



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

October 9, 2025
Agenda Item No. 2

SUBJECT: General Plan Update – Introduction of Draft Elements (PA2022-080)
▪ Land Use Element
▪ Safety Element

SITE LOCATION: Citywide

APPLICANT: City of Newport Beach

PLANNER: Benjamin M. Zdeba, AICP, Planning Manager
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PROJECT SUMMARY

This report to the Planning Commission outlines the progress made on the City of Newport Beach's ongoing comprehensive update to its General Plan, last revised in 2006. Following delays due to the State-mandated 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), the City resumed its broader update process in 2022 with the formation of the General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC) and the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), including various subcommittees to review each Element. The update process consists of four phases; Phase 1 (Background Analysis + Visioning) is complete, and Phase 2 (Policy Development + General Plan Amendment) is nearly finalized. City staff, working closely with the GPAC, GPUSC, and consultant Dudek, developed draft goals and policies based on existing conditions reports and community input gathered through digital platforms and workshops. The Land Use Element and Safety Element are both required elements pursuant to State General Plan Law. Initial drafts have been prepared and are ready for broader community review.

City staff seeks preliminary feedback from the Commission before the draft is released for wider public review. Final drafts will return for formal endorsement by the Planning Commission in late 2025 or early 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Receive a brief presentation from City staff, receive and file the draft Land Use Element and Safety Element; and either
 - a) Form an ad hoc committee to review the draft Elements and provide comments for the Planning Commission's consideration at a meeting in November 2025; or
 - b) Have Planning Commissioners review individually and be prepared to discuss and provide feedback to City staff at a meeting in November 2025.

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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, Phased approach of the 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 Land Use Element and Safety Element are required General Plan Elements. They are vital to promoting and enhancing land use and a development pattern that is both safe and efficient while upholding the excellent quality of life that has been long established in Newport Beach.

The draft Land Use Element is considered a refresh and reorganization of the currently adopted Element, with additional goals and policies attributed to the Focus Areas for housing development identified by the 6th Cycle Housing Element. These include:

- Airport Environs Area;
- West Newport Mesa;
- Dover-Westcliff;
- Newport Center; and
- Coyote Canyon.

The draft Safety Element is also considered a refresh of the current version and has been updated to comply with the latest requirements. As an important note, the draft Safety Element has been reviewed by CAL FIRE, as well as the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and has been reviewed and accepted pursuant to California Government Code Section 65302.5, giving clearance for its eventual adoption by the City Council.

The enclosed drafts are considered first drafts of the updated General Plan and are not fully formatted with graphics and exhibits. As referenced above, the Existing Conditions and Background Analysis Reports prepared for each element serve as contextual information that will be provided alongside the goals and policies for reference (Attachment Nos. PC 3 and PC 4).

The purpose of this item is to introduce the draft elements. City staff would like to ensure the Planning Commission is able to provide initial feedback prior to releasing them for broader public review and input. The Planning 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.

In early 2026, City staff will bring back final refined drafts of these Elements, as well as the remainder of the comprehensively updated General Plan for formal review by the Planning Commission to consider recommending adoption by the City Council.

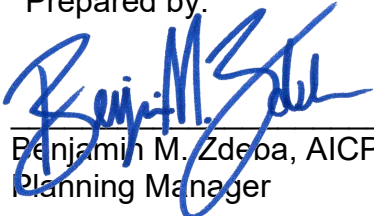
Environmental Review

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, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

Public Notice

This matter has been noticed in accordance with the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item).

Prepared by:



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Submitted by:



Jaime Murillo, AICP
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ATTACHMENTS

- PC 1 Draft Land Use Element
- PC 2 Draft Safety Element
- PC 3 Land Use Existing Conditions and Background Analysis Report
- PC 4 Safety Existing Conditions and Background Analysis Report

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