



City of
Santa Barbara



Strategic Plan



2026-
2030

Letter from the City Administrator



Dear Santa Barbara Community,

On behalf of the City Council, it is my privilege to introduce the City of Santa Barbara's Citywide Strategic Plan—our shared roadmap for strengthening the organization, improving our services, and delivering results that reflect the community's priorities and values. This plan marks an important step forward for our City government as we commit to a renewed focus on organizational culture, customer service, and a prioritized and disciplined execution of the work before us.

Over the past year, we have engaged with the City Council and staff across all departments, listened closely to community members, and assessed our internal systems and operations. Through that process, a clear message emerged:

Santa Barbara is ready for a more connected, accountable, and service-driven organization—one that supports its employees, centers the customer experience, and consistently delivers on its commitments.

A Culture That Supports Our People and Our Mission

Our strategic plan places organizational culture change at the forefront. We recognize that the strength of our City lies in the people who serve it. To meet today's challenges, we must cultivate a culture that empowers employees, encourages innovation, supports professional growth, and reinforces collaboration across departmental lines and with our community. This plan outlines new efforts to deepen staff engagement, clarify expectations, and align our internal systems to the values we aspire to uphold.

Focus on Customer Service and the Community Experience

Santa Barbara residents, businesses, and visitors deserve a public service experience that is timely, responsive, and easy to navigate. In the coming years, we will streamline processes, expand the use of technology, improve internal coordination, and adopt service standards that make it easier for community members to access the services they rely on. Re-centering the organization on customer service is not only essential to earning and maintaining the public's trust—it is key to building a modern, equitable, and forward-thinking City government. We exist to serve our community.

Delivering Results Through Project Completion and Performance Management

The plan also emphasizes the importance of completing existing projects and strengthening our



performance management systems. Santa Barbara has many significant initiatives already underway—capital infrastructure upgrades, housing and homelessness response strategies, technology modernization, and climate resilience efforts, to name a few. In the coming years, we will prioritize a disciplined approach to project delivery, adopt metrics to track progress, and create transparent reporting practices to hold ourselves accountable. Our residents deserve to see tangible outcomes, and this plan commits us to delivering them.

Recent Accomplishments

While much work lies ahead, we enter this next chapter with meaningful successes behind us. Over the past year, the City of Santa Barbara has:

- Re-organized key divisions to elevate housing, economic development, and neighborhood services to the City Administrator's Office including the hiring of a new Deputy City Administrator to oversee these efforts, bringing targeted attention and resources to advance progress on several key initiatives include the Paseo Nuevo Redevelopment and State Street Master Plan.

- Advanced several information technology projects, in an effort to improve transparency, efficiency, and the accuracy of core administrative functions.
- Delivered critical public infrastructure investments, including breaking ground on a new, state-of-the-art Police Station and renovations of Dwight Murphy Park to include a first-ever accessible and inclusive playground and updated turf sports fields. These accomplishments reflect the dedication of City staff and the community's support for long-term improvements.

Emerging Challenges

As we look toward the future, we must also acknowledge the challenges that will shape our work:

- Housing affordability and homelessness continue to require coordinated, sustained action, both locally and regionally, with strategies rooted in compassion, data, and cross-sector partnerships.
- A changing climate and aging infrastructure demand ongoing investment, from wildfire resilience to water security to modernizing core City facilities.
- Continued financial pressures

that will force us to be efficient and effective in our execution and delivery of key initiatives.

This strategic plan positions us to address these challenges with clarity, stability, and purpose.

I am grateful for the commitment of our employees, community partners, City Council, and residents who make Santa Barbara a remarkable place to live and work. Together, we are building an organization that is more responsive, more capable, and more aligned with the needs and hopes of our community.

Thank you for your ongoing support and engagement as we position Santa Barbara to face the challenges ahead while honoring the legacy and amazing place that already exists.



Kelly McAdoo,
City Administrator

By the Numbers

Population
88,024

Median Age
39.4

Land Square Miles
19.51

Year of Incorporation
1850

Number of
Households
39,015

Median Household
Income
\$101,672

Visitors Per Year
6.5 million+

Number of
Departments
15

2025 Budget
\$580 million

About Santa Barbara

Located between the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, the City of Santa Barbara is an iconic coastal community that blends natural beauty, rich history, and a dynamic local culture.

Santa Barbara offers a rare combination of small-town charm and world-class amenities that draw visitors from around the world and inspire deep-rooted pride among residents.

Santa Barbara's Spanish Colonial roots remain visible today in its signature architecture, red tile roofs, and white stucco buildings, which reflect a commitment to preserving its historic character. Today, Santa Barbara is both a premier tourist destination and a thriving community that more than 88,000 people call home. The City's cultural life is vibrant and diverse, with public art, live performances, and celebrated institutions such as the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the Old Mission, and the Granada and Arlington Theatres. State Street and the surrounding downtown offer a walkable mix of restaurants, galleries, boutiques, and historic landmarks, while annual events like Fiesta and the International Film Festival contribute to Santa Barbara's lively calendar of activities.

Natural assets are among the City's greatest treasures. With access to beaches, parks, open space, and a wide range of recreational opportunities, residents and visitors alike enjoy the outdoors year-round. The City's commitment to environmental sustainability and climate resilience is closely tied to its identity and long-term vision. Santa Barbara is also a hub for higher education, home to institutions such as UC Santa Barbara and Santa Barbara City College, which contribute to a culture of learning and innovation.

While Santa Barbara welcomes millions of visitors annually, the City also maintains a deep focus on the people who live and work here. Local government and community partners strive to balance the needs of a vibrant tourism economy with those of residents who value affordability, safety, and the character of their neighborhoods. Whether drawn by its history, beauty, or sense of community, those who spend time in Santa Barbara—whether for a weekend or a lifetime—find it to be a place unlike any other.

The Strategic Planning Overview

The City of Santa Barbara engaged Raftelis to facilitate a process to develop the City's first strategic plan. A strategic plan is a roadmap for establishing the City's future direction and key priorities.

The plan is designed to provide clear direction to guide Citywide efforts, align priorities across departments and the organization, and ensure limited resources are invested in the most important and impactful initiatives. This strategic plan serves as the fundamental framework for translating the City's long-term vision into tangible action and measurable outcomes.

This framework is the essential bridge connecting our future aspirations with daily operations, guiding resource allocation, and providing a clear roadmap for all departmental work plans. By establishing clear priorities and defined goals, the framework ensures that every effort and investment is systematically aligned across the organization to achieve meaningful progress and successfully deliver the outcomes described in this plan.



What I LOVE About Santa Barbara

Below are some of the words community members, City Council, and executive staff used to describe what they LOVE about Santa Barbara.



Vision

We are a welcoming coastal community that protects our natural beauty, leads in sustainability and innovation, and fosters a safe and healthy environment for all. We honor our past while shaping our future.

Key steps in the process of developing this strategic plan included:

- + **Conducted interviews** with City Council members and Department Directors
- + **Engaged community focus groups** of approximately 50 representatives from the community to gather feedback on the framework and learn what is important to those who live and work in Santa Barbara
- + **Conducted strategic planning workshops** with the Executive Team and City Council to draft the strategic plan framework and prioritize initiatives for implementation

Strategic Priorities

The Strategic Priorities outlined to the right represent the critical focus areas—the “big buckets” of essential work—that the City must excel in to successfully realize our long-term vision. These priorities will concentrate our resources and efforts to ensure measurable progress toward that future.



Stimulate Economic and Community Vitality

Santa Barbara supports a dynamic economy fueled by a thriving downtown and economic corridors, a diverse mix of industries, and systems that support local businesses. Through innovative partnerships, clear planning, and strategic investment, the City fosters long-term economic success that is reflective of community needs.

Objectives

- + Adopt the State Street Master Plan and implement downtown improvements
- + Support a thriving local economy
- + Increase neighborhood vitality and placemaking
- + Simplify the permitting process and support the customer experience



Enhance Community Resiliency and Safety

Santa Barbara is a resilient and prepared community. The City leverages resources and partnerships to respond to increasing risks, while investing in infrastructure that reflects a commitment to climate adaptation, sustainability, and safety for all community members.

Objectives

- + Increase community emergency preparedness
- + Invest in infrastructure improvements that support climate adaptation and protect community assets
- + Strengthen public safety services
- + Advance clean air, clean water, and clean spaces initiatives in support of public health



Strengthen Housing and Community Services

Santa Barbara strengthens our community by delivering supportive services that meet diverse needs and increasing housing supply—each essential to fostering well-being and stability for all, especially our most vulnerable residents.

Objectives

- + Increase housing affordability and production
- + Promote housing stability and tenant protections
- + Strengthen services to support diverse populations and the complexity of needs



Ensure a Thriving City Organization

Santa Barbara is a high-performing organization where employees are supported, valued, and inspired to serve. Through strategic investments in people, planning, and fiscal health, the City maintains a stable budget and earns the trust of both staff and the community.

Objectives

- + Achieve financial stability
- + Foster a strong organizational culture
- + Attract and retain a skilled workforce
- + Increase public trust and community engagement



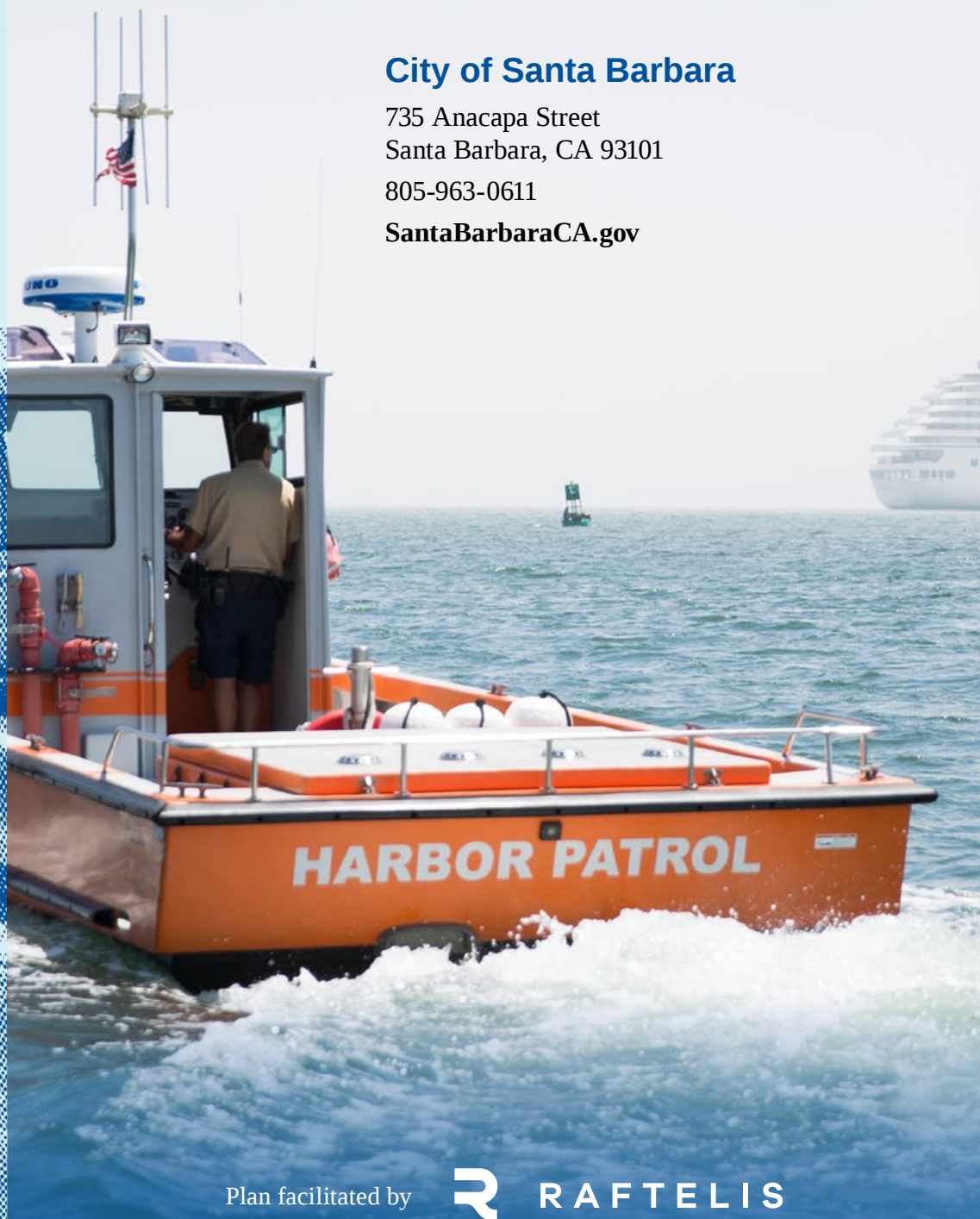
This strategic plan is a living document, designed to adapt to the changing needs of the organization and community it serves. The plan is action-oriented and is intended to lead to tangible, measurable progress through the development of a Citywide work plan to achieve the initiatives outlined within.

City of Santa Barbara

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Plan facilitated by



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