



NEWPORT BEACH

City Council Staff Report

April 28, 2026
Study Session

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jaime Murillo, Community Development Director - 949-644-3209,
jmurillo@newportbeachca.gov

PREPARED BY: Benjamin M. Zdeba, AICP, Acting Deputy Community Development
Director - 949-644-3253, bzdeba@newportbeachca.gov

TITLE: Introducing the Newport Beach 2050 General Plan (PA2022-080)

ABSTRACT:

City of Newport Beach staff will present relevant background information and an overview of the status of the comprehensive General Plan Update with special focus on introducing the final draft GPUSC/GPAC General Plan Update, also referred to as the “Newport Beach 2050 General Plan.” This is a study session item with no action required. It is anticipated the City Council will review and consider adoption of the Newport Beach 2050 General Plan at its meeting on June 23, 2026.

DISCUSSION:

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 6th 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), an originally 28-member community-based body that was reduced to 24 members 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.

Table 1, General Plan Update Process			
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"> • Community Engagement and Outreach Plan • Research and Data Analysis • Online Survey • GPAC + GPUSC Meetings • Pop-up Events • Paid Advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of General Plan • Online Survey • GPAC+GPUSC Meetings • Community Workshops • Paid Advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Open House • In-Person Open House • GPAC + GPUSC Meetings • Environmental Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Boards, Commissions, and Committees • City Council Adoption
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 conditions 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.

Through the course of the GPAC and GPUSC efforts, the Committees also voted to 1) recommend the City Council consider forming a new ad hoc committee that would assist City staff with reviewing implementation of the General Plan annually; and 2) recommend that the City Council remove all development intensity from the former Banning Ranch area.

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 Components and Elements

Introduction

The updated Introduction discusses the purpose and intent of the General Plan and includes overviews of the process to update it, Newport Beach as a city, the General Plan, and the General Plan's structure, as well as acknowledgements. Figure I-1 is provided to depict the regional vicinity and Figure I-2 is provided to depict the City's boundaries and Sphere of Influence.

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

Vision Statement

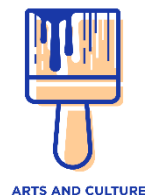
The refreshed Vision Statement was guided by the GPAC's *Vision Statement Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members Nicholas Acevedo, Curtis Black, Susan DeSantis, Jeremy Evans, Rita Goldberg, Arlene Greer, Lynn Hackman, Scott Laidlaw, and Jim Mosher, with GPAC Member Debbie Stevens serving as the subcommittee's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



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 chairperson.



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 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 *Harbor 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 chairperson.



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 ensure 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 chairperson.



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

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 6th 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 chairperson.



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 chairperson.



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:

- ✓ Provide enhanced noise considerations for the 6th 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 chairperson.



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](#)

Implementation Programs

The Implementation Programs outline the primary actions and procedures intended to carry out the goals and policies of the Newport Beach 2050 General Plan. They provide flexible, advisory guidance linked to specific policies. A key update to the Implementation Programs is an Implementation Crosswalk to enhance the City's tracking efforts while helping departments coordinate responsibilities, timelines and progress.

While the General Plan remains the controlling policy document, the implementation programs support its execution and may evolve over time in response to changing funding, technology and community priorities. Annual progress reporting and periodic, more in-depth reviews of each General Plan Element ensure that implementation is monitored, policies remain relevant, and adjustments can be made without formal amendments unless substantive policy changes are required.

The draft Implementation Programs is available for review [here](#).

Glossary

The Glossary has been updated to remove definitions for terms that are not present in the Newport Beach 2050 General Plan and includes immaterial updates to the current version.

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

City and Non-City Board, Commission, and Committee Reviews

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 (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. Committee 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 the Water Quality / Coastal Tidelands Committee's meeting on October 2, 2025, and subsequently forwarded to the GPAC and GPUSC for consideration.

On April 2, 2026, the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, Natural Resources Element, and Safety Element were presented to the committee for formal review and consideration. By a unanimous vote of 5 ayes and 0 nays, the Water Quality / Coastal Tidelands Committee recommended the City Council's adoption of the Element as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update.

Planning Commission

On October 9, 2025, the initial drafts of the Land Use Element and Safety Element were introduced to the Planning Commission. Rather than form an ad hoc committee for review, the Planning Commission opted to review individually and return to a November meeting with any feedback.

On November 20, 2025, these Elements were on the Planning Commission's agenda. At the conclusion of a brief discussion, the Planning Commission unanimously offered support for the drafts while opting to share minor suggestions that were subsequently forwarded to the GPAC and GPUSC for consideration. Most notably, the Planning Commission expressed a desire to understand which goals and policies were existing and carried forward, existing and modified, or omitted. This analysis has been prepared as part of the environmental review for the update and will be made available for the City Council's consideration.

On April 23, 2026, the Planning Commission is conducting a public hearing and considering recommending that the City Council adopt the General Plan Update. City staff will provide an update on the Planning Commission's action as part of the presentation.

Orange County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC)

On March 19, 2026, the Orange County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) conducted a public hearing to review the draft Newport Beach 2050 General Plan for consistency with the 2008 John Wayne Airport Environs Land Use Plan (AELUP). ALUC's review focused on the Land Use Element, Noise Element, and Safety Element. By a unanimous vote of 5 ayes and 0 nays, ALUC determined the proposed update is inconsistent with the AELUP. This determination was primarily made because the comprehensive update carries forward previous amendments to the Land Use and Noise Elements that were found to also be inconsistent with the AELUP. These amendments were maintained, as they were determined critical to implement the City's adopted and certified Housing Element.

Next Steps

On the same agenda as this study session (April 28, 2026), the City Council will hold a public hearing to consider authorizing the Notice of Intent to Override ALUC's Determination. If authorized, City staff will transmit a letter to ALUC and to the State Department of Transportation, Aeronautics Program, notifying them of the City's intention to override ALUC's determination.

Ultimately, City staff anticipates the matter will come to the City Council for consideration and potential adoption on June 23, 2026, which will conclude the multi-year update effort.

NOTICING:

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