

# Preface

**W**hen Solano Press invited me to write a book about General Plan preparation, I had no idea how great a project I was undertaking, particularly since I had to shoehorn in my writing between all the other tasks of my already busy work and family lives. Now, about five years after starting this project, I am both happy and relieved to have seen this work to an end.

It turns out that there is a lot to be said about writing a General Plan, ranging from the complex legal requirements to best practices to advice that I can give from over twenty years in the field. I hope readers will find this compendium of facts and suggestions useful, and my work helps to move our profession forward to create both legally sufficient and socially relevant General Plan documents.

Interestingly, the governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has been preparing a long-needed update to the official *General Plan Guidelines* at the same time I have been writing this book. Knowing how hard it has been to write this book on my own, I have great admiration for the folks at OPR who have had to write the *Guidelines* to respond to broad public and professional input from a variety of points of view. I also feel some trepidation that the thoughts and procedures I've suggested here will be different from those suggested by OPR. I hope that, in the end, this book will serve as a useful complement to the new *Guidelines*, which should appear at roughly the same time as this book.

I also want to thank several individuals whose help has been indispensable in writing this book. Bill Fulton originally connected me with Solano Press. Natalie Macris and Ling-Yen Jones have supported and encouraged this project from the outset. Ana Baginski and Eric Panzer helped to write rough drafts of parts of the text based on my outline, and Grant Reddy assembled the graphics. Jeff Loux and Tim Snellings provided invaluable feedback through peer review, Peter Detweiler and Larry Mintier provided access to an unpublished article containing information on the history of the General Plan in California, and Seth Litchney and Elizabeth Baca of OPR also shared notes and ideas. Many of the ideas in this book also come

from my course on General Plan preparation taught at UC Davis (thanks are also due to my co-instructors Terry Rivasplata and Rich Walter), and from the California Planning Roundtable, on which I serve as an emeritus member. My colleagues at PlaceWorks are irreplaceable sounding boards for the work we do in General Plan preparation, and I am also appreciative of the support of our clients in local government. Finally, my wife and partner in crime, Sue Stuart, has put up with and encouraged long hours at the keyboard, even though it cut into our private time together.

Despite all this support and assistance, I am responsible for the content of this book, and any mistakes are my own.

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