

# Glossary

---

**100-YEAR FLOOD** That flood event that has a one-percent chance of occurrence in any one year.

**500-YEAR FLOOD** The magnitude of a flood expected to occur on the average every 500 years, based on historical data. The 500-year flood has a 1/500, or 0.2 percent, chance of occurring in any given year.

**ACRE, GROSS** Area of a site calculated to the centerline of bounding streets and other public rights-of-way.

**ACRE, GROSS DEVELOPABLE** Area of a site, including proposed public streets and other proposed rights-of-way but excluding areas subject to physical or environmental constraints, which include creek corridors and floodways, and areas to be dedicated for greenways or habitat protection.

**ACRE, NET** Area of a site excluding land to be dedicated for required easements for vehicles and rights of way, either public or private; land dedicated to be hazardous and unbuildable; and land to be dedicated for schools and parks or other facilities dedicated for public use.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING** Housing capable of being purchased or rented by a household with very low, low (earning below 80 percent of the area median income), or moderate income, (earning between 80 to 120 percent of the area median income) based on a household's ability to make monthly payments necessary to obtain housing. Housing is considered affordable when a household pays less than 30 percent of its gross monthly income (GMI) for housing, property taxes, insurance, and utilities.

**AQUIFER** An underground, water-bearing layer of earth, porous rock, sand, or gravel, through which water can seep or be held in natural storage. Aquifers generally hold sufficient water to be used as a water supply.

**ATTAINMENT AREA** An area determined to have met federal or State air quality standards, as defined in the federal Clean Air Act or the California Clean Air Act. An area may be an attainment area for one pollutant and a non-attainment area for others.

**BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP)** The combination of conservation measures, structure, or management practices that reduces or avoids adverse impacts of development on adjoining site's land, water, or waterways, and waterbodies.

**BIKE FACILITIES** These include bike paths (Class I Facilities), bike lanes (Class II Facilities), and bike routes (Class III Facilities).

**BUFFER AREA** A landscape area with trees, shrubs, and vines to soften the edge of different uses and provide land use compatibility.

**BUILDOUT** That level of development characterized by full occupancy of all developable sites in accordance with the General Plan; the maximum probable level of development envisioned by the General Plan under specified assumptions about densities and intensities. Buildout does not necessarily assume parcels are developed at maximum allowable intensities.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)** The multi-year scheduling of public physical improvements based

---

on studies of fiscal resources available and the choice of specific improvements to be constructed.

**CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)** A colorless, odorless gas formed by the incomplete combustion of fuels, which is toxic because of its tendency to reduce the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood.

**CNEL (COMMUNITY NOISE EQUIVALENT LEVEL)** The average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of five decibels to sound levels in the evening from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. and after addition of 10 decibels to sound levels in the night from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

**COMPATIBLE** Capable of existing together without conflict or ill effects.

**CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (CMP)** A CMP provides a procedure to alleviate or control anticipated increases in roadway congestion and to ensure that federal, state, and local agencies join with transit districts business, private and environmental interests to develop and implement comprehensive strategies needed to develop appropriate responses to transportation needs.

**CONSERVATION** The management of natural resources to prevent waste, destruction, or neglect.

**CONSISTENT** Free from variation or contradiction. Programs in the General Plan are to be consistent, not contradictory. State law requires consistency between a general plan and implementation measures such as the zoning ordinance.

**CULTURAL FACILITIES** Premises operated to accommodate cultural pursuits such as visual or performing arts, lectures, or exhibitions.

**CURB CUT** The opening along the curb line at which point vehicles or other wheeled forms of transportation may enter or leave the roadway. Curb cuts are essential at street corners for wheelchair users.

**DARK SKY** Dark Sky is the name usually given to the campaign to reduce and eventually eliminate light pollution from as much of the planet as possible. The campaign is led by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) and supported by organizations in many countries.

**DBA** The “A-weighted” scale for measuring sound in decibels; weights or reduces the effects of low and high frequencies in order to stimulate human hearing. Every increase of 10 dBA doubles the perceived loudness though the noise is actually ten times more intense.

**DECIBEL (DB)** A unit of measurement used to express the relative intensity of sound as heard by the human ear describing the amplitude of sound, equal to 20 times the logarithm to the base 10 of the ratio of the pressure of the sound measured to the reference pressure, which is 20 micropascals (20 micronewtons per square meter).

**DEDICATION** The commitment by an owner or developer of private land for public use, and the acceptance of land for such use by the governmental agency having jurisdiction over the public function for which it will be used. Dedications for roads, parks, school sites, or

---

other public uses often are required by the city as conditions of approval on a development.

**DEDICATION, IN LIEU OF** Cash payments which may be required of an owner or developer as a substitute for a dedication of land, usually calculated in dollars per lot, and referred to as in lieu fees or in lieu contributions.

**DENSITY** The number of residential dwelling units per acre of land. Densities specified in the General Plan are expressed in units per gross developable acre. (See "Acres, Gross," and "Acres, Gross Developable.")

**DENSITY BONUS** The allocation of development rights that allow a parcel to accommodate additional square footage or additional residential units beyond the maximum for which the parcel is zoned, usually in exchange for the provision or preservation of an amenity at the same site or at another location. Under California State Law, residential projects that provide affordable housing may be entitled to a 35 percent increase of the underlying zone district.

**DETENTION AREA** A detention area is an area in the natural environment where rainwater runoff and stormwater naturally collects during a rain and then is pumped to other areas. Human activity and construction of homes have the effect of changing the size and shape of a detention area.

**DEVELOPER** An individual who, or business which, prepares raw land for the construction of buildings or builds or causes to be built physical building space for use primarily by others, and in which the preparation of the land or the creation of the building space is in

itself a business and is not incidental to another business or activity.

**DEVELOPMENT** The physical extension and/or construction of urban land uses. Development activities include but are not limited to: subdivision of land; construction or alteration of structures, roads, utilities, and other facilities; installation of septic systems; grading; deposit of refuse, debris, or fill materials; and clearing of natural vegetation cover (with the exception of agricultural activities). Routine repair and maintenance activities are not considered as "development."

**EASEMENT** A right given by the owner of land to another party for specific limited use of that land. An easement may be acquired by a government through dedication when the purchase of an entire interest in the property may be too expensive or unnecessary; usually needed for utilities or shared parking.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES, CALIFORNIA** A native species or sub-species of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant, which is in serious danger of becoming extinct throughout all or a significant portion of its range, due to one or more factors, including loss in habitat, change in habitat, over-exploitation, predation, competition, or disease. The status is determined by the State Department of Fish and Game together with the State Fish and Game Commission.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES, FEDERAL** A species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, other than the species of the Class Insect determined to constitute a pest whose protection under the provisions of the 1973 Endangered Species Act, as amended, would present an overwhelming and

---

overriding risk to humans. The status is determined by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of the Interior.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR)** A document used to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of a project, evaluate reasonable alternatives to the project, and identify mitigation measures necessary to minimize the impacts. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that the agency with primary responsibility over the approval of a project (the lead agency) evaluate the project's potential impacts in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE** Environmental Justice refers to the fair treatment of all people—regardless of race, income, and religion—when implementing policies that affect housing and the environment. The federal and State government have policies that require agencies to identify and avoid placing a disproportionately large number of minority and low-income populations in certain geographical locations.

**EQUIVALENT NOISE LEVEL (LEQ)** A single-number representation of the fluctuating sound level in decibels over a specified period of time. It is a sound-energy average of the fluctuating level.

**EROSION** The process by which material is removed from the earth's surface (including weathering, dissolution, abrasion, and transportation), most commonly by wind or water.

**EXPANSIVE SOILS** Soils which swell when they absorb water and shrink as they dry.

**FAÇADE** The front of a building; also, any face of a building given special architectural treatment.

**FAULT** A fracture in the earth's crust forming a boundary between rock masses that have shifted. An active fault is a fault that has moved recently and which is likely to again. An inactive fault is a fault which shows no evidence of movement in recent geologic time and little potential for movement.

**FINDINGS** Findings are defined as the results of an investigation, carried out by an investigating team.

**FLOODPLAIN** An area adjacent to a lake, stream, ocean or other body of water lying outside the ordinary banks of the water body and periodically inundated by flood flows. Often referred to as the area likely to be inundated by the 100-year flood.

**FLOOD ZONE** The relatively level land area on either side of the banks of a stream that is subject to flooding under a 100-year or a 500-year flood.

**FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)** The ratio between gross floor area of structures on a site and gross site area. Thus, a building with a floor area of 100,000 square feet on a 50,000 square-foot lot will have a FAR of 2.0.

**FLOOR AREA, GROSS** The total horizontal area in square feet of all floors within the exterior walls of a building, but not including the area of unroofed inner courts or shaft enclosures.

**GROUNDWATER RECHARGE** The natural process of infiltration and percolation of rainwater from land areas

---

or streams through permeable soils into water-holding rocks that provide underground storage (i.e. aquifers).

**GROUNDWATER** Water under the earth's surface, often confined to aquifers capable of supplying wells and springs.

**GREEN BUILDING** A Green Building generally refers to one that is environmentally friendly in terms of energy consumption, or the waste they produce during its entire life-cycle. A Green Building will have little or no significant impact on the environment. Green buildings are scored by rating systems, such as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, Green Globes from GBI and other locally developed rating systems.

**GREYWATER** Greywater is defined as the wastewater produced from baths and showers, clothes washers, and lavatories. Greywater may be recycled for irrigation, cooling, or other secondary uses after minimal treatment.

**HABITAT** The natural environment of a plant or animal.

**HAZARDOUS MATERIAL** A material or form of energy that could cause injury or illness to persons, livestock, or the natural environment. Some examples from everyday life include, gasoline, fertilizers, detergent, used cooking oil, mineral spirits, batteries, and paint.

**HAZARDOUS WASTE** Waste which requires special handling to avoid illness or injury to persons or damage to property. Includes, but is not limited to, inorganic mineral acids of sulfur, fluorine, chlorine, nitro-

gen, chromium, phosphorous, selenium and arsenic and their common salts; lead, nickel, and mercury and their inorganic salts or metallo-organic derivatives; coal, tar acids such as phenol and cresols and their salts; and all radioactive materials.

**HISTORIC RESOURCE** A historic building or site that is noteworthy for its significance in local, state, national, its architecture or design, or its works of art, memorabilia, or artifacts.

**HISTORIC STRUCTURE** A structure deemed to be historically significant based on its visual quality, design, history, association, context, and/or integrity.

**HOUSEHOLD** An occupied housing unit.

**IMPERVIOUS SURFACE** Any material which reduces or prevents absorption of water into land.

**IMPLEMENTATION** Actions, procedures, programs, or techniques that carry out policies.

**INFILL** The development of new housing or other buildings on scattered vacant lots in a predominantly developed area or on new building parcels created by permitted lot splits.

**INFILTRATION** The introduction of underground water, such as groundwater, into wastewater collection systems. Infiltration results in increased wastewater flow levels.

**INTERSECTION CAPACITY** The maximum number of vehicles that has a reasonable expectation of passing through an intersection in one direction during a

---

given time period under prevailing roadway and traffic conditions.

**INFRASTRUCTURE** Permanent utility installations, including roads, water supply lines, sewage collection pipes, and power and communications lines.

**INTRUSIVE NOISE** That noise which intrudes over and above the existing ambient noise at a given location. The relative intrusiveness of a sound depends upon its amplitude, duration, frequency, time of occurrence, and tonal or information content as well as the prevailing noise level.

**JOBS-EMPLOYED RESIDENTS RATIO** Total jobs divided by total employed residents (i.e. people who live in the area, but may work anywhere). A ratio of 1.0 typically indicates a balance. A ratio greater than 1.0 indicates a net in-commute; less than 1.0 indicates a net out-commute.

**LANDSCAPE EASEMENT** An area behind a City right-of-way on private property which includes trees and other landscaping.

**L10** A statistical descriptor indicating the sound level exceeded ten percent of the time. It is a commonly used descriptor of community noise, and has been used in Federal Highway Administration standards and the standards of some cities.

**LDN (DAY-NIGHT AVERAGE SOUND LEVEL)** The A-weighted average sound level for a given area (measured in decibels) during a 24-hour period with a 10 dB weighting applied to night-time sound levels (after 10 p.m. and before 7 a.m.). The Ldn is approximately

numerically equal to the CNEL for most environmental settings.

**LEQ (EQUIVALENT ENERGY LEVEL)** The sound level corresponding to a steady sound level containing the same total energy as a time varying signal over a given sample period. Leq is typically computed over 1, 2, and 8-hour sample periods. The Leq is a “dosage” type measure and is the basis for the descriptions used in current standards, such as the 24-hour CNEL used by the State of California.

**LEED** The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings.

**LEVEL OF SERVICE, LOS (TRAFFIC)** A qualitative measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream and the perception of motorists and/or passengers regarding these conditions. A level of service definition generally describes these conditions in terms of such factors as traffic volumes, speed and travel time, delays at traffic signals, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, and safety.

**LIQUEFACTION** A sudden large decrease in the shearing resistance of a cohesion less soil, caused by a collapse of the structure by shock or strain, and associated with a sudden but temporary increase of the pore fluid pressure.

**MINERALS** Any naturally occurring chemical element or compound, or groups of elements and compounds, formed from inorganic processes and organic sub-

---

stances, including, but not limited to, coal, peat, and bituminous rock, but excluding geothermal resources, natural gas, and petroleum (Public Resources Code Section 2005).

**MITIGATION MEASURES** Action taken to avoid, minimize, or eliminate environmental impacts. Mitigation includes: avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation; rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance during the life of the action; and compensating for the impact by repairing or providing substitute resources or environments.

**MIXED USE** Describes a development project which includes two or more categories of land use such as residential and commercial, or commercial and professional office and the like. For further discussion see the Land Use Element section on Mixed-use centers.

**NITROGEN OXIDES (NO<sub>x</sub>)** Chemical compounds containing nitrogen and oxygen; reacts with volatile organic compounds, in the presence of heat and sunlight to form ozone. It is also a major precursor to acid rain.

**NOISE ATTENUATION** Reduction of the level of a noise source using a substance, material, or surface.

**NOISE CONTOURS** Lines drawn about a noise source indicating equal levels of noise exposure. CNEL and Ldn are the metrics utilized herein to describe annoyance due to noise and to establish land use planning criteria for noise.

**OPEN SPACE** Any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved. The General Plan designates privately-owned rural/grazing lands, and devoted open space areas as defined by California planning law.

**OZONE** A compound consisting of three oxygen atoms that is the primary constituent of smog. It is formed through chemical reactions in the atmosphere involving volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and sunlight. Surface level Ozone can initiate damage to the lungs as well as damage to trees, crops, and materials. There is a natural layer of Ozone in the upper atmosphere, which shields the earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation.

**PARKWAY STRIPS** Areas adjacent to curbs containing street trees and landscaping as well as utilities.

**PEAK HOUR** The busiest one-hour period for traffic during a 24-hour period. The PM peak hour is the busiest one hour period of traffic during the evening commute period. The AM peak hour is the busiest one hour period during the morning commute.

**PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT** Development designed with an emphasis on the street sidewalk and on pedestrian access to the building, rather than an auto access and parking areas.

**PERFORMANCE STANDARDS** A statement representing a commitment by a public agency to attain a specified level or quality of performance through its programs and policies.



---

**PLANNING AREA** The land area addressed by a General Plan, including land within the city limits and land outside the city limits that bears a relation to the City's planning. This area is not all intended for development; the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) shows the future development area.

**PM-10, PM-2.5** The current standard for measuring the amount of solid or liquid matter suspended in the atmosphere ("particulate matter including dust"). Refers to the amount of particulate matter under 10 micrometers and 2.5 micrometers in diameter, respectively. Particulate matters can penetrate to the deeper portions of the lung, affecting sensitive population groups such as children and people with respiratory diseases.

**RARE OR ENDANGERED SPECIES** A species of animal or plant listed in Sections 670.2 or 670.5, Title 14, California Administrative Code; or Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 17.11 or Section 17.2, pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act designating species as rare, threatened, or endangered.

**RECYCLE** The process of extraction and reuse of materials from waste products.

**RETENTION AREA** A pond, pool, lagoon, or basin used for the storage of water runoff, which is not pumped to another location, thereby holding an entire winter's storm capacity.

**RIGHT-OF-WAY** A continuous strip of land reserved for or actually occupied by a road, crosswalk, railroad, electric transmission lines, oil or gas pipeline, water line, sanitary storm sewer or other similar use.

**SENSITIVE RECEPTORS** Persons or land users that are most sensitive to negative effects of air pollutants. Persons who are sensitive receptors include children, the elderly, the acutely ill, and the chronically ill. The term "sensitive receptors" can also refer to the land use categories where these people live or spend a significant amount of time. Such areas include residences, schools, playgrounds, child-care centers, hospitals, retirement homes, and convalescent homes.

**SIGNIFICANT EFFECT** A beneficial or detrimental impact on the environment. May include, but is not limited to, significant changes in an area's air, water, and land resources.

**SILTATION** The process of silt deposition. Silt is a loose sedimentary material composed of finely divided particles of soil or rock, often carried in cloudy suspension in water.

**SOLID WASTE** General category that includes organic wastes, paper products, metals, glass, plastics, cloth, brick, rock, soil, leather, rubber, yard wastes, and wood.

**SPECIFIC PLAN** A plan that provides detailed design and implementation tools for a specific portion of the area covered by a general plan. A specific plan may include all regulations, conditions, programs, and/or proposed legislation which may be necessary or convenient for the systematic implementation of any general plan element(s).

**SPHERE OF INFLUENCE (SOI)** The ultimate service area of an incorporated city, as established by the LAFCO.

---

**STATIONARY SOURCE** A source of air pollution that is not mobile, such as a heating plant or an exhaust stack from a laboratory.

**STORM RUNOFF** Surplus surface water generated by rainfall that does not seep into the earth but flows overland to a watercourse.

**STREETSCAPE** The appearance or view of a street.

**THREATENED SPECIES, CALIFORNIA** A species of animal or plant is endangered when its survival and reproduction in the wild are in immediate jeopardy from one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, over-exploitation, predation, competition, disease, or other factors; or when although not presently threatened with extinction, the species is existing in such small numbers that it may become endangered if its environment worsens. A species of animal or plant shall be presumed to be rare or endangered as it is listed in Sections 670.2 or 670.5, Title 14, California Code of Regulations; or Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations Sections 17.11 or 17.12 pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act as rare, threatened, or endangered.

**THREATENED SPECIES, FEDERAL** A species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

**TOTAL DISSOLVED SOLIDS (TDS)** Total dissolved solids comprise inorganic salts and small amounts of organic matter that are dissolved in water. The principal constituents are usually calcium, magnesium, sodium and potassium and the anions carbonate, bicarbonate,

chloride, sulphate and, particularly in groundwater, nitrate (from agricultural use).

**TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT** Measures to improve the movement of persons and goods through better and more efficient utilization of existing transportation systems (e.g., streets and roads, freeways and bus systems) and measures to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles utilized for commute purposes.

**TRIP GENERATION** The number of vehicle trip ends associated with (i.e., produced by) a particular land use or traffic study site. A trip end is defined as a single vehicle movement. Roundtrips consist of two trip ends.

**URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY (UGB)** The line within which all urban development is to be contained. The primary purpose of an UGB is to limit the extent of urbanization.

**USE** The purpose for which a lot or structure is or may be leased, occupied, maintained, arranged, designed, intended, constructed, erected, moved, altered, and/or enlarged as per the City's Zoning Ordinance and General Plan land use designation.

**VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT)** A measure of both the volume and extent of motor vehicle operation; the total number of vehicle miles traveled within a specified geographical area (whether the entire country or a smaller area) over a given period of time.

**VIEW CORRIDOR** The line-of-sight (identified as to height, width, and distance) of an observer looking

---

toward an object of significance to the community (e.g., ridgeline, river, historic building, etc.).

**WATERSHED** The total area above a given point on a watercourse which contributes water to the flow of the watercourse; the entire region drained by a watercourse.

**WETLANDS** Areas that are permanently wet or periodically covered with shallow water, such as saltwater and freshwater marshes, open or closed brackish marshes, swamps, mud flats, and fens.

**WILDLIFE CORRIDORS** A natural corridor, such as an undeveloped ravine, that is frequently used by wildlife to travel from one area to another.

**ZONING ORDINANCE** A section of municipal code that divides incorporated city land into districts and establishes regulations governing the use, placement, spacing, and size of buildings, open spaces, and other facilities.

*This page intentionally left blank.*



**DYETT & BHATIA**  
Urban and Regional Planners

755 Sansome Street, Suite 400  
San Francisco, California 94111  
☎ 415 956 4300 📠 415 956 7315