

GPAC Meeting #26 Summary: Economic Development

March 18, 2024



Introduction

On March 18, 2024, the City of Ventura convened for the 26th meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Economic Development 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
- Doug Svenssen, ADE
- Rachel Dimond, City of Ventura

GPAC Members

- Doug Halter, GPAC Chair
- Bill McReynolds, GPAC Vice Chair
- Nicholas Bonge, GPAC
- Stephanie Caldwell, GPAC
- David Comden, GPAC
- Kyler Carson, GPAC
- Nicholas Deitch, GPAC
- Joshua Damingo
- Peter Freeman, GPAC
- Kacie Goff, GPAC
- Philip Bohan, GPAC
- Karba, GPAC
- Scott McCarty, GPAC
- Sabrena Rodriguez, GPAC
- Alejandra Tellez, GPAC

Absent: Lorrie Brown, Kelsey Jonker, Erin Kraus, Daniel Reardon

Meeting Format

The meeting began with a welcome by Rachel Dimond. Matt Raimi then gave an overview on the meeting agenda and an update to the GPAC on future engagement events and GPAC meetings where the following was detailed:

1. City Council meeting regarding Ventura growth projections and a General Plan update (March 26th)
2. GPAC meeting on safety and neighborhoods (April 16th)
3. GPAC meeting on transportation and infrastructure (May 13th)
4. Land Use Designation Map Feedback Form (to identify mistakes/correction in the City Council-endorsed land use map), to be released in March
5. Topic-specific surveys on EJ, Parks and Open Space, and Economic Development, to be released in April.

After the update, Doug Svenssen provided a presentation on existing conditions related to economic development and an overview of the Economic Development Policy Framework. 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 and the public into one breakout group to discuss the Economic Development 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 summary of the next steps.

Economic Development 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. Note that comments where a group or groups stated agreement with a specific policy are not included.

General/Overarching Comments

- Language in the policy framework is too passive. Be more direct and intentional about encouraging reuse and reimagining spaces.
- Add a policy regarding education for the future workforce.
- Be cognizant of the coastal impacts of climate change.
- Use parking as a buffer to floods.
- Preservation of coastal views from Ventura's downtown to support tourism.

Goal 1

- Make sure that Ventura's land uses are is flexible to changing markets.
- Offer incentives such as fees and streamlining to promote economic development
- Move broadband capacity policy to goal 1 instead of having it in goal 8.
- Reword policy 1.2; add "and support local businesses in backfilling" to policy 1.2.

- Office and industrial uses should not be located close to the ocean. Uses close to the ocean should capitalize on tourism.
- Preserve views as a way of enhancing/preserving tourism.
- Add housing for workers and support for the agricultural sector in policy 1.14.
- Policy 1.15 about the McGrath property should focus on a diversity of uses, including R&D and industrial, to bolster the City's fiscal outlook.
- Specifically mention VUSD and the Westside in policy 1.5.
- Add a new policy (1.18): "Westside continues to nurture diverse businesses with head of household jobs."

Goal 2

- Consider changing "living wage" to "thriving wage" or "head of household"
- Add a policy
- Add Ventura Economic Development Corporation (VACE), Ventura Unified School District (VUSD), Technology Development Center, The Idea Center, and Women's Economic Ventures (WEV) to policy 2.1.
- A lot of what is detailed in policy 2.2 is already occurring. Look to VUSD website for CTE offerings.
- Connect Ventura Community College (VCC) and VUSD in policy 2.3
- Add trade schools into policy 2.3.

Goal 3

- Write policies that expand Ventura's ability to be an overnight destination in goal 3.
- Use public/private partnerships to improve golf courses in policy 3.6.
- Add text to policy 3.9 that promotes the better use of the fairgrounds.
- Add "improve lighting along the promenade" to policy 3.4.
- Underscore that policies 3.4 through 3.9 could all be addressed by capping the freeway.
- Address parking structure in policy 3.5.
- Add the idea of water taxis and shuttles to policy 3.8.

Goal 4

- Support the Harbor District with implementing their vision.
- Add a policy that fosters coastline resilience.
- Add "kelp" reference to policy 4.3 which discusses commercial production.
- Correct the numbering of policy 4.4
- Add a policy that addresses accessing the Ventura Harbor via transit, trails and roads

Goal 5

- Add text about keeping downtown safe and add reference to Front St. in policy 5.1. Look to Pearl St. in Boulder as an example.
- Replace "card rooms" with "Players Casino" in policy 5.6.

Goal 6

- Add reference to VUSD in policy 6.1.
- Emphasize training for jobs that pay a living wage in policy 6.1.
- Add training for trades, union apprenticeships, and local hiring requirements for local development and investment in policy 6.2.

Goal 7

- Remove “net zero” in policy 7.4 (note that the policy does not mention net zero)
- Consider deleting the requirement for fiscal studies in policy 7.5 because the studies cost money and could delay new development from being built.
- Reconsider promoting new office uses in light of the trend to remote work and relatively high vacancy rates in office spaces.

Goal 8

- Remove “including executive housing to attract executives and entrepreneurs” from policy 8.1.
- Add farmworker housing and other diverse housing needed for the workforce to policy 8.1.

Public Comment

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

- Desire for bigger housing for families.
- Request for more current and recent data instead of using data from 2020.
- Write policies that help foster and build a healthy, vibrant community where people want to work. The increase in quality of life in Ventura will attract jobs.
- Need for maintenance of the infrastructure and amenities, such as streets, to attract jobs.
- Direct major investment away from the coastline. Be strategic and manage buildings that are too close to the coastline, as it is too vulnerable.
- Trade jobs training is a good investment.
- Desire to convert office and industrial space on Valentine Rd. and on City outskirts into educational spaces (i.e., art schools, vocational, technological, etc.)
- Increase presence of restaurants, bars, “Art City”, galleries, art studios, etc.
- Cultivate opportunities to bring youth to Ventura for their education and possibilities they can stay in Ventura after their education.
- Survey biotech companies to understand their needs
- Better understand public safety issues to help with recruiting new businesses to the City.
- Conduct a study to understand how to close the gap between jobs located in the City and the skills of local workers.
- The language should be more flexible in policy 1.2
- Is office space still needed after Covid?
- Consider changing office/R&D to industrial rental spaces
- Address “missing middle” housing in policy 8.1.
- Conduct a study to evaluate barriers for local businesses and issues for them to compete with transnational corporations.