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April 22, 2025

The Honorable City Council
City of Los Angeles
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: Budget and Finance Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING – MAYOR’S 2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET

The Department of City Planning delivers housing, jobs and economic investment across the city through strategic land use planning and streamlined project approvals. The City’s ability to plan for smart growth, build housing, support employment and economic prosperity while engaging our City’s diverse communities is at stake. The Department must express serious concerns regarding the drastic reductions reflected throughout the Proposed Budget. If adopted without modifications, the Proposed Budget would result in sweeping reductions in the Department’s service levels.

The Proposed Budget eliminates 197 out of 567 department positions (a 35% reduction for City Planning). Of these 197 positions, 115 are filled, representing the reduction of 1 in 4 staff of the Department’s 471 filled positions. An additional 82 vacancies are deleted, leaving little flexibility for absorbing cuts internally or for responding to shifting conditions such as wildfire rebuilding and recovery. City Planning represents 1.6% of the City’s workforce, but is 7.2% of the proposed layoffs and appears to be amongst the hardest hit of all of the City departments.

Special funded programs make up 74% of staff positions in the Department. City Planning’s Special Funded operations serve both the development community and the public, and revenue collection occurs intentionally to offset, but not eliminate, costs. Fees are subsidized in many instances to promote public participation and due process (example: appeals, specific plan/overlay reviews, nuisance abatement work, commission hearings).

Impacts

The Proposed Budget would result in the elimination of key work programs, and require consolidation and restructuring of others. The following are specific examples of some of the potential work program impacts:

- Stops the launch of new community plans and impacts the timelines of plans underway (one community planning division eliminated).
- Stops the East San Fernando Valley Transit Neighborhood Plan program and halts the launch of all new neighborhood initiatives, transit plans, or specific plans amendments.
- Stops the Venice Local Coastal Program, which involves sea level rise adaptation strategies and project review compliance with Coastal Act.
- Limits Code Amendments to only those amendments required for code maintenance and compliance with State law.
- Stops work on Wildlife Ordinance and eliminates the expansion of the ordinance to the Rim of the Valley.
- Eliminates the Nuisance Abatement and Revocations program (all positions eliminated).
- Stops work on the Environmental Justice General Plan Element and stops the work of the Office of Racial Justice, Equity, and Transformative Planning (all positions are deleted).
- Eliminates the potential for adopting new historic districts and would require the consolidation of existing HPOZ boards, reduced frequency of board meetings, the limitation of reviews, and the transfer of some review authority from the boards to staff (adoption of new ordinances required).
- Stops all work on updating HistoricPlacesLA, the city's comprehensive citywide inventory of historic resources.
- Impacts department work on the implementation of Measure HLA (all positions are eliminated).
- Reduces service at the Valley Development Service Center.
- Reduces services for restaurant beverage, Al Fresco, entertainment and wireless permits.
- Reduces online services and delays rollout of the Online Application Systems.
- Limits City Planning data and mapping services provided to internal departments and online map galleries available to the public.
- Decreases data security protection and increases vulnerability for security breaches.

Housing Production and Homelessness

The Department leads in implementing priority approvals for affordable housing via the Mayor's Executive Directive 1 and the recently adopted Citywide Housing Incentive Program (CHIP) which was approved by City Council in February 2025. The Department has issued approvals for over 25,823 units of affordable housing under ED1 within the 60-day approval threshold. The proposed budget would eliminate the ability of the Department to operate under these accelerated timelines.

In addition, reducing staffing throughout case processing operations will hinder the Department's ability to meet state mandated guidelines for housing review, risking deemed approved status for projects due to a failure to act within the prescribed timeframe.

Economic Development

The Department delivers commercial and industrial investment by processing, new hotel and media studio projects that support tourism and the entertainment industry. Businesses are supported by the Restaurant Beverage Program and Al Fresco program which allows by-right alcohol service and outdoor dining with careful operating conditions. Preparation for the 2028 Olympics will bring related approvals for hotels, wireless telecom and special events. The proposed budget would severely extend the amount of time it will take for these projects to be completed, thereby creating broader economic impacts for the City and region.

Wildfire Rebuild and Recovery

The Department is streamlining the entitlement process and approvals for rebuilding in the Palisades. The proposed budget would limit the ability of the Department to provide rebuilding services and continue to serve projects citywide. More specifically, this would limit the Department’s ability to staff the One-Stop Rebuilding Center, process coastal reviews under accelerated timelines, and initiate legislative amendments to remove regulatory barriers.

Legal Liabilities

Cuts to Commission Office staff and project planners will result in an inability to maintain the Charter-required seven in-person, bi-weekly Area Planning Commission meetings, City Planning Commission meetings, and Cultural Heritage Commission meetings. This will delay the timely consideration of entitlement requests that require commission consideration, and may also result in due process issues for appeals that require a hearing within specified timeframes. Delays in scheduling cases before the appropriate commission body may also trigger Housing Crisis Act and Permit Streamlining Act violations in the City’s failure to act within a prescribed timeframe which includes liability costs of \$50,000 per unit.

Primary Budget Request

Restore 79 filled Special Funded positions to maintain critical planning functions. These costs can be offset by increased revenue collection via fee study and surcharges. Eliminating the leveraged subsidies to these programs results in drastic cuts to staffing levels and may be seen as penalizing a department that worked in good faith to offset, but not eliminate, subsidy costs.

	Current Total Filled Positions	Filled Positions Deleted	% of Filled Positions
Special Fund Operations			
52D Planning Case Processing	208	49	24%
52F Planning Long Range Planning	54	15	28%
588 System Development Fund	34	15	44%
Total Special Fund Operations	296	79	27%

Funding To Restore Special Funded Operations: Funding to offset 100% of direct costs for all special funded operations can be offset by increasing revenue collection via a revised fee study and increases to surcharges to boost the share of long-range planning costs covered by special funds.

Requested Alterations to the Proposed Budget

The following are targeted requests for restoration of work programs to address priorities.

Project Planning Bureau (restore 21 out of 36)

Geographic Project Planning, Major Projects, Expedited Processing, Affordable Housing Production, Wildfire Recovery

1. Restore 10 filled (out of 18 deleted) Project Planning positions that support and process entitlement cases (in Central and Valley Office). These are revenue generating positions.
2. Restore 1 filled (out of 8 deleted) Major Project positions that are revenue generating. This position supports business growth and development and generates job-producing uses.
3. Restore 10 vacant (out of 10 deleted) Expedited Processing positions that provide flexibility to process projected case increases as a result of Wildfire Rebuilding and housing production. These positions are revenue generating.

Development Services Bureau (restore 26 out of 37)

Economic Development, Wireless Telecom, Small Business Support, Wildfire Recovery, Restaurant Beverage Program and Al Fresco Program.

4. Restore 12 filled (out of 12 deleted) positions in Development Services Specialized Services that respond to increased entitlement processing for wireless telecommunications facilities, redevelopment projects, alcohol service, signage, dining, and hospitality in preparation for the 2028 Olympic Games. These are revenue generating positions.
5. Restore 8 filled (out of 11 deleted) positions in the Office of Zoning Administration responsible for nuisance abatement, variances, conditional use permits, and other entitlements including hillside approvals and Coastal Development Permits necessary for Wildfire Rebuilding in the Coastal Zone.
6. Restore 2 filled (out of 2 deleted) positions in Case Management that coordinate case intake and provide in-depth research and coordination with other City Departments to advise applicants on the proper development path to avoid late hits and provide a more streamlined project review process. These positions are revenue generating.
7. Restore 6 filled (out of 14 deleted) positions in DSC operations that provide zoning consultation services, respond to all development-related inquiries, map processing, and manage all application intake and planning clearances. Development Services Center positions are the frontline staff in the wildfire rebuild efforts. These are revenue generating positions.

Community Planning Bureau (Restore 23 out of 38 deleted)

Community Planning, Neighborhood Planning, New Zoning Code, Urban Design

8. Restore 3 filled (out of 3 deleted) positions responsible for the New Zoning Code Implementation, including creation of new zones to apply to all properties via Community Plans, and Code Publishing role for Chapter 1A of the LAMC.
9. Restore 4 filled (out of 7 deleted positions) responsible for Central Area Community and Neighborhood Planning programs including Boyle Heights Community Plan and Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CASP) final adoption.

10. Restore 9 filled (out of 13 deleted positions) responsible for the Valley Area Community and Neighborhood Planning programs, including Southwest Valley Community Plans and East San Fernando Valley Transit Neighborhood Plan.
11. Restore 5 filled (out of 13 deleted positions) responsible for Harbor/West Community and Neighborhood Planning programs including Harbor Plans, and Westside Community Plans underway, along with Venice Local Coastal Program.
12. Restore 2 filled (out of 2 deleted) positions in the Urban Design Program to assist with projects that are REAP 2.0 funded.

Citywide Bureau (Restore 17 out of 27 deleted)

General Plan, Mobility, Housing Policy, Open Space, Environmental Justice, Office of Historic Resources, Code Studies

13. Restore 5 filled (out of 7 deleted) positions in the Office of Historic Resources that staff Historic Preservation Overlay Zones and maintain and update Historic Places LA, the city's inventory of historic resources, which includes all data from Survey LA, and is part of the Palisades Recovery work program.
14. Restore 5 filled (out of 6 deleted) General Plan Health & Environmental Justice positions responsible for the Health and Air Quality Elements of the General Plan. General Plan Updates needed to ensure General Plan consistency findings can be made in order to approve development projects.
15. Restore 1 filled (out of 2 deleted) data analyst positions responsible for citywide demographics.
16. Restore 2 filled (out of 6 deleted) positions in Code Studies responsible for Zoning Code Ordinances to assist with new code amendments initiated by the City Council to support the Olympics, streamlining for small business, housing, and economic development.
17. Restore 1 filled (out of 2 deleted) position which implements Measure HLA and the City's Mobility Element. This position is partially funded by the REAP 2.0 grant under the Planning for Housing and Mobility project line item.
18. Restore 3 (out of 4 deleted) filled positions to assist with adoption of the Wildlife Pilot Ordinance and expansion of wildlife regulations to the Rim of the Valley.

Operations & Engagement Bureau (Restore 38 out of 45 deleted positions)

Administration, Systems and Technology, GIS Mapping, Ordinance Maps, ZIMAS and Web Tools, Case Tracking, BuildLA, Online Applications, Government Relations, Office of Racial Justice, Equity, and Transformative Planning, Performance Management Unit, Media Relations and Graphics

19. Restore 1 filled Deputy Director of Planning position which will significantly impact the management of the Operations and Engagement Bureau, which includes administration and oversight of the Commission office, Contracts, Hiring, Personnel, Information Technology, including Systems and the GIS divisions; and the Performance Management Unit which focuses on data tracking, metrics, and training.
20. Restore 3 deleted Office of Racial Justice, Equity, and Transformative Planning positions, including two filled and one vacant principal city planner which functions as the

Chief Equity Officer for the Department. Continued funding will allow the program to continue its work addressing the inequitable impacts of past planning practices on underserved communities and support the ongoing operation of the South LA Development Service Center.

21. Restore 1 filled (out of 1 deleted) providing administrative support to the executive office.
22. Restore 2 filled (out of 2 deleted) Government Relations positions which engage with communities on planning proposals and planning workshops with 97+ Neighborhood Councils across the city.
23. Restore 2 filled (out of 2 deleted) Media Relations positions that are key in the department's daily media requests including PRA requests, and responsible for meeting the Department's federal digital accessibility compliance deadline under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make new digital materials (social media, e-blasts, website, etc.) accessible by April 24, 2026. City Planning responded to 400 media requests on average in the last two fiscal years. This FY 24/25 DCP has responded to 318 media requests as of April 15, 2025 and expects more.
24. Restore 4 filled (out of 4 deleted) Graphics positions critical to the Department's operation, document development, website, and public outreach for grant related and policy mandated programs. This includes assistance with graphic design necessary for the publishing of the new Zoning Code pages for Chapter 1A of the LAMC and design of materials for the grant-funded Housing Element Implementation work program.
25. Restore 3 filled (out of 4 deleted) Environmental positions responsible for departmentwide CEQA compliance.
26. Restore 2 filled (out of 2 deleted) Performance Management Unit positions responsible for performance metrics, data transparency, and accountability.
27. Restore 2 filled (out of 3 deleted positions) needed to staff nine Commissions (the City Planning Commission, seven Area Planning Commissions, and the Cultural Heritage Commission) and comply with Public Hearing/Brown Act requirements, meeting state mandated timelines, and the timely issuance of determination letters.
28. Restore 7 filled (out of 13 deleted) Information and Technology positions responsible for safeguarding databases and maintaining security protocols for both staff and customers, online applications, ZIMAS, Web Map Integration, BuildLA/Cloud Management, and Infrastructure Support. The systems positions within Planning's Information Technology (IT) Division are critical to the ongoing stability, functionality, and performance of the department's core infrastructure. Currently, Planning maintains over 50 servers, 66 virtual machines, 23 databases, and 14 applications, all of which are essential for supporting key systems such as the Zone Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS), the Planning Document Information System (PDIS), the Planning Case Tracking System (PCTS), and the Online Application System (OAS).
29. Restore 8 filled (out of 12 deleted) GIS positions responsible for ordinance maps, radius maps, wildfire recovery, long range planning and mobility plans.
30. Restore 3 positions (out of 5 deleted positions) within the Administrative Services Division. Deletions of the positions severely impact the Department's operations related to budget implementation, revenue generation and tracking, and contract administration. These positions are responsible for preparing and updating the annual fees based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), facilitating and coordinating fee studies, and facilitating fee updates and announcements with various divisions and offices; special funded

position overseeing and administering contracts for fee generating and cost recovering projects as well as contracts for critical and state mandated policy programs.

31. Restore \$250,000 in Overtime for mandated after hour meeting attendance and to address critical case timelines. Processing urgent ED1 cases that require issuance of approval within 60 days; and to comply with LAMC required public hearings and Commission hearings (9 commissions).
32. Restore \$765,000 in Contractual Services for on-going software licensing, maintenance and software subscriptions. And to maintain reliability and uptime of these vital systems that support our daily core functions in processing cases, case intake, and overall development services.

Restructuring Department Operations

City Planning requests authority to reassign employees to vacant Special Funded positions in order to minimize potential layoffs and implement as-needed organizational restructuring to efficiently deliver funded work programs. The Department will continue to monitor revenues throughout the year and meet our salary savings target through attrition over the course of the fiscal year. It should be noted that even with the reassignment of staff to 25 vacant positions in the Proposed Budget, without additional restoration of deleted filled positions 90 employees would be subject to layoffs.

The Department is prepared to reorganize its project planning functions into two bureaus, the existing Project Planning Bureau and the new Development Services Bureau. This new bureau will also incorporate the Zoning Review program, which will provide up front review of all incoming development projects at City Planning and LADBS in regards to planning and zoning requirements. This program is fully funded by the Building Enterprise Fund.

The Department appreciates the addition of 7 new positions for Zoning Review and 3 new positions for LAWA Van Nuys Airport planning, which is fully funded by LAWA.

Options to Maximize Revenue Streams

Building upon existing revenue generating sources, the following revenue enhancements can be implemented to create additional revenue to offset costs.

- Effective July 1, 2025, per CPI (Consumer Price Index) Planning fees will automatically increase by 3.4%.
- The Department has launched an update to its Case Processing Fees (52D), which is underway and anticipated to be completed in 6 months.
- The Department is evaluating increasing the General Plan Maintenance Surcharge, currently at 7% with recommendations that could be adopted by the Summer.
- The Department has launched an update to its Home Sharing Program fees (62N).
- Other pending fee studies are expected to boost the Department's Long Range Planning Fund (52F) and Systems and Technology Fund (588) next fiscal year.
- In addition, the Department is prepared to integrate the Zoning Review functions from LADBS into its operations as part of this budget. A new dedicated Zoning Review/Plan Check fee study is underway that will have the ability to fund additional positions as part of the new Development Services Bureau.

The Department of City Planning appreciates the opportunity to provide this feedback and stands ready to work hard to meet this moment. The requested restorations will ensure the ability of the Department to continue to successfully deliver housing, economic opportunity, jobs, and investment in our city. The Department has taken actions to increase revenues to provide ongoing support of operations. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact Executive Officer Kevin Keller at (213) 978-1272 or via email at kevin.keller@lacity.org.

Sincerely,



VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

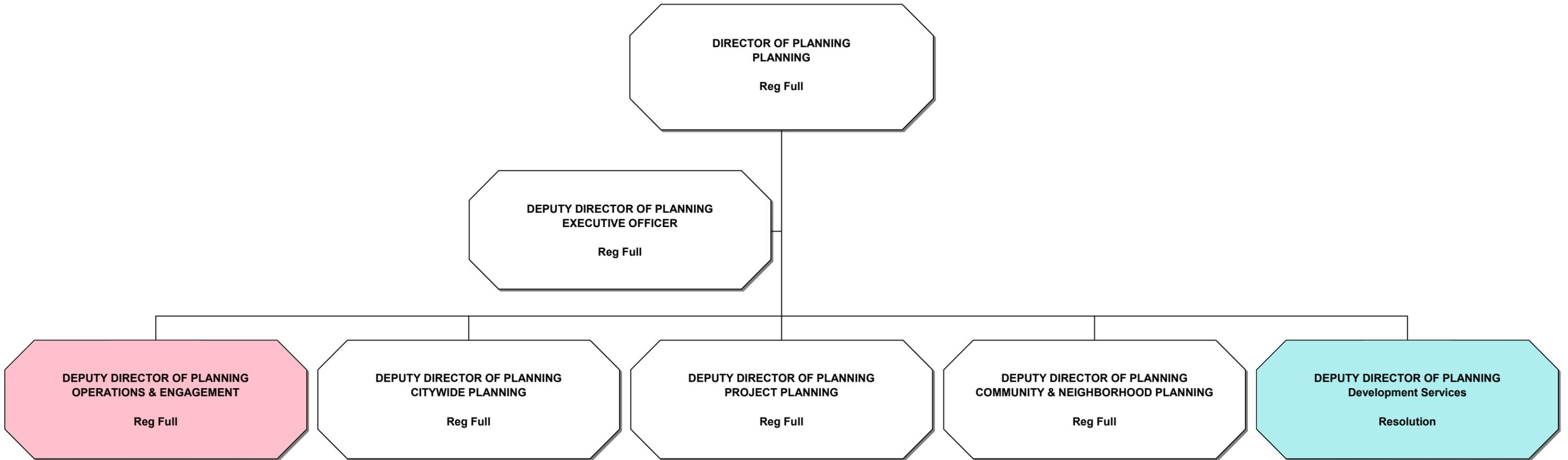
Enclosures

Organization Chart

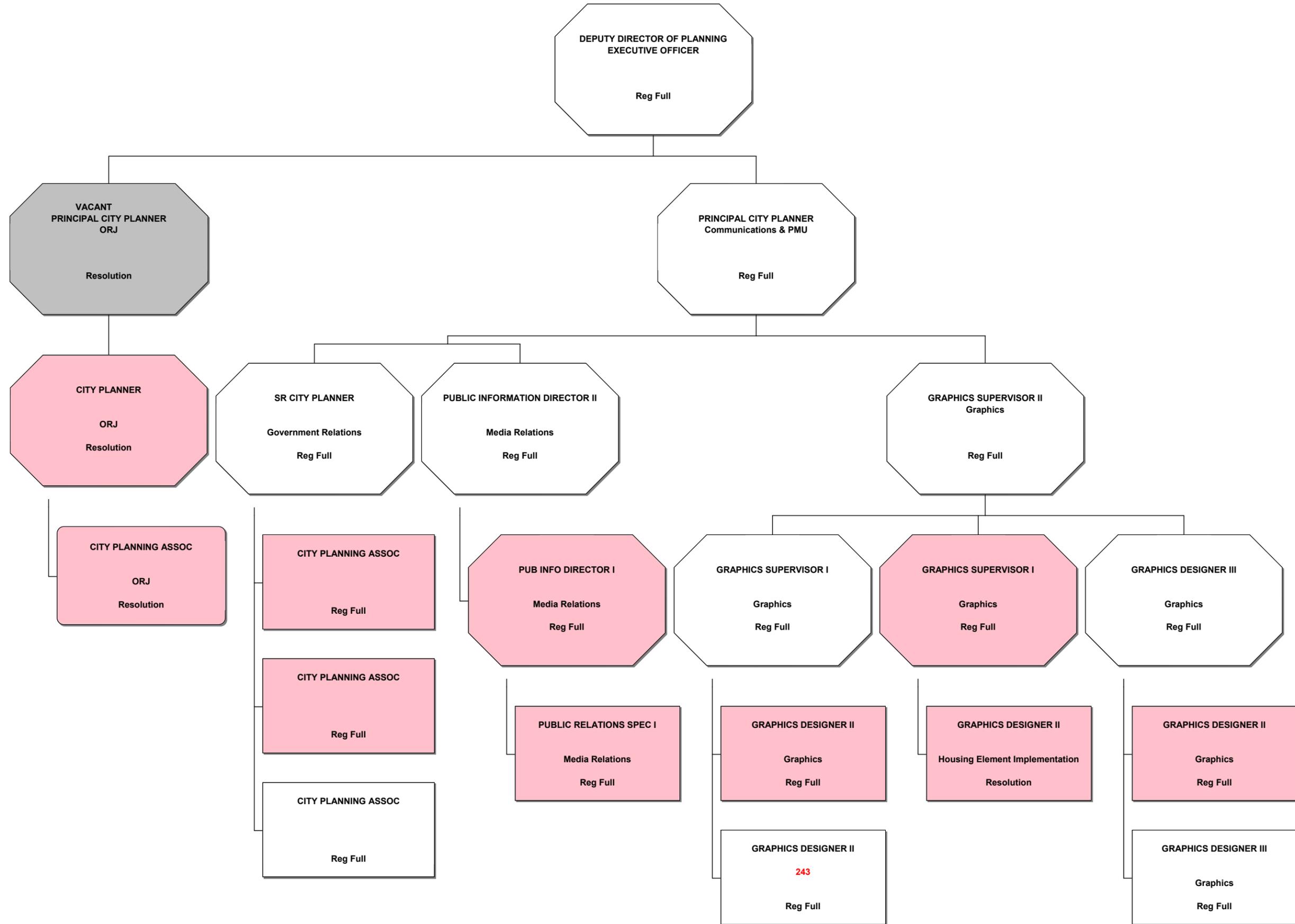
- c: Carolyn Webb de Macias, Chief of Staff to the Mayor
Rachel Freeman, Deputy Mayor of Business and Economic Development
Matt Hale, Deputy Mayor of Finance, Operations, and Innovation
Bernyce Hollins, Senior Budget Director
Sharon Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst
Matthew W. Szabo, City Administrative Officer

City Planning
April 22, 2025

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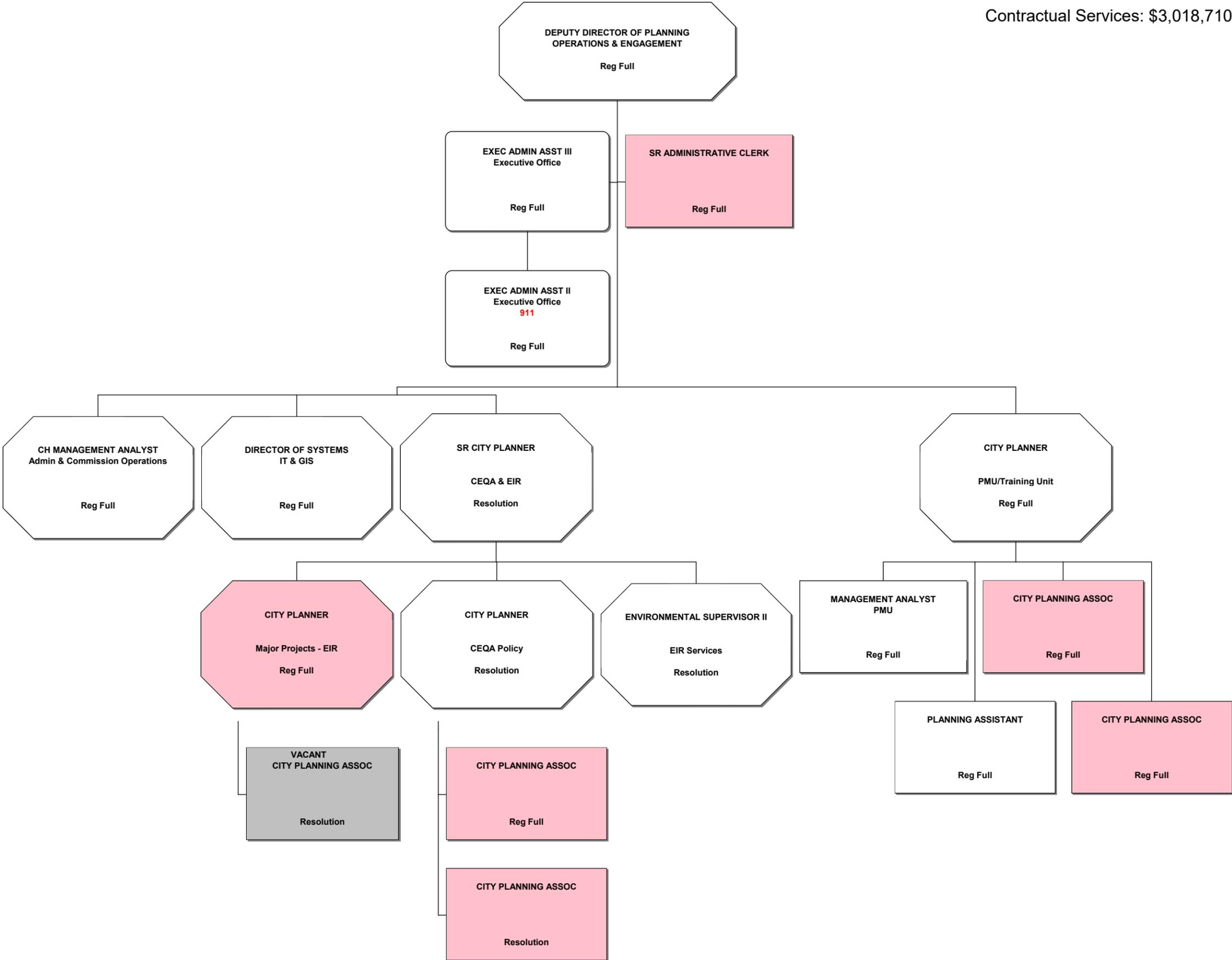


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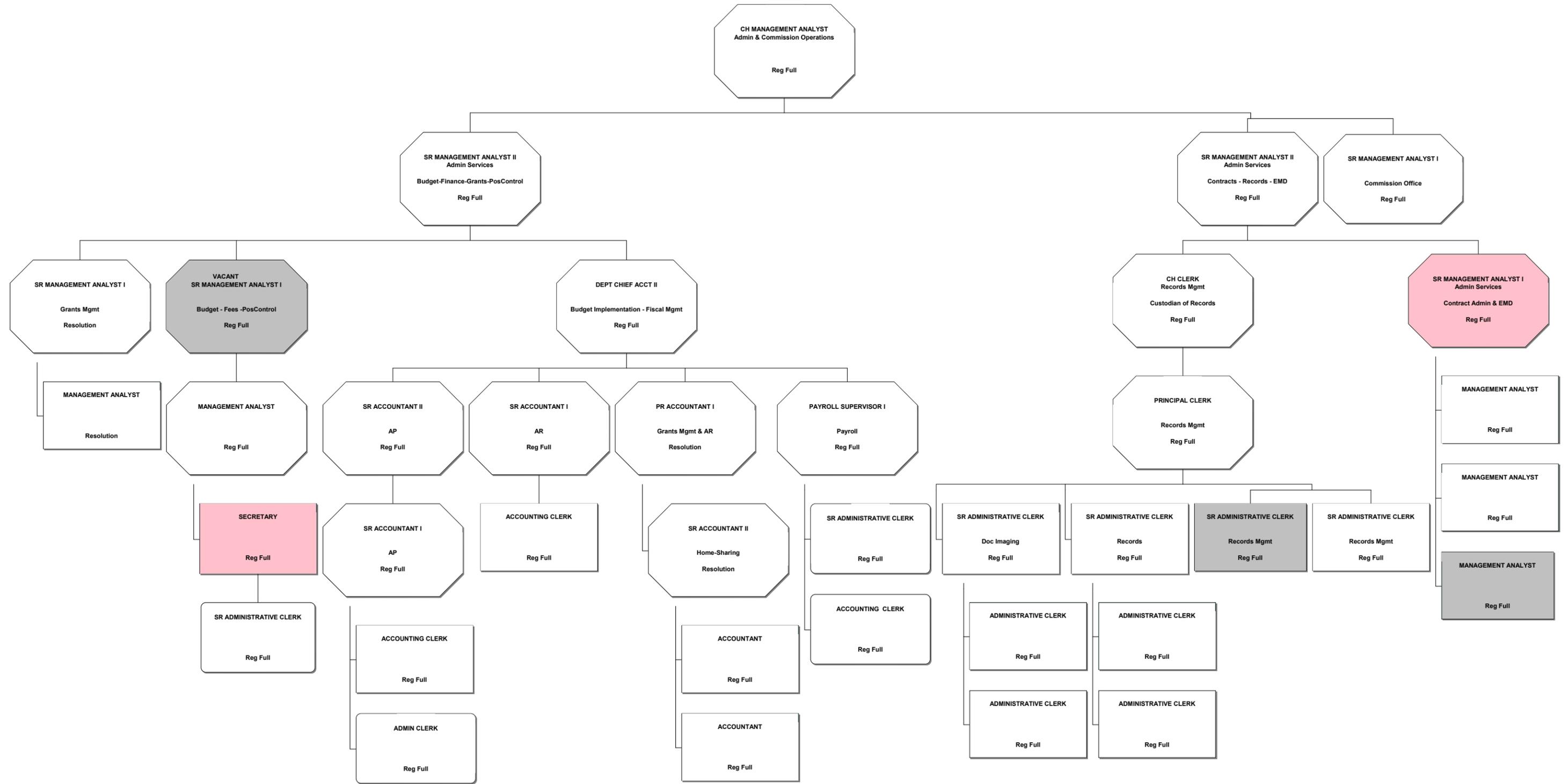


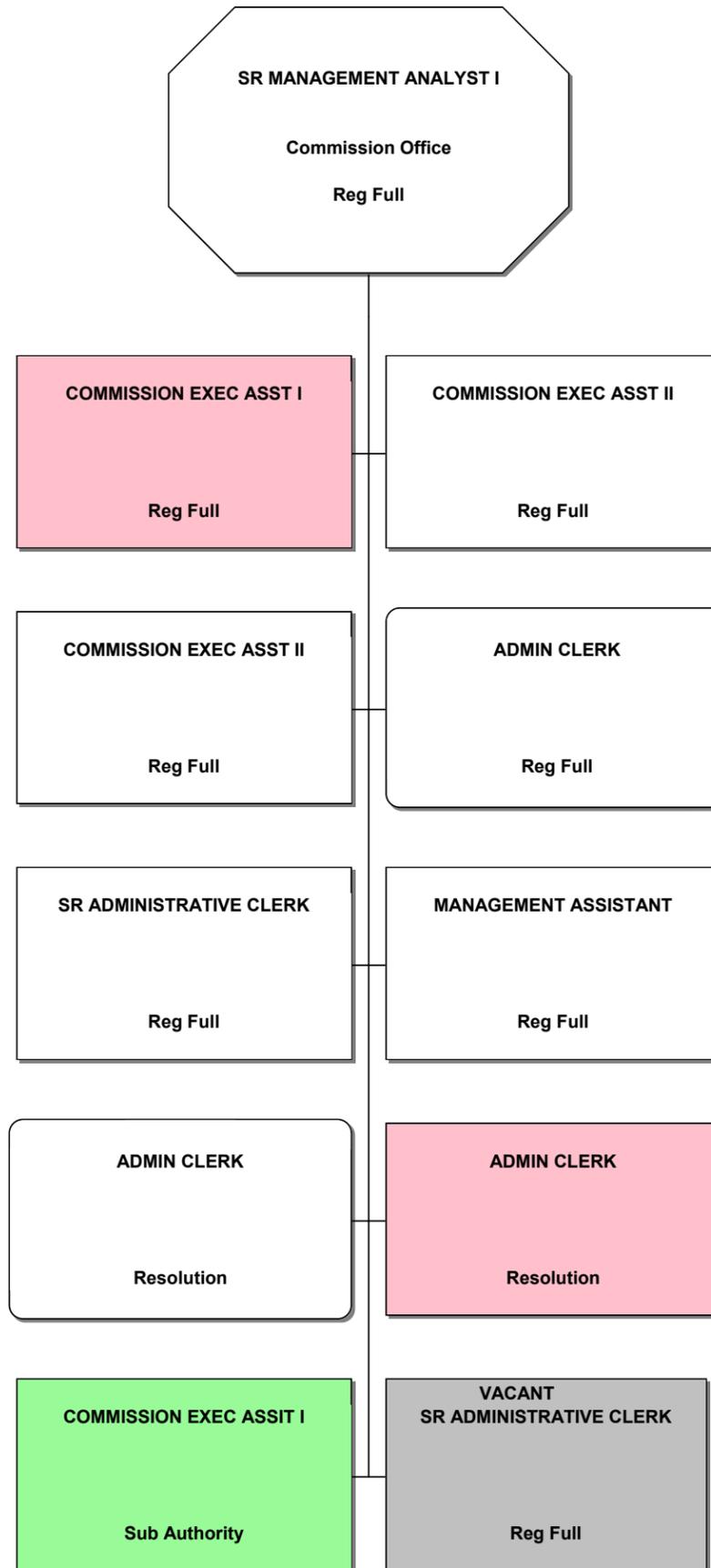
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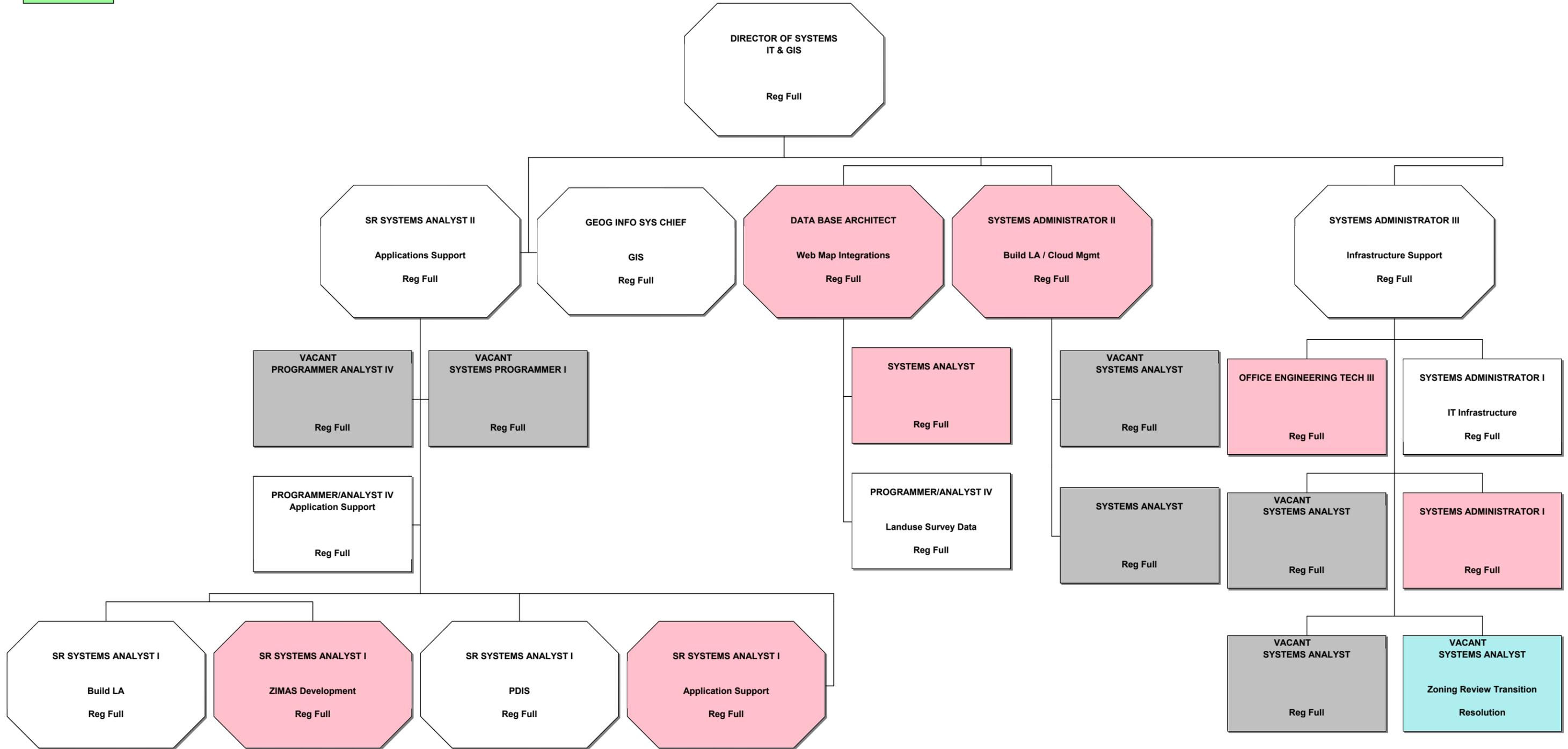


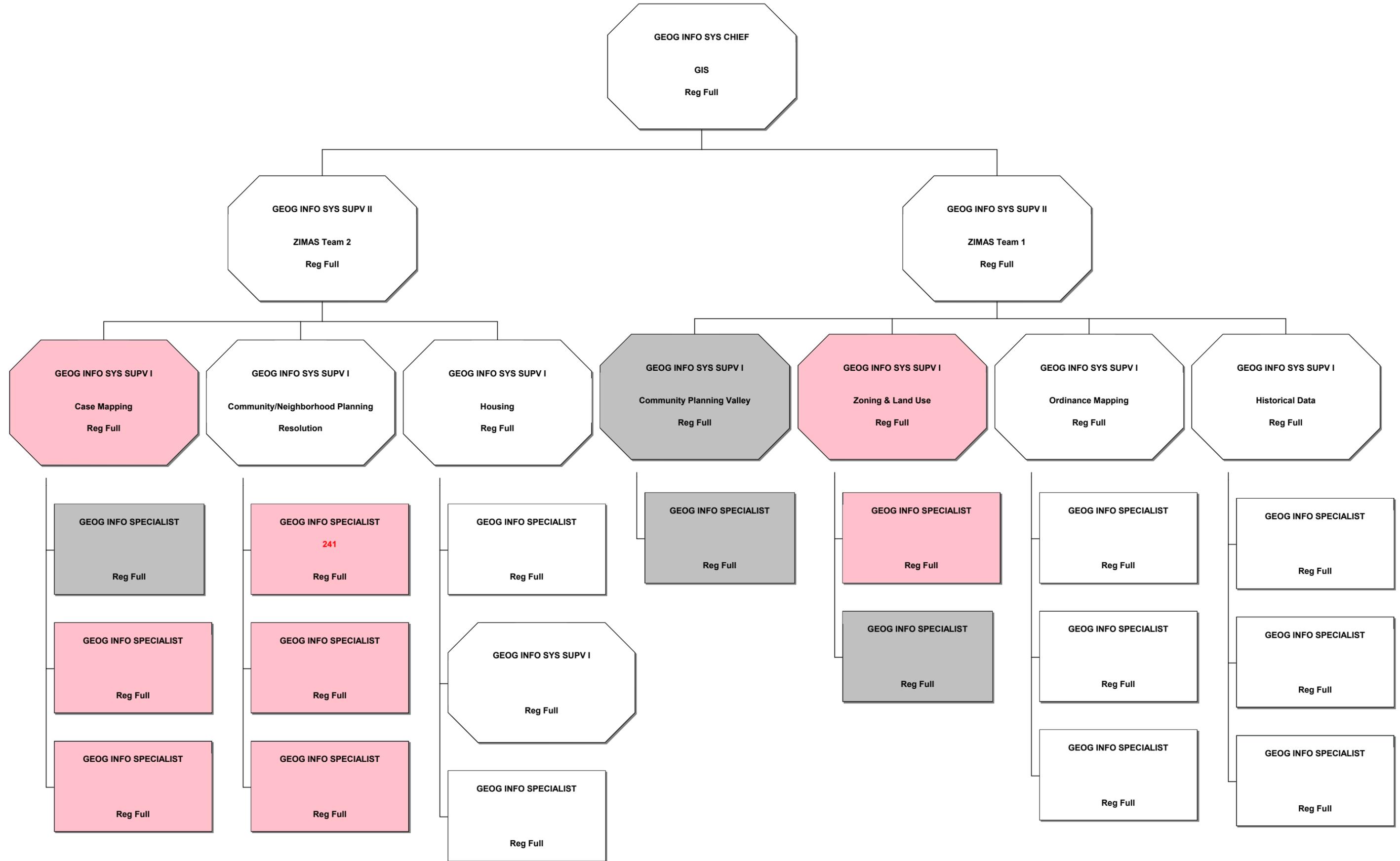
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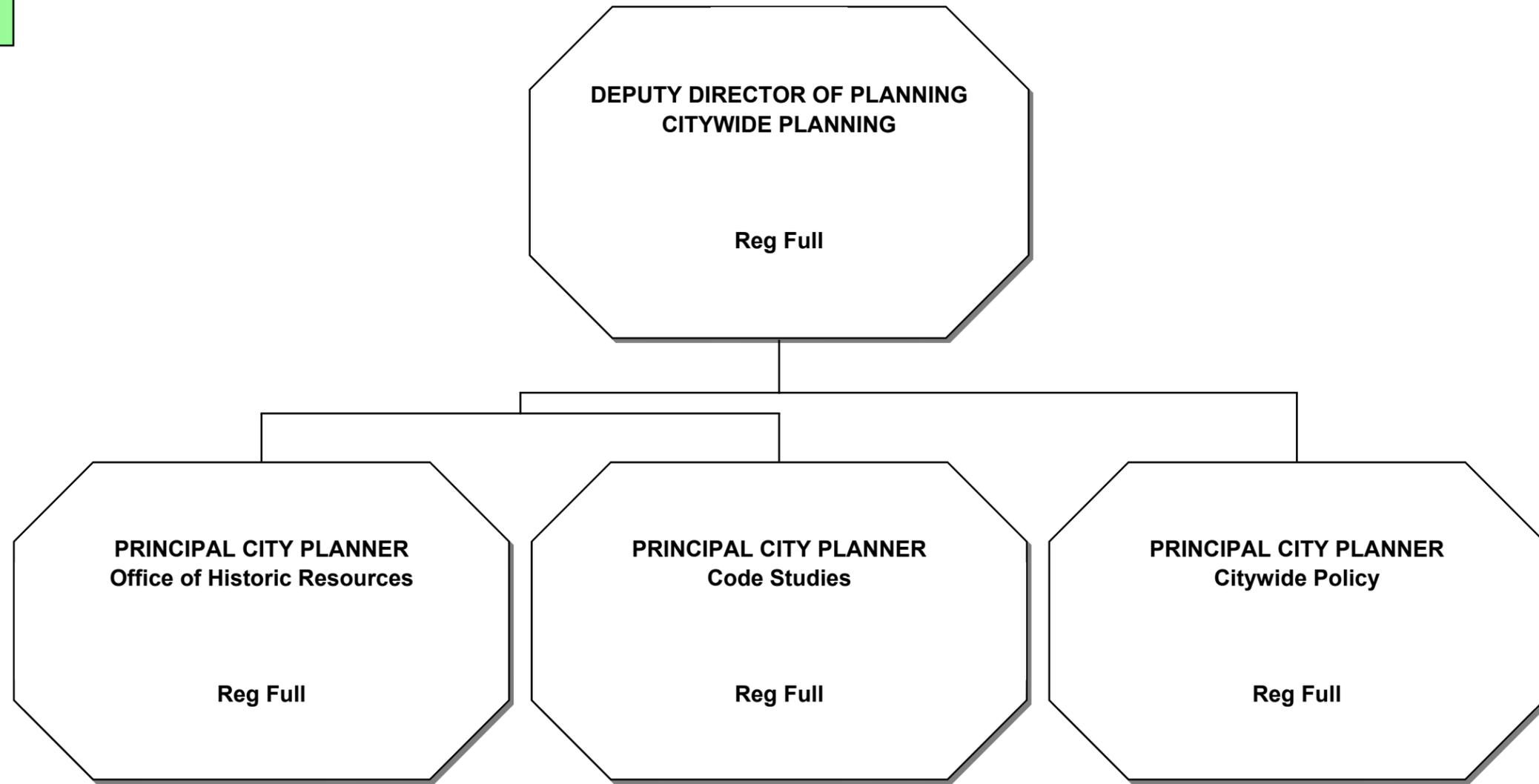
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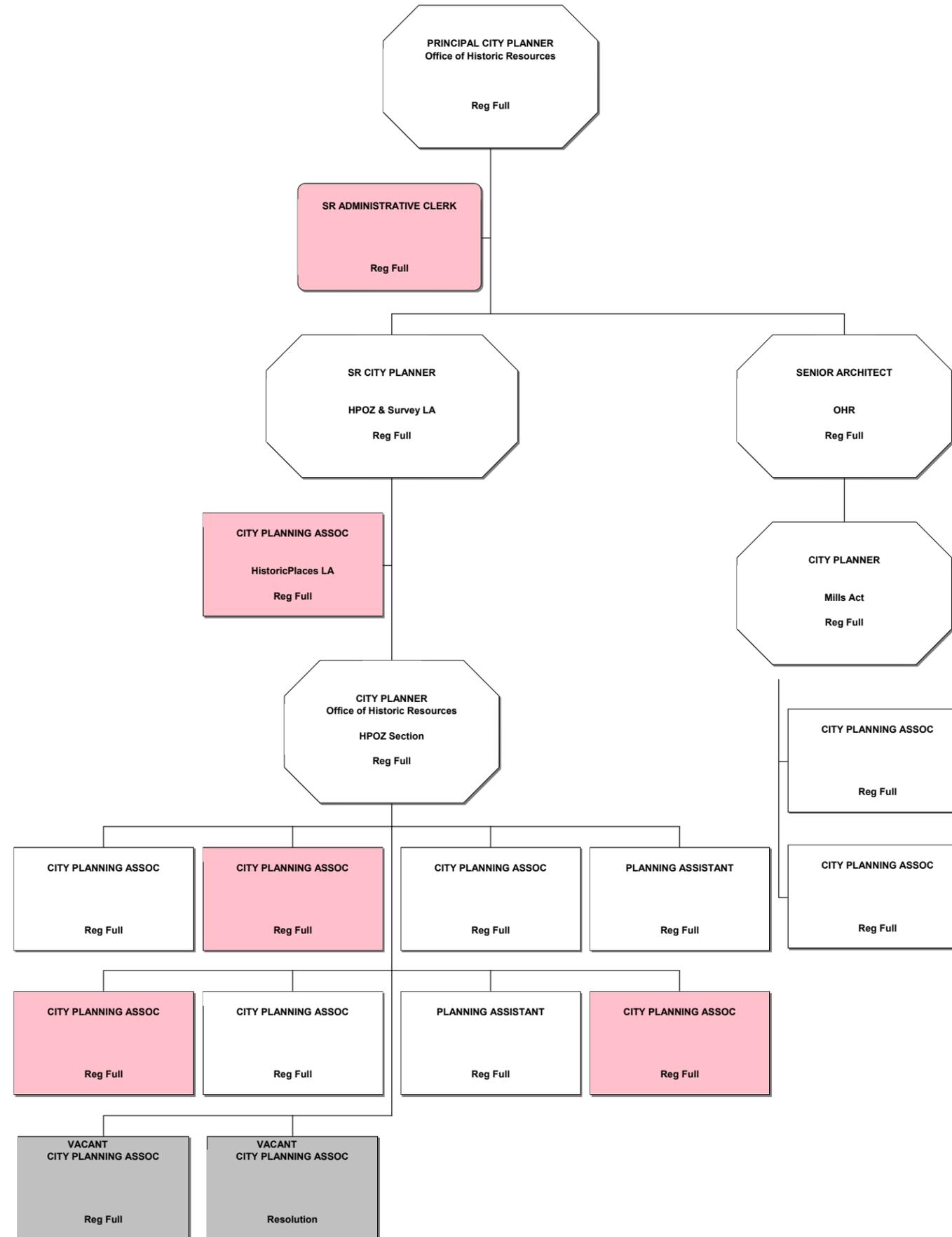


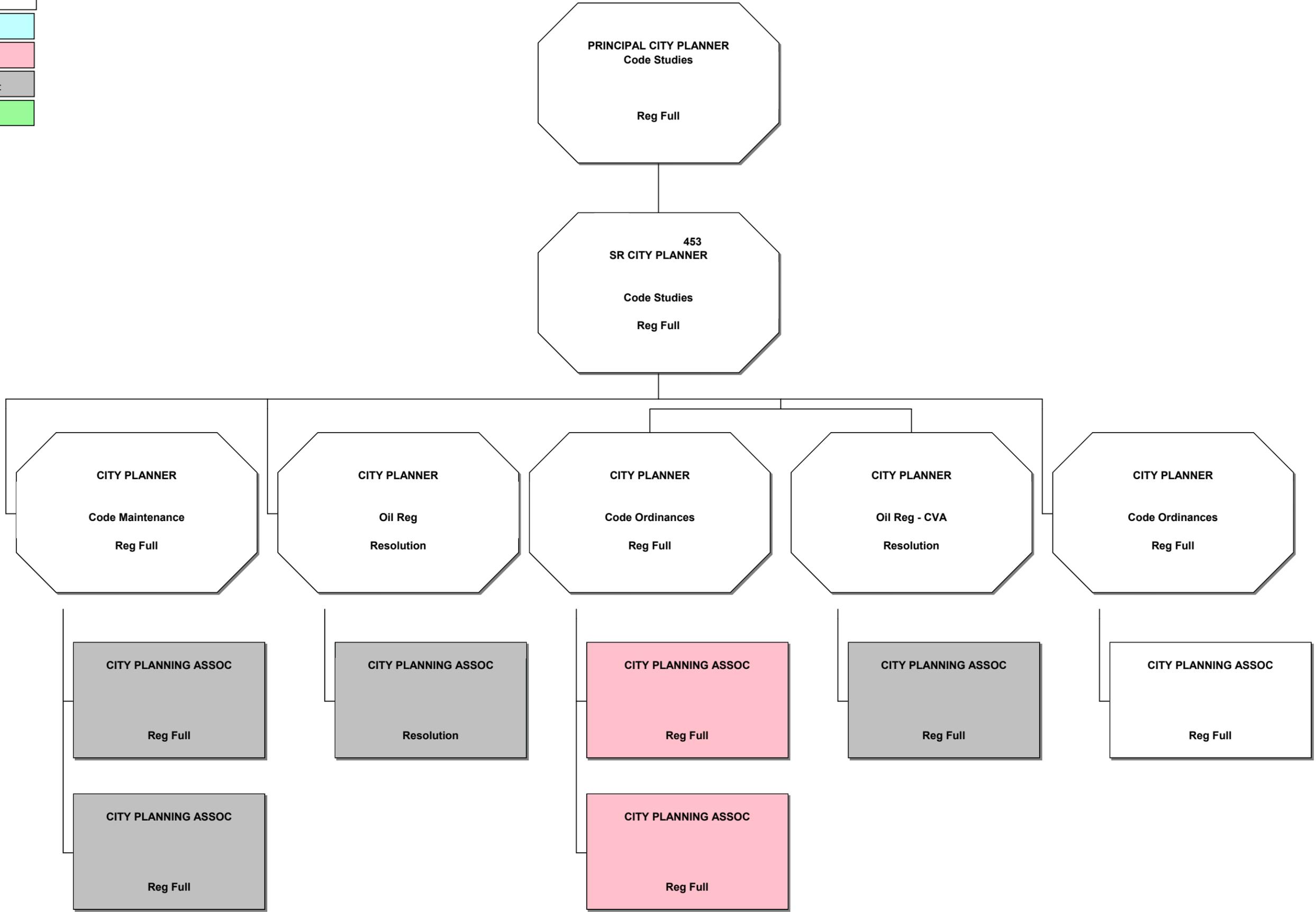
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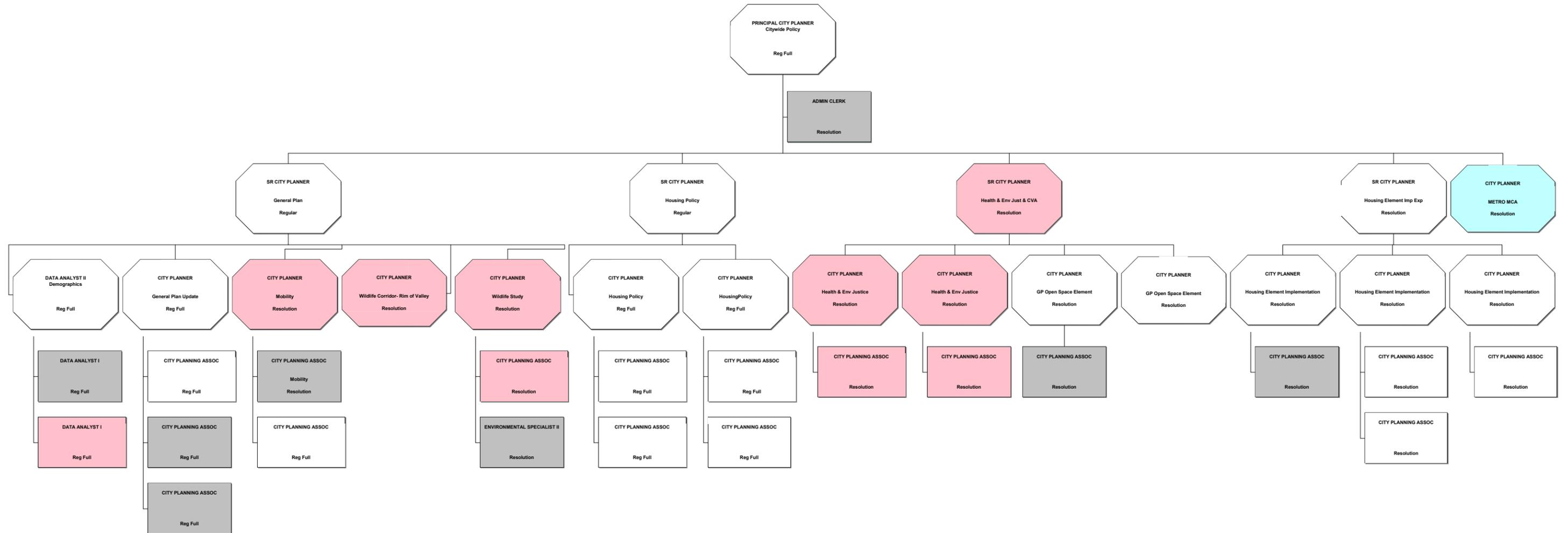


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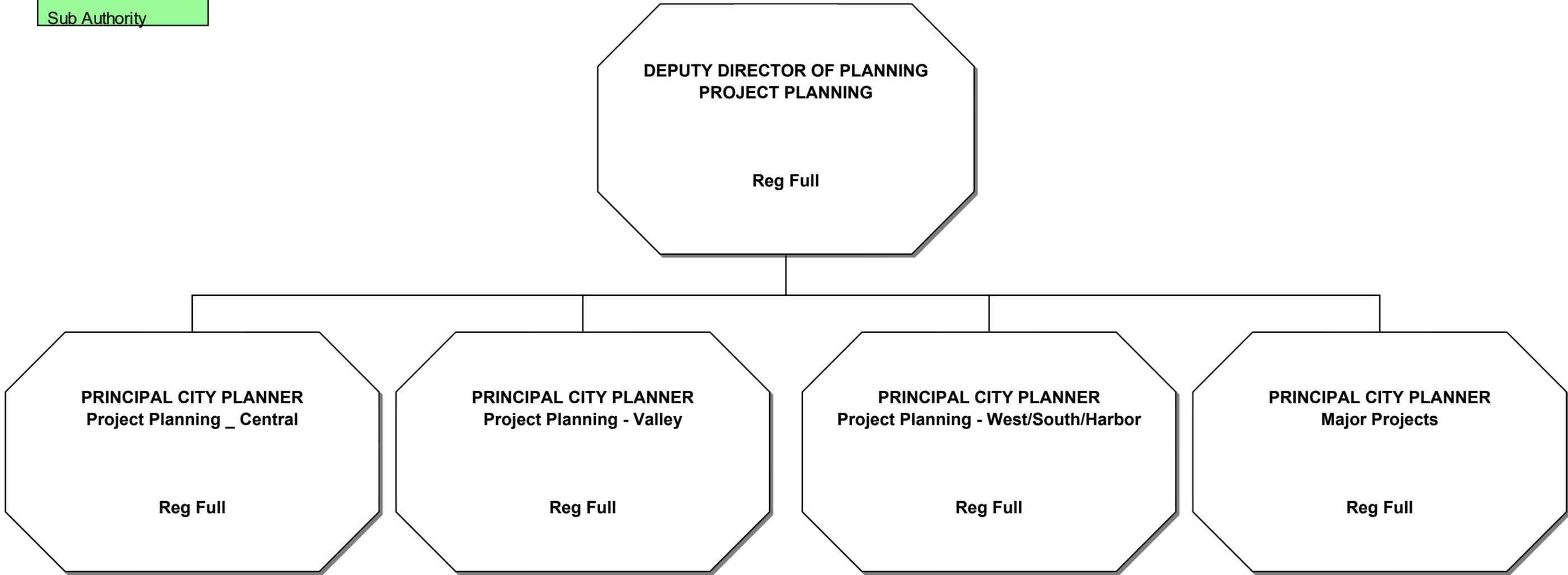
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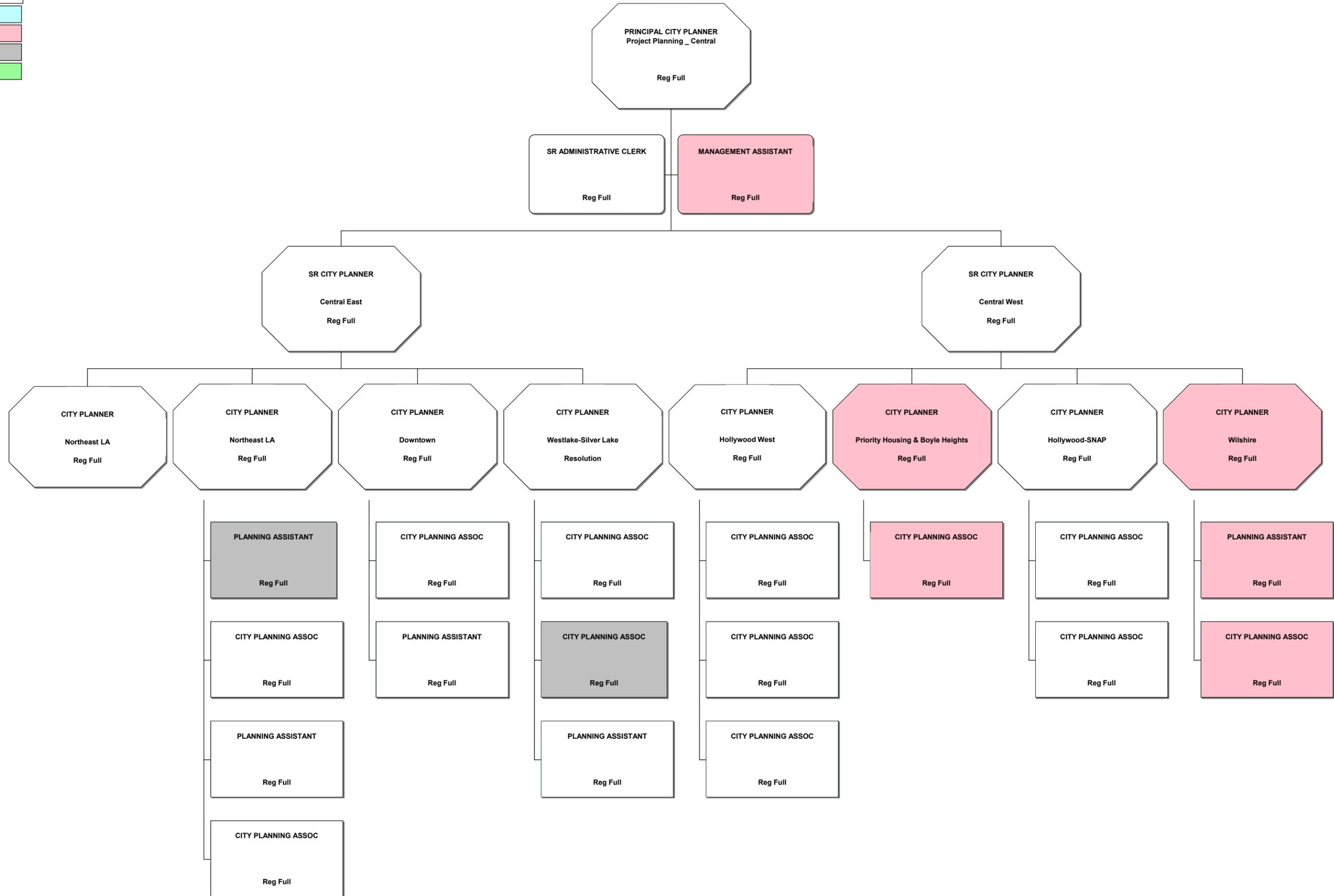
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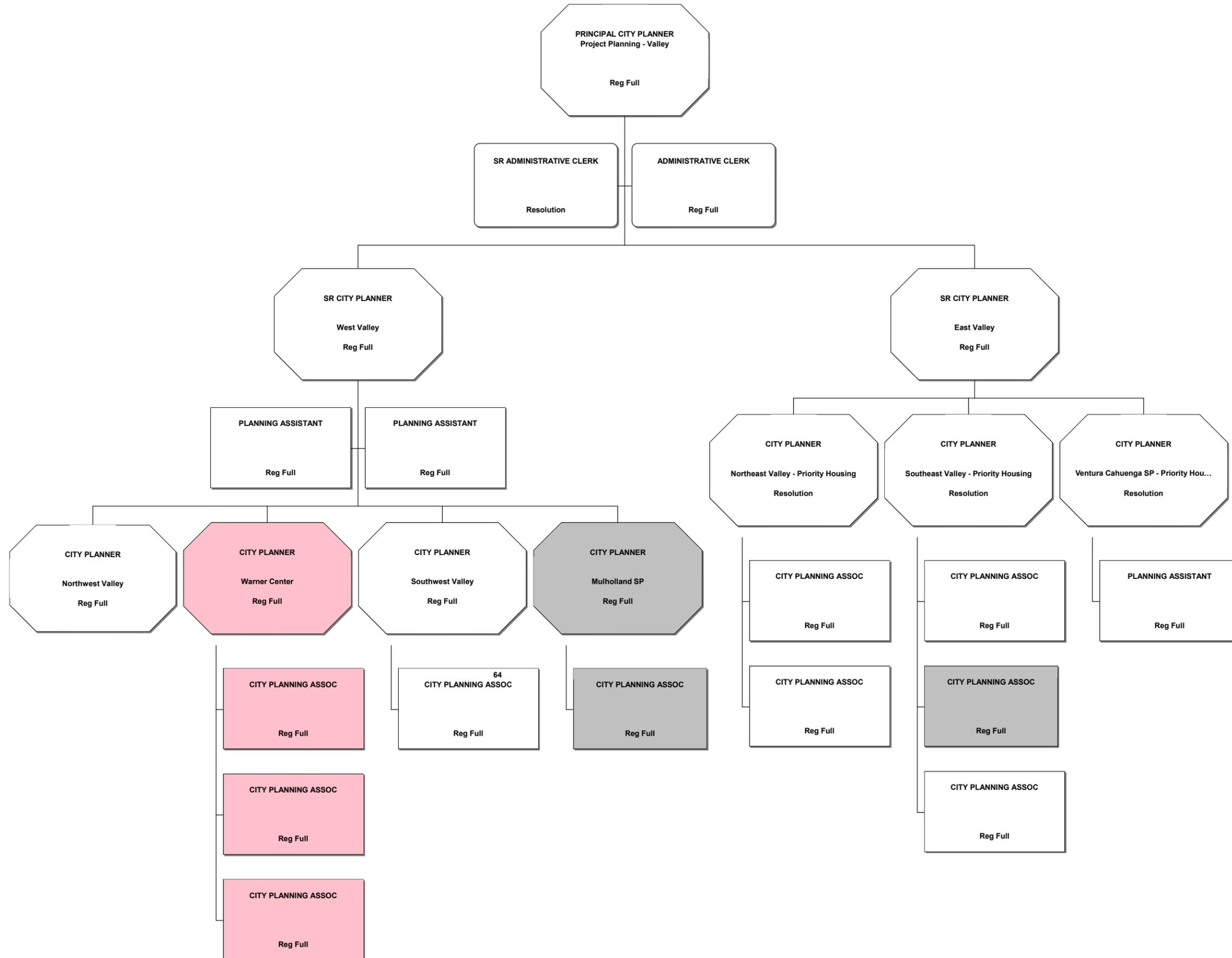
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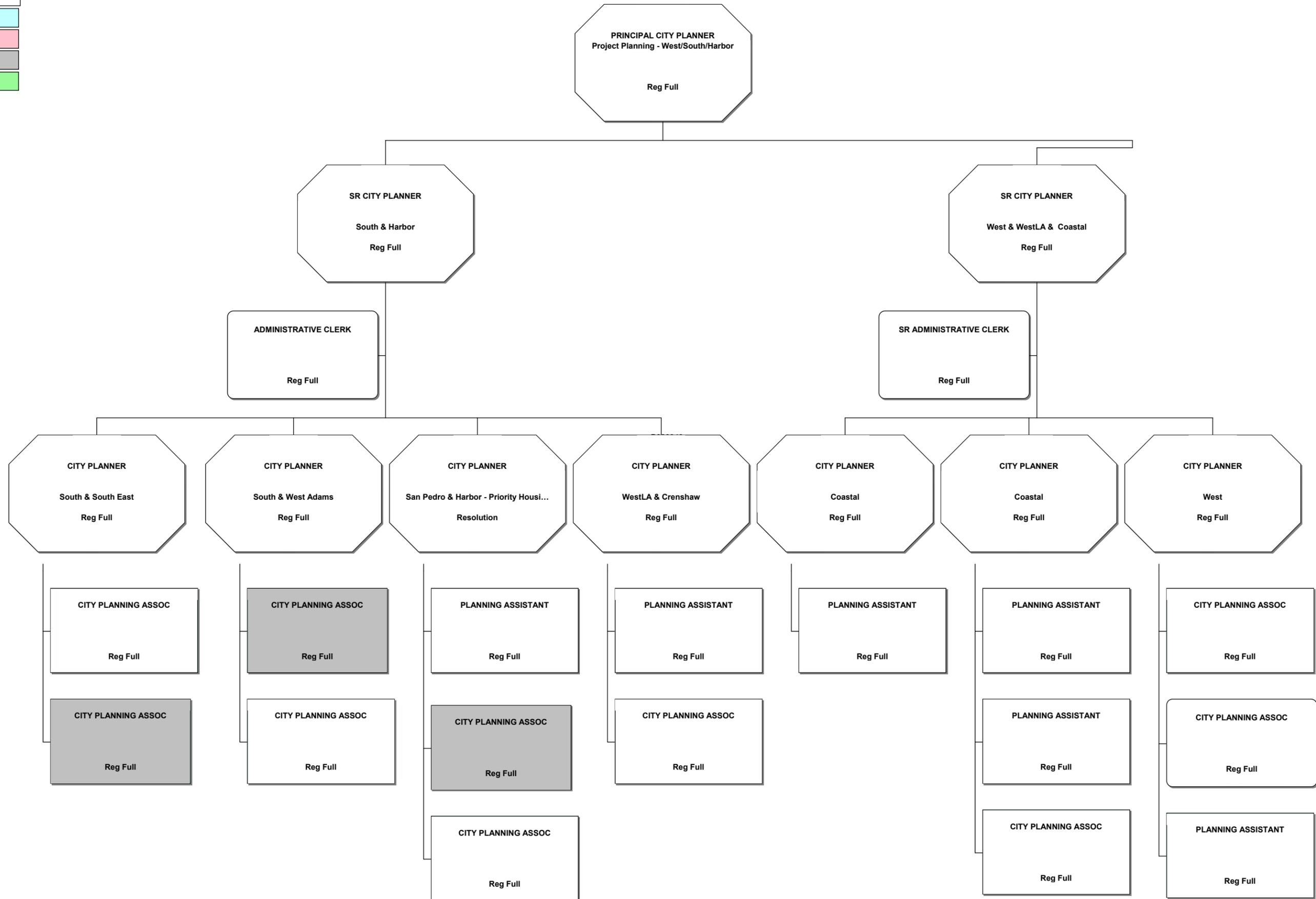
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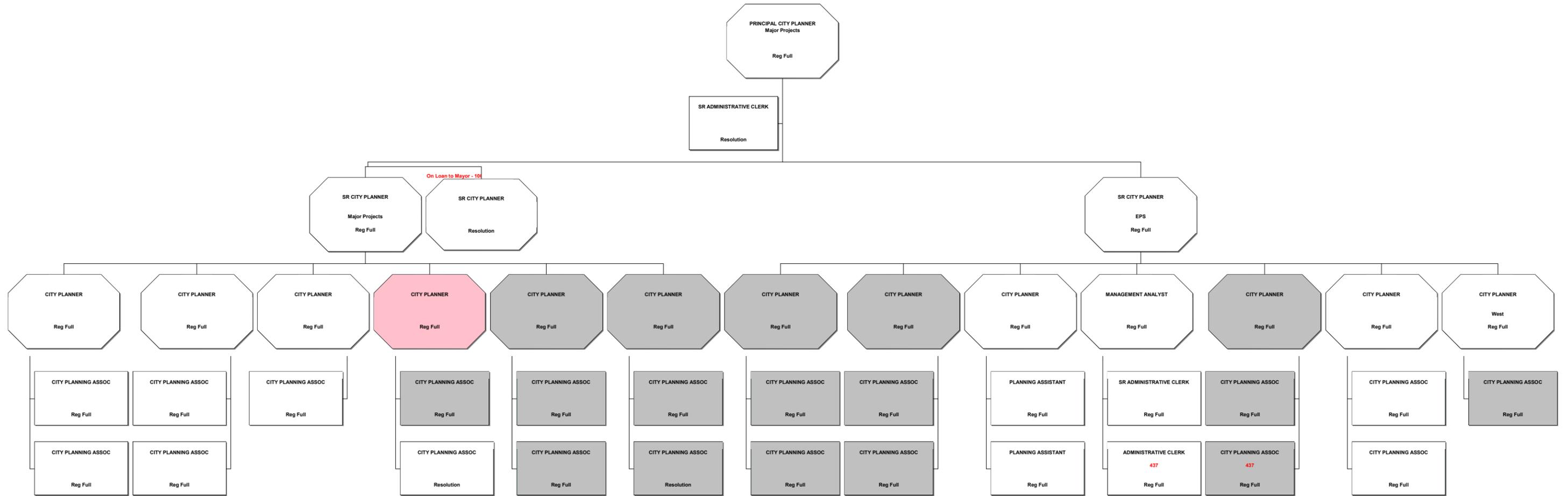
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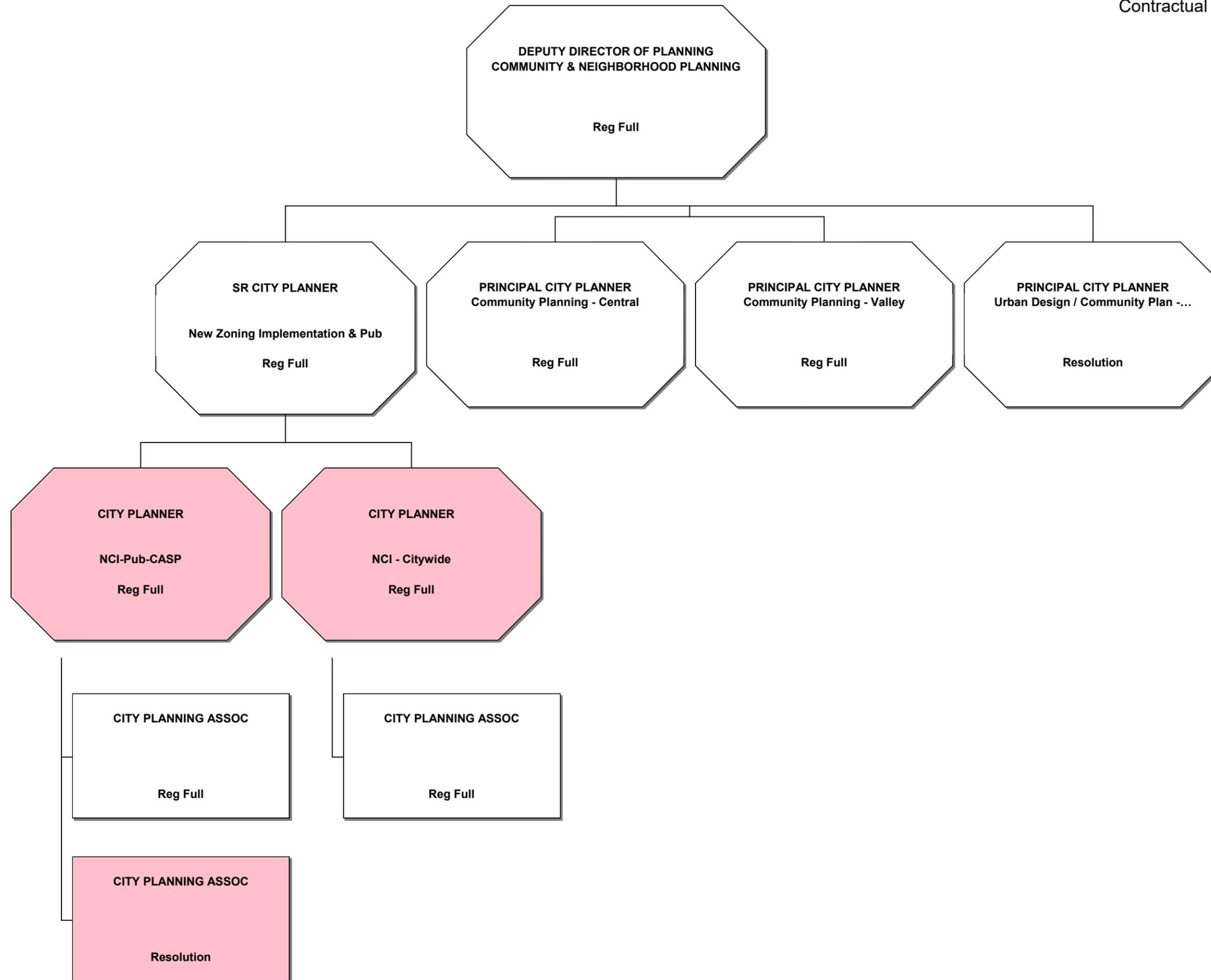


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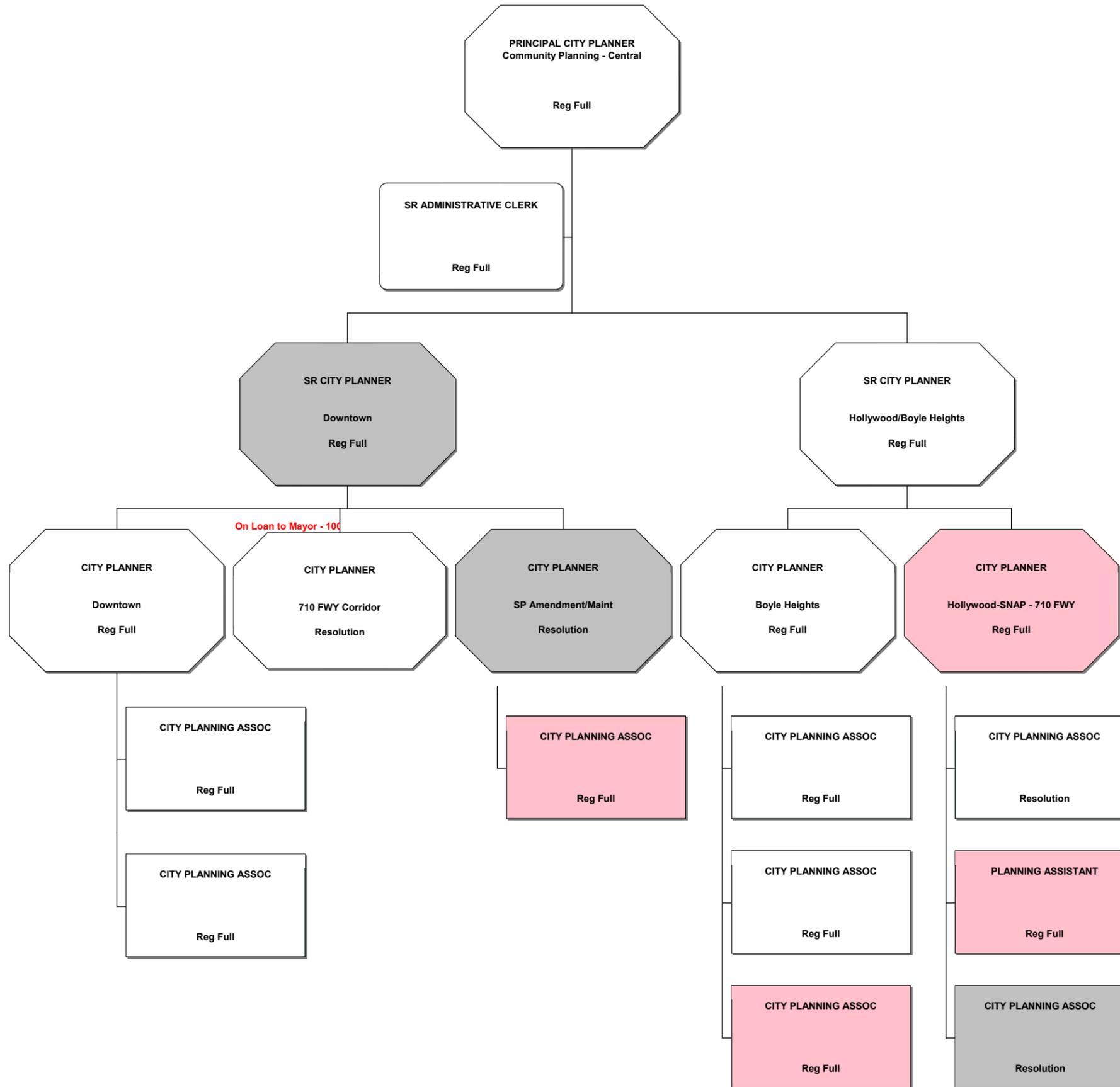


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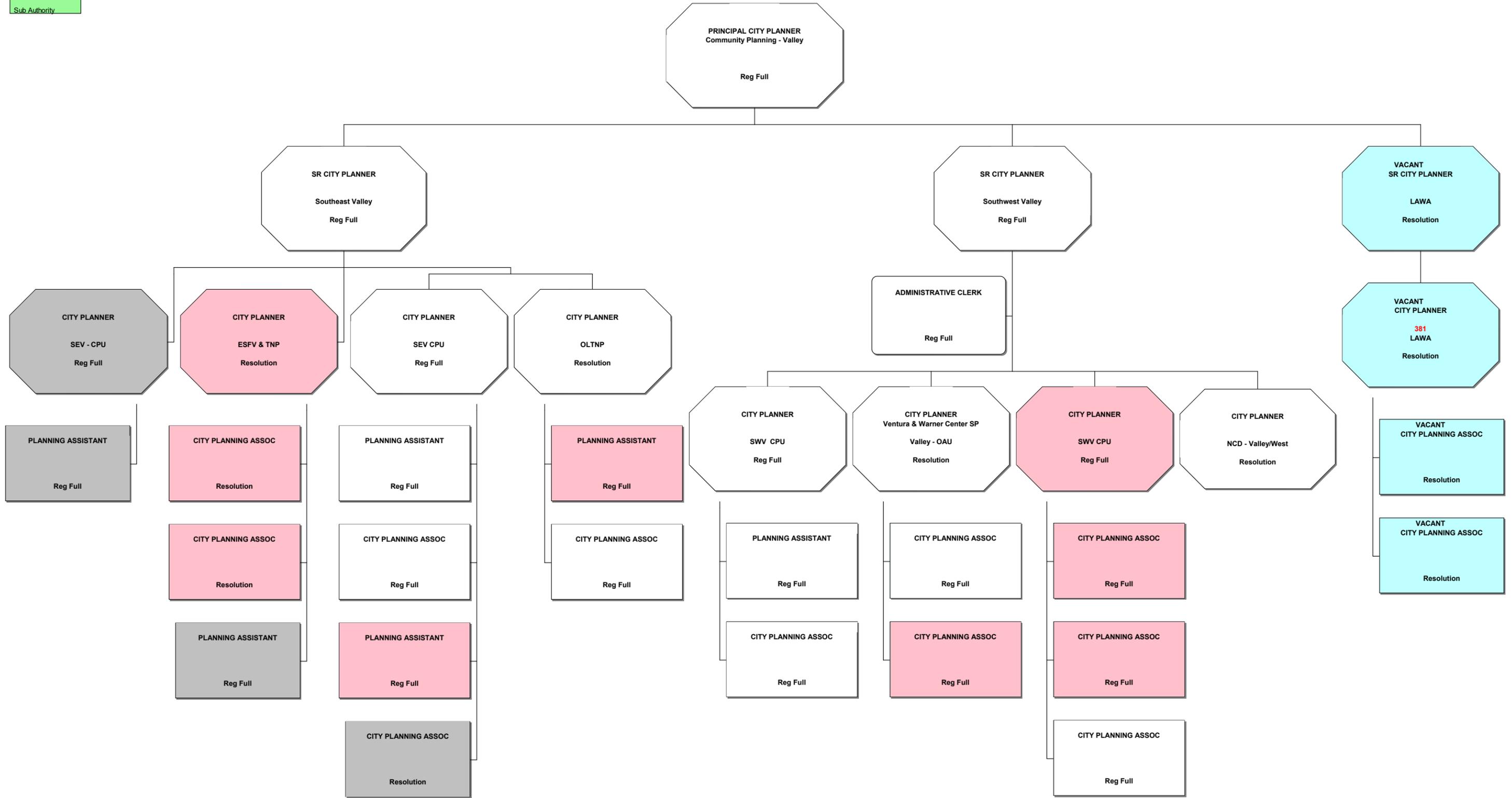
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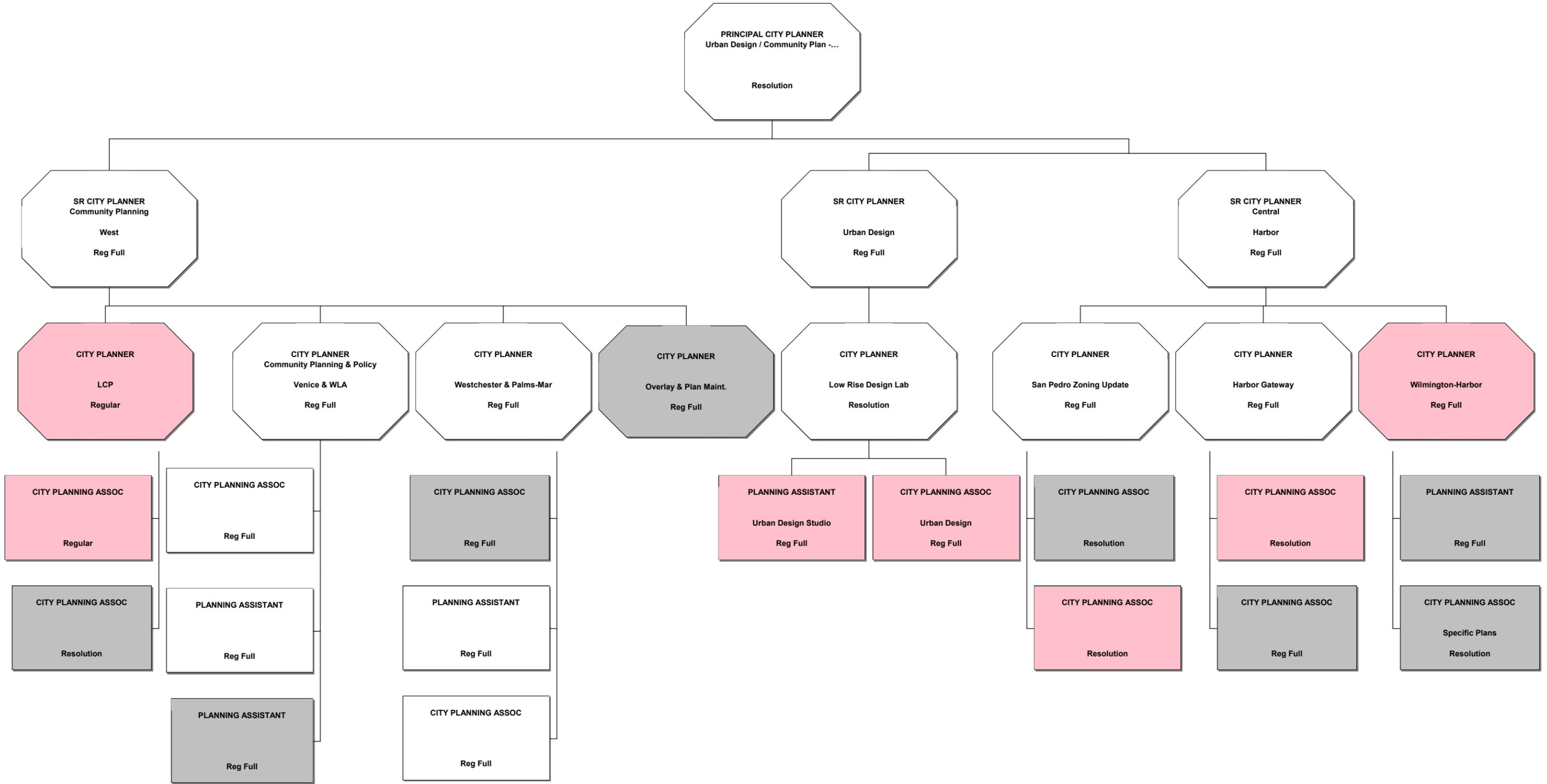


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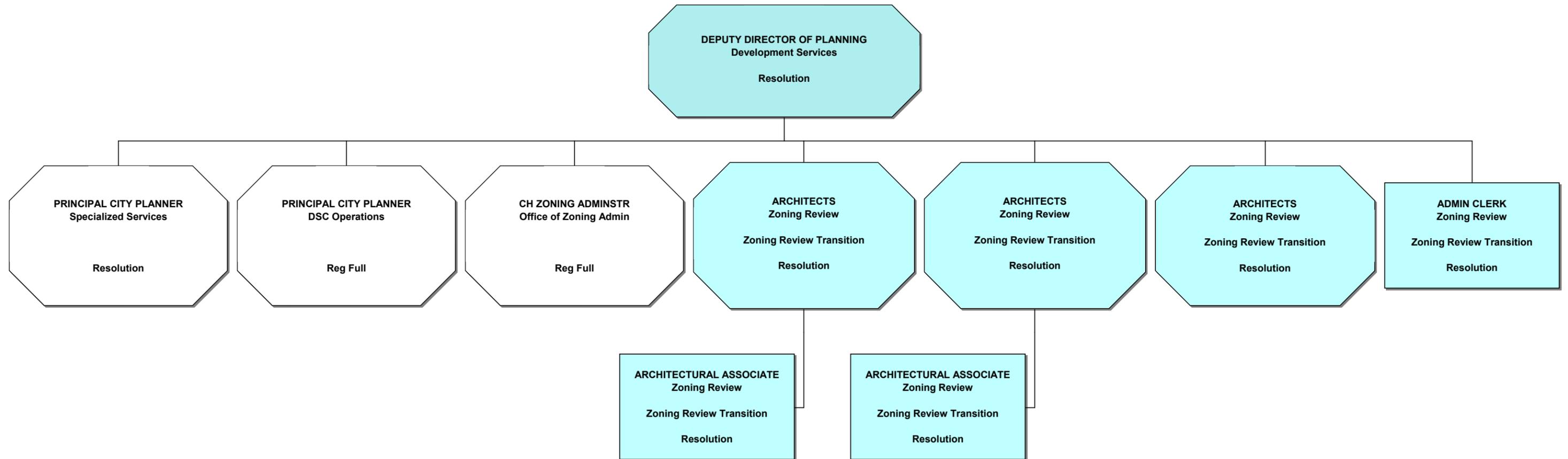
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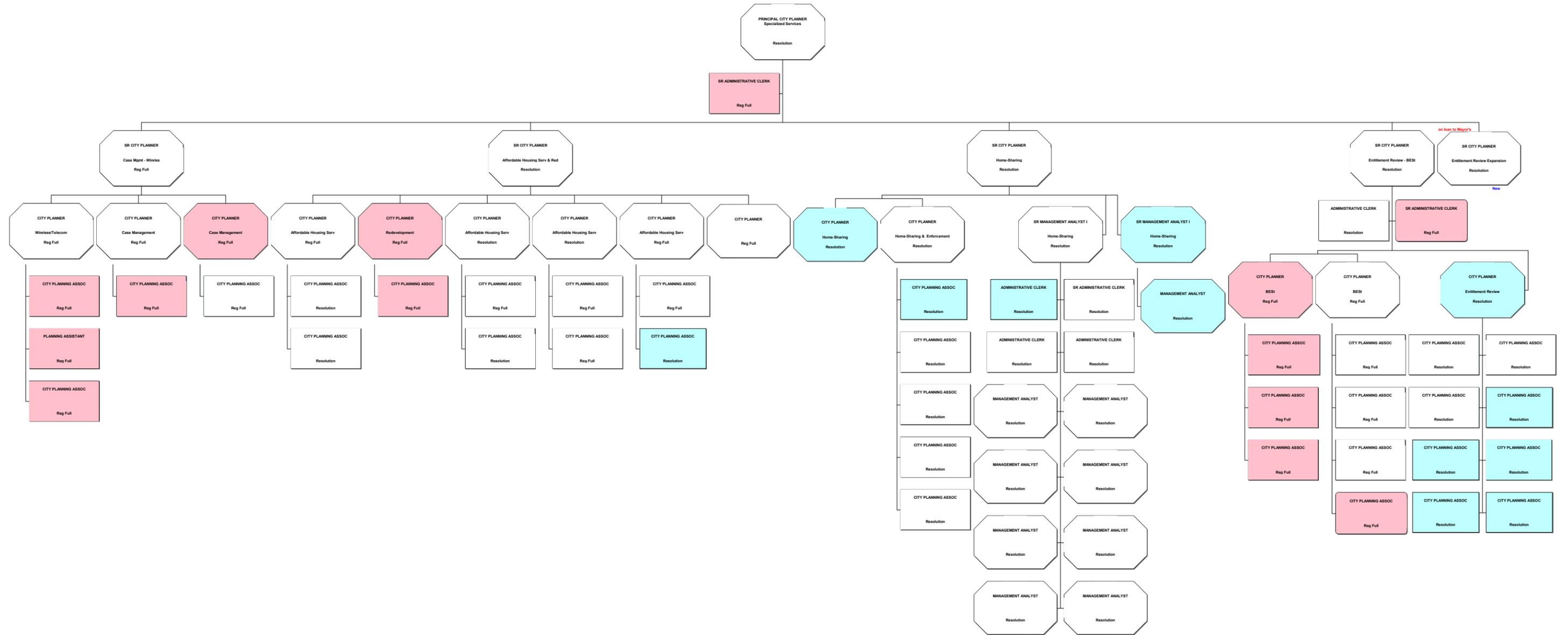


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Contractual Services \$1,019,000



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