropriate for development and higher densities. Local governments can establish “donor” areas, where development rights would be transferred away from, and “receiver” areas, where development rights would be transferred to, in LCP maps and policies along with any accompanying concessions to accommodate the higher density in receiver areas. For example, see [City of Newport Beach LCP No. LCP-5-NPB-21-0036-1 Part D \(Transfer of Development Rights\)](#).

### **Transit-Oriented Development**

Transit-oriented development is a siting and design approach that focuses on creating vibrant communities around public transportation hubs such as train stations, bus stops, or other transportation centers. The primary goal of transit-oriented development is to maximize the convenience and accessibility of public transit while promoting mixed land uses that reduce automobile dependency and encourage walking, cycling, and the use of public transit. Key characteristics of transit-oriented development include close proximity to public transit, mixed land uses, higher density development, bicycle and pedestrian-friendly design elements (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike storage), reduced or shared vehicle parking, and a range of housing affordability to equitably distribute the environmental benefits of transit-oriented communities. Local governments can facilitate transit-oriented development by applying upzoning, overlays, street design standards, and other regulatory tools in certified LCPs within areas near public transportation hubs. For example, see [City of San Diego LCP No. LCP-6-SAN-19-0165-3 \(Balboa Avenue Station Specific Plan\)](#).

### **Transit Priority Areas**

Unlike PDAs that can be used by local governments as a planning and financing tool for smart growth, Transit Priority Areas (TPAs) are defined and regulated through state law. In accordance with [SB 743](#), TPAs are defined as a geographic area within one-half mile of an existing major transit stop or a planned major transit stop scheduled to be completed within the time horizon included in a Transportation Improvement Program or applicable regional transportation plan.<sup>5</sup> SB 743 allows for streamlined environmental review for certain types of infill development projects within TPAs. Local governments should update their LCPs to identify any qualifying TPAs and identify any potential Coastal Act concerns with projects that qualify for streamlining in coordination with Coastal Commission staff. For example, see [City of San Diego LCP No. LCP-6-SAN-19-0063-1 \(Transit Priority Area\)](#). Additional resources from the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research on how to implement SB 743 can be found [here](#).

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<sup>5</sup> “Major transit stop” is defined in Section 21155 of the Public Resources Code as an existing rail or bus rapid transit station; a ferry terminal served by either a bus or rail transit service; the intersection of two or more major bus routes with a frequency of service interval of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods; and major transit stops that are included in the applicable regional transportation plan.

## Urban/Rural Growth Boundary

An urban/rural growth boundary is a regulatory tool used to concentrate development in urban lands and protect rural areas, prime agricultural lands, and environmentally sensitive areas. An urban/rural growth boundary is an officially adopted and mapped line drawn between urban and rural lands indicating where the urban growth can occur, and where rural lands are protected. Public services like water and sewer connections are typically not provided outside of such boundaries, which helps to limit potential for suburban sprawl and related impacts. Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) have the authority to approve or deny all boundary changes proposed by individuals or other public agencies. Local governments can incorporate new or revised boundaries into LCP maps and policies to reinforce the concentration of development. Other types of boundaries or areas can also be mapped in LCPs to function as a proxy to urban growth boundaries. For instance, designations of agricultural lands or ESHA can function to restrain sprawl type development, and Section 30250 of the Coastal Act can apply through LCPs to concentrate development into urban areas away from those designated areas. Similarly, local governments can designate a city or town center, downtown area, or primary commercial corridor(s) where development is encouraged and incentivized. In any case, it is beneficial for smart growth to establish and retain a stable boundary between urban and rural lands. For example, see [County of Del Norte LCP Amendment No. DNC-MAJ-1-10, \(Extensions of Urban Services\)](#).

### 4.1.2 Coastal Act Co-Benefits of Concentrating Development

#### Natural Resource and Agricultural Land Protection

Concentrating development can help to protect natural and working lands that may contain coastal resources such as ESHA, coastal waters, agricultural lands, and timberlands, thereby avoiding significant disruption of vital habitats and conversion of agricultural lands to urban uses as mandated by Coastal Act Sections 30240 through 30243. In turn, this provides multiple benefits including protecting biodiversity, maintaining vital ecosystem services, and maintaining agricultural production. These coastal resources provide a multitude of ecosystem services and are protected under the Coastal Act for these reasons. For instance, wetlands and estuaries provide water and air filtration, recharge of groundwater resources, and habitat for flora and fauna; ESHAs support rare and especially valuable plant and wildlife species; and beach and dune systems provide both habitat and recreation opportunities and natural protection for upland areas against shoreline hazards. Protecting agricultural lands and timberlands against conversion to urban uses can also benefit the local economy and workforce and allow for locally sourced food and timber. Furthermore, protection of natural resource areas, agricultural lands (when properly managed), and timberlands advances climate mitigation by retaining lands that sequester carbon. Such undeveloped and protected lands will continue to capture and store carbon in organic matter and soils, while land disturbance can cause stored carbon to be released into the atmosphere. Concentrating development also ensures more lands are available for habitat restoration, which further enables carbon sequestration efforts. Overall, concentrating development serves to protect coastal resources and enhance climate resiliency.

## **Hazard Avoidance**

Concentrating development can have the co-benefit of minimizing environmental hazard risks, as required by Coastal Act Section 30253(a), provided that development is concentrated outside of such hazard areas. As noted above, the Commission's [Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance](#) (2018 Science Update) acknowledges smart growth as a sea level rise adaptation strategy as it can concentrate new or relocate existing development away from coastal hazard areas, thereby reducing the risks that sea level rise can pose to new coastal development. This same concept can apply to other environmental hazards including wildfire, flooding, groundwater rise, tsunamis, landslides, coastal erosion, and earthquakes. Concentrating development outside of hazard areas can also improve community resilience by avoiding the need for future development relocation or managed retreat, leaving undeveloped lands for natural or engineered systems to act as hazard protection buffers, protecting vulnerable communities, and reducing the public investments needed to protect or maintain assets and infrastructure that are exposed to natural hazards and may become more exposed with climate change and sea level rise.

## **Reduced Energy Consumption**

Another co-benefit of concentrating development is reduced energy consumption as required by Coastal Act Section 30253(d). Communities with compact designs require less energy for transportation and buildings. Concentrating residential, commercial, and industrial development reduces the overall need for transportation, which reduces VMTs—an important smart growth and Coastal Act goal discussed in the following section. Additionally, about 5% of energy is lost in transmission annually and the amount lost increases the further energy is transmitted.<sup>6</sup> Concentrating development reduces the distance energy would need to travel to power new homes and buildings, and thus can reduce the amount of energy lost. Construction-related energy consumption can also be reduced by utilizing existing infrastructure, therefore requiring less energy-intensive materials such as cement and taking advantage of the energy already consumed to construct the existing infrastructure. Concentrated development in multi-family structures can also reduce the amount of energy required to heat, cool, and light buildings by using energy-efficient building designs.

Reducing energy consumption also comes with several other co-benefits. In particular, less fossil fuel combustion from transportation, manufacturing, and construction reduces GHG emissions. This mitigates climate change and reduces air pollution, which is particularly important for environmental justice communities. Reducing energy demand also conserves water used in power plants and reduces household energy bill costs.

## **Environmental Justice and Concentrating Development Co-Benefits**

Addressing and advancing environmental justice is an important co-benefit of concentrating development, in alignment with Coastal Act Sections 30013 and 30604(h). The smart growth strategies discussed above can lead to more diverse and affordable housing opportunities, walkable neighborhood amenities and services,

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=105&t=3>

revitalization of underinvested or underserved communities, improved health outcomes, and expanded opportunities to access and recreate on the coast. In basic practice, when households can spend less money on housing and vehicles and less time commuting to jobs or accessing goods and services, there are increased opportunities to improve mental and physical health, spend money on necessities like food and childcare, seek education and career advancements, and achieve social and financial stability. These outcomes are supportive of Coastal Act goals to advance environmental justice and equity and to equitably distribute environmental benefits and burdens through planning and permitting decisions.

Expansion of affordable housing opportunities in the coastal zone is particularly important to address the state's current housing crisis and right the historic injustices of colonization and exclusionary housing practices that have led to displacement of California's Native American communities, people of color, and other marginalized populations. Due in part to these historic inequities, environmental justice communities bear a disproportionate burden of pollution and climate change impacts and have increased barriers to accessing, recreating, working, and living on the California coast.<sup>7</sup> As such, the Commission's [Environmental Justice Policy](#) (2019) recognizes that equitable access to the coast for all people is essential and that affordable housing plays an important role in that equitable access. Placing affordable housing near job and transit centers also reduces vehicle dependency and associated GHG emissions, which can help to reduce the overall burdens of climate change on environmental justice communities.

Addressing environmental justice concerns will only be a co-benefit of concentrating development if impacted communities are thoroughly considered and meaningfully included in planning and permitting decisions. Decision-makers should therefore be cognizant of potential negative impacts of smart growth strategies and conduct their decision-making processes on a foundation of environmental justice and equity. For instance, it may be inconsistent with the Coastal Act or other laws to site new development in existing developed areas that have known environmental or public health hazards without also considering ways to remediate such hazards.

Revitalizing existing neighborhoods and creating opportunities for new housing production may in some places inadvertently exacerbate gentrification and displace existing lower income residents. In some places, concentrating development can lead to an increase in the costs of housing and nearby goods and services. This can further exacerbate economic disparities and make it challenging for lower income households to afford basic necessities. Local governments could consider appropriate measures to prevent displacement, such as tenant protections, inclusionary housing requirements, and meaningful engagement of community members who are connected to local needs and challenges. Being aware of the potential for negative impacts is an important first step, and taking actions to thoroughly assess how those impacts can be avoided or mitigated in coordination with the potentially affected communities is critical to effective and equitable smart growth. Additional considerations and recommendations for

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<sup>7</sup> Additional information on this topic can be found in the Commission's [Report on the Historical Roots of Housing Inequity and Impacts on Coastal Zone Demographic Patterns](#), June 2022.

advancing environmental justice through smart growth planning are provided in [Section 4.3](#) and [Section 6.3](#) below.

## **4.2 Reducing VMT**

For the past century or so, U.S. transportation and development policies have emphasized travel through personal automobiles. Roads were designed and maintained based on standards that focused on automobile safety, maintaining traffic speeds, and expanding roadway and highway capacity to “relieve congestion,” which ultimately – and perhaps counterintuitively – facilitates more congestion because more people decide to drive once congestion is relieved. Cities and towns were designed to accommodate automobiles, with standards that required expansive areas of parking in new residential and commercial developments. More recent land use and transportation planning efforts, especially in California, have adopted smart growth principles that at least begin to encourage transportation that does not rely on personal automobiles and instead utilizes public transit, walking, cycling, and other forms of active transportation. Broadly, these principles are aimed at reducing our statewide VMTs, which is a transportation metric that attempts to reduce our reliance on personal automobiles. Reducing VMTs can reduce GHG emissions while building more livable and equitable communities. In 2013, SB 743 shifted CEQA review of a project’s impacts from analyzing level of service (LOS), which emphasized maintaining automobile speeds, to analyzing VMT. This metric provides a better understanding of a project’s impact on increasing overall automobile use and related environmental impacts.

A number of smart growth principles, if followed, reduce VMTs, including mixing land uses, designing compact and dense multi-use buildings, creating walkable neighborhoods, and providing a variety of transportation choices. Reducing VMTs is generally required by Coastal Act Section 30253 and aligns with Section 30252, which calls for provision of transit services, non-automobile circulation options, and commercial facilities within or near residential areas. Reducing VMTs and thereby GHG emissions also help reduce the broad impacts of climate change on coastal resources protected under the Coastal Act, including marine resources suffering from warmer and more acidic oceans, increasing coastal hazards associated with sea level rise, and the destruction of coastal habitats from extreme weather and storm events.

The following section highlights a number of policy, zoning, and other implementation tools focused on reducing VMT that can support smart growth at both the planning and project levels.

### **4.2.1 Smart Growth Strategies for Reducing VMT**

The following section highlights smart growth strategies related to reducing VMT that may be relevant for Commission and local government CDP reviews or LCP planning efforts. Commission and local government staff may also refer to [Caltrans’ repository of research result briefs](#), which summarize the findings of Caltrans research projects that cover many of the topics below.

## **Complete Streets**

Shifting transportation use from automobiles to other forms of transportation requires streets and roads that are safe and welcoming to non-automobile users. Complete streets are roadways designed and built to accommodate the needs of all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, public transit riders, and motorists of all ages and abilities. Complete streets are also intended to prioritize safety, accessibility, and connectivity and promote a balanced transportation system. By providing safe and connected multi-modal infrastructure like sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and public transportation facilities, complete streets encourage alternative modes of transportation and reduce VMT. [AB 1358](#) (2008), the “Complete Streets Act,” requires local governments to plan for multimodal transportation networks in any substantive updates to their general plans. Any updates or relevant amendments to certified LCPs should include complete street policies and ensure harmonization with Coastal Act requirements and facilitation at the project level. For a project example, see [CDP No. A-6-ENC-18-0019 \(City of Encinitas\)](#). Additional guidance for local governments on how to comply with AB 1358 can be found in OPR’s [General Plan Guidelines: Complete Streets and Circulation Elements](#) (2010).

## **Intermodal Network Connectivity**

Intermodal network connectivity refers to the integration and connectivity of various transportation modes within a certain region or jurisdiction. The goal of intermodal network connectivity is for different modes of transportation such as buses, trains, subways, bicycles, walking paths, and shared mobility services to be effectively linked to create a comprehensive transportation network. This connectivity allows people to easily transition between modes during a single trip, making it convenient and efficient to use a mix of transportation options and allowing for a reduced reliance on personal vehicles. Local governments can identify existing network connections and opportunities for improving connectivity through LCP maps and policies. For example, see [City of San Diego LCP No. LCP-6-CCP-16-0064-2 \(Downtown Mobility Plan\)](#).

## **Macro Transit**

Macro transit (also known as mass transit) includes public transportation systems and services such as buses, subways, commuter trains, light rails, or high-speed railways that facilitate significant passenger travel between and within major urban centers, typically spanning longer distances. Macro transit is often provided within or as a connection between job centers, popular visitor destinations, transit hubs, and high-density housing areas. Frequent, affordable, and conveniently located macro transit services can lead to a significant reduction of single person vehicle trips. Macro transit improvements can be supported through LCP policies and implemented at the project level. For example, see [CDP No. 6-16-0108 \(SANDAG\)](#).

## **Micro Transit**

Micro transit, as opposed to macro transit, refers to public transportation services such as shuttle buses, trolleys, vans, and jitneys that serve fewer passengers between common but typically shorter distance pick-up and drop-off points. Micro transit can help

fill in any gaps in macro transit systems to enhance intermodal network connectivity and may be especially fitting for rural and suburban areas that lack major public transportation infrastructure. Micro transit services may be provided “on-demand” through a smart phone application or regularly during peak periods like weekends, commuter hours, or summer months depending on the service locations, ridership demand, and program funding. Micro transit can be supported through LCP policies such as [City of Half Moon Bay LUP Policy #5-52](#), and implemented locally, such as through [Half Moon Bay’s SamTrans Ride Plus](#).

### **Multi-Modal Improvements**

Multi-modal improvements are any new or enhanced transportation infrastructure that provides for more than one mode of transportation within a public right-of-way or a development site and that specifically provides for non-automobile transportation. Multi-modal transportation primarily facilitates “active transportation,” which is traditionally considered to be non-motorized (e.g., cycling, walking, scooting, skating, and other non-motorized human powered transportation). E-Bikes and E-scooters are a more recent form of multi-modal transportation that blends motorized and non-motorized cycling transportation. Multi-modal transportation also includes the facilitation of public transit networks, including dedicated bus infrastructure or lanes and provisions for rail transportation. By encouraging active transportation and the use of shared public transit, multi-modal transportation projects reduce the use of personal vehicles and thereby reduce VMTs and GHGs. Active transportation also supports healthier lifestyles and more livable communities, while multi-modal improvements can make transportation networks more inclusive for communities from different socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby improving transportation equity. Multi-modal improvements are also key to complete streets designs and intermodal network connectivity. For an example of facilitating multi-modal improvements through a certified LCP, see [City of Pismo Beach LCP No. LCP-3-PSB-18-0076-2 Part B \(Circulation Element Update\)](#).

### **Reduced Parking Requirements**

Land use planning in the U.S. has a long history of “minimum parking requirements” that require new residential and commercial development to provide substantial automobile parking in development projects. However, minimum parking requirements can encourage urban sprawl, prioritize urban land use for parking rather than housing or commercial use, reduce the walkability of communities and make active transportation difficult. Minimum parking requirements effectively subsidize the cost of parking for drivers and shift it to developers and the community, and they make housing development more expensive—all of which contribute to climate change and greater environmental justice disparities.

More recently, many local communities and some states have moved to eliminate minimum parking requirements, which can generally be considered part of smart growth planning.<sup>8</sup> Reducing automobile parking requirements can encourage use of alternative modes of transportation, reduce automobile dependency and VMT, and allow space that would otherwise be occupied by automobile parking to be used for other purposes,

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<sup>8</sup> For examples, see <https://parkingreform.org/>

such as infill housing or mixed-use development. In 2023, California adopted [AB 2097](#) and public agencies are now prohibited from imposing minimum parking requirements on most types of development within one-half mile of a major transit stop. Eliminating minimum parking requirements can lead to an increased use of public transportation in those areas, thereby contributing to a reduction in VMTs and GHG emissions. However, the Coastal Act still requires new development to maximize public access and recreation opportunities, and parking currently plays a significant role in the implementation of those policies. The elimination of parking at commercial or residential developments may increase parking demand at nearby public access points; thus, proposals to reduce parking requirements also need to account for public access needs. Local governments are encouraged to update their LCPs to harmonize AB 2097 requirements with the Coastal Act as recommended in the Commission's [AB 2097 Memo](#) (2023). In reviews of permit applications or LCP updates, Commission and local government staff may consider some of the other multi-modal and non-automobile transportation options in this section as tools to ensure adequate coastal public access is balanced with reduced reliance on automobile parking. For example, see [City of Santa Cruz LCP No. LCP-3-STC-20-0040-1 Part A \(Parking Standards\)](#).

### **Shared Mobility**

Shared mobility refers to transportation services that allow multiple users to access and share a single vehicle or a pool of vehicles for their transportation needs. A wide variety of shared mobility services have emerged in recent years to address various user demands while aiming to decrease single-occupancy automobile trips and optimize transportation options without the burden of automobile ownership. Shared mobility can include ridesharing applications, carsharing services, electronic bicycle and scooter share programs, and shared autonomous vehicles. On-demand micro transit services can also be considered shared mobility. While shared mobility can help reduce overall VMT, successful implementation may depend on local regulations and existing transportation infrastructure. Commission and local government staff may consider provision of these shared mobility services in transportation projects or major commercial or residential developments, or through related LCP updates. For example, see the [City of Santa Barbara's Bike Share Pilot Program](#) (as upheld by the Commission in [Appeal No. A-4-SBC-21-0021](#)).

### **Street Design Standards**

Related to complete streets improvements, certain street design standards can help encourage multi-modal and active transportation to reduce VMTs and support smart growth. This may include:

- bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly features like sidewalks, crosswalks, and bicycle lanes with minimum widths for such features and protections (raised road edges, barriers, trees, bollards, etc.) that separate active users from the roadway;
- traffic-calming measures like speed limits, bulb-outs and other street design interventions, raised intersections, and narrower automobile travel lanes;
- complete streets design features that focus on safety and accessibility for all user groups;

- street parking standards that influence the use and availability of street parking, like time limits or angled versus parallel parking stalls; and
- green infrastructure features like street trees and bioswales that improve stormwater management and aesthetics.

While street design standards are more commonly adopted in local municipal code sections that are not part of certified LCPs, such standards can be supported through broader land use policies, zoning regulations, or design guidelines that are part of certified LCPs. For example, see Chapter 7: Mobility and Chapter 8: Design Standards and Guidelines of the City of Long Beach's [Southeast Area Specific Plan](#) (certified by the Commission via [LCP No. LCP-5-LOB-19-0008-1](#)).

### **Transportation Demand Management**

Transportation demand management (TDM) refers to a set of strategies that aim to reduce the single-occupancy vehicle trips that contribute to traffic congestion and GHG emissions by encouraging more sustainable transportation options. New high-occupancy developments or businesses with a significant number of employees can implement (or may be required to implement<sup>9</sup>) TDM programs to help reduce local traffic congestion and parking demand. Common strategies that may be part of a TDM program include subsidizing public transit costs, promoting carpooling or ridesharing, providing bicycle and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to encourage walking and biking, encouraging remote work options, and parking management (e.g., time limits or preferential parking) for rideshares to discourage excessive vehicle use. For an LCP example of establishing TDM protocols, see [City of Oceanside LCP No. LCP-6-OCN-20-0088-3 \(Climate Action Plan\)](#).

### **VMT Thresholds of Significance and VMT Mitigation**

SB 743 required a shift from using level of service (LOS) as the metric for measuring the environmental impact of new development to using VMT as the metric. Local governments, in their role as a lead agency for CEQA review, have the discretion to adopt a VMT threshold of significance to determine whether a project will have a significant impact on the environment. VMT thresholds of significance must promote the reduction of GHG emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses.<sup>10</sup> Relatedly, lead agencies must identify feasible mitigation measures for addressing any significant environmental impacts determined by using VMT thresholds of significance. OPR's [Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA](#) (2018) provides additional guidance on these topics. VMT mitigation can include many of the smart growth strategies mentioned above, such as provision of multi-modal improvements or transportation demand management programs. Local governments can incorporate VMT thresholds and mitigation requirements into their certified LCPs to harmonize CEQA standards with the Coastal Act mandate for new

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<sup>9</sup> See Cal. Health & Safety Code § 40717.9, which limits public agencies' ability to impose employee trip reduction programs.

<sup>10</sup> Section 21099 of the Public Resources Code; Governor's Office of Planning and Research, [Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA](#) (2018)

development to reduce VMT. For example, see [City of Redondo Beach LCP No. LCP-5-RDB-21-0061-1 \(VMT Analysis\)](#).

#### **4.2.2 Coastal Act Co-Benefits of Reducing VMT**

##### **Reduced Traffic Congestion & Improved Coastal Access**

In the coastal zone, reducing VMT can have the co-benefit of enhancing public access to the coast by reducing traffic congestion on coastal roads, as supported by Coastal Act Sections 30210 and 30252. A general reduction in the number of vehicles on the road can also lead to improved traffic flow, fewer delays, less concentrated rush hour traffic, and faster response times for emergency vehicles. Reduced traffic congestion also means improved LOS which, while no longer the standard metric for evaluating environmental impacts of new development for CEQA as required by SB 743, can still provide an important metric for evaluating the operating performance of transportation facilities. As discussed above, however, certain VMT reduction measures can have tradeoffs that negatively impact public access.

##### **Environmental Justice and Reducing VMT Co-Benefits**

As with concentrating development, reducing VMT can help address and advance environmental justice in alignment with Coastal Act Sections 30013 and 30604(h). The VMT-related smart growth strategies discussed above can lead to expanded transportation options for all kinds of roadway users, which improves equitable access to job centers, residential areas, education facilities, healthcare centers, and other essential services. Similar to the benefits of affordable housing, equitable access to affordable and safe transportation options can allow households to avoid the financial burdens associated with car ownership (such as high financial cost of maintenance, storage, and operation) and instead direct more resources towards necessities like food, housing, and childcare. Local governments can increase safety and health outcomes by improving pedestrian and public transit infrastructure, as well as implementing policies that slow traffic, enhance green spaces, and support community programming.<sup>11</sup> Local economies can also benefit from VMT reduction efforts, as transit-oriented development and walkable communities can enhance foot traffic for local businesses and improve health outcomes for low-income residents and populations of color.

Reducing VMT can also help to address the disproportionate impacts of air pollution on environmental justice communities. The legacy of discriminatory land use decisions in California, such as redlining and racially restrictive covenants, exclusionary zoning, predatory lending practices, and decisions to site highways and polluting industries in lower income communities and communities of color, continues to reverberate today as these communities are disproportionately burdened by the impacts of air pollution. Black, Latino, and Asian people in California today are exposed to PM 2.5 pollution that

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<sup>11</sup> Wang, M. L., Narcisse, M. R., & McElfish, P. A. (2022). Higher walkability associated with increased physical activity and reduced obesity among United States adults. *Obesity*, [Online First], <https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.23634>.

is 43, 39, and 21 percent higher, respectively, than for white people.<sup>12</sup> The risk of asthma-related emergency department visits is substantially higher in neighborhoods that were previously redlined than other neighborhoods that were not.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the lowest-income households in California are in communities where PM 2.5 pollution is 10 percent higher than the state average.<sup>14</sup> Transportation accounts for about 80% of all harmful air pollution in California.<sup>15</sup> Fossil fuel-based vehicles contribute to air pollution through GHG and other types of emissions that are associated with fossil fuel combustion, including carbon monoxide, particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, sulfur dioxide, and hydrocarbons. These pollutants contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone, which is a main component of smog, and can have significant adverse effects on air quality and public health. Thus, reducing VMT can lead to lower quantities of air pollutants and improved air quality, which can lead to improved environmental and public health. Relatedly, reducing VMTs can help reduce the vehicle-related water, noise, and soil pollution that disproportionately affect environmental justice communities.

As with the environmental justice co-benefits of concentrating development, environmental justice may only be a co-benefit of reducing VMT if those communities are thoroughly considered and meaningfully included in planning and permitting decisions. Coastal Act decision-makers should therefore be cognizant of potential negative impacts of smart growth and embed environmental justice and equity in their decision-making processes. For instance, it may not be appropriate to wholly replace vehicular transportation infrastructure with bicycle and pedestrian facilities at a popular coastal destination where environmental justice communities may live too far away to feasibly benefit from the active transportation options. Additional considerations and recommendations for advancing environmental justice through smart growth planning are provided in [Section 4.3](#) and [Section 6.3](#) below.

### Improved Coastal Water Quality

Reducing VMT has the co-benefit of maintaining and improving coastal water quality, as required by Coastal Act Section 30231. Vehicles contribute to water pollution through various runoff contaminants including oil leaks, fuel spills, transmission and brake fluids, heavy metals, and particulate matter from wear and tear. When it rains, these pollutants can enter storm drain systems, coastal water bodies, or ESHA through runoff and can adversely impact water quality, biological productivity, and general ecosystem health. Thus, reducing VMT can lead to lower quantities of water pollutants and improved water quality which also leads to improved environmental and public health.

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<sup>12</sup> California Department of Public Health Demographic Report on Health and Mental Health Equity in California, 2023.

[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OHE/CDPH%20Document%20Library/HERSS/Demographic\\_Report\\_on\\_Health\\_and\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Equity\\_2023\\_ADA.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OHE/CDPH%20Document%20Library/HERSS/Demographic_Report_on_Health_and_Mental_Health_Equity_2023_ADA.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> CARB Scoping Plan, 2022. <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/ab-32-climate-change-scoping-plan/2022-scoping-plan-documents>

### 4.3 Advancing Environmental Justice

As discussed above, smart growth strategies related to concentrating development and reducing VMT are highly supportive of and intrinsically correlated to advancing environmental justice. To best understand the context of these correlations, [Sections 4.1](#) and [4.2](#) above should be reviewed in full. For brevity, the correlations between concentrating development, reducing VMT, and advancing environmental justice are also summarized below.

#### 4.3.1 Summary of Correlations to Concentrating Development and Reducing VMT

Potential benefits to environmental justice communities from smart growth strategies related to concentrating development include, but are not limited to:

- More diverse and affordable housing opportunities
- Walkable neighborhood amenities and services
- Revitalization of underinvested or underserved communities
- Expanded opportunities to access and recreate on the coast
- Cost savings from affordable housing and reduced reliance on vehicles

Potential adverse impacts to environmental justice communities from smart growth strategies related to concentrating development include, but are not limited to:

- Concentrating development in areas with known environmental or public health hazards without also considering ways to remediate hazards
- Revitalizing existing neighborhoods in a way that exacerbates gentrification or displaces lower income residents when appropriate protections for current residents are not in place
- Increasing the costs of nearby housing, goods, and services and making it challenging for lower income households to afford necessities

Potential benefits to environmental justice communities from smart growth strategies related to reducing VMT include, but are not limited to:

- Expanded transportation options that improve equitable access to the coast as well as to job centers, residential areas, education facilities, healthcare facilities, and other essential services
- Cost savings from reduced reliance on vehicles
- Enhanced foot traffic for local businesses in underinvested communities
- Reduced vehicle-related air, water, noise, and soil pollution
- Improved environmental and public health outcomes
- Reduced need for fossil fuel extraction and processing

Potential adverse impacts to environmental justice communities from smart growth strategies related to reducing VMT include, but are not limited to:

- Wholly replacing vehicular transportation infrastructure with bicycle and pedestrian facilities at a popular coastal destination where environmental justice communities may live too far away to feasibly benefit from the active transportation options

### 4.3.2 Fair Decision-Making and Meaningful Engagement

The ninth and tenth principles of the Smart Growth Network's [Ten Principles of Smart Growth](#) are about making development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective and encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions. These principles are also related to Coastal Act and Commission goals of advancing environmental justice and equity and providing for the equitable distribution of environmental benefits. Transparent and understandable permitting processes can help reduce barriers for project applicants and expedite planning and permitting decisions, which can in turn lead to successful project implementation and realized community goals within reasonable timelines. Meaningful public involvement can lead to planning and permitting outcomes that more accurately reflect community needs and that benefit, or at least avoid adverse impacts to, environmental justice communities.

California Native American Tribes ("Tribes") and environmental justice communities have experienced land dispossession, displacement, discrimination, and other forms of state-sanctioned violence. Tribes and environmental justice communities have also historically been underrepresented and excluded from land use decision making processes. This historic lack of meaningful involvement, accountability, and transparency from government has resulted in inequities for both environmental justice and tribal communities. Meaningful engagement requires a recognition that certain communities have been historically and systemically excluded from "having a seat at the table" and it is up to government agency staff to think both critically and creatively to brainstorm about the multitude of individuals and/or communities that may be affected by a project or plan. Meaningful engagement attempts to uplift community voices and perspectives and relies on communicating directly with potentially impacted communities and providing an opportunity for their input to inform decision outcomes.

The Commission's [Environmental Justice Policy](#) (2019) specifically recognizes the importance of informing and involving environmental justice communities in coastal land use planning and permitting decisions in meaningful and accessible ways, particularly given the historic underrepresentation, exclusion, and increased vulnerability of these communities. The Environmental Justice Policy additionally recognizes the critical need for meaningful coordination with Tribes pursuant to the Commission's [Tribal Consultation Policy](#) (2018) to ensure that tribal values and resources are honored and protected throughout coastal planning and development processes.

Strategies for the Commission and local governments to make planning and development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective may include:

- Encouraging pre-submittal coordination between the project applicant, local government staff, and/or Commission staff as applicable
- Providing readily available information regarding decision making processes, applicable land use policies and regulations, and key staff contact information on public websites in an accessible manner (e.g., in ADA format and with language translation options)
- Including regulations and procedures for expedited permitting options in LCPs (e.g., CDP exemptions and waivers, categorical exclusion areas)

- Providing incentives for smart growth development, such as reduced permit application fees
- Exploring opportunities for regulatory changes and supporting legislation that could further incentivize smart growth development while maintaining Coastal Act protections

Strategies for the Commission and local governments to meaningfully engage community members and stakeholders in planning and development decisions may include:

- Updating LCPs to provide standards for meaningful community engagement and to include policies to address environmental justice issues in the coastal zone (see the [Resources for Addressing Environmental Justice Through Local Coastal Programs Guide](#) for additional information)
- Identifying the range of local stakeholder groups (i.e., who may be interested in or affected by a proposed land use or development project), including who environmental justice communities are and how they have been impacted by historic and current coastal land use management, and creating an engagement plan involving those groups as early as possible
- Conducting outreach and developing relationships with community-based organizations and seeking their input on identifying environmental justice communities whose members live, work and recreate near a proposed project
- Promoting engagement opportunities through a wide range of communications including print (i.e., flyers, one-pagers, etc.) and online media (i.e., webpage, e-newsletters, social media, etc.), when possible, to ensure notices reach as many community members as possible
- Providing outreach opportunities for community members to help understand the lived experiences of environmental justice communities and the policy and housing solutions and infrastructure investments needed by the local community
- Providing educational opportunities for community members to learn about local, regional, and statewide coastal issues, particularly as they intersect with environmental justice issues
- Providing early, ample, inclusive, and culturally-sensitive opportunities for community members and potentially affected populations to engage in specific planning and development projects based on community needs and concerns (e.g., multi-lingual hearing notification materials, language translation services, flexible meeting times, focus groups, community surveys and meetings)
- Being transparent about how any feedback or input from meetings will be used and, if possible, sharing drafts for review to ensure comments are being used accurately and increase transparency with the community
- Creating an avenue to consider community concerns and incorporate feedback into project design, implementation, regulations, and policies that could potentially affect communities
- Coordinating with developers and the public on community benefits packages for proposed projects to support communities that may be affected by the proposed project (e.g., local hiring commitments, local workforce training guarantees,

diversity and inclusion initiatives, community group use of space, scholarship or youth educational programs)

- Referencing and applying the Commission’s [Environmental Justice Policy](#) (2019) for additional guidelines on meaningful community engagement
- Referencing and applying the Commission’s [Tribal Consultation Policy](#) (2018) for additional guidelines on meaningful tribal communication and consultation
- Referencing and learning from other resources on this topic, such as the Coastal Conservancy’s [Tips for Meaningful Community Engagement](#) (2019) and the Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability’s [Urban Green Justice Toolkit](#) (2021).

## 5. Examples of Past Commission Actions

Due to the breadth of ways that smart growth can be implemented in the coastal zone, the Coastal Commission has acted on LCPs and CDPs that take a variety of approaches related to smart growth. Examples that are specific to the individual smart growth strategies discussed above in [Section 4](#) are included alongside those strategy summaries where possible. A selection of noteworthy examples that address the three topics of concentrating development, reducing VMT, and advancing environmental justice are highlighted below. LCP and CDP examples specific to the topic of maximizing coastal access opportunities in harmony with AB 2097’s elimination of parking requirements can be found in the Commission’s [AB 2097 Memo](#) (2023). Additional examples may be found by searching the Commission’s [agenda archives](#) or [Public Data Portal](#), or by consulting with Commission staff (see [Section 6.4](#)).

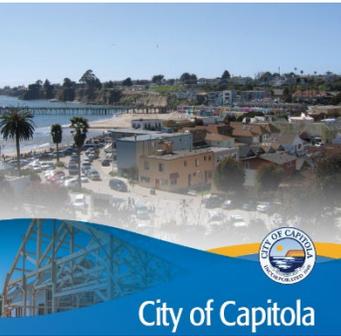
### 5.1 LCP Examples

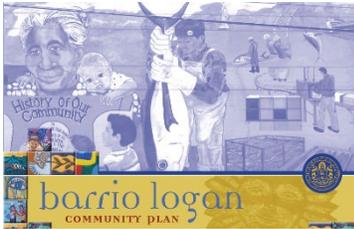
City of San Diego (2022) <a href="#">LCP Amendment No. LCP-6-SAN-21-0033-1</a>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
		
<p>Amendment to the City of San Diego’s certified implementation plan (IP). The amendment incorporates a new “Complete Communities Program” as part of the City’s response to SB 743. The Complete Communities Program is comprised of two parts: 1) Housing Solutions, an optional program to increase housing production by removing regulatory barriers and granting development incentives to projects that incorporate affordable housing and neighborhood-serving infrastructure amenities on premises within Transit Priority Areas; and 2) Mobility Choices, a mandatory requirement for development to provide amenities designed to reduce VMT or pay an in-lieu fee, depending on which of four new Mobility Zones the premises is located in. The Commission certified this amendment with suggested modifications for the Mobility Choices program to clarify where and how additional traffic analysis may be required within the City’s coastal zone area to ensure that coastal access impacts would be thoroughly considered and addressed.</p>		

<b>City of Half Moon Bay (2021)</b> <b><u>LCP Amendment No. LCP-2-HMB-20-0081-2</u></b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p>PC: The City of Half Moon Bay</p>	<p>Complete update of the City of Half Moon Bay’s LUP. The update refines policies that protect coastal resources and focuses development policies around a newly defined Town Center to incentivize development in a concentrated area and foster a vibrant, walkable downtown. Such policies include increased residential densities and reduced parking requirements in the Town Center, new open space and agricultural land use designations to protect natural and working lands outside of the Town Center, a lot retirement program and transfer of development rights program, and support for active transportation network connectivity and improvements. A new environmental justice policy provides support for a new workforce housing overlay, low-cost accommodations, tribal consultation, and low-cost public access and recreation opportunities. The Commission certified this amendment as submitted without modifications.</p>	

<b>City of Morro Bay (2021)</b> <b><u>LCP Amendment No. LCP-3-MRB-21-0047-1</u></b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
  <p>PC: The City of Morro Bay</p>	<p>Complete update of the City of Morro Bay’s LUP. The update is centered around three primary goals: 1) promoting walkable infill development; 2) protecting surrounding agricultural and open space lands and natural resources; and 3) ensuring the City is resilient to the effects of climate change. Among the multiple smart growth strategies in the updated LUP, two sites—Vistra Energy and an outgoing wastewater treatment plant—are identified as ideal for redevelopment and are redesignated to open space/recreation and visitor serving commercial with a mixed-use residential overlay. A master plan process is required to define potential outcomes at these sites, and will need to be incorporated into the LCP. Additionally, the updated LUP contains multiple policies to improve multimodal access and connections and a new environmental justice chapter. The environmental justice chapter provides support for numerous social equity considerations, including low-cost overnight accommodations, tribal consultation, low- and no-cost public access and recreation opportunities, and affordable housing. The Commission approved the amendment as submitted without modifications.</p>	

<b>City of Long Beach (2023)</b> <b><u>LCP Amendment No. LCP-5-LOB-21-0088-2</u></b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p><b>CITY OF LONG BEACH</b></p> <p><i>PC: The City of Long Beach</i></p>	<p>Amendment to the City of Long Beach’s certified IP. The amendment adds enhanced density bonus regulations. The City’s LCP already had policies that protect and encourage affordable housing to implement the State’s Density Bonus Law. However, the existing regulations had not incentivized enough projects to meet affordable housing needs. The amendment includes additional zoning concessions to encourage the development of affordable housing, especially in transit priority areas. The Commission approved the amendment with suggested modifications addressing concerns about proposed incentives conflicting with, or not adequately supporting, the coastal resource protection policies of the LUP.</p>	

<b>City of Capitola (2010)</b> <b><u>LCP Amendment No. 2-09 Part 1</u></b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p><b>City of Capitola</b></p> <p><i>PC: The City of Capitola</i></p>	<p>Amendment to the City of Capitola’s LCP to add an affordable housing overlay district. The amendment consists of several parts: 1) amend the IP to include standards for an affordable housing overlay district; 2) amend the LUP to change the land use designation of a property within an urbanized area well served by public infrastructure, including public transportation, from residential low medium to residential high and to amend the zoning map to apply the affordable housing overlay district to the property; and 3) to place standards for affordable housing density bonuses in a section of the City’s zoning code that is not part of the certified LCP. The Commission approved the amendment with suggested modifications that 1) require any project taking advantage of the affordable housing overlay district’s allowable increase in density to be in conformity with the LCP; and 2) incorporate the standards for density bonuses into the certified LCP so that these standards can apply within the coastal zone and adequately implement LUP provisions encouraging affordable housing.</p>	

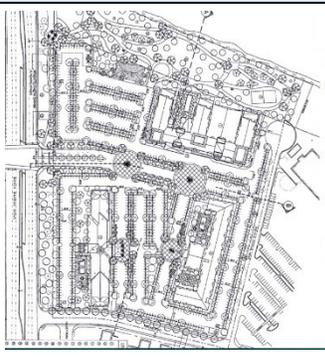
<b>City of San Diego (2023)</b> <b><u>LCP Amendment No. LCP-6-BRL-22-0022-1</u></b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p>PC: The City of San Diego</p>	<p>Amendment to the City of San Diego's LCP including: 1) An update of the Barrio Logan Community Plan, which serves as the City's LUP component for the Barrio Logan area; and 2) an amendment to the Land Development Code (LDC), which serves as the IP for the entire City of San Diego. The updated Barrio Logan Community Plan includes policies that reduce resident exposure to health hazards, provide for new public parks and mobility options, and increase housing supply. The amended LDC adds a community overlay implementation zone to establish a transition between industrial port and residential areas, and adds inclusionary housing requirements and protections for existing residents. The Commission approved the LDC as submitted, and approved the Barrio Logan Community Update Plan with suggested modifications that call for restoration of the Chollas Creek watershed and coordination with relevant agencies to improve transit access and parking for public parks.</p>	

## 5.2 CDP Examples

<b>City of Santa Monica (2019)</b> <b><u>CDP No. 5-19-0181</u></b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p>PC: Applicant exhibit</p>	<p>Proposal to 1) demolish an existing, non-operating gas station and remediate any potentially contaminated soil; and 2) construct a mixed-use multi-family building development including affordable housing units and ground floor commercial. The site is an ideal location for densification due to its close proximity to job centers (downtown Santa Monica) and a transit hub. The Commission approved the CDP with conditions.</p>	

<b>Marin County (2023)</b> <b><u>CDP No. 2-23-0300</u></b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p>PC: Applicant exhibit</p>	<p>Proposal by Caltrans to rehabilitate two existing segments of Highway 1 in Marin County with crosswalk upgrades, ADA improvements, shoulder widening to improve bicyclist safety, and more. The project includes multiple components to increase multi-modal transportation and public access. The Commission found that the project would help reduce VMT and operational GHG emissions along Highway 1. Although the project would result in construction related GHG emissions, it was designed with measures to reduce the construction related GHG emissions, such as reducing the number and duration of idling construction vehicles.</p>	

<b>City of Long Beach (2021)</b> <b>Appeal Nos. A-5-LOB-17-0032 &amp; A-5-LOB-20-0007 and CDP No. 5-18-0788</b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p><i>PC: The City of Long Beach</i></p>	<p>Appeals of three CDP applications for components of a single project to demolish and convert old pool facilities into an outdoor public pool complex with public restrooms and park areas in the City of Long Beach. The project includes closure of Olympic Plaza to automobile traffic and new bicycle parking only (no new automobile parking) throughout the site. The project also requires coordination with Long Beach Transit and/or other transportation organizations to enhance alternative transportation to the site, and provides access for people with limited means to pay for pool use, including youth, seniors, and visitors from underserved communities. The Commission approved the CDPs de novo with conditions.</p>	

<b>City of San Diego (2014)</b> <b>CDP No. 6-13-0407</b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p><i>PC: Applicant's exhibit</i></p>	<p>Proposal by McMillin-NTC, LLC to construct a new hotel complex with a restaurant, public esplanade, and a bicycle/pedestrian path at a site being used for temporary airport parking. The project is located near San Diego Bay and Liberty Station, in proximity to many popular visitor-serving destinations and along an existing bus route. To help alleviate traffic congestion and reduce VMT, the project was designed to be transit-oriented and includes a shuttle service to the airport and two different transit hubs for hotel guests as well as a TDM program for employees. The project also maximized public access and recreation opportunities with dedicated coastal access parking, the public esplanade and multi-modal improvements, a public restroom, signage, and an in-lieu fee to help establish lower cost overnight accommodations nearby.</p>	

<b>City of Los Angeles (2021)</b> <b>CDP No. A-5-VEN-15-0003</b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p>PC: Applicant's exhibit</p>	<p>Proposal to convert a single-family residence into a mixed-use development including retail on the ground floor, and artist-in-residence units on the ground floor, second, and third floors in Venice. The applicant modified the City-approved project (which was appealed to the Commission and found to raise a substantial issue in February 2015) to reduce the size of the retail component to reduce the total required parking from thirteen spaces to six spaces. The project site is in an area served by public transportation, located within walking distance of several main attractions in Venice and Santa Monica where densification is appropriate. The project includes monthly transit passes for any employee/lessee who will be using transit to get to work and on-site parking for a minimum of eight bicycles. The Commission approved the CDP de novo with conditions.</p>	

<b>City of Los Angeles, Venice (2021)</b> <b>CDP No. 5-21-0142</b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concentrating Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reducing VMT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advancing Environmental Justice
 <p>PC: Applicant's exhibit</p>	<p>Proposal for after-the-fact change of building use from a flower shop to a restaurant, addition of four bicycle spaces and conversion of two of the four standard parking spaces to an ADA compliant space resulting in three parking spaces. Given the constraints of the subject site, it was not feasible for the applicant to provide all six of the required parking spaces onsite without demolishing a portion of the existing structure. Thus, to mitigate for the potential parking impacts of the proposed development, the Commission approved the CDP with conditions requiring the applicant to provide four onsite bicycle parking spaces and to cover 100% of the cost of transit passes for all employees.</p>	

## 6. Coastal Act Considerations & Recommendations

### 6.1 Plan Alignment

Local governments face the challenge of addressing the climate and housing crises in a manner that is consistent with federal and state laws and suited to the local context. Then, there is the added challenge of preparing and adopting mandated planning efforts that may have overlapping goals such as general plans, LCPs, local hazard mitigation plans, climate action and adaptation plans, and sustainable communities strategies. Smart growth can help bridge many of these challenges.

However, to be effectively implemented in the coastal zone, smart growth strategies must be incorporated into certified LCPs. LCPs are critical tools for laying the foundation

for how future land use decisions will support climate adaptation and resilience goals, since they establish the standard of review for new development in the coastal zone. Thus, proactively updating LCPs to align with the smart growth and climate resiliency goals of other planning documents will help local governments ensure smart growth strategies become routinely considered and consistently applied in all local planning efforts. Plan alignment will also reduce the potential for policy conflicts and allow for more efficient use of government resources.<sup>16</sup>

[Sustainable Communities Strategies](#) in particular have significant potential to support smart growth development as they consider how to reduce regional GHG emissions by linking housing, transportation, climate, and land use policies with implementation through local government actions and investments. However, while metropolitan planning organizations are required to develop these plans pursuant to SB 375, the statute does not require local governments to carry out these plans at the local level. Translating the findings and recommendations of these plans into LCP policies and development standards can ensure their effective implementation in coastal zone jurisdictions.

The Commission partnered with several federal and state agencies to create the [Coastal Plan Alignment Compass](#). While more specifically geared towards coastal hazard resiliency, the Compass includes information on relevant planning documents, key opportunities for alignment, possible challenges for alignment efforts, and broader tips and best practices for supporting alignment efforts that local governments may also find useful in efforts to align smart growth planning. Local governments are encouraged to review this resource and consult with Commission staff on how to approach plan alignment in a way that meets Coastal Act mandates and establishes an effective standard of review for smart growth development within the coastal zone.

## **6.2 Application Review**

When reviewing an LCP amendment or CDP application that incorporates one or more of the smart growth strategies discussed above, Coastal Commission and local government staff should always analyze and coordinate on the potential for impacts to coastal resources. Similarly, Coastal Commission and local government staff should always analyze and coordinate on the potential to include any additional smart growth strategies in a proposed LCP amendment or in a development project, as appropriate to the scope of the LCP amendment or project and to the local context. Comprehensive LCP updates are especially good opportunities to infuse smart growth strategies into land use policies and development standards given the many cross-cutting Coastal Act topics involved and the broad scope of such comprehensive updates. In any case, it is important for Coastal Act decision makers to be able to identify 1) proposed smart growth strategies, 2) opportunities to enhance an LCP amendment or development project using smart growth strategies, 3) the range of potential Coastal Act issues associated with those strategies, and 4) information needs to determine how to address those issues. These four items can all be best approached through early pre-submittal

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<sup>16</sup> See [City of San Diego LCP Amendment No. LCP-6-SAN-22-0045-2 \(Climate Action Plan Update\)](#) for an example of plan alignment.

coordination and, in the case of LCP amendments, may be eligible for financial support through the Commission’s Local Assistance Grant Program as discussed further in [Section 6.4](#) below.

**Questions that should be addressed by Coastal Commission and local government staff in review of smart growth-related LCP amendments and CDP applications include, but are not be limited to:**

<b>Topic: Concentrating Development</b>	
<b>Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would the proposed LCP amendment or project concentrate new development near a transit-rich and/or job-rich area?</li> <li>• Were opportunities to concentrate new development optimized?</li> <li>• Are there adequate public services (e.g., roads, water, sewer) to accommodate the project?</li> <li>• Would the proposed LCP amendment or project allow development outside of an urban/rural boundary or adversely induce unplanned urban growth?</li> <li>• Would the proposed LCP amendment or project preserve natural resource areas, agricultural lands, visual resources, and cultural resources?</li> <li>• Would the proposed LCP amendment or project facilitate new non-priority development in an area where Coastal Act priority land uses should be prioritized?</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Information Needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local land use and zoning maps</li> <li>• Transit/circulation maps</li> <li>• Public service capacity data</li> <li>• Local buildout estimates</li> <li>• Habitat maps</li> <li>• Biological resource surveys</li> <li>• Visual resource maps</li> <li>• Cultural resource maps</li> </ul>
<b>Topic: Reducing VMT</b>	
<b>Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would the proposed LCP amendment or project help to maximize public access and recreation opportunities, or is there potential for impacts?</li> <li>• Were opportunities to reduce VMT optimized?</li> <li>• Are there effective transportation systems or alternatives in place to help avoid or minimize public access impacts?</li> <li>• If the project would increase VMT, are there VMT mitigation strategies that could be incorporated into the project?</li> <li>• Are there complete street or multi-modal improvements that could be incorporated into the project?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would the proposed LCP amendment or project affect public parking supply or demand?</li> <li>• Does the proposed LCP amendment or project facilitate VMT reduction in a transit priority area or priority development area, or other appropriate areas with transit-oriented development?</li> <li>• Would the proposed LCP amendment or project preserve natural resource areas, agricultural lands, visual resources, and cultural resources?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential Information Needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking supply and demand data</li> <li>• Public transit maps and service information</li> <li>• Transit user demographics</li> <li>• Bicycle and pedestrian trail network maps</li> <li>• Locally adopted VMT thresholds</li> <li>• Habitat maps</li> <li>• Biological resource surveys</li> <li>• Visual resource maps</li> <li>• Cultural resource maps</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topic: Environmental Justice</b></p>	
<p><b>Considerations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would the proposed LCP amendment or project have the potential to positively or negatively impact any environmental justice (EJ) communities or exacerbate existing burdens?</li> <li>• How could any negative impacts be avoided or mitigated? How could positive impacts be optimized and equitably distributed?</li> <li>• How does the LCP amendment or project provide for equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens?</li> <li>• Did the LCP amendment or project provide meaningful opportunities for community engagement during local approvals and throughout the process?</li> <li>• How was any input received from EJ communities addressed?</li> <li>• Is there a possibility of Tribal resources being impacted?</li> <li>• Has there been Tribal consultation?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential Information Needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EJ community screening tools/maps (e.g., <a href="#">CalEnviroScreen</a>, EPA's <a href="#">EJScreen</a>)</li> <li>• Records and policies that provide information on historical land use decisions that resulted in EJ communities facing disproportionate pollution burdens</li> <li>• Proposed community benefits package (if applicable)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record of outreach efforts, hearing notices, public comments, and responses from local approval process</li> <li>• Tribal consultation record</li> </ul>
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**Table 2: Considerations for Reviewing Smart Growth-Related LCP Amendments and CDP Applications**

### 6.3 Common Challenges with Smart Growth in the Coastal Zone

While smart growth is generally beneficial for climate change resiliency and often aligns with Coastal Act goals, there can also be competing objectives with implementing smart growth strategies in the coastal zone. Several common challenges are identified below, with recommended best practices for addressing these challenges. In all cases, it is helpful to review past Commission actions for guidance or precedent (see [Section 5](#) above) and to consult with appropriate Commission staff (see [Section 6.4](#) below).

#### Smart Growth in Rural Settings

Smart growth planning and permitting presents unique challenges in rural settings as compared to more urban or suburban settings, in particular because the low-density character and typical lack of public transportation options in rural areas may not as easily facilitate concentration of development or reduction of VMT. Rural areas are also typically characterized by significant natural resources and agricultural lands, which can contribute to both the local economy and the low-density nature of the area. As the Coastal Act and smart growth principles both call for protection of natural and agricultural lands, support of local agricultural economies, and protection of community character, all of these things must be considered in balance with the need for new development to be concentrated and to reduce VMT. As such, best practices for smart growth in rural settings may include:

- Defining an urban/rural boundary line, rural town center, or similar proxy to accommodate and cluster growth in a specified area while protecting natural and agricultural lands outside that area;
- Innovative smaller-scale transportation solutions such as community shuttles or ridesharing;
- Incentivizing open space and agricultural easements to protect those areas from conversion;
- Provisions for farmworker and other workforce housing to reduce commute distances and allow for diverse and affordable housing options; and
- Promotion of small-scale industries and agritourism through mixed-use zoning or additional permitted land uses to support the local economy.

#### Considering Environmental Justice and Equitable Distribution of Environmental Benefits and Burdens

As discussed above, environmental justice communities can both benefit from and potentially be affected by smart growth planning and development if not carefully considered. Planners should consider whether smart growth strategies may burden environmental justice communities. For instance, there is risk of displacing existing

residents and business owners if new development, new transportation amenities, or adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings lead to rising property values, costs for nearby goods and services, and gentrification. Likewise, concentrating affordable housing in areas vulnerable to hazards likely to be exacerbated by climate change may make it difficult for lower income households with fewer resources to adapt and lead to displacement. Smart growth planning and development in the coastal zone must also consider equitable access to and distribution of environmental benefits—for instance, a new shoreline bicycle trail may help to reduce VMT, but it should include connections to transportation networks and lower income communities, if feasible, so that the amenity does not only benefit those who can afford to live near that shoreline. In order to meet Coastal Act and smart growth goals for advancing environmental justice and considering the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, best practices should include employing fair decision making and meaningful community engagement (see [Section 4.3.2](#) for details); utilizing equity mapping tools to identify areas with historically marginalized communities, environmental vulnerabilities and disparities in access to resources; conducting comprehensive needs assessments to identify the specific needs and priorities of environmental justice communities; incentivizing and prioritizing projects that provide community and environmental benefits; and implementing anti-displacement strategies such as rent controls, tenant protections, and community land trusts.

### **Reducing VMT While Maximizing Coastal Access Opportunities**

The Coastal Act requires the Commission and local governments to protect and maximize coastal access and recreation opportunities for all people. To a large extent, this access still relies on cars and parking along the coast. This is particularly the case for coastal visitors and inland residents that must travel far to reach the coast and cannot afford to live in coastal areas, which is a large share of visitors. Thus, efforts to reduce VMT and overall vehicle dependency must consider potential impacts to coastal access and recreation, and how to adequately avoid or mitigate such impacts. This may be particularly challenging for provision of new multi-modal transportation improvements within already built out rights-of-way where space to provide for all modes of transportation is limited. Additionally, projects or entities with limited funding may not be able to provide adequate mitigation. It can also be difficult to mitigate public access impacts when new development that increases the demand for automobile parking near the coast does not provide sufficient parking to offset this increase in demand, as allowed under certain circumstances by AB 2097.

As detailed in the Commission’s memo on [Implementation of AB 2097 Relating to Minimum Parking Requirements Near Major Transit Stops](#) (2023), the Commission and local governments must find other ways to ensure that new development and transportation improvements comply with the Coastal Act and LCPs in a manner that harmonizes the intent of laws aiming to reduce vehicle dependency and associated GHG emissions with the Coastal Act mandate to maximize coastal access and recreation opportunities. This can mean ensuring that effective alternative transportation options are in place or will be provided, and that such alternatives are equitable for all people, including environmental justice communities that may have more difficulty accessing the coast without adequate automobile infrastructure or public parking. The

AB 2097 Memo provides suggestions for planning and permitting alternatives to minimum parking requirements that could apply broadly to VMT reduction efforts, such as shuttle services, in-lieu fee programs, complete streets designs, and transportation demand management programs. Flexible LCP policies and monitoring requirements for CDPs will be important for understanding the effectiveness of these alternatives and making adjustments as needed. See the memo linked above for more details.

### **Balancing Coastal Act Priority Land Uses and Other Land Uses**

The Coastal Act provides for several categories of land uses that must be prioritized over other land uses in certain circumstances within the coastal zone. Namely, Section 30222 prioritizes private lands suitable for visitor-serving commercial recreational facilities over private residential, general industrial, or general commercial development, but not over agriculture or coastal-dependent industry uses. This provision creates the need for a careful approach to mixed-use zoning districts and residential overlay zones that would allow for both priority Coastal Act uses and other land uses. To be consistent with Section 30222 but still supportive of smart growth goals, mixed-use zoning districts and residential overlay zones should specify how Coastal Act priority land uses will be sufficiently prioritized over other land uses. This could be achieved through tables of permitted uses that clearly list and prioritize permitted land uses in mixed-use and overlay districts; requirements for ground-floor visitor-serving commercial uses in mixed-use zoning districts; density or floor area minimums for priority land uses and/or maximums for non-priority land uses; and design guidelines and development incentives that facilitate and prioritize Coastal Act priority land uses in balance with other land uses. Mixed-use zoning regulations could also incorporate inclusionary housing requirements for the residential components of mixed-use projects to meet other Coastal Act goals of advancing environmental justice.

### **Ensuring Protection of Coastal Resources**

Although smart growth concepts are generally in alignment with the Coastal Act, smart growth is not without potential to impact coastal resources in practice. Smart growth can often pose the challenge of striking an appropriate balance between accommodating new development that is concentrated in existing developed areas, *and* minimizes VMT, *and* protects coastal resources consistent with the Coastal Act. For instance, concentrating development can sometimes mean building up instead of out in urbanized areas with limited vacant lands that do not have coastal resource constraints; however, a new medium-rise or high-rise building in a primarily low-rise area could raise consistency issues with Section 30251 requirements for new development to protect public views and be visually compatible with the character of surrounding settings. Another example of this challenge is the extension of road shoulders to accommodate safe bicycle access, which may impact sensitive habitat, agriculture, or the visual character of Highway 1 in more rural areas and thereby raise consistency issues with Sections 30240, 30241, 30242, or 30254. As such, it is always important to analyze Coastal Act consistency on a case-by-case basis to consider the project details, setting, and applicable Coastal Act issues.

In some limited and especially challenging circumstances, a development project may be inconsistent with a Coastal Act provision if the project is approved but would also be

inconsistent with another provision if it is denied. Where such conflicts between one or more Coastal Act policies occur, the conflict must be resolved in a manner which on balance is the most protective of significant coastal resources. In making this determination, the Coastal Commission is guided by the Legislature's determination that "broader policies which, for example, serve to concentrate development in close proximity to urban and employment centers may be more protective, overall, than specific wildlife habitat and other similar resource policies."<sup>17</sup> Resolving conflicts in this manner can also be supportive of smart growth principles and Coastal Act objectives for advancing environmental justice, maximizing coastal access opportunities for all, and reducing VMT. The Coastal Act grants authority for such conflict resolution to the Commission only; thus, local governments wishing to approve a project that presents a policy conflict would need to have the Commission use this conflict resolution process to certify a project-specific LCP amendment before the local government could proceed to issue a CDP.

### **Sea Level Rise Adaptation**

Planning for sea level rise is a pervasive challenge throughout coastal California that is only compounded by the need to accommodate new development and provide multimodal transportation opportunities for current and future generations. Concentrating development in existing developed areas, although generally supported by the Coastal Act and smart growth principles, does not always mean that those developed areas are safe from hazards like sea level rise. For example, in an LCP amendment proposed by the City of Del Mar ([LCP-6-DMR-20-0079-3](#)) to increase residential density in infill areas, the City agreed to limit subdivisions and increases in density in areas extremely vulnerable to sea level rise, and the Commission required projects developed in the flood zone to include conditions to address their exposure to hazards, such as design modifications, notification to all occupants that the development is located in a hazardous area, assumption of risk, and no-future-armoring provisions. Likewise, efforts to reduce VMT in areas that are vulnerable to sea level rise may not be consistent with the Coastal Act's standard for maximizing coastal access and recreation opportunities for all people. Local governments will need to take holistic planning and adaptation approaches for areas that are already built out and vulnerable to sea level rise, especially if such areas are proposed for densification or transportation improvements. At the planning level, this could mean conducting sea level rise vulnerability assessments and developing adaptation plans; considering innovative adaptation pathways to allow for context-sensitive solutions that can evolve over time; collaborating with local, regional, and state planning agencies to coordinate adaptation planning and implementation efforts; updating LCPs with land use and zoning regulations that align smart growth planning with sea level rise adaptation needs; and establishing development standards that account for sea level rise vulnerability and adaptation goals. Additional information on sea level rise adaptation planning can be found in the Commission's [2018 Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance](#) and [2021 Critical Infrastructure at Risk Guidance](#), and planning efforts may be eligible for financial support through the Commission's [LCP Local Assistance Grant Program](#) (discussed

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<sup>17</sup> Pub. Res. Code § 30007.5.

further in [Section 6.4](#) below). At the project level, this could mean requiring applicants for new development or transportation infrastructure to design for safety from a certain amount of sea level rise; assume the risks of impending sea level rise hazards; relocate or remove structures that become unsafe or impactful to public access and safety; monitor sea level rise hazards and thresholds for adaptation or removal of development; and disclose hazard risks to occupants or tenants as appropriate.

#### **6.4 Consultation with Coastal Commission Staff**

Smart growth strategies come in a wide variety of policy, implementation, and design tools that can generally align with Coastal Act goals but have the potential to raise coastal resource, coastal access, and environmental justice issues. Therefore, early consultation with the Commission's staff is imperative to the success of any smart growth planning or permitting project. As efforts to address climate resiliency and housing needs in LCPs are becoming more and more prevalent, contacting Commission staff as early as possible allows for thoughtful collaboration, streamlined reviews, and successful outcomes that meet the standards of the Coastal Act. The Commission may also be able to support local smart growth planning efforts through its [LCP Local Assistance Grant Program](#), which provides funding to local governments working towards LCP updates or amendments that incorporate climate change and sea level rise resiliency plans, policies and regulations.

The Commission's website includes a [Contact page](#) that lists the district offices and staff that cover specific coastal counties and cities. Questions about LCPs or development projects pertaining to Caltrans rights-of-way, complete streets, VMT reduction, and other transportation-related efforts can also be directed to the Commission's Statewide Transportation Unit; questions about environmental justice to the Commission's Environmental Justice Unit; and questions about housing-related LCP amendments, climate change resiliency, and plan alignment to the Commission's Statewide Planning Unit. Contact information for the LCP Local Assistance Grant Program can be found on the [grant webpage](#).

**Appendices: State Laws & State, Regional, and Local Planning Efforts Relevant to Smart Growth**

**Appendix 1: Selection of Relevant State Laws Enabling Smart Growth**

<b>Climate Adaptation Legislation</b>	
<b>State climate adaptation strategy – <a href="#">AB 1482</a> (2015)</b>	Requires the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and the Strategic Growth Council to, by January 1, 2017 and every three years after, update the <a href="#">state's Climate Adaptation Strategy</a> .
<b>Safety element updates – <a href="#">SB 379</a> (2015)</b>	Requires local governments to, upon the next revision of their general plan or local hazard mitigation plan, update their safety element to address climate adaptation and resiliency strategies or to reference out to a stand-alone document (e.g., a climate adaptation or action plan) that does the same. The update must include a vulnerability assessment; a set of adaptation and resilience goals, policies, and objectives; and a set of implementation measures.
<b>Local and Regional Growth Legislation</b>	
<b>Changes of local government organization – <a href="#">AB 2838</a> (2000) and <a href="#">subsequent clean-up legislation</a></b>	Establishes procedures for local government changes of organization, including city incorporations, annexations to a city or special district, and city and special district consolidations. Also establishes the policies, powers, and procedures for Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) to oversee such local government changes of organization with the goals of discouraging urban sprawl and encouraging the orderly formation and development of local agencies. Provides that any change of organization or reorganization in the coastal zone may be subject to the certification by the California Coastal Commission through an LCP amendment.
<b>Regional planning for GHG emission reductions – <a href="#">SB 375</a> (2008)</b>	Directs CARB to set regional targets for GHG emission reductions and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to coordinate regional housing needs allocations (RHNA) and regional transportation plans into a “Sustainable Communities Strategy” (SCS) to meet those regional targets. Also includes California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining incentives for development projects that are consistent with such regional plans.
<b>Transportation Legislation</b>	
<b>Complete Streets Act – <a href="#">AB 1358</a> (2008)</b>	Requires that, commencing January 1, 2011, cities or counties conducting any substantive revision of their

	<p>circulation element must include provisions for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan.</p>
<p><b>California Transportation Plan updates – <a href="#">SB 391</a> (2009)</b></p>	<p>Directs the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to update the <a href="#">California Transportation Plan</a> by December 21, 2015, and every five years after. The plan must identify the statewide integrated multimodal transportation system improvements needed to achieve a statewide reduction of GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.</p>
<p><b>CEQA transportation standards and streamlining – <a href="#">SB 743</a> (2013)</b></p>	<p>As of July 1, 2020, lead CEQA agencies must analyze how much auto travel rather than auto delay a proposed development project would create during the environmental review process, thus shifting the focus of transportation impact metrics from maintaining or improving traffic level of service (LOS) to reducing VMTs. Provides CEQA streamlining for infill projects in Transit Priority Areas.</p>
<p><b>Active transportation program and funding – <a href="#">SB 99</a> (2013)</b></p>	<p>Consolidated several former federal and state transportation programs into the <a href="#">California Active Transportation Program</a>. Provides funding for transportation projects with the intent of increasing active modes of transportation, achieving GHG reduction goals, and enhancing public health and community benefits.</p>
<p><b>Transportation funding – <a href="#">Executive Order N-19-19</a> (2019)</b></p>	<p>Empowers the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to leverage discretionary state transportation funds to help meet statewide climate goals of reducing GHG emissions related to the transportation sector.</p>
<p><b>Active transportation CEQA streamlining – <a href="#">SB 288</a> (2020) and <a href="#">SB 922</a> (2022):</b></p>	<p>Extends CEQA exemptions for bicycle transportation plans in urbanized areas from January 1, 2021, to January 1, 2030, provided that the lead CEQA agency prepares an assessment of any traffic and safety impacts of the plan and include measures in the plan to mitigate potential impacts. Also provided CEQA exemptions for other categories of transportation-related projects (e.g., provision or expansion of rapid transit, bus, or light rail services). SB 922 extends all CEQA exemptions provided by SB 288 through January 1, 2030, and expands the CEQA exemptions beyond bicycle transportation plans to include active transportation plans and pedestrian plans.</p>

<p><b>Minimum automobile parking requirements – <a href="#">AB 2097</a> (2022)</b></p>	<p>Prohibits public agencies from imposing a minimum automobile parking requirement on any residential, commercial, or other development projects within a half-mile radius of a major transit stop with limited exceptions. <b>See the Commission’s <a href="#">AB 2097 Memo</a> for more information on how to harmonize AB 2097 with the Coastal Act.</b></p>
<p><b>Shared parking requirements – <a href="#">AB 894</a> (2023)</b></p>	<p>Require local agencies to allow entities with underutilized parking to share their underutilized parking with the public, local agencies, or other entities through a shared parking agreement. Also requires local agencies to allow parking spaces identified in a shared parking agreement to count toward meeting automobile parking requirements for a new or existing development or use.</p>
<p><b>Housing Legislation</b></p>	
<p><b>Housing Element Law – Gov. Code Article 10.6 (<a href="#">§§ 65580</a> et seq) including multiple recent amendments</b></p>	<p>Local governments must plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in their community by periodically adopting an updated housing element that inventories adequate sites and programs that can be used to develop sufficient sites for residential use to meet the housing needs of the community, including the jurisdiction’s share of the regional housing needs allocation (RHNA).</p>
<p><b>State Density Bonus Law – <a href="#">Gov. Code § 65915</a> including multiple recent amendments</b></p>	<p>Allows residential project of 5 or more units to exceed local development standards in exchange for incorporating units for specific demographics (moderate, lower, and very low income residents; transitional foster youth; disabled veterans; unhoused persons; college students on financial aid, seniors).</p>
<p><b>Streamlining housing approvals during a housing shortage – Gov’t Code § 65913.4, <a href="#">SB 35</a> (2017), <a href="#">SB 423</a> (2023)</b></p>	<p>Requires a local government not meeting its RHNA requirements to approve qualifying multi-unit housing projects ministerially through January 1, 2036, with modified objective planning standards for qualifying projects in the coastal zone.</p>
<p><b>No-Net-Loss Law – Gov. Code § 65863, <a href="#">SB 166</a> (2017)</b></p>	<p>Generally prohibits local governments from approving any reduction of residential density on a parcel identified as contributing to its housing element inventory.</p>
<p><b>Housing Accountability Act – Gov. Code § 65589.5, <a href="#">SB 167</a> (2017), <a href="#">AB 2234</a> (2022), <a href="#">AB 1633</a> (2023)</b></p>	<p>Prohibits local governments from disapproving housing projects for lower or moderate income households or emergency shelters, or conditioning approval in a manner that renders the development infeasible, unless the local government makes one of five narrow written findings. Also requires a local government to support a decision to disapprove a housing development project, or to approve it on the condition that it be developed at a lower density, with</p>

	findings that the project would have a specific, adverse impact upon public health or safety that cannot feasibly be mitigated when the project complies with the objective general plan and zoning standards that were in effect at the time the application was deemed complete.
<b>Housing Crisis Act of 2019 – Gov. Code § 66300 et seq. <a href="#">SB 330</a> (2019), <a href="#">SB 8</a> (2021)</b>	Allows submission of a preliminary application for a housing development project that “freezes” the fees and development standards that apply to the project and prohibits “affected” cities and counties from downzoning certain areas, approving projects that reduce the number of units currently available on the site, imposing a moratorium on development, or imposing design review standards that are not objective, among other actions.
<b>Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing— Gov. Code §§ 8899.50, 65583, <a href="#">AB 686</a> (2018)</b>	Requires cities to analyze patterns of residential segregation; rezone some affluent, historically exclusive areas for multi-family use; and identify sites in their housing element that can be developed with housing throughout the community in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing. Requires all public agencies (including the Commission) to administer its programs and activities relating to housing and community development in a manner to affirmatively further fair housing.
<b>Middle Class Housing Act of 2022 – Gov. Code § 65852.24, <a href="#">SB 6</a> (2022)</b>	Deems a housing project, as defined, an allowable use on a parcel that is within a zone where office, retail, or parking are a principally permitted use, if site/project meet certain requirements relating to density, public notice and comment, urban-ness, lot size, consistency with sustainable community strategy or alternative plans, and labor.
<b>Affordable Housing and High Road Jobs Act of 2022 – Gov. Code Chapter 4.1 (§ 65912.100 et seq.), <a href="#">AB 2011</a> (2022)</b>	Requires local governments to issue ministerial, by right approval for qualifying multi-family affordable and mixed-income housing projects in commercial areas that use prevailing wages for construction.
<b>By-right supportive housing – Gov. Code §§ 65650-65656, 65583, <a href="#">AB 2162</a> (2018)</b>	Requires supportive housing to be a use by right in multi-family and mixed use zones and requires local governments to approve supportive housing projects within expedited timelines. Housing element law also requires supportive and transitional housing to be considered a residential use of property and subject only to those restrictions that apply to other residential dwellings of the same types in the same zone.

<p><b>Option to upzone transit-rich and urban infill areas – Gov. Code § 65913.5, <a href="#">SB 10</a> (2021)</b></p>	<p>Gives local governments the option to adopt an ordinance to upzone transit-rich areas and urban infill sites to up to 10 units of residential density per parcel, despite local restrictions on adopting zoning ordinances. <b>See the Commission’s <a href="#">SB 10 Presentation</a> for more information on how to harmonize SB 10 with the Coastal Act.</b></p>
<p><b>Ministerial approval of employee &amp; farmworker housing – Health and Safety Code § 17021.8; Gov. Code § 65583, <a href="#">AB 1783</a> (2019)</b></p>	<p>Requires ministerial approval of eligible agricultural employee housing development projects located on agricultural land. If adequate sites for farmworker housing are not identified in housing elements, farmworker housing must be a use by right to meet this need.</p>
<p><b>Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) – Gov. Code § 66310 et seq., multiple amendments including <a href="#">AB 2221</a> (2022), <a href="#">SB 897</a> (2022), <a href="#">AB 976</a> (2023), <a href="#">AB 1033</a> (2023)</b></p>	<p>Requires local governments to ministerially permit ADUs and JADUs in zones that allow single-family and multi-family uses. <b>See the Commission’s <a href="#">Implementation of New ADU Laws Memo</a> for more information on how to harmonize ADU law with the Coastal Act.</b></p>
<p><b>Ministerial lot splits and duplexes – Gov. Code §§ 65852.21, 66411.7, <a href="#">SB 9</a> (2021)</b></p>	<p>Requires local governments to ministerially consider projects to develop 1-2 residential units and lot splits in single-family residential zones statewide, resulting in up to 4 residential units on lots that previously would have supported a single unit. <b>See the Commission’s <a href="#">SB 9 Memo</a> for more information on how to harmonize SB 9 with the Coastal Act.</b></p>
<p><b>Limits on Floor Area Ratios (FAR) – Gov. Code § 65913.11 &amp; Civil Code § 4747, <a href="#">SB 478</a> (2021)</b></p>	<p>Limits the FAR that local governments can impose on housing development projects in multi-family residential and mixed-use zones, and voids any covenant, restriction, or condition contained in any deed, contract, or certain other documents that would effectively prohibit or unreasonably restrict a housing development project from using these FAR standards.</p>
<p><b>Unbundled parking – <a href="#">AB 1317</a> (2023)</b></p>	<p>Requires the owner of qualifying residential property, as defined, that provides parking with the qualifying residential property to unbundle parking from the price of rent.</p>
<p><b>By-right Affordable Housing on Religious/Institutional Lands –</b></p>	<p>Makes 100%-affordable housing projects a use by right on land owned by an independent institution of higher education or religious institution that was in their ownership prior to January 1, 2024, if the project meets objective zoning standards, the applicant hires skilled and trained labor, and the project is located within ½ mile of a major</p>

<b>Gov. Code § 65913.16, <a href="#">SB 4</a> (2023)</b>	transit stop, a high quality corridor, or within one block of a car-share vehicle.
<b>Environmental Justice Legislation</b>	
<b>Environmental justice in general plans – <a href="#">SB 1000</a> (2016)</b>	Requires local governments with Disadvantaged Communities, as defined, to incorporate environmental justice policies in their general plans through either a stand-alone element or by integrating relevant goals, policies, and objectives throughout other elements when two or more elements are revised after January 1, 2018.
<b>Community Air Protection Program – <a href="#">AB 617</a> (2017)</b>	Requires CARB to develop and update a statewide strategy to reduce emissions of toxic air contaminants and criteria air pollutants in communities affected by a high cumulative exposure burden.
<b>Climate Investments to Benefit Disadvantaged Communities – <a href="#">SB 535</a> (2012), <a href="#">AB 1550</a> (2016)</b>	Specifically targets and requires minimum funding for investment of proceeds from the state’s cap-and-trade program in disadvantaged communities.

\* Any legislation passed after the publication date is not included here.

**Appendix 2: Relevant State, Regional, and Local Planning Efforts Enabling Smart Growth**

<b>State Planning Efforts</b>	
<b>Climate Change Scoping Plans</b>	CARB is responsible for guiding the state’s path forward to meeting the mandates of <a href="#">AB 32</a> (2006), <a href="#">SB 32</a> (2016), and <a href="#">AB 1279</a> (2022) through five-year updates to the <a href="#">Climate Change Scoping Plan</a> , which translates the latest climate science and projection modeling into a range of economically and technologically feasible actions to achieve GHG reduction targets. These actions focus on a wide variety of sectors that significantly contribute to statewide GHG emissions and have a concrete ability to reduce those emissions, including transportation, energy, industrial, and natural and working lands. <sup>18</sup> In the latest <a href="#">2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality</a> , CARB’s modeling scenarios and related actions rely on smart growth strategies including significant VMT

<sup>18</sup> CARB defines “natural and working lands” to include forests, grasslands, shrublands and chaparral, croplands, wetlands, coastal areas, developed lands, and sparsely vegetated lands.

	reduction and protection and management of natural and working lands to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.
<b>California Climate Adaptation Strategies</b>	As required by <a href="#">AB 1482</a> (2015), the CNRA and Strategic Growth Council produce updates to the state’s climate adaptation strategy every three years to establish a vision for state agency adaptation roles and responsibilities and to direct programmatic and policy responses in specific policy areas. Previous iterations of this strategy were called <i>Safeguarding California</i> . Now, the latest <a href="#">2021 Climate Adaptation Strategy</a> discusses how the state agencies can commit to and support a suite of strategies (including smart growth-related strategies) that advance climate adaptation and resiliency efforts.
<b>California Transportation Plans</b>	Caltrans is responsible for updating the California Transportation Plan every five years pursuant to <a href="#">SB 391</a> (2009) to identify the statewide multimodal transportation improvements needed to achieve the GHG emission reduction goals of <a href="#">AB 32</a> (2006). The latest <a href="#">California Transportation Plan 2050</a> (2021) includes smart growth-related recommendations including expanding access to safe and convenient active transportation options; improving transit, rail and shared mobility options; and encouraging efficient land use. Caltrans produces additional policy and guidance documents that help implement and standardize these recommendations, such as the <a href="#">Corridor Planning Process Guide</a> (2020) and the <a href="#">Complete Streets Elements Toolbox</a> (2018).
<b>Caltrans Complete Streets Director’s Policy</b>	<a href="#">Caltrans’ Director’s Policy 37</a> (DP-37) mandates that all transportation projects funded or overseen by Caltrans will provide comfortable, convenient, and connected complete streets facilities for people walking, biking, and taking transit or passenger rail unless an exception is documented and approved.
<b>Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure</b>	Following <a href="#">Executive Order N-19-19</a> , CalSTA produced the 2021 <a href="#">Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure</a> (CAPTI) which creates a framework for aligning state transportation investments with the state’s climate, health, and social equity goals. The CAPTI aligns with the priorities identified in the <a href="#">California Transportation Plan 2050</a> (2021) and identifies investment strategies related to those priorities.

<b>State &amp; Local Planning Efforts</b>	
<b>Hazard Mitigation Plans</b>	Pursuant to the federal <a href="#">Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000</a> , state and local governments are required to prepare <a href="#">Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs)</a> . In California, local HMPs (LHMPs) are reviewed and approved by the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), while FEMA approves the State HMP (SHMP). HMPs include information on disaster histories, hazard zones, risk assessments, and mitigation goals and progress that can be used to inform land use planning efforts such as planning for increased housing stock outside of hazardous areas.
<b>Regional Planning Efforts</b>	
<b>Sustainable Communities Strategies</b>	<a href="#">Sustainable Communities Strategies</a> are a regional planning requirement placed on metropolitan planning organizations via <a href="#">SB 375</a> (2008) that align transportation, housing, climate, and land use decisions toward achieving regional GHG emissions reduction targets set by CARB. These plans have significant potential to support smart growth development as they consider how to integrate RHNA requirements for housing development, strategies for reducing VMT, priority development and transit area designations and related incentives, and other regional and local context for implementation through local government actions and investments.
<b>Local Planning Efforts</b>	
<b>General Plans</b>	All cities and counties in California are required to prepare General Plans to serve as their blueprint for community growth and development pursuant to state Planning and Zoning Law (Government Code § 65300). The <a href="#">Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR)</a> provides guidelines and technical advisories for preparing and updating the elements that comprise general plans, including smart growth-related guidance on how to transition from level of service (LOS) to VMT impact analysis in circulation elements per <a href="#">SB 743</a> (2013), how to prepare environmental justice elements per <a href="#">SB 1000</a> (2016), and how to update safety elements per <a href="#">SB 379</a> (2015). <sup>19</sup> The <a href="#">California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)</a> has unique authority

<sup>19</sup> [https://opr.ca.gov/docs/OPR\\_C4\\_final.pdf](https://opr.ca.gov/docs/OPR_C4_final.pdf)

	<p>over the required housing element and provides additional resources and oversight for the housing element update process. General plans provide an opportunity for local governments to incorporate smart growth-related laws and strategies into their land use and development policies. In the coastal zone, many local governments integrate their general plans and their LCPs as they require consideration of overlapping topics.</p>
<p><b>Climate Action/Adaptation Plans</b></p>	<p>Pursuant to <a href="#">SB 379</a> (2015), all cities and counties in California have to update their general plan safety elements with climate adaptation and resiliency strategies or to reference out to a stand-alone document that does the same. Many local governments are choosing to prepare and incorporate separate Climate Action or Adaptation Plans (CAAPs or CAPs) to meet the requirements of SB 379. These plans may include policies and implementation measures that align with smart growth strategies to help achieve local GHG emission reduction targets and sustainable growth goals.</p>