



CITY OF

NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

November 12, 2025
Agenda Item No. 6.3

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

FROM: Paul Blank, Harbormaster
pblank@newportbeachca.gov
(949) 270-8158

TITLE: Recommendation on Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element of the General Plan

ABSTRACT:

At its meeting of October 9, 2024, the Harbor Commission established an ad hoc subcommittee to review proposed updates to the Harbor, Bay and Beaches (HBB) Element of the City's General Plan. On August 13, 2025, Ben Zbeda from the Community Development Department presented an overview of the General Plan Update process and introduced the draft HBB Element for Commission input.

The General Plan Update Committee has requested feedback from the Harbor Commission on the draft HBB Element. The ad hoc subcommittee will report its findings and recommendations, after which the full Commission may choose to formalize recommendations for transmittal to the General Plan Update Committee—or conclude its review without adopting formal comments.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
2. Consider the report and proposal from the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Harbor, Bay and Beaches Element; and if appropriate, direct staff to forward the Commission's recommendations to the General Plan Update Committee;
 - a. OR
3. Determine not to adopt a formal recommendation on the draft Harbor, Bay and Beaches Element at this time;

AND

Disband the Harbor, Bay and Beaches General Plan Update Ad Hoc Subcommittee.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

At its August 13, 2025 meeting, the Harbor Commission received a presentation from Ben Zbeda, Principal Planner with the Community Development Department, regarding the City's comprehensive General Plan Update. The presentation included an overview of the draft Harbor, Bay and Beaches (HBB) Element—one of the topic areas most relevant to the Harbor Commission's purview.

The General Plan Update Committee has invited feedback from City Boards, Committees, and Commissions with subject-matter expertise to ensure each element reflects informed community input.

In October 2024, the Harbor Commission appointed Commissioners Scully, Marston, and Yahn to an Ad Hoc Subcommittee to review the evolving HBB Element and monitor its development. The subcommittee has since met multiple times, gathered background information, and discussed potential revisions and priorities for the Harbor area.

The subcommittee now returns to the full Commission to present its findings and potential recommendations. The Commission may elect to forward formal comments to the General Plan Update Committee or conclude its review without formal action.

Regardless of the Commission's action, individual Commissioners and members of the public may continue to provide feedback directly through the ongoing public engagement process. The draft General Plan elements, including the HBB Element, are available for review online at: <https://newporttogether.mysocialpinpoint.com/2050-general-plan-draftelements>

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – DRAFT Harbor, Bay and Beaches Element
Attachment B – Commissioner Marston Comments on Draft
Attachment C – Commissioner Scully Commend on Draft