



2025 General Plan Annual Progress Report

Presentation to City Council March 17, 2026

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INTRODUCTION

Government Code Section 65400 requires the City to annually prepare a report, the General Plan Annual Progress Report (GP APR), regarding the status of the City's General Plan (GP) and progress in its implementation, and provide the GP APR to the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The GP APR provides for the annual review of the General Plan to assess the level of implementation and effectiveness of the General Plan as a guide for orderly growth and development, preservation and conservation of open-space land and natural resources, and the efficient expenditure of public funds. The GP APR also provides information regarding the City's progress in meeting its share of regional housing needs (RHNA).

The General Plan is the City's official policy that guides decisions affecting future physical development and change within the City. The current General Plan was originally adopted on June 7, 2011, but most elements were updated in 2023 and 2024 as part of the Focused General Plan Update. There are seven State-required elements within the General Plan: **Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Safety, Noise, Open Space, and Conservation**. An **Environmental Justice** Element is also required for most jurisdictions, including National City. Currently, the City's General Plan is organized as follows:

- **Conservation** and Sustainability Element
- Education and Community Participation Element (optional)
- Health and **Environmental Justice** Element
- **Housing** Element
- **Land Use** Element
- **Noise** and Nuisance Element
- **Open Space** and Agriculture Element
- **Safety** Element
- Transportation Element (**Circulation**)

Additional guiding documents include the Bicycle Master Plan, Climate Action Plan, Downtown Specific Plan, and Westside Specific Plan.

As of 2025 the City of National City has completed both a Focused General Plan Update and Climate Action Plan Update. The updated elements include: Land Use, Transportation (Circulation), Safety, and Housing. The remaining elements were last updated in 2011. Referenced General Plan documents can be accessed at <https://www.nationalcityca.gov/government/community->

[development/planning/general-plan](#). It is anticipated that the next General Plan update will be the Housing Element, which will be due in 2029 to coincide with the 7th cycle planning period.

Starting in 2017 and continuing to date, the passage of numerous housing bills has impacted planning priorities placing a significant emphasis on addressing the housing shortage by amending state law to facilitate and incentivize the development of dwelling units to increase the housing supply throughout the state. The City has prioritized the facilitation of increasing the City's housing stock by drafting and adopting ordinances to meet state requirements and by updating the Housing Element. The 2021 – 2029 Sixth Cycle Housing Element (part of the ongoing Focused General Plan Update) was adopted by the City Council on August 3, 2022 and certified by the California Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department on November 10, 2022.

GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Conservation and Sustainability Element. The City adopted an updated Climate Action Plan (CAP) on March 19, 2024, as part of its Focused General Plan Update. The CAP includes more current information on the policy and regulatory framework related to air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the updated plan provides a robust update to the City's emissions inventory to help guide reduction efforts. Key strategies in the CAP include a reduction framework based on sectors, encouraging efficient transportation systems and land uses patterns, increasing efficiencies in residential and commercial buildings, increasing renewable energy production, improving solid waste efficiency, reducing energy use in water and wastewater management, and a summary of target reductions for each strategy. A follow up Implementation Plan has also been produced (February 2026).

Since 2011, the City has encouraged energy efficiency by collaborating with the City of Chula Vista and South Bay Energy Action Collaborative in offering a Free Resource & Energy Business Evaluation (FREBE) Program. The FREBE Programs require businesses in the city to perform on-site energy and water audits in order for buildings to be as efficient as possible. In addition, the City adopted several Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs to help homeowners save energy and water.

The Focused General Plan Update project also included a new Bicycle Master Plan. This newly-adopted plan will help to support ongoing implementation of bicycle corridor improvements and supportive infrastructure such as bicycle parking. It could also help attract additional funding opportunities through available grants. In addition, the City fostered land use intensity near, along with connectivity to, retail and employment

centers and services to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by implementing amendments to the zoning map and adding a new mixed-use overlay.

Education and Community Participation Element. The City library has several programs that meet the needs of all residents, including adult literacy, access to technology (computer lab, computer classes, 3D printing), and distance learning, and high school diploma programs.

Health and Environmental Justice. The City was the first in California to adopt a Health and Environmental Justice Element in 2011. Since that time, the City has encouraged policies and communication related to the goals in the element, including participation in the Portside Community Emission Reduction Program (CERP), as well as garnering participation in land use decisions such as the Transit Oriented Development Overlay (TODO) Plan and the Focused General Plan Update.

In 2025, the City adopted a Tobacco Retail Ordinance that created new rules effecting all tobacco sales, location restrictions for new retailers, updated penalties for violations, and revised procedures for compliance inspections. This new ordinance is intended to ensure retailers are in compliance with the rules and regulations pertaining to tobacco and protect youth from being able to purchase such products illegally.

The City has also embarked on a series of recreation improvement projects in City parks, as well as adding Paradise Creek Park, which has implemented access to safe and accessible physical activities to meet the needs of all segments of the community. The next major project is an expansion of Pepper Park, which will provide greater access to the City's waterfront for residents. The expansion project is being planned by the Port of San Diego.

Another goal of the Health and Environmental Justice Element is convenient and accessible health services that meet the needs of the community. In 2022, the City approved a new PACE (Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) clinic that is currently completing construction.

Housing Element. The 2021 – 2029 Sixth Cycle Housing Element was adopted by the City Council on August 3, 2021 and certified by the California Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department on November 10, 2021.

5,437 units were identified as National City's 2021-2029 Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) target. In calendar year 2025, 51 units were issued building

permits in National City. This brings National City’s cumulative Sixth Cycle RHNA total up to 756, leaving 4,681 remaining of the target.

Income Level		RHNA Allocation by Income Level	Projection Period - 06/30/2020-04/29/2021	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total Units to Date
Very Low	Deed Restricted	645	0	1	33	0	57	0	91
	Non-Deed Restricted		0	0	0	0	0	0	
Low	Deed Restricted	506	6	1	113	0	36	0	156
	Non-Deed Restricted		3	8	28	49	32	49	169
Moderate	Deed Restricted	711	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Non-Deed Restricted		0	0	0	0	0	0	
Above Moderate		3575	40	71	131	17	79	2	340
Total RHNA		5437							
Total Units			49	81	305	66	204	51	756

The 51 units identified by building permit data for 2025 include 49 accessory dwelling units and two single-family homes. In the same year, 234 units were completed, consisting of 193 multi-family units, 39 accessory dwelling units, and two single-family homes. A more detailed breakdown is included in the 2025 Housing Element Annual Progress Report, which will be submitted to HCD and OPR in March 2026.

The previous year was significant for National City as several planning documents and code amendments related to the Focused General Plan Update were implemented. Of note, a mixed-use overlay zone and a floor area density bonus program were added to the City’s Land Use Code. The Zoning Map was also amended to increase permitted densities in strategic areas of the City. A new project for 2025 was the “Own National City” program, which launched a request for proposals to construct new housing developments on City-owned land with an emphasis on home ownership. The City also has partnered with San Diego State University for support on brownfields, which includes assistance with Phase 1 Environmental Assessments.

In prior years, many of the affordable housing projects in National City were funded with redevelopment funds from the redevelopment agency that has since been abolished with the passage of AB 26 (effective in 2012). Many cities as a result, including National City, have fewer funding options to meet Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)



targets. Planning and Housing staff have identified non-restricted units, such as ADUs and SB 9 units, for potential inclusion when reporting in the future to provide more accurate data on the affordability of constructed units.

Land Use Element. The City's Land Use Element (previously Land Use and Community Character) was updated in early 2023. Supportive changes to the City's General Plan and Land Use Code were also implemented in 2024, such as amendments to the General Plan Land Use Map and Zoning Map. The City has also made significant progress planning for its Coastal Zone with the passage of an updated Local Coastal Plan (LCP) by City Council and certification by the California Coastal Commission in 2024. Funding was also secured for the completion of the Implementation Plan and a draft has been completed and expected to be finalized in 2026.

Several amendments to the City's General Plan and Land Use Code were completed in 2025. The City approved a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change for properties near the intersection of East 16th Street and Harbison Avenue. The change will allow for the construction of a small multi-family apartment building and reduce the number of non-conforming structures in the area. The City also created a new Lot Tie Ordinance to provide an additional development remedy. The City also increased the number of stories that are permitted in the MXC-1 and MXC-2 zones to allow for more flexibility in how sites are developed. Previously, the City had also modified its measurement of height to make it easier to develop on sloped lots. Finally, the City adopted a new Short-Term Rental Ordinance that will place new regulation on the operation of short-term rentals in National City. The primary reason for this new ordinance was to address nuisances related to existing properties. However, the licensing program could also help ensure that most housing units in the City are still available for renters.

Noise and Nuisance Element. Traffic is the most significant source of noise in National City. I-5, I-805, and SR-54 are the most prevalent sources of traffic noise and affect distant land uses. Major arterials, including National City Boulevard, Highland Avenue, Euclid Avenue, Division Street, Plaza Boulevard, Civic Center Drive, 18th Street, Bay Marina Drive/Mile of Cars Way, and 30th Street/Sweetwater Road are the most significant noise sources for land uses immediately adjoining these roadways. There are also several noise-generating land uses west of I-5 including Naval Base San Diego, industrial manufacturing, commercial, and institutional uses. Noise generating activities throughout this portion of the city include heavy flow of trucks, industrial equipment, and operations at the Naval base.

The City continues to encourage the enforcement of State and City noise standards for trucks, cars, and motorcycles through coordination with the California Highway Patrol and National City Police Department. The City has also continued to enforce Title 24 of the California Building Code, which contains required noise insulation standards in building design and construction to reduce noise generated by non-transportation sources.

Open Space and Agriculture Element. Approximately five percent of the planning area of National City is dedicated to open space, parks, and agricultural uses. Only 2.3 percent of land within the planning area remains vacant. Due to the highly developed nature of the community, the City faces significant challenges in the provision of additional open space and recreational facilities. Despite a lack of vacant land, opportunities exist within the urban fabric of the community to provide new recreational and open space areas. Possible solutions include: rooftop gardens; closing or converting a limited number of redundant streets for the purpose of creating mini parks, community gardens, and plazas; incorporating trail systems into utility corridors; turning vacant parcels into parks or community gardens; and the enhancement of public street rights-of-way for use as open space.

Since the General Plan was adopted in 2011, the City has worked with local nonprofits to implement the production of pocket farms in the city. While work is still ongoing, the City has constructed one new city park – Paradise Creek Park – which is approximately four acres in size and opened in 2022. The City is also funding improvements at El Toyon Park as part of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Capital Improvement Program. In 2025, the Port of San Diego also began construction on improvements for Pepper Park. This park will also be expanded in the near future to provide residents more access to the City's waterfront.

Safety Element. This element was updated in 2023 as part of the Focused General Plan Update project. The purpose of this element is to protect the community from risks of injury, loss of life and property, and environmental damage associated with natural and manmade hazards such as wildfires, geologic and seismic hazards, flooding, hazardous materials, military installations, and brownfields. This element also includes recent data on identified risks and hazards within the jurisdiction as well as new goals and policies related to climate adaptation.

Transportation (Circulation) Element. This element was updated in 2024 as part of the Focused General Plan Update project. The purpose of this element is to plan for the movement of people and goods and identify the general location and extent of existing and proposed major roadways, transportation routes, terminals, air and water ports, and

pedestrian and bikeway facilities. National City’s dense and compact urban form makes it highly adaptable for mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development and the incorporation of multi-modal transportation options. Renaming this element in the City’s General Plan acknowledges the need to have more comprehensive transportation polices to keep up with the changing needs of the City. Key concepts from the updated element include “10-minute” neighborhoods, economic development, safety and resilience, and new mobility and emerging technology. The City also adopted a new Bicycle Master Plan in 2024.

COMPLIANCE WITH OPR GUIDELINES

The updated 2017 General Plan Guidelines provides local jurisdictions with guidance on addressing new issues such as environmental justice considerations, climate change/sea level rise impacts, collaborative planning with the military lands and facilities, and consultation with Native American tribes. The current 2011 GP is out of compliance with the 2017 General Plan Guidelines with regard to Land Use, Circulation, and Safety, which is the reason for undertaking the current Focused General Plan Update effort. The City has coordinated with environmental justice organizations, Navy Region Southwest, and Native American tribes as part of the stakeholder outreach process for the Focused General Plan Update. In addition, the City routinely coordinates with the California Native American Heritage Commission on CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) matters, as required by AB 52 and SB 18 (Tribal Consultation).

PLANNING PRIORITIES

The Focused General Plan Update has established a new set of goals and priorities for the City. It is important for City leaders and staff to utilize these updates to better prioritize future projects. One of the programs the City is working on implementing is House National City, which will develop new floor area ratio (FAR) opt-in regulations that will create new homes for the community in areas zoned for multi-family and mixed-use. Additionally, it will provide new affordable homes near bus and trolley stops, known as Transit Priority Areas, generating community benefits that will uplift the quality of life for all residents.

PLANNING PROPOSALS

Goals, policies, objectives, standards or other plan proposals that need to be amended include the City’s Local Coastal Program (LCP), last updated in 1998. The Local Coastal Program Update, which began in Spring of 2023, is proposed in three phases: Reflect recent changes on National City Marine Terminal/Port lands (Port of San Diego) with regard to boundaries and uses (National City Balanced Plan), amend Land Use and Implementation Plan components to reflect the current General Plan and Zoning

Ordinance (\$100,000 in grant funding has been provided by the California Coastal Commission), and a comprehensive Local Coastal Program Update (future action).

Of the two documents contained in the LCP, the Land Use Plan has been updated and approved by the Coastal Commission, The Implementation Plan has been updated and is currently being reviewed by the Coastal Commission. Approval is expected in summer 2026.

OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Major Developments. Among the major developments, Union Tower is under construction and expected to be ready for occupancy in 2026. This is a 100% affordable residential project that includes 94 units across four buildings. The project also includes wraparound services for residents such as assistance for Veterans. A 48-unit, market rate apartment complex was also completed on East 8th Street on land that was recently rezoned as part of the Focused General Plan Update project.

Intergovernmental Coordination. The City has collaborated with the Unified Port District of San Diego on the National City Balanced Plan, a plan to rebalance land uses for the National City Bayfront. The City has also coordinated with the US Navy, the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority, and San Diego County Tribal agencies as part of the ongoing Focused General Plan Update and other significant developments.

Infill development, reuse, and redevelopment. National City is a built-out city and any new development is basically infill and redevelopment. Although redevelopment funds through AB 26 were lost, commercial redevelopment and affordable housing projects continue to be proposed, particularly in conjunction with GC 65915 (Density Bonus).

Environmental Resource Protection. The northern extent of the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge is located in National City west of Interstate 5 (I-5) and north of Sweetwater River. Established to protect endangered and threatened species, the Refuge encompasses approximately 2,620 acres of land and water in and around San Diego Bay, including the cities of National City, Chula Vista, San Diego, Imperial Beach, and Coronado. There is also the Bannister Marsh, an upstream tributary to Sweetwater Marsh east of I-5, as well as Paradise Creek which is located near 18th Street, 22nd Street, and Hoover Avenue. These areas are protected by policies in our Local Coastal Plan (Bannister Marsh) and the Westside Specific Plan (Paradise Creek). With the exception of these protected natural open space areas, the City is almost completely urban in nature, with little in the way of emergent wetlands or riverine areas. As such, City staff promotes resource protection through General Plan policy (Open Space and Agriculture Element and Conservation and Sustainability Element).

Economic development. The City has an adopted Economic Development Strategic Plan (2017-2022). The goals of the Strategic Plan are to collaborate and communicate, support business, promote vibrant neighborhoods, support employment and increase city revenues. These goals are created in support of the City's existing strategic goals and specific plans. The purpose of expanding the City's goals is to create a plan that is specifically tailored to driving economic development. The Economic Development Strategic Plan includes an overview of market research, historical data and the strategic steps necessary to meet our goals.

Under Goal C3. Tourism Promotion in the Strategic Plan, areas of Focus include Hotel Attraction, which entails promoting the expansion of Pepper Park (Port of San Diego) and the Marina District to attract hotel developers. Existing city parcels available for hotel development include approximately two acres of land near Westfield Plaza Bonita, Bay Marina Drive north of the Marina District, and 32nd Street and Marina Dr. near Pepper Park in the Marina District. The soon-to-be-adopted National City Balanced Plan (Port of San Diego) and related Local Coastal Program updates include goals and implementation strategies to further this Economic Development Strategic Plan goal.

Monitoring long-term growth. Since National City is a built-out community, there is limited vacant land available for large scale development, excepting the two acres mentioned above.

Grants administration. In addition to the LCP update that is funded by a \$100,000 LCP grant from the Coastal Commission, notable City Capital Improvement projects currently under construction or in planning include:

8th Street Mobility Hub for FRANCO NEV Shuttles (CIP 22-15)

- \$500,000 CALSTART CMO Voucher Program grant

El Toyon Park Improvements (CIP 22-26)

- \$5,632,600 Prop 68 grant