



California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

What is CEQA and why is it important?

Topics Covered in this Presentation

- California Environmental Quality Act Background and Purpose
- Types of CEQA Documents
- Public Involvement
- Opportunities for Public Review and Input

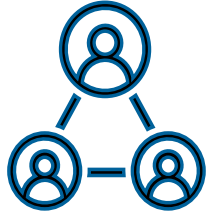


California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

- CEQA, or the California Environmental Quality Act, is a statute requiring state and local agencies to **identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.**
- CEQA **applies to all government agencies** at all levels in California, including local agencies, regional agencies, and state agencies, boards, and commissions. **The City of Los Angeles (City) and its departments' projects and activities are subject to review under CEQA.**
- The environmental review process has become a **means by which the public interacts with agency decision makers.**



CEQA Purpose



Inform governmental decision makers and the public about potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities (and ultimately why the project was approved).



Disclose and **evaluate** the potential significant environmental impacts of proposed projects.



Identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced.



Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures if feasible.



When does CEQA Apply?

- CEQA applies to any **project, activity or discretionary action** that a government agency is proposing
- CEQA is a key component of the project development and approval process



Types of CEQA Documents

- Notice of Exemption (NOE)
- Negative Declaration (ND)
- Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)
- Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

No project is final or approved until CEQA has been completed.



Notice of Exemption

- CEQA has ministerial, statutory, and categorical exemptions.
- Projects are first evaluated to determine if any exemptions apply.
- A Notice of Exemption (NOE) can be filed by a Lead Agency when a project is determined to be exempt from CEQA.
- NOEs are posted to CEQAnet and the project's County Registrar/Recorder websites.
 - City Departments also post NOEs to their website or can provide a hardcopy on request.



Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52)

Public Resources Code § 21080.3.1(b)

- Provides a formal structure to discuss confidential Native American resources and for “meaningful consultation” to protect tribal cultural resources.
- Consultation contains multiple steps:
 - Contacting the California Native American Heritage Commission for:
 - List of Native American Tribes with ancestral ties to the project area
 - Sacred Lands File Search to determine if known sensitive resources are present
 - Inviting Native American Tribes to consult on this project.
 - Incorporating mitigation measures into the final document to protect Tribal Cultural Resources.



Initial Study

- An **Initial Study (IS)** evaluates a proposed project's potential impacts on the environment.
- Typically, the environmental factors of Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines is used, but additional environmental factors may be analyzed for each project.
- Initial Studies rely on technical data to predict potential environmental impacts.
 - If the study determines that the project will have no impact to the environment, a **Negative Declaration** may be prepared.
 - If the study determines that the project will have no impact to the environment with the inclusion of mitigation measures, a **Mitigated Negative Declaration** may be prepared.
 - If the study determines that the project will have a significant impact to the environment, an **Environmental Impact Report** must be prepared.



Environmental Factors commonly evaluated



Aesthetics



Agriculture and Forestry Resources



Air Quality



Biological Resources



Cultural Resources



Energy



Geology and Soils



Greenhouse Gas Emissions



Hazards and Hazardous Materials



Hydrology and Water Quality



Land Use



Mineral Resources



Noise



Population and Housing/ Growth



Public Services



Recreation



Transportation



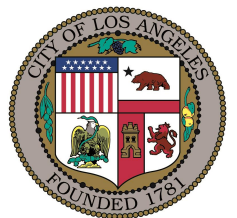
Tribal Cultural Resources



Utilities and Service Systems



Wildfire



How are Environmental Impacts determined?

- Each environmental factor has a **threshold** for environmental impact, determined by the Lead Agency.

Impact Determinations:

- **No Impact:** The project will not cause any change to the environment in this category.
- **Less Than Significant Impact:** The project will cause some change, but it will not be significant enough to require mitigation.
- **Less Than Significant with Mitigation:** The project will cause significant impacts, but these can be reduced to less than significant levels with the implementation of mitigation measures.
- **Significant and Unavoidable Impact:** The project will cause significant impacts that cannot be fully mitigated, even with all feasible measures in place.



Negative Declaration

- A Negative Declaration (ND) is a statement by a lead agency that a project will not have a significant effect on the environment.
- An ND is based on an Initial Study that evaluates the potential environmental impacts and concludes that there are no significant effects.
- An ND must be made available for a minimum of 20-day public review and comment period, ensuring transparency and community involvement in the decision-making process.

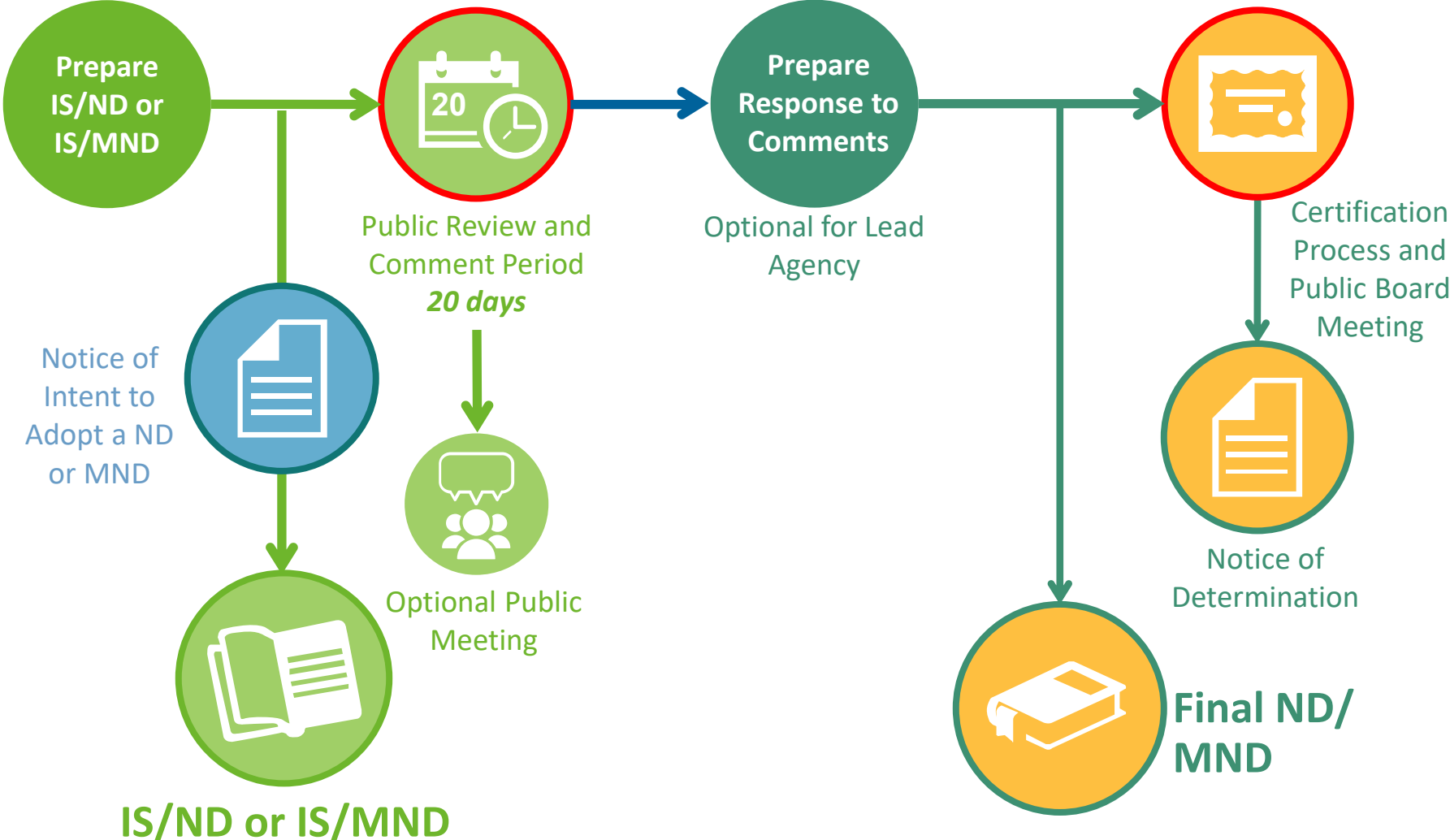


Mitigated Negative Declaration

- A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is based on an Initial Study that concludes there are no significant effects on the environment with the implementation of mitigation measures.
- A MND must be made available for a minimum of 20-day public review and comment period, ensuring transparency and community involvement in the decision-making process.
- A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program based on the mitigation measures of the MND is prepared to ensure compliance.



CEQA ND/ MND Process



Environmental Impact Report

- There are several types of EIRs:
 - Project EIRs
 - Program EIRs
 - Master EIRs
 - Tiered EIRs
 - Supplemental EIRs



Project EIRs

- Most common kind of EIR
- Evaluates the environmental effects of a **specific, defined development project**, analyzing all phases, including planning, construction, and operation.
- Focuses on the site-specific impacts of a particular project.
- Provides a detailed analysis of environmental changes resulting from the project.



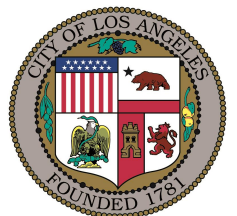
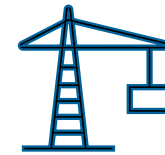
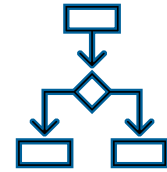
Program EIRs

- An EIR prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:
 - Geographically
 - As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions
 - In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or
 - As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.



Program EIRs continued

- Umbrella document that can cover different types of development that are linked
- Analyzes the broader environmental impacts of a plan, program, or policy that may encompass a series of related actions or activities.
- Can address broad environmental and cumulative effects
- May not address potential site-specific impacts of the individual projects
- Consideration of reasonable, worst-case scenarios
- Allows for variety of future projects within the scope of the program
- Can include a phased approach/horizon year.



Other Types of EIRs

- Master EIR
 - Evaluates the cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, and irreversible significant effects of a general or specific plan, program, or series of related projects, allowing for streamlined review of subsequent projects
- Tiered EIR
 - Focuses on a specific project within the broader context of a previously certified program-level EIR, reducing repetitive analysis by referencing the broader EIR
- Supplemental EIR
 - Prepared when there are substantial changes to a project or new significant environmental effects that were not analyzed in the original EIR
- Addendum to an EIR
 - A document that makes minor changes or additions to a previously certified EIR without requiring a full EIR, used when changes do not result in new significant environmental impacts

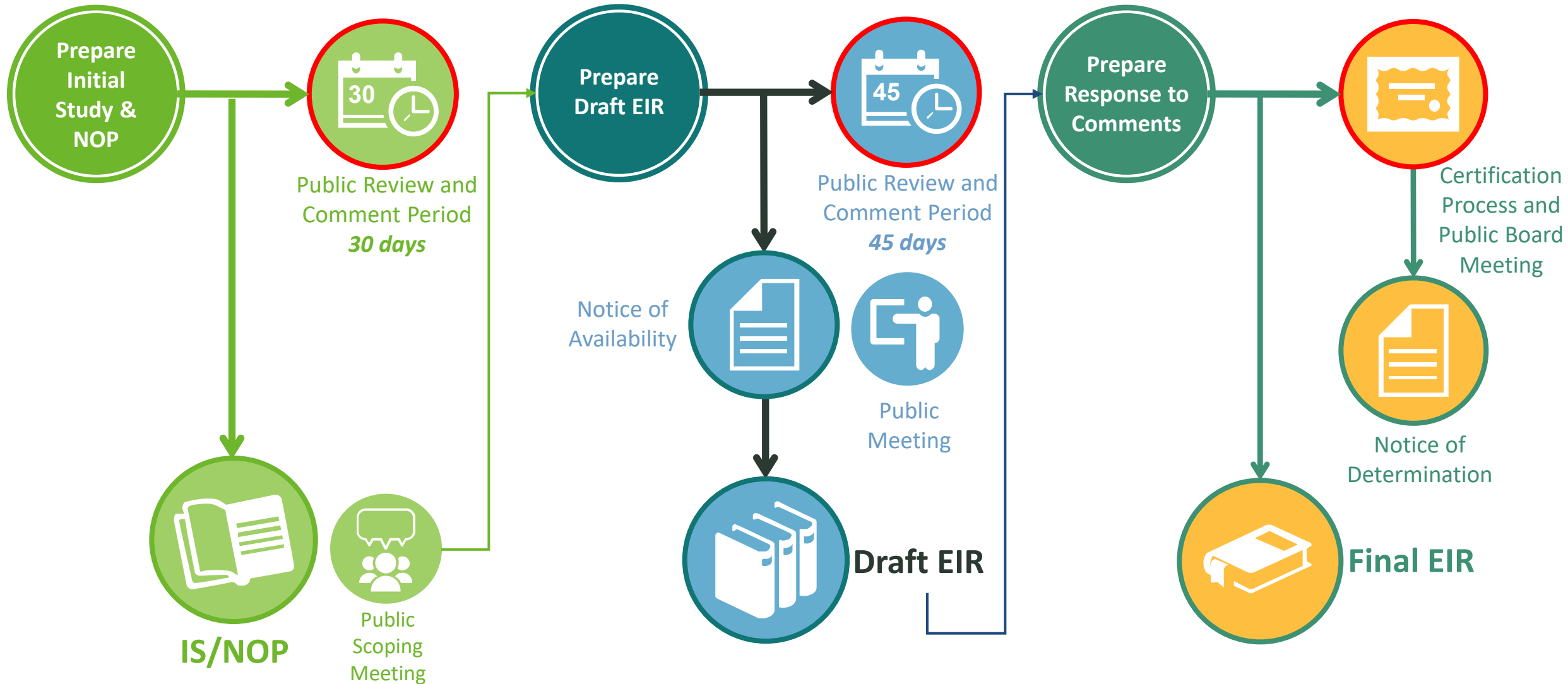


Mitigation Measures

- **Mitigation measures** are designed to avoid, minimize, or compensate for significant environmental impacts of a project. They aim to reduce these impacts to a **less-than-significant level**.
- Lead agency adopts a **Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program** outlining all project mitigation measures in a checklist format for implementation tracking. The Lead Agency is responsible for ensuring mitigation measures are implemented.
- Mitigation measures can include a variety of actions, such as altering project designs, implementing conservation plans, or restoring affected environments. These measures are tailored to address specific environmental impacts identified in the initial study or EIR.
- A **Statement of Overriding Considerations** under CEQA is a written explanation by a lead agency justifying the approval of a project despite its significant and unavoidable environmental impacts, by demonstrating that the project's specific benefits outweigh adverse effects



CEQA EIR Process



Opportunities for Public Participation

- Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Scoping Period:
 - 30 days
- Draft EIR Public Review
 - 45 days
- Final EIR City department board consideration
 - Frequency varies by City department.



After CEQA Approval

- After a Lead Agency decided to adopt/ certify a ND, MND, or EIR, the Lead Agency posts a Notice of Determination to CEQAnet, and the project's County Registrar/Recorder websites.
 - City Departments also post NODs to their website or can provide a hardcopy on request.
- Lead Agency implements the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and begins construction or implementation of the approved project.
- Lead Agency maintains MMRP throughout the project to ensure all mitigation measures are implemented according to the associated CEQA document (MND or EIR).





Thank you!