GPAC Meeting #3 Summary

June 9, 2021

Introduction

On April 20, 2021, the City of Ventura General Plan Update team convened the third meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The primary meeting objectives were to:

- Present and receive feedback on list of "Plan Drivers"
- Brainstorm Plan direction, outcomes and strategies to address "plan drivers"
- Prioritize "plan drivers"
- Present and receive feedback on approach to the first public workshop

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

- 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
- 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 meeting, followed by a brief meeting overview from Susan Harden and roll call by Neda Zayer. Matt Raimi then provided a summary of project updates and a presentation on "plan drivers." This was followed by a 30-minute brainstorming session, in which GPAC participants refined the list of plan drivers, provided comments, and proposed high-level strategies to address them in the General Plan. The presentation then resumed with a discussion of the City's approach to the first community workshop, and GPAC members were specifically asked to share input on the proposed agenda, objectives, and outreach methods.

The meeting concluded with a public comment session. Each speaker was allotted roughly 90 seconds.

GPAC Feedback and Discussion

Plan Drivers

A primary objective of this session was to present and discuss a preliminary list of "plan drivers" – defined as the conditions, events, trends, and movements that are driving change in Ventura. These drivers, which include both existing and anticipated issues, were developed by the General Plan team based on community input and findings from existing conditions analysis. The list of plan drivers is shown below, with those added by GPAC members italicized and bolded at the end:

- Population Shifts
- RHNA Requirements
- Cost of Housing
- Protection of Open Space and Natural Areas
- Changing Retail Environment
- Stagnant Regional Economy
- Fiscal Stability and Public Services
- Focus on Active Transportation
- New Mobility
- Equity

- Environmental Justice
- Water Supply
- Carbon Neutrality
- Climate Change
- Wildfire Hazards
- COVID-19 Recovery
- Creative Economy
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- ***Public Transportation***
- ***Technology and Digital Infrastructure***
- ***Action on Homelessness***

Comments, Strategies, and Ideas

A summary of GPAC members' comments on the plan drivers, including strategies to propose in the General Plan, are provided below. The worksheet developed by the GPAC can be found in the Appendix at the back of this summary report.

Population Shifts
- To attract young families, the City should consider adding amenities like affordable childcare. Other social infrastructure (e.g., strong education system) are also vital.

Cost of Housing
- Ventura needs to find the right balance between affordability and desirability. While the need for affordable housing is substantial, the City should continue to remain supportive of market-rate housing as well.
- Brownfield sites could be better utilized to host new needed uses, such as housing. Cleaning and utilizing such sites could be a "win-win" since they also address environmental concerns.
- Ventura needs to be a city of neighborhoods – amenities and housing provided close to each other. This can achieve a great balance that makes a big city feel small.
- The General Plan should consider creative ways to sensitively densify single-family neighborhoods (e.g., ADUs).
- The city needs to increase allowed density in focused areas with the opportunity for redevelopment and to advance multiple goals of the city (e.g., revitalization of corridors, increased housing opportunities, less reliance on automobiles, etc.)

- There is a physical limit to growth in the city, and the City needs to support community desires to protect open space.
- The City is trying to play "catch up" with housing development and water resources based on past actions.

Homelessness
- Mental health and substance abuse are major issues to address with the region's homeless population.

Stagnant Regional Economy
- The auto sales industry is ripe for disruption. This suggests that the Ventura Auto Center can be redeveloped and put to better use.
- The General Plan should create strategies that make Ventura an attractive and supportive environment for all sectors and businesses, both small and large.
- The City should identify an area that can accommodate a more productive manufacturing sector. An artisan district could allow small-scale manufacturers to both produce and sell their goods in one place. Such a district could be integrated with other amenities as well (e.g., housing).
- The General Plan should support local hiring practices.

Protection of Natural Resources and Open Space
- The City should participate in regional efforts to protect open space.
- The City should consider strategies to acquire and develop open space in its Sphere of Influence (but outside the City Limits).

Focus on Active Transportation
- The City should create expansive bike corridors that travel through the city.
- The General Plan should promote a "park once" strategy that reduces dependence on cars, specifically for tourists.
- The designation of freight corridors will have an impact on roadway design. Given this, how can we ensure adequate pedestrian and bike safety?

Equity
- Past discriminatory policies and practices (e.g., redlining) must somehow be addressed moving forward.

Climate Change
- The City needs to act urgently and boldly on climate change, which is an existential crisis. A managed retreat from the shore should be considered.

Wildfire Hazards
- To mitigate future wildfire impacts, the City needs better education and maintenance for open space. Agricultural buffers can also be used to protect our built environment

Technology and Broadband Infrastructure
- Equitable access to technology, specifically broadband, needs to be emphasized since it impacts virtually every facet of life (e.g., education, transportation, etc.). Broadband is the "new electricity" given how essential it is.
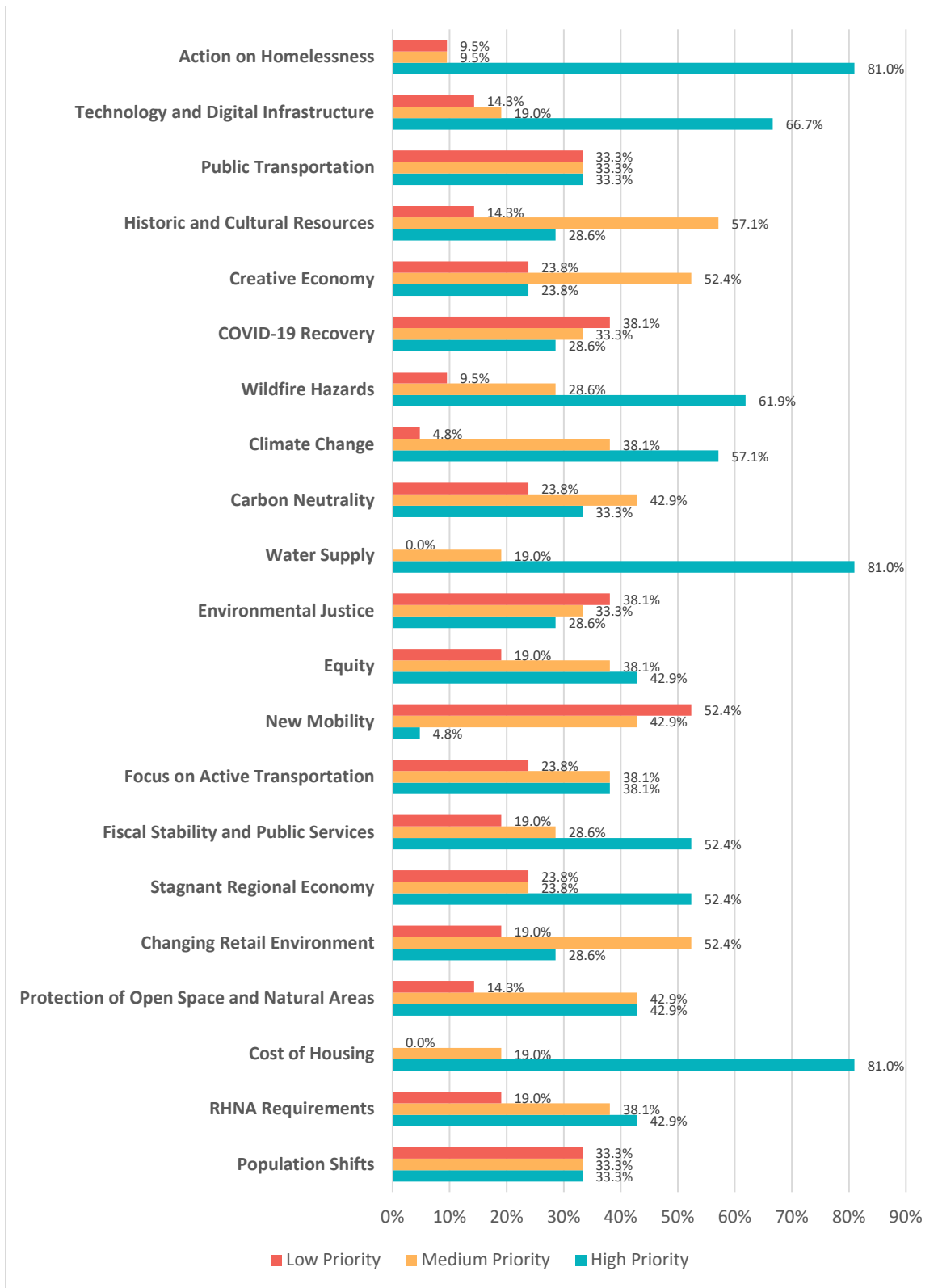
Public Transportation
- Transit service needs to be expanded to different parts of Ventura. A streetcar system could be developed to connect different parts of town

Prioritization Polling

After discussing and refining the list of plan drivers, GPAC members were asked to rank each one based on priority level: high, medium, or low. A summary of the results is shown below, and the full results are provided on the following page.

- The plan drivers that had the highest number of votes at "high priority" were:
  - Action on homelessness (81.0%)
  - Water supply (81.0%)
  - Cost of housing (81.0%)
  - Technology and digital infrastructure (66.7%)
  - Wildfire hazards (61.9%)
  - Climate change (57.1%)
  - Fiscal stability and public services (52.4%)
  - Stagnant regional economy (52.4%)
  - Protection of open space (42.9%)
  - RHNA requirements (42.9%)
- The plan drivers that had the largest percent of votes for "low priority" were:
  - New mobility (52.4%)
  - Environmental justice (38.1%)
  - COVID-19 Recovery (38.1%)
  - Public transportation (33.3%)
  - Population shifts (22.2%)

Action on Homelessness — Low 9.5%, Medium 9.5%, High 81.0%
Technology and Digital Infrastructure — Low 14.3%, Medium 19.0%, High 66.7%
Public Transportation — Low 33.3%, Medium 33.3%, High 33.3%
Historic and Cultural Resources — Low 14.3%, Medium 57.1%, High 28.6%
Creative Economy — Low 23.8%, Medium 52.4%, High 23.8%
COVID-19 Recovery — Low 38.1%, Medium 33.3%, High 28.6%
Wildfire Hazards — Low 9.5%, Medium 28.6%, High 61.9%
Climate Change — Low 4.8%, Medium 38.1%, High 57.1%
Carbon Neutrality — Low 23.8%, Medium 42.9%, High 33.3%
Water Supply — Low 0.0%, Medium 19.0%, High 81.0%
Environmental Justice — Low 38.1%, Medium 33.3%, High 28.6%
Equity — Low 19.0%, Medium 38.1%, High 42.9%
New Mobility — Low 52.4%, Medium 42.9%, High 4.8%
Focus on Active Transportation — Low 23.8%, Medium 38.1%, High 38.1%
Fiscal Stability and Public Services — Low 19.0%, Medium 28.6%, High 52.4%
Stagnant Regional Economy — Low 23.8%, Medium 23.8%, High 52.4%
Changing Retail Environment — Low 19.0%, Medium 52.4%, High 28.6%
Protection of Open Space and Natural Areas — Low 14.3%, Medium 42.9%, High 42.9%
Cost of Housing — Low 0.0%, Medium 19.0%, High 81.0%
RHNA Requirements — Low 19.0%, Medium 38.1%, High 42.9%
Population Shifts — Low 33.3%, Medium 33.3%, High 33.3%

Legend: ■ Low Priority ■ Medium Priority ■ High Priority

Workshop Approach

The final segment of the session focused on the first General Plan community workshop, which was scheduled for April 29th and focused on visioning. The intent of this section was to present and obtain feedback on the overall workshop approach, including the proposed agenda and small group exercises.

Overall, reception was highly positive and there were very few comments or suggestions. Below is a summary of the items discussed:

- In advance of the workshop, the City should ensure it is doing adequate outreach to engage minority and Spanish-speaking populations.
- In the near- to medium-term, the City should more seriously consider a transition back toward in-person engagement, since this is likely a more effective means of eliciting input.

Public Comment

A limited number of individuals spoke during public comment at the close of the meeting. Comments are summarized below:

- There is indeed a large outflux of families from Ventura for an easier quality of life. It is imperative that the City attract young families to ensure that the population does not continue to age.
- The General Plan should prioritize and promote healthy food choices in every community. Generally speaking, less affluent areas are saddled with less nutritious food options than are more affluent areas.
- A second train track would be great to better facilitation commuting patterns.
- Noise pollution (from cars) and light pollution (from spotlights) are big issues, affecting both humans and wildlife.
- Jobs, housing, and homelessness are three major pillars that the General Plan should address in an integrated way. Homelessness is increasing and it will have negative implications if it continues.
- Ventura needs a project (?) labor agreement so residents can both work in the city and stimulate the local economy.
- The conversation on broadband infrastructure is long overdue. This is about bridging the digital divide and creating future prosperity.
- Leveraging local organizations (e.g., churches) for viewing parties of virtual meetings could help expand participation. Face-to-face interaction is important for community-building.

Appendix

This Appendix contains a worksheet documenting the GPAC's brainstorm on Plan Drivers.

PLAN DRIVER	THOUGHTS, OBSERVATIONS, & COMMENTS	STRATEGIES & IDEAS FOR GENERAL PLAN?
Population, Land Use, and Housing		
Population Shifts	•	• Consider adding amenities like affordable child care. Social infrastructure can be supported to attract young families • Need to continue to support the education system
RHNA Requirements	•	•
Cost of Housing	• 2/3 of the County's homeless pop. Are in Ventura and Oxnard. Mental health and substance abuse are major issues with this population	• Need to ensure that we have a diverse mix of housing at different income levels • Brownfield sites could be better utilized • City is trying to play "catch up" with housing development, water supply, etc.
Protection of Open Space and Natural Areas	•	• How can we annex land in the SOI but outside City Limits? • Should the City think about how to participate in broader regional efforts to protect open space?
Economic Development, Mobility, and Health & Equity		
Changing Retail Environment	• Auto sales is ripe for disruption. What are we going to do with the Auto Center?	•
Stagnant Regional Economy	•	• Where can we accommodate a more productive manufacturing sector in Ventura? • Create a community of small-scale manufacturers (retail + manufacturing space), integrated with other amenities (e.g., housing)

		• Need to make sure this is an attractive environment for manufacturing, other desired sectors • General Plan needs to support all industries and businesses • Need to ensure we are hiring locally
Fiscal Stability and Public Services	•	•
Focus on Active Transportation	• Look into County Freight Corridor study, which will impact roadway design	• Expansive bike corridors that travel across the city • Devise strategy to reduce tourist dependence on cars. "Park once" strategy
New Mobility	•	• EV Chargers
Equity	•	• How do we address past discriminatory policies and practices?
Environmental Justice	•	•
Public Facilities, Climate Change, and Other		
Water Supply	•	•
Carbon Neutrality	•	•
Climate Change	•	• Need to think BIG on climate change, which is an existential crisis • Need to consider a managed retreat from the shore
Wildfire Hazards	•	• Better education and maintenance for open space • Agricultural buffers (and others) to protect our built environment
COVID-19 Recovery	•	•
Creative Economy	•	•

Historic and Cultural Resources	•	•
New Drivers		
Safe Access to Open Spaces	•	•
Internet Access and Broadband	• Needs to be emphasized more in the General Plan process • Technology will impact all parts of life, including education and transportation • Access needs to be equitable	•
Public Transportation	• Need to look more at expanding transit	• Explore a streetcar system
A City of Neighborhoods	•	•