

GPAC Meeting #1 Summary

February 26, 2021



Introduction

On February 16, 2021, the City of Ventura General Plan Update team convened the first meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The primary meeting objectives were to:

- Initiate the General Plan Advisory Committee
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of the General Plan Advisory Committee
- Provide an overview of the General Plan process

The meeting was open to the public and live-streamed to YouTube. This document summarizes the key content presented and themes discussed at the meeting.

Meeting Participants

The following participants attended the meeting:

General Plan Team

- Matt Raimi, Raimi + Associates
- Simran Malhotra, Raimi + Associates
- Aram Kamali, Raimi + Associates
- Susan Harden, Circlepoint
- Peter Gilli, City of Ventura
- Neda Zayer, City of Ventura

GPAC Members

- Lorrie Brown, GPAC Chair
- Doug Halter, GPAC Vice Chair
- Philip Bohan, GPAC
- Nicholas Bonge, GPAC
- Stephanie Caldwell, GPAC
- Kyler Carlson, GPAC

- David Comden, GPAC
- Joshua Damigo, GPAC
- Nicholas Deitch, GPAC
- Peter Freeman, GPAC
- Kacie Goff, GPAC
- Kelsey Jonker, GPAC
- Stephanie Karba, GPAC
- Erin Kraus, GPAC
- Louise Lampara, GPAC
- Scott McCarty, GPAC
- Bill McReynolds, GPAC
- Daniel Reardon, GPAC
- Sabrena Rodriguez, GPAC
- Alejandra Tellez, GPAC
- Abagale Thomas, GPAC
- Dana Worsnop, GPAC

Meeting Format

Lorrie Brown, GPAC Chair, initiated the session and welcomed all participants to the first meeting. Matt Raimi and Susan Harden then gave a joint presentation that covered several topics related to the meeting objectives, including:

- Introductions of GPAC members, City staff, and the Consultant Team
- A review of GPAC roles and responsibilities, including Brown Act requirements
- A demographic overview of the City of Ventura
- A summary of the General Plan's purpose and required components

- An overview of the project schedule
- An overview of the project community engagement approach

Following the presentation and questions from GPAC members, the meeting concluded with a public comment session. Each speaker was allotted two minutes.

GPAC Feedback and Discussion

Favorite Thing(s) about Ventura

During introductions, GPAC members were asked to share their favorite aspects or attributes about Ventura. Below is a summary of major themes that were expressed:

- Small town charm.
- Great Downtown.
- Old school coastal, beach town California vibe.
- Tight-knit community with friendly, down-to-earth people. Socially, everyone is connected to everyone somehow.
- Jobs-housing balance. Unlike other cities, you can both live and work in Ventura.
- Ideal balance. Ventura enjoys world-class companies, natural beauty, friendliness, and opportunity.
- Proximity to diverse natural recreation. One can enjoy the ocean then visit the hillsides within 10 minutes.
- Bike-friendly community. Great to not need a car year-round.
- All the benefits of the Southern California lifestyle while still retaining a unique small town character.
- Great historic architecture
- Farmers' market on Saturdays
- Pierpont Bay is a great place to be a swimmer
- "Almost paradise"
- Abundant and diverse open space – parks, beaches, botanical gardens. These have been especially valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ventura feels like a vacation destination!

GPAC Roles and Responsibilities

Following the presentation of GPAC roles and responsibilities and the Brown Act, GPAC members asked several questions related to proper conduct and their role on the GPAC. Below is a summary of these questions (*italicized*) and accompanying responses from City staff and/or the Consultant Team:

- *Is advocating for other planning efforts unrelated to the General Plan considered a Brown Act violation?*
 - It depends. Providing information relevant to your experience, and answering questions, is likely okay. However, expressing personal opinions is not appropriate. Ideally, GPAC members would direct the public to this forum to more freely share and hear opinions.

- *Is it a violation to discuss topics addressed in the General Plan in other contexts (e.g., sharing general views on housing development)?*
 - Most probably, yes. The best course of action is to facilitate public involvement in the General Plan Update process.
- *Can GPAC members share ideas with each other in between meetings?*
 - No, that is discouraged. Private conversation amongst a majority of members would amount to a Brown Act violation.
- *Can we ask a question to City staff in between meetings?*
 - Yes, individual communication with staff is generally fine. Sending messages to a majority of the group, however, is a problem.
- *Can GPAC members receive PowerPoint presentations in advance of each meetings?*
 - Usually, yes, with the caveat that they may be in draft form and subject to change.

Community Engagement

GPAC members also asked questions about community engagement during the General Plan Update process. These questions are summarized below (*italicized*) and followed by accompanying responses from City staff and/or the Consultant Team:

- *Will there be any specific engagement or outreach for the Housing Element?*
 - The GPAC will have at least one meeting focused on housing, and we will likely host other topical meetings with the broader community later in the process.
- *The GPAC is not demographically representative of Ventura's population, specifically with respect to the Hispanic/Latino and Black communities. Is it possible to create a subcommittee that comprises members from these underrepresented groups?*
 - Although we will not create any additional subcommittees, we will frequently meet with and leverage local interest groups who can help extend our reach into disadvantaged communities. When needed, we will also provide Spanish-interpretation services during public meetings.

Other

GPAC members also posed a range of other comments and questions, including those summarized below:

- *Regarding Environmental Justice, how will we address disadvantaged areas in the Sphere of Influence (SOI) (e.g., Saticoy) that are not within the City Limits?*
 - SB 1000 only requires that areas within the City Limits be analyzed. However, in the context of Ventura, it is hard to ignore disadvantaged areas, like Saticoy, that are just outside the City but functionally integrated with it. For this reason, we will discuss analyzing areas in the SOI as well.
- *Can we see precedent plans and policy documents – including their outcomes – so we understand what we are working toward in the General Plan Update process?*
 - Yes. Currently, there are various background documents provided on the project website for reference. More will be added as the process moves forward.

- *For demographic conditions, can we also look at housing tenure in the city? This is a major socioeconomic indicator that relates to housing security and household wealth.*
 - Yes, we will certainly account for housing tenure in our analyses.
- *Between now and the second meeting, how can we share ideas for effective engagement of underrepresented groups?*
 - Members should direct all suggestions to Neda Zayer.

Public Comments

A small number of individuals spoke during public comment at the close of the meeting. Comments and questions (*italicized*) are summarized below:

- *Does the City Council explicitly consider whether a proposed capital improvement project implements a General Plan goal or policy?*
 - Not exactly. The Planning Commission reviews the City's Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) program for consistency with the General Plan. Based on its finding, it makes recommendations to City Council.
- *The ongoing housing shortage is a major crisis both locally and statewide. The City needs to prioritize accelerating housing production to meet the needs of all income groups.*
- *Net-zero energy, wildlife protection, and community healing are important principles to prioritize in the General Plan Update process.*

Next Steps

At the close of the meeting, Matt Raimi listed a number of next steps and recommendations for GPAC members, including:

- Review the background materials posted on the project website, particularly the State's General Plan Guidelines
- Encourage friends and family to sign-up for the project email list
- Be on the lookout for a welcome call from either Matt or Susan