



## CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

March 19, 2026  
Agenda Item No. 5

**SUBJECT:** Study Session on the Newport Beach 2050 General Plan (PA2022-080)  
▪ Comprehensive General Plan Update

**SITE LOCATION:** Citywide

**APPLICANT:** City of Newport Beach

**PLANNER:** Benjamin M. Zdeba, AICP, Acting Deputy CDD Director  
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### **SUMMARY**

After 20 years, the City of Newport Beach (City) embarked on a comprehensive review and update of the General Plan. Although this began in 2019, City staff focused on several key pieces of the update and pivoted back to the comprehensive review in 2022, when the City Council formed the General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC), and in 2023, when the City Council formed the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC).

The draft Newport Beach 2050 General Plan has evolved over the course of a combined 100 meetings between the GPUSC, GPAC, and the GPAC's various subcommittees.

Most recently, the GPUSC/GPAC held a special joint meeting on December 3, 2025, to review comments on the General Plan Update from City Boards, Commissions, and Committees, and to provide direction to City staff and Dudek, the City's consultant, on how to incorporate responsive revisions, as deemed appropriate. The GPUSC/GPAC held another special joint meeting on January 21, 2026, and supported the comprehensive set of revised draft elements moving forward as the "Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft General Plan Update."

The purpose and intent of this study session is to share the Final Draft GPUSC/GPAC General Plan Update, also referred to as the "Newport Beach 2050 General Plan." The Planning Commission will tentatively be reviewing and considering a formal recommendation to the City Council on its adoption on April 23, 2026.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Discuss and provide input or direction to City staff.

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**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The General Plan is a State-mandated, long-term policy document that guides a community’s physical development and informs local decision-making on land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, parks, and related issues over a 20- to 30-year horizon. Newport Beach’s General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 2006, prompting the City Council to initiate a full review in 2019; however, the effort temporarily shifted to address the unprecedented 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) and complete the Housing and Circulation Elements.

As that work concluded, the City resumed the comprehensive update and, in the middle of 2022, the City Council established the three-member General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC), chaired by Nancy Gardner, to guide the process and report to the City Council. In early 2023, the City Council also formed the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), a 24-member community-based body chaired by Jeremy Evans and Arlene Greer, which organized subcommittees to support efficient and focused review of each General Plan element.

The General Plan Update effort has been broken into four primary phases, as described in Table 1 on the following page. Phase 3 (California Environmental Quality Act) is nearing completion with Phase 4 (Hearings) in progress. It is anticipated that the entire process will be completed by June 2026.

<b>Table 1, General Plan Update Process</b>			
Phase 1 (Background Analysis + Visioning)	Phase 2 (Policy Development + General Plan Amendment)	Phase 3 (California Environmental Quality Act)	Phase 4 (Hearings)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Engagement and Outreach Plan</li> <li>• Research and Data Analysis</li> <li>• Online Survey</li> <li>• GPAC + GPUSC Meetings</li> <li>• Pop-up Events</li> <li>• Paid Advertisements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of General Plan</li> <li>• Online Survey</li> <li>• GPAC+GPUSC Meetings</li> <li>• Community Workshops</li> <li>• Paid Advertisements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual Open House</li> <li>• In-Person Open House</li> <li>• GPAC + GPUSC Meetings</li> <li>• Environmental Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Boards, Commissions, and Committees</li> <li>• City Council Adoption</li> </ul>
Completed late 2024	Completed late 2025	Open houses completed late 2025; Environmental analysis in progress	In progress

To get to the point of having initial drafts of the General Plan Elements available for review, City staff worked extensively with the GPAC Subcommittees, the GPAC, and the

GPUSC. This started with the review of existing conditions and background analysis reports for each element. These documents are considered a “snapshot in time” to identify current condition in Newport Beach under each topical area as well as what needs to be addressed from a State requirement standpoint. Each subcommittee then worked on identifying a potential refresh for the individual elements and helped to create “ideas to support” them. These ideas were shared with the community through digital engagement on the City’s website for the effort (<https://www.newportbeachca.gov/gpupdate>), as well as at community workshops.

Based on the feedback received, City staff alongside consultant Dudek refined the ideas shared as actual goals and accompanying policy statements in furtherance of each. The draft goals and policies were then shared with internal City staff from various departments for review prior to finalizing them as initial draft elements.

These initial drafts were then reviewed by the Subcommittees, as well as the full GPAC and the GPUSC prior to being shared with the City’s boards, commissions, and committees for further input, and then advertised for additional public input from the broader community late last year.

At a special joint meeting of the GPAC and the GPUSC on December 3, 2025, those Committees reviewed 56 comments received on various draft elements from six different City Boards, Commissions, and Committees, as well as 69 comments received from community members. Based on guidance received at that meeting, City staff returned to another special joint meeting on January 21, 2026, with a comprehensive set of revised draft elements. By a vote of 25 ayes to 1 nay, the GPAC and the GPUSC voted to move the draft forward as the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft General Plan Update.

This draft represents the culmination of three years of diligent work by the GPAC, its subcommittees, the GPUSC, and engaged community members. Notably, the GPAC and the GPUSC combined for 57 meetings held in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and 47 public meetings of the various Subcommittees.

## **GENERAL PLAN CHAPTERS AND ELEMENTS**

### *Vision Statement*

The refreshed Vision Statement was guided by the GPAC’s *Vision Statement Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members Nicholas Acevedo, Curtis Black, Susan DeSantis, Jeremy Evans, Rita Goldberg, Arlene Greer, Lynn Hackman, Scott Laidlaw, and Jim Mosher, with GPAC Member Debbie Stevens serving as the Subcommittee’s Chair.



The draft Vision Statement is available for review [here](#).

### *Arts and Culture Element and Historical Resources Element*

The Arts and Culture Element and the Historical Resources Elements were guided by the GPAC's *Arts and Culture/Historical Resources Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members Dennis Baker, Rita Goldberg, and Paul Watkins, with GPAC Member Arlene Greer serving as the Subcommittee's Chair.



ARTS AND CULTURE

The Arts and Culture Element and Historical Resources Element are both important and unique to Newport Beach but not required by State law. They serve to place emphasis on Newport Beach's robust arts and culture offerings, and its important history. Together, they set forth a decision-making framework for the maintenance and enhancement of the City programming, as well as continuing to raise awareness and recognize the early beginnings and integral historical components that are meaningful to the community.



HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The refreshed Arts and Culture Element includes updates that:

- ✓ support art in both public spaces and larger private development projects;
- ✓ offer enhanced policy support for City libraries and services;
- ✓ include policy support for musical and culinary arts programming;
- ✓ add a focus on marketing to engage the community; and
- ✓ emphasize collaboration with other organizations.

The refreshed Historical Resources Element includes updates that:

- ✓ celebrate Newport Beach's historical resources;
- ✓ encourage enhanced outreach, education, and interpretation of Newport Beach history through signage, partnerships, walking tours, and school programs; and
- ✓ consider the establishment of a legacy business program.

The draft Arts and Culture Element is available for review [here](#).

The draft Historical Resources Element is available for review [here](#).

### *Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element*

The Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element was guided by the GPAC's *Habor and Bay Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members Nicholas Acevedo, Virginia Anders-Ellmore, Dennis Baker, Jim Carlson, Lynn Hackman, Amber Snider, Debbie Stevens, and Paul Watkins, with GPAC Member Curtis Black serving as the Subcommittee's Chair.



HARBOR, BAY, & BEACHES

The City's currently adopted Harbor and Bay Element is important and unique to Newport Beach but not required. It serves to place emphasis on Newport Harbor as not only a

community asset but a regional asset and sets forth a decision-making framework for its maintenance and enhancement. While not exhaustive, the following list presents highlighted updates of the refreshed and renamed Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element. The updated Element includes:

- ✓ incorporating direct goal and policy support related to “beaches,” which has also been added by name;
- ✓ enhancing goal and policy support for Upper Newport Bay;
- ✓ helping to sure multi-faceted and well-integrated public coastal access;
- ✓ minimizing risk of displacement from coastal hazards; and
- ✓ placing an emphasis on the economic strength and vitality of the beaches and harbor.

The draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element is available for review [here](#).

### *Land Use Element*

The Land Use Element was guided by the GPAC’s *Land Use Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members James Carlson, Chuck Ebner, Jeremy Evans, David Guder, Anthony Maniscalchi, Thomas Meng, Jim Mosher, Debbie Stevens, and Christine Walker, with GPAC Member Susan DeSantis serving as the Subcommittee’s Chair.



The Land Use Element is a State-mandated element intended to support the orderly maintenance, enhancement, and growth of the community. This Element must be consistent with all other regulatory documents, including Title 20 (Planning and Zoning) of the Newport Beach Municipal Code (NBMC) and the Local Coastal Program.

The refreshed Land Use Element includes updates that:

- ✓ condense and consolidate the narrative while restructuring to make it easier for all users to navigate the City’s complex land use patterns;
- ✓ introduce new policies that help balance the planning for focus areas, as identified in the adopted and certified 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element, by ensuring whole and balanced communities;
- ✓ provide new opportunities for change or special highlight, including Balboa Island;
- ✓ increase opportunities for open space amenities through direct policy support for publicly accessible open space (PAOS); and
- ✓ allow staff-administered updates to land use tracking tables for transparency and up-to-date information.

The draft Land Use Element is available for review [here](#).

### *Natural Resources Element and Recreation Element*

The Natural Resources Element and Recreation Element were guided by the GPAC's *Recreation/Natural Resources Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members Virginia Anders-Ellmore, Curtis Black, Susan DeSantis, Laird Hayes, Ruth Kobayashi, Katie Love, Jim Mosher, Amber Snider, and Paul Watkins, with GPAC Member Dennis Baker serving as the Subcommittee's Chair.



The Natural Resources and Recreation Elements have required components that cover the City's required policy areas related to conservation and open space. They are vital to maintaining the high level of open space areas and park amenities that the City prides itself on offering.



The refreshed Natural Resources Element includes updates that:

- ✓ integrate goals and policies that satisfy the requirements of Senate Bill 272 (2023) related to preparing a Sea Level Rise Plan by 2034 and Assembly Bill 1889 (2024) related to wildlife and habitat connectivity;
- ✓ encourage thoughtful clean energy infrastructure that is not wholly reliant on electricity;
- ✓ transition away from oil and gas resources, as deemed appropriate;
- ✓ raise awareness of clean energy incentives for existing buildings to reduce natural gas emissions; and
- ✓ encourage native/naturalized species habitats in parks and open space.

The refreshed Recreation Element includes updates that:

- ✓ integrate goals and policies that satisfy the requirements of Senate Bill 1425 (2022) related to open space access and co-benefits of open space (i.e., buffers from source pollutants and wildlife connectivity);
- ✓ encourage new and innovative parks where needed and connections to them that increase resident access;
- ✓ help ensure parks and recreational facilities that are adapted to meet a variety of needs for existing and future residents; and
- ✓ protect public beach access.

The draft Natural Resources Element is available for review [here](#).

The draft Recreation Element is available for review [here](#).

### *Noise Element*

The Noise Element was guided by the GPAC's *Noise Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members David Guder, Anthony Maniscalchi, Thomas Meng, Amber Snider, and Debbie Stevens, with GPAC Member Jim Mosher serving as the Subcommittee's Chair.



The Noise Element provides for noise control in the planning process in order to maintain land use compatibility with environmental noise levels. This Noise Element identifies noise-sensitive land uses and noise sources and defines noise impacts for the purpose of developing policies to ensure that Newport Beach residents will be protected from excessive noise intrusion.

The refreshed Noise Element includes updates that:

- ✓ contemplate the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element's introduction of additional residential into the West Newport Mesa Focus Area, which includes adjacency to the older industrial and light industrial uses;
- ✓ commit to more regularly reviewing and updating the City's Noise Ordinance;
- ✓ offer decision framework for better community education and communication surrounding noise regulations, as well as for adopting noise technology to better monitor and assess noise impacts;
- ✓ include policy support to review projects with potential to have significant vibration and effects on the neighboring-built environment; and
- ✓ elevate construction-related noise as a key community issue, providing policy support to curtail the issue, including construction noise best practices.

The draft Noise Element is available for review [here](#).

### *Safety Element*

The Safety Element was guided by the GPAC's *Safety Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members Virginia Anders-Ellmore, Curtis Black, Jim Carlson, Susan DeSantis, Jeremy Evans, Lynn Hackman, Laird Hayes, Ruth Kobayashi, Katie Love, and Debbie Stevens, with GPAC Member Amber Snider serving as the Subcommittee's Chair.



The Safety Element is a State-mandated element intended to safeguard the community from natural disasters and hazardous events while adequately preparing in the event they do occur. This Element is vital to maintaining and fostering a resilient city with community members who are well-informed and prepared.

The refreshed Safety Element includes updates that:

- ✓ elevate the discussion surrounding evacuation preparedness, including a consideration of non-automobile options and alternative routes;
- ✓ provide resilience for extreme weather events through components like shade tree and “cool” pavement strategies;
- ✓ set forward a path to preparing for sea level rise, in compliance with State law;
- ✓ modernize the fire hazard maps; and
- ✓ address aviation hazards, including emerging technologies like advanced air mobility vehicles (AAMVs) and drones.

The draft Safety Element is available for review [here](#), with individual draft figures available separately due to size at the links below.

[Figure 1. Citywide Coastal Flood Risk](#)

[Figure 2. Newport Harbor Coastal Flood Risk](#)

[Figure 3. Landslide Zones](#)

[Figure 4. Liquefaction Zones](#)

[Figure 5. FEMA Flood Zones](#)

[Figure 6. Fire Hazard Severity Zones](#)

[Figure 7. Land Uses in Fire Hazard Severity Zones](#)

[Figure 8. Historic Fires](#)

[Figure 9. Hazardous Materials](#)

## **OTHER CITY BOARD, COMMISSION, AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

### *Board of Library Trustees*

On August 18, 2025, the initial drafts of the Arts and Culture Element and the Historical Resources Element were introduced to the Board of Library Trustees (BLT). Rather than form an ad hoc committee for review, the BLT opted to review individually and return to its October 2025 meeting with any feedback.

On October 20, 2025, these Elements were on the BLT’s agenda. At the conclusion of a brief discussion, the BLT unanimously offered support for the drafts without any feedback.

On February 23, 2026, the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Arts and Culture Element and Historical Resources Element were presented to the BLT for formal review and consideration. By a unanimous vote of 5 ayes and 0 nays, the BLT recommended the City Council’s adoption of the Elements as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update.

### *City Arts Commission*

On September 11, 2025, and October 9, 2025, the initial drafts of the Arts and Culture Element and the Historical Resources Element were introduced to the City Arts Commission (CAC). Also on October 9, the CAC opted to establish an ad hoc committee

to review the draft Elements, consisting of Chair Ignatin, Vice Chair Moore, and Commissioner Blom. The ad hoc committee met to review and compile comments, which were presented and reviewed at the CAC's meeting on November 13, 2025, and subsequently forwarded to the GPAC and GPUSC for consideration.

On February 12, 2026, the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Arts and Culture Element and Historical Resources Element were presented to the CAC for formal review and consideration. By a majority vote of 6 ayes, 0 nays, and 1 abstention, the CAC recommended the City Council's adoption of the Elements as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update.

#### *Harbor Commission*

On August 13, 2025, the initial draft of the Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element was introduced to the Harbor Commission. Although some initial feedback was shared during that meeting, it was noted that the Commission had already formed an ad hoc committee to track the General Plan Update, consisting of Commissioners Scully, Marston, and Yahn, as appointed in October 2024. The ad hoc committee met to review and compile comments, which were presented and reviewed at the Commission's meeting on November 12, 2025, and subsequently forwarded to the GPAC and GPUSC for consideration.

On March 11, 2026, the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element was presented to the Commission for formal review and consideration. By a unanimous vote of 7 ayes and 0 nays, the Commission recommended the City Council's adoption of the Element as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update.

#### *Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission*

On August 5, 2025, the initial drafts of the Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, Natural Resources Element, and Recreation Element were introduced to the Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission (PB&R). During this meeting, PB&R requested the creation of an ad hoc committee to effectively explore them and provide more informed feedback. Commissioners Daruty, Kirby, and Malouf were appointed to the ad hoc committee at the meeting on September 2, 2025. The ad hoc committee met twice to review and compile comments, which were presented and reviewed at PB&R's meeting on October 7, 2025, and subsequently forwarded to the GPAC and GPUSC for consideration.

On March 3, 2026, the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, Natural Resources Element, and Recreation Element were presented to PB&R for formal review and consideration. By a unanimous vote of 6 ayes, 0 nays, and 1 absence, the PB&R recommended the City Council's adoption of the Element as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update, with a recommendation to revise draft Policy HBB-5.5 (Coastal Resilience) to include PB&R alongside the Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee.

### *Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee*

On September 4, 2025, the initial drafts of the Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, Natural Resources Element, and Safety Element were introduced to the Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee. During this meeting, the Committee received an overview from Committee Member Curtis Black who also served on the GPAC and was the Chair of the Harbor and Bay Subcommittee. Member Black suggested the creation of an ad hoc committee to effectively explore them and provide more informed feedback. Committee Members Black, Fancher, and Wadsworth were appointed to the ad hoc committee at the same meeting. The ad hoc committee met to review and compile comments, which were presented and reviewed at Committee's meeting on October 2, 2025, and subsequently forwarded to the GPAC and GPUSC for consideration.

The Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, Natural Resources Element, and Safety Element will be presented to the Committee for formal review and consideration at its next meeting on April 2, 2026.

### **NEXT STEPS**

On the day of this study session, the Orange County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) will review the draft Newport Beach 2050 General Plan for consistency with the 2008 John Wayne Airport Environs Land Use Plan. Staff will provide an update on the ALUC meeting during the study session.

Notwithstanding ALUC, it is anticipated that the Newport Beach 2050 General Plan will return to the Planning Commission for formal review and recommendation to the City Council on April 23, 2026.

On April 28, 2026, the City Council is tentatively scheduled to hold a study session very similar to that of the Planning Commission.

Ultimately, City staff anticipates the matter will come to the City Council for adoption in May or June 2026, which will conclude the multi-year update effort.

### **Environmental Review**

Staff recommends the Planning Commission finds the action of making a recommendation to the City Council is exempt from 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, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly. An addendum to the Program Environmental Impact Report for the City of Newport Beach General Plan Housing

Element Implementation Program is being prepared and will be provided for the City Council's action on the General Plan Update.

Public Notice

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

Prepared and Submitted by:



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Benjamin M. Zdeba, AICP  
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01/18/23