

GPAC Meeting #25 Summary: Environmental Justice

January 30, 2024



Introduction

On January 30, 2024, the City of Ventura convened for the 25th meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The purpose of the meeting was to continue the discussion of the Parks and Open Space Policy Framework goals, policies, and actions and discuss the Environmental Justice Policy Framework.

The meeting was open to the public and held in person in the Community Room at City Hall. The meeting recording is available on [YouTube](#). This document summarizes the key conclusions from the meeting.

Meeting Participants

The following participants attended the meeting:

General Plan Team

- Matt Raimi, Raimi + Associates
- Sarah Perez, Raimi + Associates
- Rachel Dimond, City of Ventura
- Susan Harden, Circlepoint

GPAC Members

- Doug Halter, GPAC Chair
- Nicholas Bonge, GPAC
- Stephanie Caldwell, GPAC
- David Comden, GPAC
- Kyler Carson, GPAC
- Nicholas Deitch, GPAC
- Peter Freeman, GPAC
- Kacie Goff, GPAC
- Philip Bohan, GPAC
- Karba, GPAC
- Louise Lampara, GPAC
- Scott McCarty, GPAC
- Sabrena Rodriguez, GPAC
- Dana Worsnop, GPAC

Absent: Lorrie Brown, Joshua Damigo, Kelsey Jonker, Erin Kraus, Bill McReynolds, Daniel Reardon, Alejandra Tellez

Meeting Format

The meeting began with a round of introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda led by Susan Harden. The meeting transitioned to continue the Parks and Open Space Element discussion from the previous evening. After the discussion, Matt Raimi began the Environmental Justice Policy Framework presentation. This was followed by general comments and questions from the GPAC. Following the GPAC's general comments and questions, there was a public comment period. Following public comments, the GPAC split into three small groups to discuss the Environmental Justice Policy Framework goals, policies and actions. The small group discussions were then followed by representatives of each group sharing what they discussed and their requested edits to the Policy Framework.

The meeting closed with a breakdown of the project schedule along with the proposed topics of the remaining GPAC meetings.

Parks and Open Space Results Discussion

The following section summarizes the GPAC's comments from the continued discussion of the Parks and Open Space Policy Framework from the previous evening (GPAC #24).

- Interested in writing a policy that requires new developments to have a certain amount of on-site public open space as part of the development.
- Acknowledgement that there are limitations of being an older city regarding development. The presence of already established developments impacts the City's ability to build new parks and open space.
- Recognize that Ventura's beaches and ocean are valuable public open spaces that many other jurisdictions do not have access to in their jurisdictional bounds.
- Incorporate a policy that requires developers to have their public space dedication to be *accessible and visible* to the public.

The General Plan Team stated that they will be preparing a brief online "feedback form" to allow the public to comment on the Parks and Open Space Policy Framework. The following are ideas for the feedback form suggested by the GPAC.

- What would make a space feel accessible and welcoming to you?
- What would make a space feel accessible and welcoming to the people you know in your life and their ability levels?
- Would you be willing to pay an additional tax or levy to fund parks?
- Do you view agricultural land as a working farm or open space?
- Would you be open to private funding of certain amenities if the funder had naming rights?
- What kind of athletic facilities would you like to see in the parks?
- What is your favorite park? (Response can be in Ventura or outside of Ventura)
- Which parks do you go to?
- Do you have differing views between what you would like to see at beaches and parks in Ventura?
- What does the best beach look like to you?
- What does the best park look like to you?

Environmental Justice Presentation

The following section summarizes the GPAC's high-level comments on the Environmental Justice presentation.

- Include a goal and policies around economic development in the Environmental Justice Element that touches on building up income, education, job creation, and economic vitality.

- Ensure these policies are being based upon data identifying who is truly being impacted by environmental pollution.
- Include policies that address the biggest sources of pollution (e.g., air pollution from the 33 and 101 freeways and pesticide use from agriculture).
- Invite the County Agricultural Commissioner to discuss the impacts of pesticide exposure in Ventura and the City's authority to prevent exposure to pesticides.
- Commit to ensuring the policies and implementation actions are actionable and implemented. The City has many regulations that are not enforced.

Public Comment

Several members of the public provided public comments. A summary of the comments is below.

- Shocked that the land use conversion of General Industrial to Light Industrial is a controversial topic. Studies have shown that living within 2 ½ miles of an oil and gas well is linked to higher levels of air pollution, therefore increasing one's likelihood of being diagnosed with cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and other life-threatening conditions. Need policies that address these polluters and inequities.
- Pollution is not an issue on the Westside. PurpleAir air monitors show there is no cause for concern regarding air pollution since the pollution levels are low. Concerned how policies addressing environmental pollution through land use continue to emerge in different forms.
- Gas compressor issue is a separate issue from the other industrial businesses on the Westside. Dragging other industrial businesses that provide good-paying jobs and business to the community and propose moving industries to the Arundell neighborhood is disappointing.
- Acknowledge and make note of who is not in the room right now, who will be most negatively impacted by the decisions made here today, and who will pay with their health and safety consequently. Less Ventura residents are in attendance who are a majority low-income and people of color. Claims that the Westside is not burdened by pollution is not supported with evidence. PurpleAir does not regularly measure the air pollutant contaminants that are of concern on the Westside.
- Craft policies that ensure park and open space dedications by developers are accessible and visible to the public. Look at indoor and outdoor public spaces, places community members convene for civic engagement, parks, walking paths, and the promenade. Underscore the importance of evaluating pedestrian and bicycle collisions and deaths as part of the environmental justice element. Include the evaluation of heat sinks and the importance of the tree canopy to address environmental injustice.
- Desire for a free public dump station with several sites across Ventura. These sites would also allow recreational vehicle users to dump their waste. Interest in using schools as sites for low-income housing.
- Environmental Justice policies throughout the framework are redundant. Policies 4.2 and 4.3 go against what was voted on by the City Council. The path of least resistance for renewable energy projects is located on industrial land. Preserving these spaces and land uses can help streamline those efforts to better utilize the lands we have. First tackle enforcing the rules in the books like [Section 24.470](#) before passing new policies that we cannot even enforce.

- Adamantly support the ten acres for every 1,000 residents. Surprised to see policy 4.3 in the policy framework; thought this discussion was already settled. Would like policy to be deleted. Strong desire for more actions around urban forestry.
- Oil and gas is a dying industry. Times change. As people, we are sometimes pushed to make certain job changes and we adapt. There is more concern about a certain segment of people losing their jobs in the oil and gas industry. Request to not focus on that.
- Strike policy 4.3. We do not need General Industrial change. General Industrial will be able to adapt and change to evolving markets.
- Get rid of 4.2 and 4.3. Please provide more information on the Tree Master Plan and inclusion in the Parks and Open Space Element. Request that public notice of GPAC meetings are two or four weeks in advance, not ten days. Would result in more community members present. Interested in including a 20 to 1 tree ratio in the General Plan. Remove the acreage of Seaside Park in the park ratio since it is just a river bottom and not accessible. Saticoy area is not really recognized as part of the General Plan policies.
- As a business owner, there are not forty-one acres on the Eastside we can move to. Results in job loss for those workers. Where is the air quality report? Make decisions that are informed by data.
- Recognize the importance of the balance of the scale between General Industrial business owners and environmental justice advocates. Are we really engaging the community? General Industrial employs the people of the Westside. Businesses have done everything to comply with CARB.
- Make schoolgrounds be multipurpose for the public to access them. Add the Citywide income levels to be assessed as part of the low-income classification. Focus on acquiring State funds to clean up abandoned and retired wells.
- Frustrating to see the land use issue of General Industrial on the Westside being brought up again. PurpleAir shows that the Westside does not have air pollution issues.

GPAC Discussion

GPAC members were asked to give high-level feedback on the policies and actions after their small group discussions. A summary of the comments is below.

- A lot of the policies are already covered by State law. Redundancy places the City in potential conflict with State law. The City does not have jurisdiction over State law. If there is a policy written that is already regulated by the State, remove it. There is a lot of room to expand environmental justice.
- Some GPAC members liked the redundancy of the General Plan policies that align with already established State laws and regulations since the Plan is a standalone document. The document might be the first resource a person visits to understand the policies and regulations of the jurisdiction.
- Remove policies 4.2 and 4.3. State law is already addressing industrial businesses and operations with which they must comply. Add a policy that states the City will support businesses through permit streamlining, grant assistance, and other actions to comply with State and federal regulations.

- Add an action to conduct an air quality assessment to determine if there is pollution on the Westside, the sources, and if it constitutes a health risk. Identify if there are ways to track cancer, asthma, and other health effects on the Westside.
- Keep policy 4.2 since to prohibit changes in land use to General Industrial near residential areas. This will minimize future impacts to residential health.
- Remove the entire agricultural section. The City does not have the authority to enforce many of the proposed policies. Only include a policy to support the County Agricultural Commissioner.
- Add a policy to pursue a farmers' market on the Eastside.
- Farmers do not need assistance with agricultural tourism ideas, they need a streamlined permitting process. Change the policy to place responsibility on the City to make their process faster.
- Remove 9.3. Rent stabilization does not work in the long run. Instead, have a policy that promotes the generation of more housing.
- Add a policy that aims to support existing businesses and attract new businesses to increase Head-of-Household type jobs. This will, in turn, increase wages and decrease the gap in housing affordability.
- Add a policy to expand eviction prevention assistance and add additional emergency short-term assistance to allow current residents to remain in their housing.
- Add that the river parkway can be revitalized to improve access for Westside residents to positively impact recreation opportunities and serve as a gathering space for residents. Establish improved relationships with the Land Trust and seek State funding.
- Expand resources to food access on the Eastside. Find innovative ways to bring food to the area (e.g., grocery stores, restaurants, etc.).
- Add policies that seek to expand the manufacturing sector to increase the number of jobs in Ventura.
- Agree with Policy 9.3 for tenant protections.
- Agree with Policies 1.5 and 1.6
- Add policies that address strategies to combat urban heat, capture carbon, and increase the tree canopy.
- Revise the noise generator policy apply to all noise generators and be less specific, including mentioning the Fairgrounds as a source of noise pollution.
- Add a policy about capping the freeway as a potential mitigation for noise and air pollution in the Downtown.
- Remove the date reference in the Metrolink pollution policy.
- Remove reference to the Westside in policy 4.1. The policy should be applied to disadvantaged communities in general.
- Include a specific buffer size for policy 5.7.
- Policy 6.2 should also include mental health care facilities and services.
- Expand Policy 6.5 to include a partnership to work with local organizations to plant native trees and other native plants.
- Keep Policy 7.4 to support subsidizing convenience stores to make conversions to serve healthy and fresh produce.

- Include a policy that requires the City to identify co-benefits during construction projects. For example, when the City is repairing the road, there should be more climate resilient practices like adding semi permeable streets materials instead of the conventional rubberized asphalt concrete.
- Recognize that the implementation of these policies and actions will probably require hiring more City staff.
- Incorporate the idea that the City is well maintained, and this has a positive impact on mental health.
- Keep the aging-in-place policy.

Project Schedule

At the end of the meeting, the GPAC discussed the schedule and topics for the remaining GPAC meetings. The GPAC expressed interest in changing one of the two meetings dedicated to reviewing the Draft General Plan and to use this meeting to discuss economic development.