

Introduction

Laguna Beach has many unique assets—the beach and ocean, hillsides and open space, the arts and festivals, distinctive neighborhoods, good schools and a vibrant Downtown. Perhaps, most of all, Laguna Beach is fortunate to have citizens who take pride in their City and work hard to preserve and enhance its unique character and quality of life.

At the same time, Laguna Beach faces many challenges as it enters the next century: substantial growth and development pressures from Orange County neighbors; increased infrastructure and service demand; water quality deterioration after storms and spills, and high housing costs. Laguna Beach also experiences the impact of tourists with varying needs depending on whether they stay for a few hours or for a few days. Each of these trends contributes to the challenge of guiding future decisions and actions.

To meet these challenges, the City initiated a strategic planning process based on establishing a shared vision



for the community. This vision will lead to an action plan—a blueprint—to direct and coordinate future planning, decisions and action for the next thirty years.

If, thirty years ago, we had embarked on a similar process to create a vision for 1970-2000, the Strategic Plan might have looked like this:

- Reduce zoning densities by half.
- Prevent the widening of Pacific Coast Highway and Laguna Canyon Road.
- Adopt height limitations for all new construction.
- Create permanent homes for the City's major art festivals.
- Purchase all of the oceanfront property in the City's Downtown, and construct a Main Beach Park.
- Purchase all the open space the City can afford and create a permanent greenbelt surrounding the City.
- Preserve the character of public buildings such as City Hall, the High School and the Water District offices.
- Underground or disguise major public facilities, such as water reservoirs or park buildings, that are constructed in the open space areas.
- Annex South Laguna, Old Top of the World, and portions of Laguna Canyon.
- Prohibit internally illuminated signs and pole signs in commercial areas.
- Construct a community-wide system of resident-serving parks and recreation facilities.
- Preserve the resident-serving character of the City's Downtown.

The above is what has been accomplished over the last 30 years. What is the plan for the next 30 years?

Project Work Plan

The overall work plan for the Strategic Planning and Visioning Project spans twelve months. The first several months will be devoted to creating the vision, while the remaining months will focus on creating the Strategic Plan. The viability of the Strategic Plan will

rest on how accurately it reflects the collective vision of what the citizens of Laguna Beach want for the next thirty years. Therefore, participation from every part of the community is imperative!

Between May and December 2000, the City will sponsor numerous opportunities for citizen involvement: celebrations, town hall meetings, and neighborhood workshops. The timeline (see Figure 1) shows how the various events fit together to provide each community member the opportunity to make his or her mark on Laguna Beach's future.

This booklet, "Laguna Beach At a Glance" is part of the process. It is a short compilation of information and trends that are relevant to future decision-making. At the Vision Fair and other community workshops, this booklet will serve as a helpful reference for discussing existing and future conditions and needs in Laguna Beach. This booklet also presents a series of issues and questions within each topic area to stimulate and focus discussion. This booklet is not intended to be comprehensive or detailed on all aspects of community life—for that we have provided a references list at the back. The booklet does not offer the answers. They will come from the community dialogue. But, it does provide a baseline of shared information—facts to build on and questions to consider.

Laguna Beach At a Glance is organized into five sections:

- History and Demographics
- The Economy
- The Physical Environment
- Community Facilities and Services
- Neighboring Communities



The booklet includes a preliminary list of available "indicators" such as crime rates, traffic statistics, per capita income and air quality to illustrate how Laguna Beach is doing in each of the five categories. Together these indicators measure community health and well-being. Other communities have invested substantial energy into developing more sophisticated indicators to assess community progress and compare services and qualities to other areas. Laguna Beach could consider this approach as one of its future strategies.

Other Recent Planning Efforts

In recent years, residents of Laguna Beach have undertaken a number of community-based projects focused on specific areas and interests within the City. Some of these planning efforts include:

- The Downtown Specific Plan Review
- The Village Entrance Master Plan
- The Diamond/Crestview Specific Plan
- The Implementation of the Open Space Initiative
- Treasure Island Reuse Plan

Each planning process involved grass-roots action and many volunteers, as well as support from City Hall.