



2026 State and Federal Legislative Platform

Adopted by City Council on April 21, 2026

The Legislative Platform establishes a clear and efficient framework that enables the City Council, City Administrator, City staff, and the City's legislative advocates to act promptly and strategically on state and federal legislative proposals. The Platform is organized around the City's adopted Mission Statement as a welcoming coastal community that protects our natural beauty, leads in sustainability and innovation, celebrates our diversity, and fosters a safe and healthy environment for all. The Strategic Plan Goals are intended to guide advocacy that advance economic and community vitality, resiliency and safety, housing and community services, and a high-performing City organization.

Legislative positions that are consistent with the Legislative Platform may be reviewed, approved, and signed by the Mayor or City Administrator. When time-sensitive action is required, and the Mayor is unavailable, the Mayor Pro Tem and City Administrator are authorized to approve and sign position letters consistent with the Platform. Once approved, position letters are transmitted to the bill's author, the City's legislative advocate, and other relevant stakeholders, with copies provided to the City Council.

To ensure the City remains responsive throughout the Legislative Session and able to address amendments or rapidly evolving proposals, the City Administrator or designee may also approve and submit position letters that align with the City's Strategic Plan Goals and the intent of the Legislative Platform, including positions consistent with those taken by the League of California Cities, California Community Choice Association, and other City-affiliated organizations, even if the specific issue area is not expressly enumerated in the Platform.

1. Stimulate Economic and Community Vitality

Strengthen Santa Barbara's economic base, downtown and neighborhood vitality, and long-term fiscal health by supporting local businesses, tourism, innovation, and place-based investment while preserving community character and local control.

Legislative Priorities:

- *Downtown and Neighborhood Revitalization, Waterfront Revitalization, and Airport Improvements*
 - Support adoption and implementation of the State Street Master Plan and related downtown improvements.
 - Advocate for state and federal funding for placemaking, public realm investments, adaptive reuse, and infrastructure that support economic corridors, neighborhood centers, aviation operations, and the waterfront.
 - Support harbor investments that strengthen tourism, fisheries, maritime industries, and the blue economy while preserving public access as well as coastal and environmental protections.
 - Support efforts to maintain or increase support for aviation operations and projects relating to safety, security, capacity, and noise abatement.

- *Business Climate and Permitting Efficiency*
 - Support streamlining of permitting and development review processes while preserving local control, including California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reforms that reduce duplicative review, limit abusive litigation, and accelerate delivery of housing, infrastructure, and community-serving commercial projects.
 - Advocate for customer-focused regulatory systems that improve predictability and reduce time and cost burdens for small businesses and local employers.

- *Local Revenue Authority and Fiscal Tools*
 - Protect local authority over sales tax, transient occupancy tax, utility user tax, franchise fees, and voter-approved revenue measures.
 - Oppose state actions that preempt, pause, divert, or otherwise interfere with locally adopted fiscal policies.
 - Support financing tools that allow cities to invest in infrastructure, housing, cultural assets, and economic development.

- *Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Economy*
 - Support policies that sustain Santa Barbara's visitor economy, hospitality sector, arts institutions, and cultural programming.
 - Advocate for workforce development and education partnerships tied to tourism, arts, and creative industries.

- *Innovation and Workforce Development*

- Support partnerships with higher education institutions to advance workforce development, innovation, and economic growth.
- Advocate for state and federal investments in broadband, digital infrastructure and technologies that support residents, businesses, and visitors.

2. Enhance Community Resiliency and Safety

Protect residents, businesses, and natural assets by strengthening emergency preparedness, public safety, climate resilience, and infrastructure reliability in the face of increasing environmental and fiscal risks.

Legislative Priorities:

- *Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response*

- Support investments in evacuation infrastructure, emergency communications, mutual aid systems, and regional disaster coordination.
- Advocate for streamlined permitting, expanded pre- and post-disaster mitigation funding, improved hazard mapping, and resources that enable local governments to proactively reduce risk to people, property, and critical infrastructure while prioritizing nature-based solutions to wildfire risk reduction, flood control measures, seismic retrofits, and coastal adaptation.

- *Climate Adaptation and Environmental Protection*

- Support funding, policies, and resources for climate adaptation and resilience.
- Support practical climate preparedness efforts, including statewide monitoring of changing conditions, use of higher probability climate projections, regulatory streamlining, and phased implementation.
- Advocate for clean air, clean water, and climate-friendly energy and transportation policies and funding mechanisms that protect public health while maintaining and strengthening flexibility and feasibility for local implementation.
- Advocate for regulatory accountability and local government participation in resource (energy, solid waste, wastewater, water, etc.) regulation and ratemaking policies.

- Support state legislation and regulatory reforms that ensure Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) can operate on a fair and level playing field with investor-owned utilities, including equitable cost allocation, transparent and stable rate-setting, and protection from discriminatory charges or policies that undermine CCA financial viability.
- *Water Resources*
 - Support comprehensive solutions for water quality and water use efficiency as part of a solution that includes local resource development and infrastructure improvements, including storage and conveyance, as part of a statewide system that promotes economic and environmental sustainability.
 - Advocate for Local Water Resources Autonomy and Infrastructure through legislation and funding that support a diverse water supply portfolio, streamlining the use of drought-proof supplies—specifically desalination, potable reuse, and groundwater storage—while protecting the City's right to manage these local resources without restrictive state or federal oversight.
 - Support for Regulatory Flexibility and Local Control through policies that provide agencies with local control over water and wastewater rate structures (such as low-income subsidies and conservation-based rates).
 - Advocate for State and Federal funding support (grants, loans, etc.) for water resources infrastructure and planning.
- *Public Safety Services and Infrastructure*
 - Preserve local control over law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, and harbor patrol operations.
 - Support funding for public safety staffing, training, facilities, and technology.
 - Support reasonable bicycle, e-bike, and micro-mobility safety standards, education, infrastructure, and enforcement approaches that protect public safety and meet local climate goals while preserving local authority over street design, speed management, and operational rules.
 - Promote infrastructure and design solutions that prioritize bodily safety, accessibility, and comfort for all modes of transportation, all ages and abilities, particularly in high-use corridors, school zones, commercial districts, and coastal areas.
- *Insurance and Risk Management*
 - Support reforms that stabilize municipal insurance markets and reduce unreasonable liability exposure for coastal and wildfire-prone communities.

- Advocate for improved access to affordable insurance and risk-pooling options for local governments.

3. Strengthen Housing and Community Services

Increase housing stability and access to essential services while respecting Santa Barbara's coastal constraints, infrastructure capacity, and community-driven planning framework.

Legislative Priorities:

- *Housing Affordability, Supply, and Tenant Protections*
 - Support policies that promote the development and preservation of affordable housing as well as expand and protect local authority to implement inclusionary housing requirements.
 - Support sustained state and federal funding for affordable, workforce, and supportive housing tailored to high-cost coastal communities, including flexible programs that address land constraints, construction costs, and infrastructure limitations.
 - Advocate for housing element and Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) reforms that prioritize housing affordability, certainty, feasibility, and timely implementation, including clearer standards for compliance, realistic production assumptions, and alignment with infrastructure capacity and environmental constraints.
 - Support reforms that better align RHNA obligations with available funding, infrastructure readiness, and demonstrated regional housing need, while avoiding punitive approaches that undermine local planning and project delivery.
 - Support tenant protection policies that address housing affordability and prevent harassment, retaliation, and unlawful displacement, consistent with Santa Barbara's adopted tenant protection ordinances, while preserving local enforcement authority and maintaining incentives for housing maintenance and production.
- *Local Land Use Authority, Infrastructure, and Safety*
 - Preserve local control over zoning, development standards, coastal management, and infrastructure capacity determinations.

- Advocate for housing and infrastructure policies that ensure adequate water, wastewater, transportation, evacuation, and emergency response capacity before or concurrent with new development.
 - Support development standards and environmental review frameworks that prioritize life-safety, wildfire resilience, evacuation capacity, transportation connectivity, and climate change mitigation and adaptation in housing and mixed-use projects.
 - Oppose mandates that require housing development in areas with severe environmental constraints or elevated public safety risks, including Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, without appropriate mitigation, infrastructure investment, and emergency planning.
 - Oppose one-size-fits-all mandates that fail to account for local environmental and geographic constraints.
- *Homelessness and Supportive Services*
 - Support funding for shelter, homelessness prevention, permanent supportive housing, and behavioral health services.
 - Advocate for coordinated regional service delivery models and data-driven response strategies.
- *Community Services and Equity*
 - Support investments in parks, recreation, libraries, public health, youth services, senior services, and social services.
 - Promote equitable access to community amenities, public facilities, broadband equity, and essential services, particularly for vulnerable populations and neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by housing instability and environmental risk.
 - Support efforts that acknowledge the vital contributions of immigrants to the social, economic and cultural fabric of our communities.
 - Oppose actions that separate families, erode civil liberties, or foster fear in immigrant communities.
 - Support legislation that protects the public's right to read and access information.
 - Advocate on legislation affecting digital content licensing and support reforms that ensure libraries can acquire electronic materials under reasonable terms.

4. Ensure a Thriving City Organization

Maintain a high-performing, financially stable City organization that earns public trust, supports its workforce, and delivers results efficiently and transparently.

Legislative Priorities:

- *Fiscal Stability and Mandate Reimbursement*
 - Oppose unfunded or underfunded state and federal mandates.
 - Support full reimbursement for mandated programs and timely disaster recovery funding.

- *Local Authority and Governance*
 - Preserve local authority over labor relations, workforce management, compensation, and organizational structure.
 - Support open meeting and governance reforms that expand transparency while maintaining practical decision-making tools.

- *Workforce and Organizational Capacity*
 - Support policies that attract, retain, and develop a skilled municipal workforce.
 - Advocate for pension and retiree health sustainability while honoring commitments to employees.

- *Technology, Cybersecurity, and Service Delivery*
 - Support investments in cybersecurity, broadband, digital infrastructure, public safety technology, and open data platforms.
 - Promote technologies that improve efficiency, transparency, and customer service.
 - Support parking policy and technology that improves efficiency and customer service while protecting users privacy.
 - Endorse an AI governance framework requiring transparency (model purpose/limitations), equity/bias testing, human-in-the-loop for consequential decisions, and auditability, along with considerations for environmental impacts and competing value uses.