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## INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PLAN

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Dana Point became an incorporated city on January 1, 1989. The City includes the original “Dana Point” named after Richard Henry Dana, and the surrounding coastal area, a total area of 6.5 square miles. The City lies in the southwest portion of Orange County and is part of the larger Southern California region, an area in which the population and economy have grown substantially over the past 40 years. Dana Point is a coastal city with a picturesque Pacific coastline extending almost seven miles from Laguna Beach on the north to San Clemente on the south. This interface between water and land is characterized by rugged coastal bluffs separated by two major freshwater drainages, San Juan Creek and Salt Creek, which empty into the Pacific Ocean.

Development in the Dana Point area began in the early 1900’s, but substantial development did not occur until the decades following World War II. Over time, that development created the three pre-incorporate communities of Dana Point, Capistrano Beach, and Monarch Beach. A 2,500-boat harbor with many water related facilities and a major State Park make the City a destination for many visitors.



## **THE FUTURE OF DANA POINT**

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The future of Dana Point, like that of all cities, will be the cumulative result of past and current decision making by those who have a local role in the development process, such as residents, property and business owners, elected officials and staff. In addition, Dana Point's future will be influenced by large-scale economic, social, and environmental events and trends. Participants who have a local role in the development process may have little control over large-scale forces, but can utilize the authority and resources they possess to create change in the physical development of the City over time, to create positive results are most likely to be achieved through concerted efforts to build upon those significant natural and man-made characteristics of the community which constitute fundamental strengths or opportunities commonly acknowledged by the local participants. These significant natural and man-made characteristics include Dana Point's natural physical form, its coastline as a unique area of interface between land and water, and the diversity of its man-made physical development.

### **Natural Physical Form**

The physical landform of Dana Point is characterized by nearly seven miles of Pacific Ocean coastline consisting of prominent coastal bluffs and rolling hills, separated by two major drainage basins, which flow into the ocean. Between these two basins is a unique apex of land, a promontory known as the "Headlands" which overlooks Dana Point Harbor, one of the most significant man-made alterations of the Orange County coastline. This consummate blend of the natural and man-made environment can be duplicated in very few places. The strong visual image created by this blend is a unifying element of physical form, easily recognized and remembered, having fundamental importance and value.

### **Coastline**

The coastline of Dana Point is an exceptional area where the interface between land and water can be experienced in different ways. With its combination of high coastal bluffs and coastal access where the San Juan and Salt Creek basins meet the ocean, both inhabitants and visitors to Dana Point have the opportunity to enjoy the coastline by viewing it from visual vantage points along the bluffs or further inland, or by utilizing community beaches and the

Harbor. Maintaining these different ways of experiencing the attractions offered by a beautiful coastline setting is fundamental in the establishment of an image of Dana Point's future.

### **Diversity of Development**

The pre-incorporation development of the Dana Point area as three communities – Dana Point, Capistrano Beach, and Monarch Beach – has created diversity in the physical development of the City. This has provided a certain eclectic quality characteristic of communities, which have developed over relatively long periods of time. The City's diversity is not simply a range of land use types, but is a rich collection of structures having different functions and exhibiting a variety of architectural styles and influences. This sense of diversity and variety is an important fundamental trait of present-day Dana Point, and is a source of interest and charm for inhabitants and visitors alike.

### **Future of Dana Point**

These three significant natural and man-made characteristics provide a commonly acknowledged basis for future development, growth, and sense of place. Together, they act as a foundation for the continuation of Dana Point as a successful community in the future – desirable, attractive, and functional, for those who live, work, or visit there.

## **PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN**

California State law requires each city and county to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for its own physical development. In essence, a city's general plan serves as the blueprint for future growth and development. As a blueprint for the future, the plan must contain policies and programs designed to provide decision makers with a solid basis for land use related decisions.

The general plan must address many issues which are directly related to and influence land use decisions. In addition to land use, State law requires that the plan address circulation, housing, the conservation of natural resources, the preservation of open space, the noise environment and the protection of public safety (Section 65302 of the California Government Code). These issues are to be

discussed to the extent that each applies to the particular jurisdiction. The general plan may also cover topics of special or unique interest to a city or county, such as urban design and economic development.

Adopted in 1976, the purpose of the California Coastal Act is to generally protect the natural and scenic qualities of the California Coastal Zone. Approximately one-half of the City's land area lies within the California Coastal Zone and is therefore, subject to requirements of the California Coastal Act (Division 20 of the Public Resources Code commencing with Section 30000). To meet these requirements, the City must have a California Coastal Commission certified Local Coastal Program (LCP) consisting of its "(a) land use plans, (b) zoning ordinances, (c) zoning district maps, and (d) within sensitive coastal resources area, other implementing actions, which, when taken together, meet the requirements of, and implement the provisions of policies of, this division at the local level." (Public Resources Code § 30108.6). Therefore, the portions of the City's General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Map and other implementing actions effectively certified by the Coastal Commission will constitute its LCP for that portion of the Coastal Zone within its jurisdiction. California Coastal Commission certification of the City's LCP allows the City to assume responsibility for administering coastal development permits in those areas of its coastal zone that are not on submerged lands, tide lands, public trust lands, or state universities or colleges. As a component of the City's LCP, the portions of the General Plan effectively certified by the Coastal Commission includes required coastal resources planning and management policies which are in conformance with and intended to carry out the Chapter Three policies of the California Coastal Act of 1976. These coastal resources planning and management policies shall be applied in a manner which is most protective of coastal resources and public access.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN**

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The City of Dana Point General Plan contains goals, policies and programs which are intended to guide land use and development decisions into the twenty-first century. The Plan consists of a Land Use Policy Map and the following nine elements, or chapters, which together fulfill the state requirements for a general plan. The nine

elements are: Land Use, Urban Design, Housing, Circulation, Noise, Public Safety, Conservation/Open Space, Economic Development, and Public Facilities/Growth Management. Table I-1 illustrates the relationship between the General Plan's nine elements and the seven state-mandated elements.

**TABLE I-1  
RELATIONSHIP OF DANA POINT GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS  
TO STATE-MANDATED ELEMENTS**

DANA POINT GENERAL PLAN ELEMENT	STATE-MANDATED GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS						OPTIONAL
	Land Use	Housing	Circulation	Noise	Public Safety	Conservation/ Open Space	
Land Use	*						
Urban Design							*
Housing		*					
Circulation			*				
Noise				*			
Public Safety					*		
Conservation/ Open Space						*	
Public Facilities/ Growth Management							*
Economic Development							*

**Approach to General Plan Organization**

The Dana Point General Plan consists of text and maps. The Plan provides direction for the City's growth and development. Several supporting documents completed during the preparation of the Plan, include the Master Environmental Assessment, various technical reports, the Traffic Analysis, Design Guidelines, the Implementation Plan and the General Plan Program Final Environmental Impact Report (Program FEIR). These documents provide substantial background information for the General Plan.

The Master Environmental Assessment (MEA), which describes the existing environmental setting in the City, serves as a reference document for future development which occurs within the City. The subject areas of the MEA follow the format prescribed by the California Environmental quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

The preparation of each general plan element was preceded by the preparation of a technical report. The technical reports identify issues and constraints (i.e., existing conditions, infrastructure constraints, funding considerations) which were used to guide the formulation of General Plan policy. The Traffic Analysis assesses traffic impacts of implementing the General Plan and the Design Guidelines provide criteria for design of residential and non-residential development.

The Implementation Plan identifies programs designed to achieve goals and policies contained in the General Plan. Because the Implementation Plan is not adopted as part of the General Plan, it may be amended annually or as required. In fact, the Implementation Plan should be reviewed and updated annually to help identify specific time frames, responsible parties, and specific measures to ensure that the General Plan policies are implemented.

The General Plan Program FEIR analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the policies and programs contained in the General Plan. The Program FEIR differs from the MEA in that it focuses upon the specific impacts of the General Plan policies, rather than the pre-General Plan environmental conditions of the City.

### **Element Organization**

Each of the nine General Plan elements is comprised of three sections – the Introduction, the Goals and Policies, and the Plan. The Introduction describes the purpose and focus of the element and also introduces other plans and programs outside of the General Plan which may be used to achieve specific General Plan goals.

The Goals and Policies section presents the City's long-term objectives for the subject area of each element. The goals and policies are arranged by issue of subject, and a brief description of philosophy or basis behind this objective precedes each group of goals and policies.

For general reference, goals and policies may be defined as follows:

**GOAL:** A goal is a broad statement of purpose and/or direction.

**Policy:** A policy describes a more definitive course of action supporting the achievement of a goal.

The third and final section of each element consists of the “plan,” or the further definition of programs to be used to implement General Plan policy. For example, the Land Use Element contains a “Land Use Plan” which indicates the types and intensities of land use permitted city-wide. The “Circulation Plan” in the Circulation Element includes a Master Circulation Plan showing streets and intersections to be improved and new infrastructure provided to meet the circulation needs of City residents and those employed in or visiting the City. As appropriate, each element contains maps, diagrams and tables to illustrate General Plan policy.

### **Local Coastal Program Components**

The certified Land Use Plan (“LUP”) policies, land use designations, and maps, diagrams, figures, tables and other graphics for all areas of the City of Dana Point’s coastal zone, excepting the uncertified Dana Strands area and the area covered by the existing certified Dana Point Specific Plan/Local Coastal Program, are contained in the Land Use, Urban Design, and Conservation/Open Space Elements of the General Plan. The policies, land use designations, and maps, diagrams, figures, tables and other graphics which apply specifically to Dana Point Harbor, Dana Point Headlands, Dana Point Town Center, and other geographic areas of the City which are covered by the existing Dana Point Specific Plan/Local Coastal Program are contained within the Dana Point Specific Plan/Local Coastal Program. These LUP policies, land use designations, and maps and other graphics contained in the Dana Point Specific Plan/Local Coastal Program remain in effect for local coastal program purposes for those specific geographic areas. The Certified LUP carries out the requirements of the California Coastal Act by including coastal resources planning and management policies described in Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act. Identification of the Chapter Three policies is provided by the inclusion of parenthetical references to the applicable section of the California Coastal Act. For example, a policy statement relating to coastal visual resources will be followed by the parenthetical reference (Coastal Act/30251) to indicate that the policy relates to or addresses scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas as required by Section 30251 of the California Coastal Act. The Land Use, Urban Design, and Conservation/Open Space Elements also each contain a

reference matrix identifying Coastal Act planning and management issue areas and the Chapter 3 Coastal Act policies applicable to that element.

No changes to the Certified LUP policies, land use designations, and maps, diagrams, tables, and other graphics of the Certified Land Use Plan shall be effective unless and until such changes are effectively certified by the Coastal Commission.

**TABLE I-2  
LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM REFERENCE MATRIX**

Coastal Resources Planning and Management Issue Areas	Dana Point General Plan Elements									
	Land Use	Urban Design	Housing	Circulation	Noise	Public Safety	Conservation Open Space	Economic Development	Public Facilities/Growth Management	
Shoreline Access (30210-212.5)	*	*		*			*			
Visitor Serving and Recreational Facilities (30213)	*	*	*	*			*	*		
Water-Oriented Recreation (30220-324)	*			*		*	*	*		
Water and Marine Resources (30230-232)	*						*			
Diking, Filling and Dredging (30233)	*					*			*	
Commercial Fishing and Recreational Boating (30234)	*						*	*		
Shoreline Structures/Flood Control (30235-236)	*					*	*		*	
Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (30240)	*						*			
Agriculture (30241-242)	*									
Soil Resources (30243)	*						*			
Archaeological/Paleontological Resources (30244)	*						*			
Locating and Planning New Development (30250, 252, 255)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Coastal Visual Resources (30251)	*	*		*			*	*		
Hazard Areas (30253)	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	
Public Works (30254)	*			*					*	
Industrial Development and Energy Facilities (30260-264)	*	*		*					*	

\* Indicates presence of Coastal Act issue area within an element of the General Plan.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS**

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The citizens and other members of the public play an important role in both the preparation and implementation of the General Plan. Because the Plan reflects community goals and objectives, citizen input is essential in identifying issues and formulating goals. Public participation in the General Plan preparation process occurred through the following methods which assisted City decision makers:

- Issues identification through a mail survey distributed to 3,000 households in the City;
- Public “Open House” sessions held early in the process at different locations in the City to solicit input for issues identification and goal formulation;
- Opportunities to address decision makers (the City Council and the Planning Commission meeting as a committee) regarding issues, concerns, and desires at numerous General Plan Workshops both prior to preparation and during review of the Preliminary Draft General Plan; and
- Public review and comment on the Draft General Plan and its supporting documents during public hearings held before the City’s Planning Commission and City Council.