

Environmental Review

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The state legislature enacted the California Environmental Quality Act (<http://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/>) (CEQA) in 1970. CEQA established statewide regulations for the environmental review of discretionary (/development-services/land-use-process/planning-processes) projects as well as a process for mitigating or avoiding potential environmental impacts.

The purpose of CEQA is to:

- Disclose to the public the potentially significant environmental effects of a proposed project;
- Develop alternatives and mitigation measures to prevent or minimize environmental impacts;
- Identify additional opportunities for public participation and community input;
- Improve the findings to support the future approval of discretionary projects.

CEQA requires public agencies to publish Negative Declarations, Mitigated Negative Declarations, Environmental Impact Reports, and Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessments. Visit the Published Documents (/development-services/environmental-review/published-documents) page to view Los Angeles City Planning's CEQA documents.



(<https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/e524a6c4-8de9->



(https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/ab9e5647-1d96-4db7-aab1-2905984fbd1e/TechnicalReports_Studies-TribalCulturalResources.pdf)

Discretionary Projects

CEQA applies to all discretionary projects. Most land use proposals are subject to CEQA, including revisions to the General Plan (/plans-policies/general-plan-overview) and Community Plans (/plans-policies/community-plans), as well as certain proposed ordinances (/plans-policies/proposed-land-use-regulations). All development projects requiring discretionary approvals undergo environmental review.

Stand-alone ministerial and by-right projects are statutorily exempt under CEQA. These projects do not need planning approvals (/development-services/land-use-process/planning-processes) because they comply with zoning and building code requirements.

CEQA Process Overview

1. Determine if the proposed project or policy qualifies for a statutory or categorical exemption from CEQA based on State Guidelines. The CEQA Guidelines (<http://resources.ca.gov/ceqa/>) interpret state statute and published court decisions to better inform the environmental review process and preparation of any associated documents.

Statutory Exemptions (SEs) apply to projects that the California Legislature has determined to be specifically excluded from CEQA consideration.

For example, emergency projects such as emergency repairs to publicly or privately owned service facilities necessary to maintain services essential to the public health, safety or welfare are statutorily exempt from CEQA.

Categorical Exemptions (CEs) apply to projects that are not determined to have a significant environmental impact. CEQA recognizes over 30 types of CEs. They are listed in Section 15300 of the CEQA Guidelines that are adopted by the Natural Resources Agency under rulemaking authority and are maintained in the California Code of Regulations at Title 14, Chapter 3.

For example, Class 32 is a Categorical Exemption available for qualifying infill development located in an urban area. To qualify, a project must meet all of the following criteria:

- The Project Site must be 5 acres or less in size;
- The Project must be consistent with the General Plan (i.e. Community Plan) and zoning requirements;
- The Project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.
- Approval of the Project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.
- The site can adequately be served by all required utilities and public services.

Other commonly used Categorical Exemptions include Class 1 (which may include the minor alteration of an existing facility) and Class 3 (which may include new construction of small structures).

- Unlike statutory exemptions, categorical exemptions must be further reviewed to ensure that a particular project doesn't trigger an exception that would disqualify a project from being categorically exempt under CEQA.
- These exceptions include factors that address:
 - A project's location in a sensitive environment (not applicable to Class 32);
 - Significant cumulative impacts from successive projects in same location of same type;
 - Identifiable unusual circumstances;
 - Potential impacts to State designated scenic highways
 - A project's location within a hazardous waste site listed under state law, or a
 - Project's significant impact to historical resources

The application of CEQA does not apply to projects over which the City only has ministerial authority. This means that stand-alone by-right or ministerial projects are exempt from CEQA based on the project scope and the planning approvals (/development-services/land-use-process/planning-processes).

2. If the proposed project is not exempt under either a statutory or categorical exemption an initial study is prepared to assess the project's potential impacts to the

environment. The initial study analysis will determine if a Negative Declaration (ND), a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) or an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (/development-services/eir) must be prepared for the associated project.

Note: The summary above provides a general overview of the CEQA process and is intended to be used for informational purposes only. The steps enumerated above do not address new streamlining tools for projects located within Transit Priority Areas or involve affordable

housing. For more information, consult the California Natural Resources Agency website (<http://resources.ca.gov/ceqa/>).

EIR Dashboard

Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) are complex documents that combine the input of numerous subject-matter experts as well as comments and concerns of diverse stakeholders. These reports may require many rounds of Planning staff review and applicant revision.

The Department's standards for EIR review and preparation and the Department's Environmental Consultant List are provided in the links below.



**EIR Review Criteria
and Performance
Standards**

([https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/b307e4c2-](https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/b307e4c2-bb7a-43ec-88ff-a97260da23a6/Env_PS_Criteria_November.pdf)

[bb7a-43ec-88ff-a97260da23a6/Env_PS_Criteria_November.pdf](https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/b307e4c2-bb7a-43ec-88ff-a97260da23a6/Env_PS_Criteria_November.pdf))



**Environmental
Consultant List**

([https://planning.lacity.org/development-](https://planning.lacity.org/development-services/environmental-review/environmental-consultant-list)

[services/environmental-review/environmental-consultant-list](https://planning.lacity.org/development-services/environmental-review/environmental-consultant-list))

Los Angeles published nearly 13 percent of the Draft EIRs and 80 percent of the Final EIRs in California in 2019—even though the City represents only 10 percent of the State's population. The dashboard below explores a number of metrics related to both active and completed EIRs. These interactive charts will be updated on a monthly basis, so check this space for updated information on EIR progress and completion times.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Metrics

What is an Environmental Impact Report?

Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) are required for complex projects that can anchor a community or define a skyline. Los Angeles City Planning staff work closely with all stakeholders to ensure these projects' environmental impacts are mitigated while providing the maximum benefit to the city. The production of an EIR is a collaborative and iterative process -- a 2018 analysis by the Department of City Planning found that the time an applicant or their environmental consultants spend revising and updating an EIR filing accounts for between 33% and 50% of total processing time

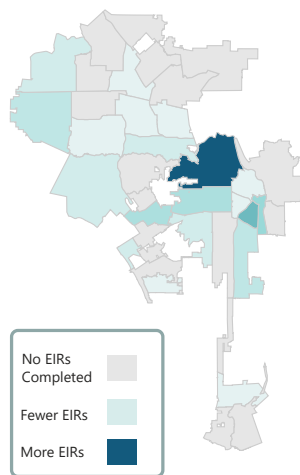
50% of all EIRs are finalized within 23 months of filing.

Between 2016 and 2019, projects that completed the EIR process generated more than **18,000 units** of housing, including more than **1,000 units of affordable housing**. These projects also provided **257,000 square feet** of medical floor area and **1.8 million square feet** of commercial floor area. City Planning is currently overseeing the completion of **66 active EIRs**.

Please Note: This dashboard only includes data on EIRs associated with the development of individual projects

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EIRs Completed by Plan Area (2013 to Date)



Key EIR Phases

1. Notice of Preparation (NOP) & Initial Study: A Notice of Preparation (NOP) is issued by the Department of City Planning, as Lead Agency, to inform the public and other agencies that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared, and to solicit input on the scope and content of the EIR, including the project description, possible effects of the project, possible alternatives, and mitigation measures. The Initial Study is released along with the NOP, indicating factors that will be studied in the EIR.

2. Draft EIR (DEIR): City Planning next prepares and issues a Draft EIR (DEIR) containing the project description and location, environmental setting, identification of significant environmental impacts, mitigation measures, discussion of alternatives and growth inducing impacts, information about how to review the EIR, and technical materials. The DEIR is available for public comment for a minimum of 45 days.

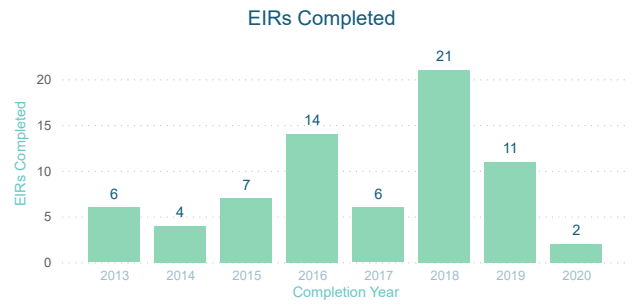
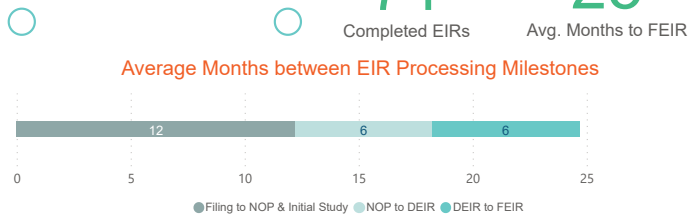
3. Final EIR (FEIR): The Final EIR (FEIR) contains information related to those who submitted comments during the DEIR public comment period, and includes responses to those comments. The FEIR may include clarifying discussion and information to address common areas of concern or questions raised during the DEIR comment period. A Notice of Availability (NOA) is issued when the FEIR is released. In some cases, the Notice of Public Hearing will be issued together with the NOA for the FEIR, or may be issued separately once a public hearing date has been identified.

[Click here to view the City Planning EIR Information Page](#)

Completed Environmental Impact Reports

January 2013 - December 2020

2013 2020



Plan Area	EIRs Completed	Avg. Months to Complete*	File to NOP	NOP to DEIR	DEIR to FEIR
Wilmington - Harbor City	1	69	34	17	18
Van Nuys - North Sherman Oaks	1	60	30	14	16
Brentwood - Pacific Palisades	2	31	16	8	8
Southeast Los Angeles	3	28	14	7	7
Hollywood	25	27	13	7	7
Westlake	1	27	13	6	7
Wilshire	1	24	12	6	6
Total	71	25	12	6	6

Case Number	Project Name or Address	Plan Area	Months to FEIR
ENV-2016-4676-EIR	100 S. Broadway	Central City	31
ENV-2016-4889-EIR	1015 W Olympic Blvd 90015	Central City	11
ENV-2015-1159-EIR	1020 S. Figueroa Street	Central City	24
ENV-2016-4321-EIR	1033 S Abbot Kinney Blvd 90291	Venice	19
ENV-2016-4630-EIR	1045 S. Olive Street	Central City	34
ENV-2016-4476-EIR	1101 E 5Th St 90013	Central City North	31
ENV-2015-3033-EIR	1111 W 6Th St 90017	Westlake	27
ENV-2015-1102-EIR	1119 N Moorpark Pl	Hollywood	15
Average			25

* These figures only track environmental case processing time. Additional entitlements may require further departmental or Council action before they are finalized.

Please Note: Completion times are inclusive of State-mandated public comment periods. Time that a case was on hold pending receipt of additional application materials or reports is excluded.

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Active Environmental Impact Reports

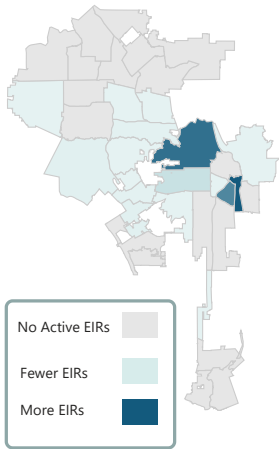
As of December 2020

Current EIR Phase

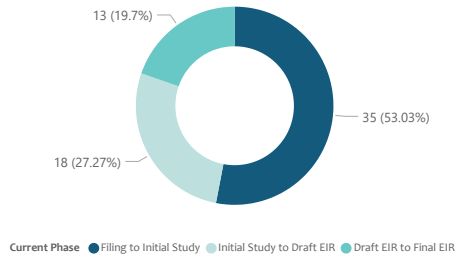
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All

Count of Active EIRs by Plan Area

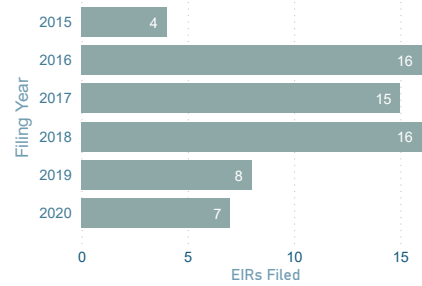


Share of EIRs by Current Phase



Current Phase	Active EIRs	Avg. Months from Filing
Filing to Initial Study	35	13
Initial Study to Draft EIR	18	21
Draft EIR to Final EIR	13	23
Total	66	17

Active EIRs by Year Filed



Case Number	Plan Area	Project Name or Address	Current Phase
ENV-2018-1509-EIR	Bel Air - Beverly Crest	The Retreat At Benedict Canyon	Filing to Initial Study
ENV-2016-2319-EIR	Brentwood - Pacific Palisades	12001 W. Chalon Road	Draft EIR to Final EIR
ENV-2019-4565-EIR	Brentwood - Pacific Palisades	Berggruen Institute	Filing to Initial Study
ENV-2019-6645-EIR	Brentwood - Pacific Palisades	11973 San Vicente (Barry Building)	Filing to Initial Study
FNV-2016-3636-FIR	Canoga	Treeland	Draft EIR to

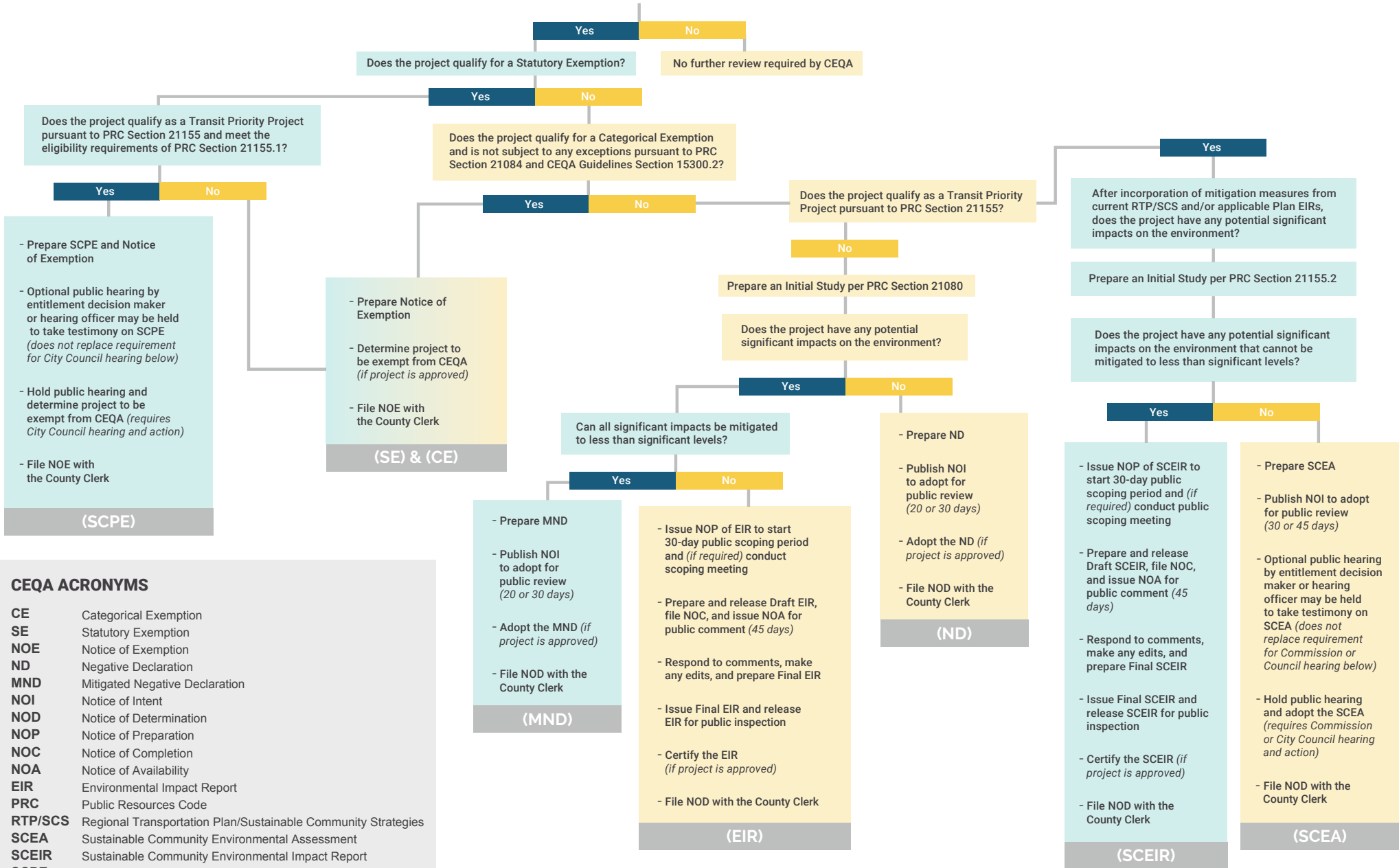
[Click here to view the City Planning Department's EIR Information Page](#)

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CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT FLOW CHART



Is the Action a Project as Defined by CEQA?



CEQA ACRONYMS

CE	Categorical Exemption
SE	Statutory Exemption
NOE	Notice of Exemption
ND	Negative Declaration
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
NOI	Notice of Intent
NOD	Notice of Determination
NOP	Notice of Preparation
NOC	Notice of Completion
NOA	Notice of Availability
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
PRC	Public Resources Code
RTP/SCS	Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategies
SCEA	Sustainable Community Environmental Assessment
SCEIR	Sustainable Community Environmental Impact Report
SCPE	Sustainable Communities Project Exemption

This flowchart provides a general overview of the CEQA process and is intended to be used for informational purposes only.