



## CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH CITY ARTS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

February 12, 2026  
Agenda Item No. 4

**TO:** CITY ARTS COMMISSION

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

**PREPARED BY:** Ben Zdeba, Community Development Planning Manager

**TITLE:** General Plan Update: Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Arts and Culture and Historical Resources Elements

---

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the City Arts Commission review the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Arts and Culture Element and Historical Resources Element, which have been revised to incorporate the Commission's input from November 2025. The Commission should conduct a vote to consider recommending the City Council adopt them as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update later this year.

### **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. This included the *Arts and Culture/Historical Resources Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members Dennis Baker, Rita Goldberg, and Paul Watkins, with GPAC Member Greer serving as the Subcommittee's Chair.

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"> <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>
<b>Completed late 2024</b>	<b>Completed late 2025</b>	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, including the Arts and Culture and Historical Resources Elements, 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.

**DISCUSSION:**

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.

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 purpose of this item is to share those draft Elements, as revised by the GPAC and GPUSC to incorporate the Commission's feedback from November 2025 (Attachments A and B). Attachment C is a table of the comments provided by the Commission along with a note on how each comment is addressed. City staff recommends the Commission review the updated drafts and conduct a vote to recommend the City Council adopt them as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update later this year.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

The City Arts Commission's 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.

**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: Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Arts and Culture Element

ATTACHMENT B: Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Historical Resources Element

ATTACHMENT C: Table of City Arts Commission Comments and Revisions