



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH CITY ARTS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

September 11, 2025
Agenda Item No. 3

TO: CITY ARTS COMMISSION

FROM: Library Services Department
Melissa Hartson, Library Services Director
(949) 717-3801, mhartson@newportbeachca.gov

PREPARED BY: Benjamin Zdeba, Planning Manager

TITLE: General Plan Update: Introducing Refreshed Goals and Policies in the Draft Arts and Culture Element

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Arts Commission receives and files the draft Element and provides any initial guidance or feedback on its goals and policies. The refined and finalized draft would be returned to the Commission for review and formal recommendation of approval to the City Council later this year or first quarter of 2026.

BACKGROUND:

A General Plan is a long-term document that acts as a guide for future development and is used as the foundation for decision-making on the physical development of a community. It contains goals that set values and direction, policies that guide decision-making, and programs to carry out the actions needed to achieve the goals. The General Plan is required by State law and is used by local governments to make decisions about land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, and parks, among other issues. While planning horizons vary, it typically sets direction for the next 20-30 years. The City of Newport Beach (City) General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 2006 – nearly 20 years ago.

In 2019, the City Council initiated its comprehensive review and update; however, due to the challenging and unprecedented 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), City staff was directed to pivot focus toward the Housing Element and Circulation Element. With the adoption and certification of the Housing Element in 2022, staff continued toward implementing the Housing Element but returned focus to the comprehensive update.

In early 2022, as the Housing Element was wrapping up, the City Council formed and seated the three-member General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC), which is chaired by Nancy Gardner. The primary purpose of the GPUSC is to guide the larger General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) and to report to the City Council. The GPAC was formed and seated in early 2023, is currently made up of 24 community members appointed by the City Council and chaired by Jeremy Evans and Arlene Greer. To help ensure efficient effective review and input for all the elements, the GPAC formed subcommittees to review each of them.

The effort is broken into four primary phases, as depicted in Figure 1 below. Phase 1 (Background Analysis + Visioning) was completed late 2024 and Phase 2 (Policy Development + General Plan Amendment) is in progress but nearly complete.



Figure 1, Phasing of the comprehensive General Plan Update.

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 are now being reviewed by the individual responsible Subcommittee, as well as the full GPAC and the GPUSC prior to being shared with the City’s boards, commissions, and committees for further input. After they are shared, City staff will begin to advertise the drafts for additional public input from the broader community. Ultimately, the drafts will be refined and shared back to the boards, commissions, and committees for consideration of support.

DISCUSSION:

The current Arts and Culture Element is important and unique to Newport Beach but not required by State law. It serves to place emphasis on Newport Beach’s robust arts and culture offerings and sets forth a

decision-making framework for the maintenance and enhancement of the City's arts and culture programming.

The attachment provided as Attachment A is considered a first draft and is not fully formatted with graphics and exhibits. As referenced above, the Existing Conditions and Background Analysis Report prepared for each element serves as contextual information that will be provided alongside the goals and policies for reference. The Arts and Culture Existing Conditions and Background Analysis Report is provided for reference as Attachment B.

The purpose of this item is to introduce the draft Element. City staff would like to ensure the Commission is able to provide initial feedback prior to releasing it for broader public review and input. The Commission may wish to provide feedback verbally at this meeting or it may consider forming an ad hoc committee to provide a more formal comment alongside the broader community review.

City staff will bring back final refined drafts of the Element for formal review and support from the Commission later this year or early 2026.

NOTICING:

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

ATTACHMENT A: Draft Arts and Culture Element

ATTACHMENT B: Arts and Culture Existing Conditions and Background Analysis Report