

Introduction

Visioning is the process by which a community comes together to create a picture of the place it wants to be in the future. **Strategic Planning** is the process by which a community creates an action plan for making the vision a reality. A vision based on consensus captures the best of what the community believes about itself, what it sees as its greatest assets, and how it intends to care for and build upon those strengths. By doing so, the vision reflects the shared values of the community and how those values are to be expressed. In this way the vision explains where it is we want to go. The strategic plan is companion to the vision—it points the path for getting there.



In the past, Laguna Beach has enjoyed the luxury of relative isolation, protected from the rest of Orange and Los Angeles counties by beautiful ocean waters on one side and rolling hills and steep canyons on the other. These natural barriers and our own stubbornness to succumb to the dictates of regional suburbanism have helped avert the inevitable encroachments from neighboring communities—communities whose future growth pose serious potential to diminish the special quality and character of Laguna Beach. Over the last thirty years, we have accomplished things that other communities only dream of such as the creation of the Main Beach Park in the 1970's (our window to the sea) and the establishment of the Greenbelt in the 1980's (our buffer to the inland sprawl).

Today, however, the pace and scale of regional and global change threaten to overwhelm and reshape our community.

In response to this, the City of Laguna Beach has initiated this community-wide Visioning and Strategic Planning Project. The intention is to continue our tradition of taking our destiny into our own hands. To do this we need a vision and a plan for getting there.

The first phase of this project—the Visioning Phase—has been recently completed. It was designed to engage as large a portion of the community as possible in a dialogue about what we like most about Laguna Beach today, and what we would like it to be in thirty years. This phase spanned a period of six months. **Over 1,000 community members have already participated.**

The booklet you are now reading has three purposes. The first is to summarize the results of this Visioning Phase and present a concise compilation of the common thinking that has grown out of this extensive community outreach. Towards this end, it represents a concise summary of what the community has said are Laguna Beach's greatest assets, opportunities, and challenges.

The second purpose of this booklet is to identify the issues around which there appears to be substantial consensus, and synthesize them into a "Vision Framework"—a framework that, on one hand, expresses the "common vision" as articulated by the community, and on the other hand, provides a conceptual tool that we can use to organize our thoughts as we begin the next phase of the project—the Strategic Planning Phase. **This Vision Framework is shown graphically on the following two pages.** It organizes the "common vision" into six Vision Themes and related sub-themes. In Chapter



IV of this publication, this Vision Framework is considerably expanded into much greater detail and presented as a Strategic Planning Framework which includes not only the vision themes but also a complete list of the related issues and potential action steps which the community has identified to date.

The third and final purpose of this booklet is to encourage and provide the means for all community members—both veterans of the visioning process as well as newcomers to the project—to fully participate during the next, strategic planning phase.

THIS BOOKLET CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING FOUR CHAPTERS:

- Chapter I** A short overview of the Vision Process to date (page 7).
- Chapter II** A description of the Assets and Opportunities unique to Laguna Beach, as identified by the community, on which a vision can be built (page 9).
- Chapter III** A description of the most important Challenges, as identified by the community, and which face Laguna Beach as it looks to the future (page 13).
- Chapter IV** A presentation of a proposed Strategic Planning Framework which expresses the common vision and which provides an organizing tool for building the Strategic Plan (page 21).

Vision Framework



COMMUNITY CHARACTER

RESIDENT & VISITOR MOBILITY

People

Place

- Preserve the spirit and diversity that currently defines Laguna
- Provide high quality services and facilities to meet the needs of all residents
- Assure adequate services and facilities to accommodate an aging population and changing generational needs.
- Promote programs and services for children and youth including high quality recreational facilities
- Support world-class educational programs and facilities for the entire community

- Preserve the “small-town” and “village charm” that has traditionally defined Laguna
- Preserve the individual, unique, and historical character of Laguna’s residential and commercial neighborhoods
- Preserve the City’s identity as an “art colony” and as a “beach community”

- Relieve vehicular, pedestrian and parking congestion
- Encourage a pedestrian downtown with more limited vehicle access
- Provide a broader range of transportation alternatives
- Improve transit facilities and services
- Improve parking facilities and services.
- Develop better pedestrian and bicycle systems

SUB-THEMES



T H E M E 3



ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Restore and protect the City’s natural environment
- Preserve and expand the open space “greenbelt” system
- Preserve and protect the hillsides
- Preserve and protect the underwater “bluebelt” system
- Promote environmentally sustainable building and development patterns
- Provide public protection from natural disasters



T H E M E 4



ART & CULTURAL PRESERVATION

- Enhance and promote the City’s cultural identity as a home for the arts
- Preserve and encourage Laguna’s vitality as a community of artists
- Nourish Laguna’s cultural facilities and cultural programming



T H E M E 5



ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

- Maintain and promote a vibrant, intimate, resident-serving, pedestrian-friendly downtown
- Achieve appropriate balance between local residential and commercial interests and the interests of daytime and evening visitors as well as the interests of overnight tourists
- Encourage low impact and environmentally responsible commercial and industrial development



T H E M E 6



GOVERNANCE & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Promote greater community dialogue and civic engagement among the citizenry
- Improve, expand, and develop new governance models that are innovative, participatory, inclusive, and assure accountability
- Provide proactive response to the impact of regional growth, regional change, and external economic pressures
- Develop information technology that encourages citizen participation and fosters community networking
- Commit to creative, long-term thinking and continued support to the strategic planning process