

PLAN Hermosa Frequently Asked Questions

1. Planning Documents

What is a General Plan?

Every city and county in California must have a General Plan. California State law requires each city and county to adopt and regularly update the General Plan to guide “the physical development of the city and any land outside its boundaries that bears relation to its planning.” Typically, a General Plan considers and addresses the current and future issues facing the community over the next 15 to 25 years. Most communities update their general plan every 10 to 15 years.

A General Plan is the local government’s blueprint for how we use and manage our physical, social, and economic resources. The General Plan represents the community’s vision for the future and expresses the land use and development goals and policies needed to achieve that vision.



What is a Local Coastal Program?

The California Coastal Act of 1976 was approved by voter initiative to “ensure maximum public access to the coast and public recreation areas”. Roughly half of Hermosa Beach lies within the Coastal Zone designated under the Coastal Act and therefore the City is required to prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP). Development within the Coastal Zone requires a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) any time a project proposes to change the density or intensity of use or impacts coastal access.

An LCP consists of a series of goals and policies that are contained within a Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP) and an Implementation Plan (IP) that contains more detailed standards within the municipal code that carry out the goals and policies. The LCP must be reviewed and certified by the Coastal Commission, at which point the Coastal Commission can authorize the City to issue CDPs.

Can the City combine the General Plan and Coastal Land Use Plan?

Yes. In fact, the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research recognizes that the contents of Coastal Land Use Plans overlap with some of the requirements of General Plans and recommends that "to simplify implementation, coastal zone communities should integrate both sets of requirements into a coherent and internally consistent local General Plan."

The benefits of an integrated document include:

- Simplified review of all relevant policies, standards, and maps
- Ease of implementation and interpretation among staff, property owners, and the public
- Strengthened internal consistency among documents

Why update the General Plan and Local Coastal Program?

The City's Planning Documents are not current.

The last major update to the General Plan and Coastal Land Use Plan occurred in 1979 – nearly 40 years ago. While conditions have changed, policies and action plans to guide the City's change and development have not been comprehensively updated. Additionally, new laws have passed that affect General Plans. These changes require a re-evaluation of the existing General Plan and CLUP and confirmation of the vision for Hermosa Beach.

This is an opportunity to build off of recent planning initiatives.

In recent years, the City has undertaken numerous initiatives to improve quality of life in Hermosa Beach, including initiatives related to livability, downtown revitalization, improved mobility, and sustainability and greenhouse gas reduction. Updating the General Plan and integrating the Local Coastal Program, as the Governor's Office of Planning and Research recommends, is an opportunity to comprehensively address these topics.

PLAN Hermosa expresses the vision for the future of Hermosa Beach.

Once adopted, the integrated PLAN Hermosa will ensure the City's plans, programs, and activities are consistent with and carry out the community vision. PLAN Hermosa will look ahead to the year 2040, so the update will bring policies and programs up to date, and look forward to the next 25 years.

What is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)?

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the potential environmental impacts of all major development projects, including policy documents such as a General Plan, must be evaluated. The results of this process are documented in the form of an environmental impact report (EIR). The EIR is not a policy document, rather a technical report that evaluates, discloses, and appropriately mitigates environmental impacts to the extent feasible.

As required by CEQA Guidelines, the EIR for PLAN Hermosa identifies the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan and the Coastal Land Use Plan. The topics evaluated in the EIR include:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services, Community Facilities, and Utilities
- Transportation

CEQA also requires the EIR to identify and evaluate potential Alternatives to the proposed project (in this case PLAN Hermosa) to attempt to mitigate some or all of the significant environmental impacts identified. One of the Alternatives must be a No Project Alternative.

If significant impacts cannot be avoided, and if alternatives cannot be feasibly implemented while still achieving project objectives, findings must be made that the social, economic, legal or technological benefits of the project outweigh the impacts in a Statement of Overriding Considerations. The City Council must review and consider the Final EIR for its adequacy in analyzing impacts and responding to public comments prior to a decision to approve, revise, or reject PLAN Hermosa.

2. PLAN Hermosa Update Process

How was the plan update funded?

The City has received two grants to support this update effort. In 2013, the City was awarded a grant of \$410,000 by the California Strategic Growth Council to comprehensively update the General Plan to emphasize sustainability and a low carbon future. In 2014, the City received an additional grant of \$100,000 from the California Coastal Commission to integrate the Local Coastal Program with the General Plan. These grants, along with the General Plan Maintenance Fee paid as part of planning and building permits have helped the City to cover additional resources and expertise needed to take on the update effort.



How has the community been engaged in the process?

The community engagement process kicked off in July 2013 with a Summer Celebration event at the Community Center. Since that time, the community has participated in a three-part educational series, four community workshops/walking tours, and more than two-dozen study sessions and public hearings in front of the Planning Commission, City Council, Emergency

Preparedness Advisory Commission, Public Works Commission, and Parks and Recreation Commission. City staff participated in meetings, presentations, and activities to the local Kiwanis Club, Leadership Hermosa Beach, Beach Cities Health District Livability Committee,

Additionally, the City formed a community working group made up of residents, business owners, local architects, and commissioners that met over a dozen times over the course of two years.

When will PLAN Hermosa be completed?

The Planning Commission recently completed their review and recommended revisions to PLAN Hermosa. The City Council will now begin their review of the Planning Commission's recommendations and provide input and direction on PLAN Hermosa prior to taking formal action. It is anticipated that the City Council will take action by Summer 2017.

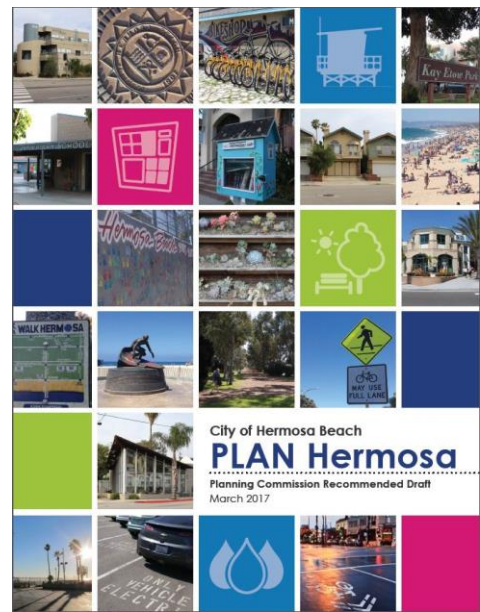
Following City Council Adoption, PLAN Hermosa will be submitted to the California Coastal Commission for review and certification. The City will then begin the implementation process, which includes updates to the municipal code and zoning ordinance.

3. Topics Covered in PLAN Hermosa

What topics are covered in PLAN Hermosa?

General Plan Topics

State law requires the following topics to be addressed: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. State law also allows local governments to organize and format their general plans however they desire, as long as the required topics or elements are addressed. The required Housing Element was updated and adopted separately in 2013. PLAN Hermosa proposes to meet State General Plan requirements and locally important topics with the following elements:



- **Community Governance**, describing the City's approach to decision-making, community participation, representation, and collaboration;
- **Land Use + Design**, describing the general distribution and location of land uses, standards of population density and building intensity;
- **Mobility**, describing the general location and extent of existing and proposed thoroughfares and transportation routes, correlated with the land use element;
- **Sustainability + Conservation**, describing the policies for greenhouse gas reduction and the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources;
- **Parks + Open Space**, identifying areas intended to preserve natural resources, serve outdoor recreational needs, and demand/opportunity for recreational trails;

- **Public Safety (includes Noise)**, for the protection of the community from seismic hazards, flooding, and other risks and analyzing current and projected noise levels from vehicles and stationary sources, providing noise contour maps for these sources, and discussing possible solutions to address noise problems; and
- **Infrastructure**, describing policies to modernize, integrate, and maintain the City's infrastructure systems.

State law also requires that the General Plan be internally consistent. This means that policies in one chapter or element of the Plan may not conflict with policies in another chapter or element. This is important, for example, when planning where future land uses will go and what types of infrastructure and services will be needed to serve those uses.

Coastal Land Use Plan Topics

The California Coastal Act also prescribes specific topics that must be covered in the Local Coastal Program. PLAN Hermosa integrates the following Coastal Act topics, as they are applicable to Hermosa Beach throughout the document:

- **Public Access**, containing policies regarding recreational opportunities, development projects, public facilities and lower cost visitor and recreational facilities;
- **Recreation**, including protection of certain water-oriented activities, protection of oceanfront land for recreational use, and priority of development purposes;
- **Marine Environment**, containing policies regarding water quality, hazardous substance spills, movement of sediment, construction altering natural shoreline, water supply and flood control;
- **Land Resources**, including environmentally sensitive habitat areas, productivity of soils, and archaeological or paleontological resources;
- **Development**, containing policies regarding existing developed area, scenic and visual qualities, maintenance and enhancement of public access, minimization of adverse impacts, public works facilities, and priority of coastal-dependent developments; and
- **Industrial Development**, including location or expansion of coastal-dependent industrial facilities, and renewable energy development.

The coastal topics are noted in PLAN Hermosa with a blue icon of a lifeguard tower.



What goals has the State of California set for reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions?

Over the last decade, the State of California has enacted a number of laws to further facilitate conservation and sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions reductions. These recent legislative changes are adopted or incorporated into local policy (for example, recycling programs, or building codes) or provide incentives to residents and businesses locally (solar rebates or credits for electric vehicles).

The State's goals associated with greenhouse gas reductions are as follows:

- 2020 - Assembly Bill 32 set a goal to reduce statewide emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 (roughly equivalent to a 15% reduction from 2005 levels)
- 2030 - Senate Bill 32 set a goal to reduce statewide emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 (roughly equivalent to a 49% reduction from 2005 levels)
- 2050 - Executive Order S-3-05 set a goal to reduce statewide emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 (roughly equivalent to a 83% reduction from 2005 levels)

The 2050 goal, signed by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2005, is based on the scientific consensus of the emissions reductions needed globally to limit average global temperatures to a 2 degree Celsius increase and the 2020 and 2030 goals are incremental steps to reach that long term goal.

Why does PLAN Hermosa discuss Sustainability, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Carbon Neutrality?

State law requires all General Plans to contain a conservation element to address the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources. Natural resources identified by statute include waters, forests, soils, wildlife, minerals, and other energy resources.

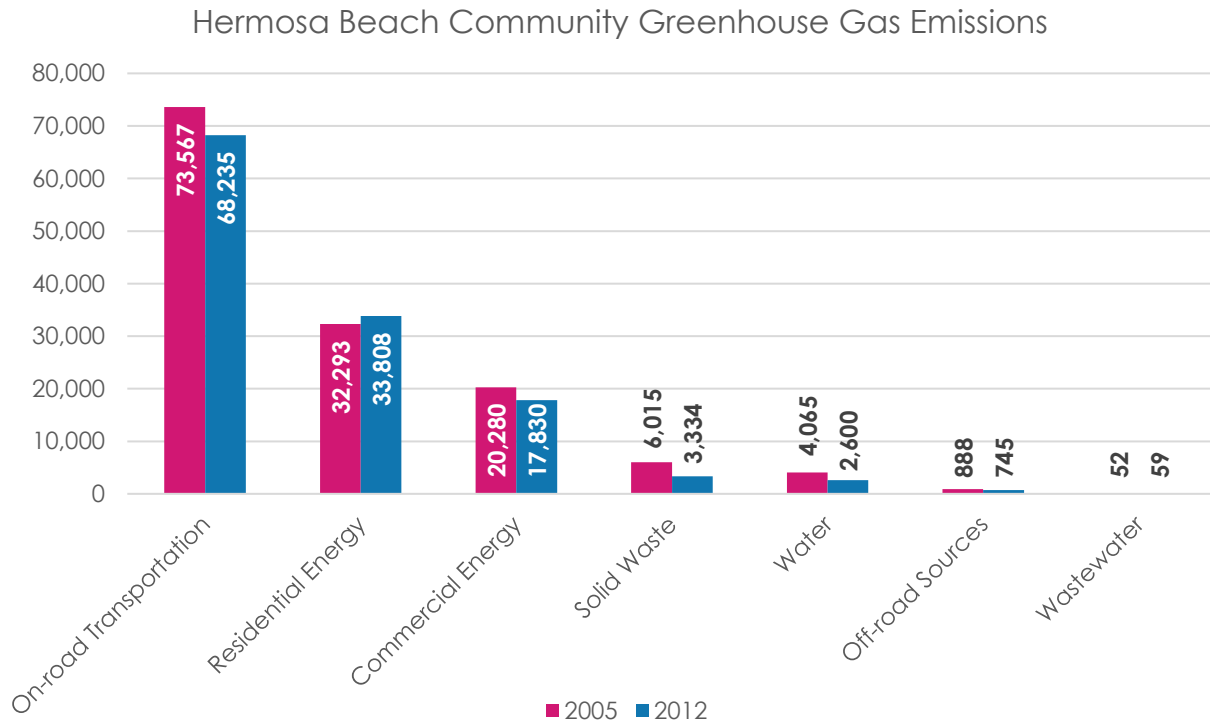
Hermosa Beach is further required to address the topic of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by establishing greenhouse gas reduction goals and identifying methods to reduce emissions. Many jurisdictions address greenhouse gas emissions through climate action plans, GHG reduction plans, general plan updates, or the creation of local thresholds for evaluating projects through CEQA. PLAN Hermosa is an appropriate place to set greenhouse gas reduction targets, identify policies and programs to facilitate the reduction of emissions, and set the stage for consistently evaluating progress toward meeting or exceeding greenhouse gas reduction targets for Hermosa Beach.

Carbon neutrality is a concept discussed by the City Council and the community since 2010. PLAN Hermosa is an opportunity to evaluate municipal and community-wide goals in more detail and identify the types of policies or programs needed to reach those goals. As part of the PLAN Hermosa process, the City prepared a quantitative analysis of the estimated reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and the relative costs/benefits of the various programs for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council. The evaluation in the PLAN Hermosa documents is the starting point for discussion, deliberation, and decision-making. The City Council will consider the recommendations of the Planning Commission and public input to determine the appropriate goals for Hermosa Beach.

What activities are included in Hermosa Beach's calculation of Greenhouse Gas Emissions?

The City of Hermosa Beach, through the South Bay Cities Council of Governments, has calculated and prepared an inventory and forecasts of the greenhouse gas emissions generated by community activities in Hermosa Beach using industry protocols and calculation methods. In 2005, Hermosa Beach generated approximately 137,160 metric tons of CO₂e (MTCO₂e), with on-road transportation generating 73,567 MTCO₂e or approximately 54 percent

of overall emissions. By 2012, the City had a reduction in emissions of 7.7 percent from the 2005 inventory, with emissions decreasing in most sectors. Between 2005 and 2012, the wastewater sector observed a small increase in emissions and the residential energy sector observed a five percent increase in emissions.

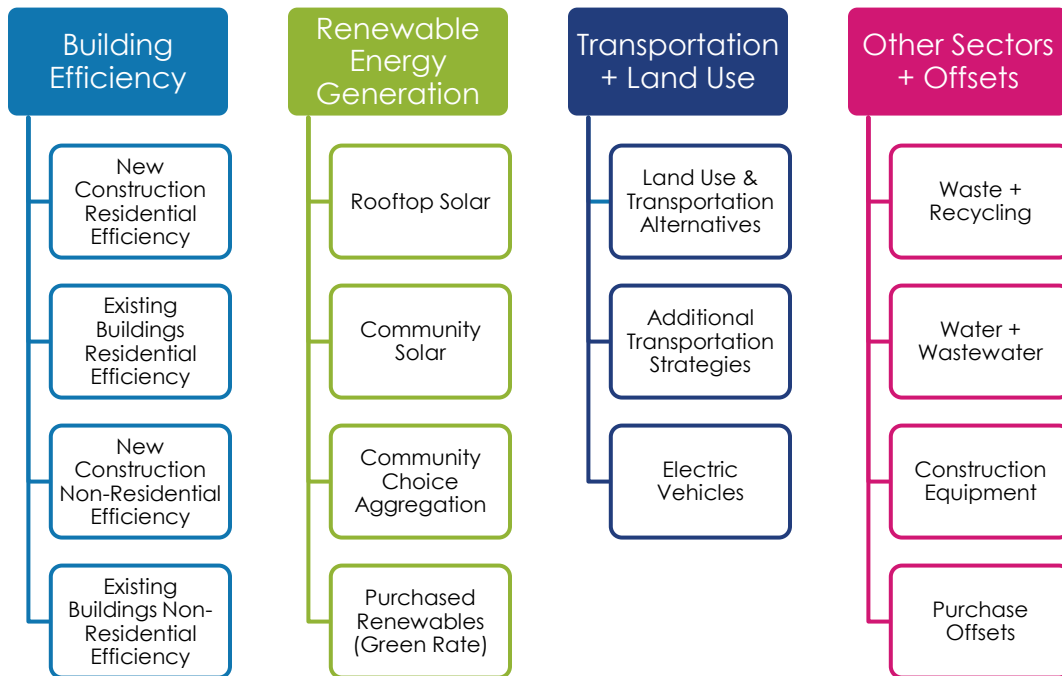


Transportation sector emissions are the result of gasoline and diesel combustion in vehicles traveling to, from, or within Hermosa Beach, but excludes emissions associated with vehicles that pass through Hermosa Beach without stopping (i.e. cars passing through on Pacific Coast Highway). Residential and commercial energy use contributes emissions from electricity generation and natural gas consumption by residences and commercial businesses within Hermosa Beach, while solid waste emissions are based on the amount of waste disposed in landfills, where it decomposes and generates methane. Finally, water and wastewater emissions are calculated by determining the energy needed to extract, transport, treat, and dispose of the water resources consumed by the community. Sources like outdoor barbeques or fireplaces are not included in the inventory of emissions.

The methodology calculating greenhouse gas emissions is explained in the GHG emissions inventory prepared by the South Bay Cities COG and is the standard method used in preparing GHG inventories across California.

What strategies have been proposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Hermosa Beach?

The Carbon Planning Tool, developed for the City of Hermosa Beach in 2015, provides a series of strategies that the community can employ to reduce GHG emissions. The tool is tailored to the emissions profile and physical conditions in Hermosa Beach, and is designed to estimate the effectiveness and relative costs/benefits of the various strategies based on assumptions related to level of participation or implementation over a certain time period. The range of potential strategies have been grouped into four categories, as noted in the image below. These strategies are supported by policies and implementation actions identified throughout PLAN Hermosa to facilitate increased production of renewable energy, encourage energy and water conservation, or make it easier to get around town safely and conveniently by walking, biking, or using transit.



Does PLAN Hermosa need to address Historic Resources?

Historic resources is not a required element of a General Plan, though many communities choose to address historic resources as part of the Land Use Element or as a stand-alone Historic Preservation Element. During the community outreach and visioning process for PLAN Hermosa, a considerable amount of input was received on the importance of preserving our small beach town character, and therefore historic resources have been addressed in the Land Use + Design Element. The City is further obligated to evaluate cultural resources as part of the Environmental Impact Report. The Planning Commission has recommended changes to PLAN Hermosa and the City's existing [Historic Preservation Ordinance](#) to make it clear that the City encourages the preservation and designation of private properties on a voluntary basis only.

4. Implementation Process

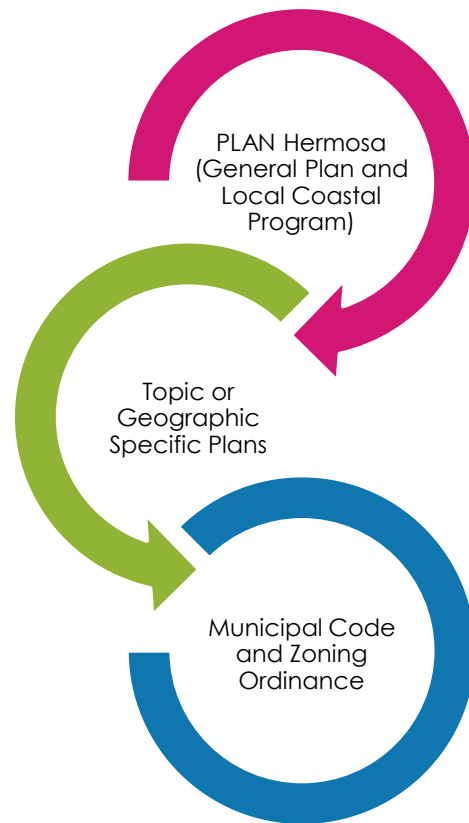
What is the difference between the General Plan, Other Plans, and the Municipal Code or Zoning Code?

PLAN Hermosa contains the goals and policies upon which the Planning Commission and City Council will base land use decisions, develop Capital Improvement Programs, create new plans and carry out updates to the municipal code or zoning ordinance. PLAN Hermosa, other plans, and the Municipal Code all differ in the level of detail they include. Development must not only meet the specific requirements of adopted plans and the Zoning Ordinance, but also be found to be consistent with the broader policies set forth in PLAN Hermosa.

PLAN Hermosa has a long-term outlook. It identifies the types of development that will be allowed, the spatial relationships among land uses, and the general pattern of future development. State law requires that all focused plans and zoning be consistent with diagrams and policies in the General Plan.

Other plans like the Downtown Core Revitalization Strategy or Sustainability Plan, may provide focused strategies to address a certain topic or geographic area, and must be consistent with the General Plan but do not carry the same weight of enforceability as the Municipal Code or Zoning Ordinance.

Finally, the Municipal Code and specifically the Zoning Ordinance implements General Plan and Coastal Land Use Plan policies through more detailed development standards, such as specific use types, building setbacks, and open space requirements.



How will PLAN Hermosa be implemented?

As the long-term blueprint for future physical development, any decision affecting land use and development must be consistent with PLAN Hermosa. It is the responsibility of the City to determine whether proposed land use projects are consistent with the General Plan. To assist in carrying out the vision of PLAN Hermosa, it is anticipated that the following efforts will be undertaken:

- Local Implementation Plan (Coastal Ordinances)
- Zoning Code Update
- Municipal Code Amendments
- Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines
- Additional Programs, Processes, and Physical Improvements

Amendments to the Municipal Code are required to be reviewed by the City Council and appropriate Advisory Commissions (i.e. Planning Commission or Parks and Recreation Commission) with opportunities for public comment prior to being adopted. To fully implement a General Plan and Coastal Land Use Plan various amendments to the Municipal Code typically take place over the course of several years.

The specific actions to be completed are identified in the PLAN Hermosa Implementation Actions documents, which is adopted separately from PLAN Hermosa, and functions like a to-do list for the City. Progress updates and recommendations to refine the implementation actions, and in some cases PLAN Hermosa, will be brought back to the Planning Commission and City Council on a regular basis to ensure the implementation actions are adequately carrying out PLAN Hermosa, and that PLAN Hermosa continues to reflect the vision and desired direction for the future of Hermosa Beach.

How will the City keep the community informed about new programs or progress toward implementing PLAN Hermosa?

PLAN Hermosa is a “living document” and the update is the first major step. Following adoption, the City will prepare annual reports to summarize PLAN Hermosa’s implementation progress and when appropriate, identify amendments for the Planning Commission and the City Council to consider for PLAN Hermosa to ensure that the document remains current and relevant.