

I. The Introduction



The City of Huntington Beach has enjoyed a unique and rich history in its first century. Since 1909, the city has grown in land area, population, employment, transportation, and opportunity. Throughout this time, the highly coveted natural features and resources integral to the city's identity have been protected. Formerly an agriculture-based community, the city is now home to a variety of employment opportunities in the tourism, industrial, professional office, and healthcare sectors.

Today, Huntington Beach is known for its pristine beaches, diverse family-friendly community, and renowned Downtown. The city attracts millions of visitors from around the world, who enjoy the weather, recreation, events, and shopping. While experiencing steady population and economic growth, the city continues to meet the challenge of preserving its beach city culture and identity, protecting its natural resources, and enhancing quality of life for all community members.

The General Plan serves as a blueprint for the community through the year 2040. The plan provides a roadmap for new housing and job growth, while protecting those characteristics and values that make Huntington Beach a desirable and distinctive place to live, work, and visit.

Plan Overview

This overview of the General Plan describes Huntington Beach's geography and key demographic trends.

Why a General Plan?

The General Plan is a state-required policy document that provides guidance to City decision-makers on allocating resources and determining the future physical form and character of development. It is the City's official statement about the extent and types of development needed to achieve community physical, economic, and environmental goals. The General Plan consists of individual chapters, or "elements," each of which addresses a specific topic. It also embodies a comprehensive and integrated approach to planning. The General Plan clarifies and articulates the City's intentions with respect to the rights and expectations of the general public, property owners, community groups, developers, and businesses.

Geography

The City of Huntington Beach is located in the northwestern portion of Orange County along the Pacific Ocean. The city is bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the southwest, the City of Seal Beach to the northwest, the City of Westminster to the north, the City of Fountain Valley to the northeast, and the Cities of Newport and Costa Mesa to the east.

Huntington Beach's defining coastline, scenic viewsheds, and diverse neighborhoods create a unique sense of place and quality of life. The community provides a distinctive mix of coastal resources, protected open spaces, distinct residential neighborhoods, high-quality services, shopping opportunities, and a longstanding commitment to environmental stewardship.

From its early origins as a stop along the Pacific Electric Railway corridor to recent and possible future annexations, Huntington Beach has a long history of leveraging the economic and environmental advantages of its physical location and building on surrounding resources.

KEY FACTS

- Area of City: 27.3 square miles¹
- Population: 193,189²
- Housing: 78,175 units¹
- Average Household Size: 2.62 persons³
- Population Density: 7,179 inhabitants per square mile
- Jobs: 81,013 jobs⁴

Sources:

- 1) City of Huntington Beach 2014
- 2) California Department of Finance 2014
- 3) 2010–2014 American Community Survey
- 4) Stanley R. Hoffman Associates 2016



Demographics

While Huntington Beach has experienced modest population growth over the past several decades, ongoing demographic and household trends indicate that the population will continue to gradually increase over the next several decades.

Furthermore, Huntington Beach's age profile is shifting from a younger to a more mature population. The number of young adults (25–44 years) has decreased over the past decade, while the number of middle-aged adults (45–64 years) and seniors (65+ years) has increased.

In 2014, Huntington Beach had a population of 193,189 and 78,175 total housing units. The average household size from 2000 to 2014 increased from 2.56 to 2.62 persons per household. The total employment in Huntington Beach was estimated at 81,013 in 2015. Total employment is projected to increase by 15.3 percent between 2015 and 2040 and strong evidence suggests that the rate of new housing unit construction will continue to increase as well.

This General Plan provides development capacity for approximately 17,862 additional residents and 12,386 additional jobs by 2040. The plan identifies how community amenities, services, and infrastructure will be provided to accommodate this planned growth, while maintaining community character and culture, conserving important resources, and adapting to changing economic and environmental conditions.

Regulations

A number of key state, regional, and local regulations set requirements that the General Plan must fulfill.

California Government Code

Each city and county in California is required to adopt a general plan and update this plan at regular intervals. Sections 65300–65404 and 65590–65590.1 of the California Government Code establish the requirements for the minimum contents of the general plan and rules for adoption and subsequent amendments. Together, state law and judicial decisions establish three overall guidelines for general plans. General plans should be:

Comprehensive. This requirement has two aspects. First, the general plan must be geographically comprehensive. Second, the general plan must address the full range of issues that affect the city's physical development.



Internally consistent. The general plan must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. All adopted portions of the general plan have equal weight, whether required by state law or not.

Long range. State law requires every general plan take a long-term perspective since anticipated development will affect the city and the people who live or work here into the foreseeable future.

Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) *2016–2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/Sustainable Communities Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Future* provides a comprehensive outline of the regional vision for transportation investments in Southern California through 2040. The RTP was adopted in 2017 and is updated every four years to address regional transportation needs. The General Plan should be consistent with these regional planning efforts.

California Environmental Quality Act

The state legislature adopted the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in response to a public mandate for thorough environmental analysis of projects that could affect the environment. The provisions of the law and environmental review procedures are described in the CEQA Statutes and Guidelines (Public Resources Code Sections 21000–21189). A separate Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the General Plan is the instrument for ensuring that environmental impacts of the plan are appropriately assessed and mitigated.

Huntington Beach Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance

The City of Huntington Beach Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance (Huntington Beach Municipal Code Title 20–Title 25) is the primary implementation tool for the General Plan. The Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance consists of two parts: the official Zoning Map divides the city into zones consistent with General Plan land use designations, and zoning text establishes development standards for each zone including permitted uses, density and intensity of uses, building height, performance standards, and other similar regulations.

California Coastal Act

The California Coastal Act (California State Public Resources Code, Division 20, Section 30000 et seq.) directs each local government lying wholly or partly within the coastal zone, as defined by the Coastal Act, to prepare a Local Coastal Program for its portion of the



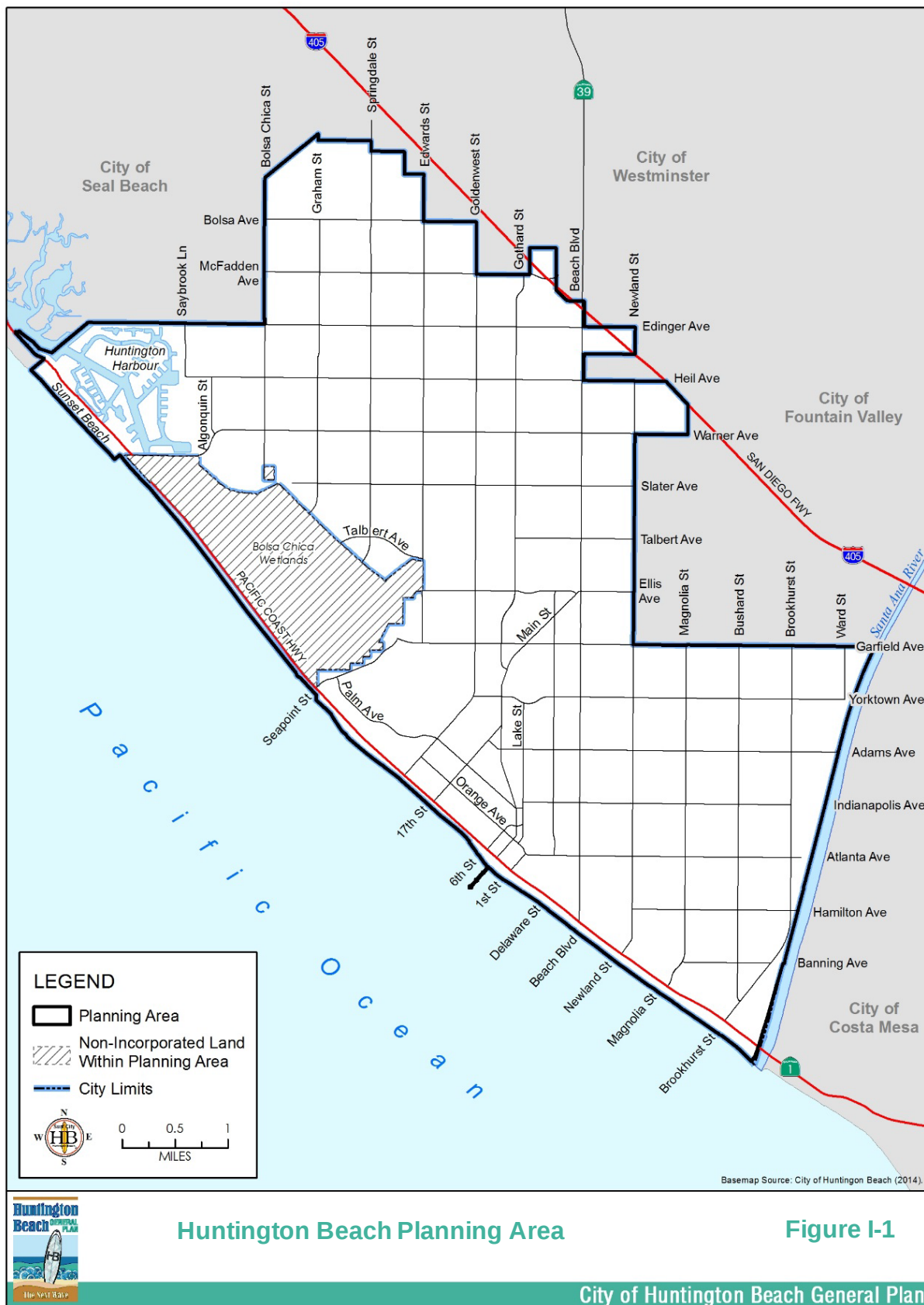
coastal zone. Local Coastal Programs are prepared so that local governments can carry out the policies and requirements of the Coastal Act. Local Coastal Programs must be reviewed and certified by the California Coastal Commission before being implemented by a local government. The City of Huntington Beach has a certified local coastal program, which is divided into two components: (1) a Coastal Element and (2) an Implementation Program. The Coastal Element includes a land use plan and goals and policies to be used by decision-makers when reviewing coastal-related issues and proposed development within the coastal zone boundary. The Huntington Beach Coastal Element was initially certified by the California Coastal Commission in 1985 and was last comprehensively updated in 2001.

Planning Area

The General Plan addresses all land within the city limits, as well as unincorporated Orange County properties surrounded by Huntington Beach, including the Bolsa Chica Wetlands. These areas are located within Huntington Beach's sphere of influence (SOI). While properties outside the city limits are under the jurisdiction of Orange County, they are critical to Huntington Beach's planning activities, resource conservation, and overall community value. The city and SOI comprise the "planning area" as illustrated in **Figure I-1**.

The planning area encompasses 29.6 square miles (18,971 acres) on the western edge of Orange County, located 37 miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles. Land within the current city limits (including the Huntington Beach Municipal Pier) comprises 27.3 square miles (17,482 acres), or 92 percent of the planning area, while unincorporated areas comprise 2.3 square miles (1,489 acres), or 8 percent of the planning area.





Community Engagement

Community engagement provides opportunities for input from residents, property owners, businesses, and concerned stakeholders. This feedback helps the City make quality decisions to create a more livable community. Updating the General Plan provided many opportunities for participants to help guide the future of Huntington Beach. The City invited the entire community to participate in a process of visioning, planning for the future, and reviewing the draft plan. The community engagement process helped define a community vision and widely shared guiding principles, but also exposed issues and opportunities, which informed the planning process. Community engagement activities conducted during the General Plan update included the following:

General Plan Advisory Committee.

The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) was created to provide input on the overall General Plan update process. The GPAC consisted of twelve community members and alternates: representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Community Services Commission, Environmental Board, Planning Commission, and Public Works Commission, and seven members appointed by City Council members. The GPAC met seven times over a one-year period, providing input on community themes and key issues, the community vision and guiding principles, technical reports, potential transformation areas and land use alternatives, and General Plan goals and policies.



Community Workshops and Open House. The City conducted community-wide workshops during the initial visioning phase of the project. The City hosted a beach bonfire, two community visioning workshops, and a pop-up workshop. The purpose of these workshops was to set a framework for future engagement on focused policy discussions in a transparent and collaborative way and to gather input on current priorities, issues, concerns, and a vision for the future. City staff also presented General Plan concepts to a number of community groups throughout the update process.

During the public review phase of the General Plan update, the document was posted on the City's General Plan update website (www.hbthenextwave.org) and advertised through the City's website, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), the Huntington Beach Wave newspaper, and the email distribution list gathered during the project.

Community-Wide Online Surveys. Community members participated in three online surveys throughout the course of the General Plan update. During the visioning phase of the project, community members described the demographics, preferences, and habits of the Huntington Beach community to help inform current and future community needs and wants. During the policy development phase, participants shared feedback regarding the draft guiding principles and potential transformation areas. During the draft plan review phase, participants shared feedback, questions, and concerns regarding the draft General Plan. Throughout this process, the City shared feedback from these surveys with the GPAC, Planning Commission, and City Council to maximize transparency.

Stakeholder Interviews. The City interviewed 16 stakeholders during the initial visioning phase of the project to capture a broad range of perspectives. Stakeholders were involved leaders in the community related to current planning processes, resource efficiency, circulation, market trends and fiscal considerations, resource conservation and wetland protection, land use, and social services. Stakeholders included City Council members, Planning Commissioners, existing and former City staff, business owners, civic organization leaders, Chamber of Commerce members, and neighborhood advocates.

Meetings with Community Groups. The City gave presentations to City and community groups to provide an overview of the General Plan purpose and process. The meetings also provided an opportunity for community group members to share their input. City staff met with homeowners, businesses, and environmental groups over the course of the update.

General Plan Website. A General Plan website provided access to background materials, information on the process, and progress of the project for easy reference. This website was the main access point for community members to participate in online surveys, access publicly available information and documents, and submit comments and questions to City staff.



Community Vision and Guiding Principles

Community Vision

A community vision is a long-term aspiration describing what a community wants to achieve in the future. Put simply, it describes the ideal condition of Huntington Beach in 2040, and outlines the factors that will sustain long-term community character and values over time. The Community Vision was crafted by the GPAC, City staff, and the consulting team, based on the input provided by the community during the community engagement process. This was reviewed by the City Council early in the General Plan update process. The City's Community Vision represents a summary of the future aspirations underlying the General Plan.

In 2040, the City of Huntington Beach is...

a **desirable destination for all people to live, work, play, and visit**. Huntington Beach is a **healthy and safe, family-oriented community** with flourishing schools and accessible community services for all ages. Natural resources are protected, while parks, open spaces, and the beach provide a variety of recreation opportunities. Community members travel easily by automobile, by bicycle, on foot, and using transit.

Well-maintained, high-quality infrastructure and cutting-edge technology help **all businesses throughout the city prosper in a culture of innovation**, offering a variety of job opportunities for residents and the region. **Development is guided to ensure responsible growth** while preserving and enhancing our community character, the beach, Surf City culture, and the environment.

The community and its priorities are resilient, withstanding the challenges posed by a changing coastline and economic base, and shifting demographics. The City, in partnership with the community, is sustainable—**considering the needs of future generations while protecting what is valued today**.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles help to achieve the community's vision. They provide a foundation for General Plan goals and policies and offer guidance to the City Council, City commissions, and staff for making future decisions.

The following principles, supporting the Community Vision, are intended to guide future City decision making. The guiding principles were created through the GPAC's work and reviewed by the City Council early in the General Plan update process and provide an



overarching rationale for more specific General Plan goals and policies. Each principle is supported by a newspaper-style headline submitted by workshop participants, followed by a description of the community Huntington Beach wants to be in 2040 while underscoring both challenges and opportunities. Quotes from the community engagement process accompany the guiding principles and describe what workshop participants cherish about Huntington Beach and what they want for Huntington Beach in the future. Projects supporting these guiding principles will be pursued over the 25-year time frame of the General Plan, subject to available funding.



Economic Vitality

Local Businesses Thrive in an Innovation-Friendly Environment

Our local businesses are a top choice for highly qualified job seekers, and Huntington Beach is a place that businesses want to come to. Innovation and workforce diversity are creating high-paying jobs in the community. New businesses and jobs have emerged in areas capable of providing technology and infrastructure specifically to support business start-ups, allowing for smooth transition into larger spaces as businesses expand. The variety of building and development platforms provided to businesses in Huntington Beach makes the community resilient to future economic changes. Consistent and predictable development standards support businesses in their efforts to start or expand, minimizing commercial vacancy in the community.

Local attractions, such as the beach, accommodations, and amenities, draw tourists from near and far, while improved housing and transportation options support the service sector upon which Huntington Beach's tourist economy relies.



Infrastructure

Funds Flow Toward Improved Infrastructure Systems

Water, sewer, street, and other infrastructure facilities are updated to serve future generations of residents, businesses, and visitors. New infrastructure projects are coordinated using a comprehensive systems approach, supporting existing community members and providing adequate capacity for future growth.

A vibrant economy, expanded tax base, and sustainable infrastructure investments result in improved neighborhood quality and increased property values throughout Huntington Beach. The City and community groups are successful in seeking grant funding to support community infrastructure objectives.

Open Space and Recreation

Residents Don't Have to Travel Far to Play Outside

Both open space and recreational activities are highly valued. Residents and visitors cherish the beach, parks, trails, wetlands, and recreational activities available throughout the community. A careful balance between recreational structures, amenities, and activities is maintained. The beach is accessible, open, and clean, and natural open spaces have been managed carefully to accommodate varying preferences and changing priorities.

The City continues to successfully partner with regional agencies, Golden West College, local school districts, conservation organizations, and community groups to plan for parks, share facilities, and conserve resource areas.



“My priority for Huntington Beach is to provide nice places to get away and enjoy our family—grandchildren and all.”

Surf City Community Image

Huntington Beach Voted Most Family-Friendly City in California

The beach community and Surf City culture are among the most cherished assets of Huntington Beach for locals and visitors alike. The beach, surfing, and related activities endure as part of the community's image and identity. The City and community organizations partner to preserve historic and cultural resources related to that identity, such as older neighborhoods and historic Downtown buildings. Surf City events and community art are promoted throughout the community to retain Huntington Beach's unique feel and culture.

"A celebration of the surfing, outdoor lifestyle."

"I like the small-town feel of Huntington Beach."



Public Safety

Huntington Beach Celebrates Top-Notch Public Safety Ratings

The City promotes public safety as an important part of maintaining a high quality of life in Huntington Beach. Community members and visitors feel safe and secure living and playing here. The community is prepared for catastrophic events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and flooding.

Street lighting and design are enhanced in public areas, open spaces, and parks, and along streets and boulevards, improving the community's sense of safety. An increased police presence in some areas, particularly neighborhoods, Downtown, and the beach, leads to fewer incidents and safer community events.

"The residents of your neighborhood will know each other, and the exchange of information will increase community safety."



Redevelopment and Revitalization

Responsible Growth Is Accommodated to Maintain Community Character

Commercial corridors and older industrial areas are revitalized to support economic development. Downtown is thriving and safe, and successful infill projects enhance our community. A cautious and thoughtful approach has avoided land use conflicts and balanced the need for growth with the desire to maintain the community scale enjoyed by residents.

A diverse array of housing types, with a mix of densities, is available to provide Huntington Beach residents with a full range of housing opportunities. The housing supply matches diverse population and workforce needs, supporting the city's economic base.

Mobility and Access

Biking, Walking, and Transit Use Rates Reach All-Time Highs

Bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users are a priority on roadways, and it is easy and pleasant to reach goods and services, as well as parks and recreation resources, by bike or on foot. High-traffic corridors are retrofitted to better connect cyclists and walkers, and to support use of alternative fuel vehicles. Downtown streetscape improvements enhance the pedestrian experience, create additional community gathering places, and provide valuable space for events.

Community members and visitors do not experience traffic congestion along high-traffic corridors. Expanded regional transit connections provide links between the beach and the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC), resulting in improved access and mobility for residents and visitors, reduced traffic congestion, and accessible parking in the community.



Resource Conservation

Blue Ocean Meets Green City

Huntington Beach is a regional leader in sustainability, taking steps to conserve and protect natural resources within the community. The beach and wetland areas are protected and valued by residents and visitors. Water is a valued resource that the community conserves while also seeking additional and alternative sources. The community has shifted to renewable energy resources and conservation practices. Support for local businesses to develop new technologies leads to the use of these technologies to support further conservation and sustainability.

Continued relationships with and support for nonprofit organizations promote natural resource protection and enhance community pride in our clean, healthy, and vibrant resources. Efficient land use patterns and resilient design strategies minimize exposure to natural hazards, including rising sea levels.



Resident Services

City Reaches Every Resident Through Expanded Community Services and Programs

Community and social services are updated and expanded to meet the needs of all community members, including youth and seniors. Through efforts to collaborate with local schools, community-based organizations, and City departments, these community services are accessible and open to all residents.

Youth in the community have access to the same caliber of education or extracurricular programs as adults. Young adults find a range of employment, continuing education, and entertainment options in the community. Senior and elderly residents benefit from additional and accessible social services meeting their needs, and the senior center successfully provides a venue and forum for seniors to access services.



“Community that provides housing, economic opportunities, cultural, and recreational options to young families as well as seniors.”

Culture and Arts

Cultural Opportunities Abound

New venues for arts, entertainment, and cultural activities elevate our reputation as a regional hub for culture and the arts. The expansion of cultural activities and events serves an important role in promoting the efforts of local artists, providing educational opportunities for our community's youth, and diversifying the activities and amenities available to visitors.

Huntington Beach will continue to recognize and appreciate its history and cultural heritage by supporting programs, activities, and facilities that celebrate our heritage.



General Plan Elements

The General Plan provides direction regarding many different development and conservation topics, organized by elements. These elements address all state-mandated topics plus additional topics of local importance. The plan format combines related topics in a concise, easy-to-read format that describes how the City will achieve the Community Vision in a manner consistent with the guiding principles.

The **Land Use Element** guides future development and designates appropriate locations for different land uses including open spaces, parks, residences, commercial uses, industry, schools, and other public and community-serving uses. The Land Use Element establishes standards for residential density and nonresidential building intensity for lands within the planning area. The element also establishes the City's long-term community design and economic development goals related to beach city culture and identity, community form, neighborhoods and districts, economic trends, and job development and retention strategies.

The **Circulation Element** defines the transportation network and describes how people move throughout the planning area, including the streets, railways, transit routes, bicycle paths, and sidewalks. The transportation network is a major determinant of development form and land use. Factors such as, but not limited to, traffic patterns and congestion, access to transit, and ease and safety of walking and biking may determine where people choose to live, work, and visit.

The **Environmental Resources and Conservation Element** describes the conservation, development, and use of natural resources (including open space), as well as parks and recreation opportunities, in Huntington Beach. This element also addresses key issues related to environmental resources and conservation, including biological resource areas, energy and water conservation, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and coastal resources.

The **Natural and Environmental Hazards Element** identifies areas prone to natural hazards and potentially hazardous conditions including ground shaking and surface rupture from earthquakes; ground failure; tsunami, seiche, and dam failure; slope instability leading to mudslides and landslides; subsidence, liquefaction, and other geologic hazards; flooding; urban fires; hazardous materials; and evacuation routes.

The **Noise Element** describes the existing noise environment in Huntington Beach, identifies noise sources and problems affecting community safety and comfort, and establishes policies and programs that limit community exposure to excessive noise levels. The Noise Element sets standards for acceptable noise levels by various land uses



and provides guidance for how to balance the noise created by an active and economically healthy community with the community's desire for peace and quiet.

The **Public Services and Infrastructure Element** describes the water delivery system, wastewater collection and treatment system, stormwater and urban runoff, solid waste disposal, electricity, communications, and infrastructure finance. This element also identifies plans for preparing for health and safety hazards, including police protection, fire protection, marine safety, emergency response and preparedness, and airport safety.

The **Historic and Cultural Resources Element** identifies important local cultural, archaeological, and historic resources and establishes goals, policies, and actions for the protection and preservation of those resources.

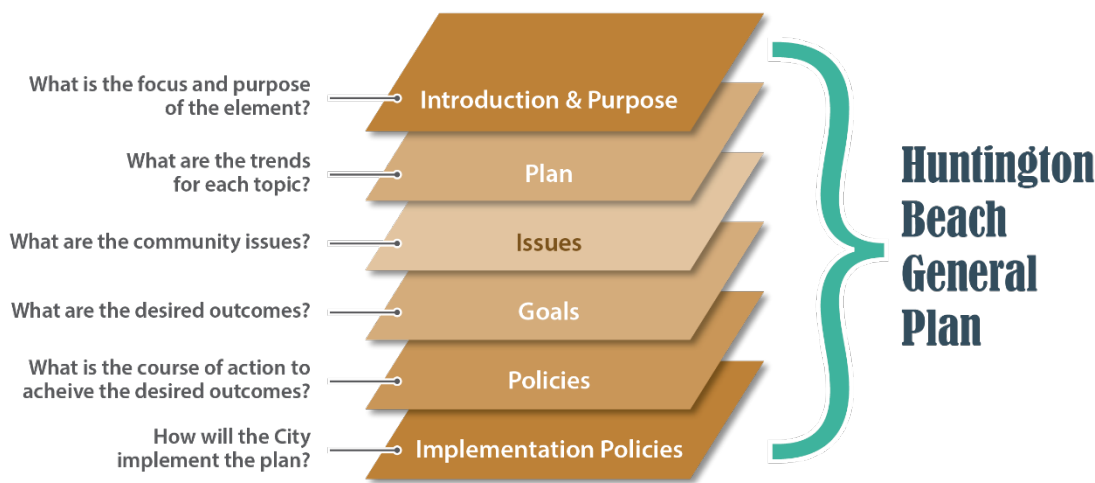
The **Housing Element** serves as a policy guide to address community housing needs. The element outlines the housing needs of the community, the barriers or constraints to providing that housing, and actions proposed to address these housing-related concerns pursuant to state housing element law (Government Code Section 65584).

The **Coastal Element** addresses the requirements of the California Coastal Act within the portions of Huntington Beach located in the coastal zone. Goals and policies in this element guide civic decisions regarding growth, development, enhancement, and preservation of coastal resources. The Coastal Element is part of the City's Local Coastal Program.

Measure M, approved by Orange County voters in 1990, requires all jurisdictions within the county to maintain a **Growth Management Plan** and a seven-year Capital Improvement Program. Measures M and M2, approved in 2006, raise the County's sales tax until 2041 to pay for specific voter-approved transportation projects. Local jurisdictions may receive tax monies for approved local projects if their Growth Management Plan and Capital Improvement Program conform to measure requirements. The City's Growth Management Plan is addressed by the Land Use and Public Services and Infrastructure Elements.



Plan Organization and Use



The *Introduction and Purpose* section of each element describes the purpose and scope of the element, and specifies the relationship of each element to other elements in the General Plan.

The *Plan* section provides important background information and key trends that provide a strategic basis for City policy. Many of the elements illustrate various opportunities, constraints, classifications, policies, and standards in either graphic or tabular form. For example, the Land Use Element contains a Land Use Map and a Land Use Plan that identify and describe the locations of future uses by type, density, and intensity.

The *Issues, Goals, and Policies* sections identify the most important community issues related to the element topic. For each issue, *goals* set direction by stating a desired future end state. *Policies* are guides for the City Council, Planning Commission, and City staff when reviewing development proposals and making other decisions that affect future development and conservation. Policies represent a commitment by the City to pursue a particular course of action, or to take action in the future consistent with the direction stated in the related goal. Policies are presented as written statements, tables, diagrams, and maps. All of these components must be considered together when making planning decisions.

Implementation Programs describe how the City will implement identified goals and policies. Unless otherwise stated, all policies are to be implemented on an as-appropriate or as-feasible basis, considering surrounding physical and environmental context and financial resources. These implementation programs are located in Chapter VIII. Implementation.

The organization of this General Plan allows for users to identify the sections that interest them and quickly obtain a sense of the City's policies on those subjects. However, plan users should realize that the policies in various elements are interrelated and examine them collectively.