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SPON’s General Plan Advisory Committee Report

Talking Points

Train Decision Makers to Interact with the Public

- Trust in government is at an all-time low, and yet resident engagement is increasing.
- It appears that what decision makers perceive as frustration may really be a lack of municipal tools deployed to resolve community planning issues.
- Training opportunities, offered by the Public Policy Institute of Pepperdine, may help bridge the tool gap for staff and decision makers involved in developing a general plan.

Engage Residents in Goal Setting

- Newport’s goal should strive to become a “responsive government” that pays attention to the residents, businesses, and visitors (in that order).
- Engaging the residents in goal setting is essential to creating a shared outcome that aligns the community, business, and City’s interests—a view *everyone* can support.
- A good public process includes not only results in a cost effective, timely and goal-oriented process, but it also considers the City’s culture and history.
- When the State’s General Plan Guideline says “The GPG is a resource to help planners accomplish their respective community’s priorities and vision while meeting the larger state goals . . .”, SPON is confident that the emphasis is on “community”.

Respect and Uphold the General Plan

- Residents, businesses, developers, decision makers, and staff all use the General Plan as a tool for understanding what is in store for the community now and in the future.
- This “rule book” sets the stage for future development and change.
- Instead of following the General Plan, many developers request to change the plan, instead of changing the project.
- When too many modifications are proposed to the Plan or the Municipal Code it is indicative of two problems. First, adjustments are too easy and second, the vision is no longer upheld.



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Talking Points (cont'd)

Focus the General Plan on Areas of Change

- The development of the new General Plan should focus on opportunity areas, leaving stable neighborhoods and commercial areas alone.
- The General Plan should focus only on anticipated areas of change instead of opening the entire plan.
- The City should prioritize its action plan in shorter increments (3-5 years) and have an accountability component to ensure those goals are met in that timeframe.

Meet State Mandates for General Plans

- The residents support updating the General Plan to meet new state mandates (environmental justice, sustainability, climate change, etc.).
- We support a forward thinking, innovative, and sustainable policy document.

Create an Accessible, Digital General Plan

- The next General Plan should be accessible, easy to access online (and on a variety of devices), and easy to implement.

Incorporate Data-Driven Technologies

- We also believe data-driven technologies should be incorporated to promote accountability, transparency, and empowerment. The goal should be to make Newport Beach a “Smart City.”

Expand the Existing Open Data Portal

- The City has an open Data Portal, but it is missing information the residents would like to see.
- Residents would like to have a short training video on how to use the portal, a time stamp of when information was updated for each project, and better project descriptions.

Keep the Community Informed

- Residents also would like to see new tools incorporated into the City’s process.
- These include a published checklist of steps for the planning process with each project included and its status; a list of all the development agreements and their implementation status; a list of the variances requested and/or provided to an applicant; real time baseline data; and ensuring all the City’s policies are in line with each other and the community’s vision.