

Community Workshop #1 Summary

June 14, 2021



Introduction and Overview

On Thursday, April 29, 2021, the City of Ventura hosted its first community workshop for the General Plan Update. This was the first in a series of approximately four workshops intended to elicit community input at key junctures in the planning process. The primary objectives of this workshop were to:

- Provide an overview of the General Plan update process for the public
- Establish a “common ground” starting point on existing conditions and past visioning
- Brainstorm on long-term vision
- Identify areas that are cherished and areas that could be improved

The session was held virtually via Zoom, featured live Spanish interpretation, and hosted around 120 participants (excluding City staff, the consultant team, and volunteers). This document summarizes the content presented and themes discussed at the workshop.

Workshop Structure

Matt Raimi, lead consultant for the General Plan Update, kicked off the session by welcoming participants and launching a five-minute visioning exercise, in which participants were asked to identify words or phrases they hope to use when describing Ventura in 2045. A brief round of introductions then ensued, followed by a 30-minute presentation that provided an overview of the General Plan’s purpose and requirements, snapshot of existing conditions, and summary of engagement to-date. Participants were then broken into 10 small groups to conduct three interactive visioning exercises, which lasted approximately one hour in total. Participants then reconvened for a debrief and summary of exercise results, and the meeting concluded with an overview of next steps in the planning process.

Results

Polling

Various polls were conducted at key points in the workshop, both in English and Spanish. These polls were organized thematically and primarily centered on the following topics:

- Demographics and Geography
- Familiarity with the General Plan
- Vision Statement

This section summarizes poll results, organized by theme. The figures shown below are aggregates of both English and Spanish responses.

Demographics and Geography

- White (Not Hispanic) individuals and adults aged 45 or older were overrepresented in the workshop. Over 69 percent of workshop participants identified as White (Not Hispanic), despite forming 55.7 percent of the City population. Similarly, nearly three-quarters (74.0 percent) of participants were aged 45 or older, despite forming just 43.5 percent of the City population.
- Hispanic/Latinx individuals and young adults were underrepresented in the workshop. Only 13.5 percent of participants identified as Hispanic/Latinx, despite forming 36.0 percent of the City

population. Similarly, only 26.0 percent of participants were between ages 19 and 44, despite forming 33.4 percent of the City population.

- Generally, the response rate by neighborhood was proportionate to residential population size. Residents of large neighborhoods like East Ventura (22.1 percent), College Area (18.3 percent), and Midtown (17.3 percent) participated most frequently, whereas smaller neighborhoods like Montalvo (3.8 percent) and Pierpont (5.8 percent) were less represented.

Familiarity with the General Plan

- Most participants (57.8 percent) were at least somewhat familiar with the City's existing General Plan.
- Over half of all participants (55.6 percent) had not attended a General Plan event previously.
- More than a quarter of all participants (26.7 percent) heard about the workshop via the General Plan E-blast, and another 40 percent heard either from an organization they follow or through social media.

Vision Statement

- Most participants (69.0 percent) considered the 2005 General Plan either good or great, and only 3.6 percent considered it outdated.

Word Cloud

As the workshop commenced, participants were asked to participate in a brief exercise answering the following prompt:

- Thinking ahead to 2045, what are some words or phrases you hope to use when describing what it's like to *[live/work/play/visit]* Ventura?

Participants were allowed to submit as many words or phrases as desired, using the Mentimeter digital engagement platform. This exercise resulted in the word cloud shown on the following page.

The most common words and phrases submitted included:

- Sustainable (22x)
- Diverse (13x)
- Green (9x)
- Open-spaces (8x)
- Inclusive (7x)
- Clean (6x)
- Affordable (5x)
- Healthy (5x)
- Beautiful (5x)

- Improve focus on multi-modal transportation, including walking and biking. Existing bike lanes could be expanded to better connect with other trails, open space amenities, restaurants, and neighborhoods
- Improve public transportation service and access – including both bus and boat transit – to accommodate cross-town travel and allow residents to age in place
- Provide efficient multimodal access to Oxnard
- Promote design methods that improve connectivity between districts and neighborhoods
- Modernize the transportation system through electrification, among other strategies
- Provide more bike parking options around the city
- Encourage safe routes to schools initiatives
- Integrate transportation and land use planning decisions
- Expand affordable and transit-oriented housing options, specifically for families, young professionals, and local workers
- Respect the historic character of existing neighborhoods
- Thoughtfully execute higher density housing and promote sustainable growth
- Address homelessness
- Promote high quality building design
- Ensure that infrastructure is provided concurrent with growth
- Revitalize underutilized sites, including the mall and auto center
- Ensure diversity of land uses to allow for a variety of building sizes
- Preserve and protect traditional single family residential neighborhoods

Environment

- Combat the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, heat, and wildfires
- Ensure sustainable management of natural resources
- Address coastal erosion
- Address Ventura’s water shortage and drought prospects
- Promote carbon neutrality
- Expand the urban forest
- Reduce pollution citywide, addressing disproportionate burden on disadvantaged communities
- Address lighting issues, waste, and littering
- Eliminate single-use packaging

Collaboration

- Improve collaboration and communication with the community, prioritizing youth and the Hispanic/Latinx community
- Expand volunteer options in the city
- Engage proactively with the community as early as possible in planning processes, engaging a diverse cross section of the community
- Support public education and conduct outreach with the school community

Social Activity

- Promote social and physical connectivity
- Ensure that housing prices are proportionate to local incomes

Economy

- Promote and transition toward a green economy, attracting environmentally friendly businesses
- Reduce dependence on the fossil fuel sector
- Prioritize local workers in employment
- Expand trade schools and vocational education options
- Support and sustain the agriculture and aquaculture industries
- Remove barriers to better attract, welcome, and support small businesses
- Retain commercial activities at Ventura Harbor
- Deter illicit camping in public and private realms.

Magic Genie

Imagine a magic genie gives you 3 wishes to implement your vision. What would they be? (e.g., cost, feasibility, etc. do not matter!)

- Use desalination and recycled water to sustain water resources
- Bury or cap the freeway (perhaps with a park) to improve access to the beach
- Expand community resources and facilities, including public bathrooms, libraries, and community centers
- End homelessness, such as through the creation of a homeless shelter with addiction treatment and services
- Improve the business environment, such as through support for small businesses and attracting new businesses to Ventura
- Improve economic vitality in the city
- Revitalize the Fairgrounds
- Repurpose the Golf Course
- Create a comprehensive and usable transit system that provides easy access to all
- Improve transportation and connectivity throughout the city
- Implement effective parking solutions for new development
- Retain the community's character as an authentic California beach town
- Provide sufficient housing options for all socioeconomic groups, ensuring that Ventura is an affordable place to live
- Attract competitive industries that create high-wage jobs for residents
- Become a sustainable community that is well-adapted to the impacts of climate change
- Create new and improved open spaces that provide important value to the community
- Expand the trail network to facilitate safe and comfortable cycling across the city, including bicycle-grade crossings
- Expand the urban forest and tree canopy throughout the city
- Improve collaboration between the City and community
- Provide 100% carbon neutral buildings and promote electrification
- Restore historic buildings and architecture
- Provide mental and physical healthcare resources
- Provide new beautiful gateways, including at underpasses and on/offramps

- Improve pedestrian infrastructure, including widened sidewalks, expanded tree canopy, and sheltered bus stops
- Grow and develop the green (and blue) economy with good-paying jobs
- Create a hillside trail to connect Harmon Canyon to the Westside
- Maintain a car-less downtown
- Provide affordable public gathering spaces
- Expand use of solar energy for housing
- Make Pacific View Mall an open-air destination

Places

Thinking about the "places" in the City...

- *Which areas do you love?*
- *Which areas need some love?*

Love

- **Parks and open spaces:** An abundance of unique public open spaces, including Kimball Park, Arroyo Verde Park, Grant Park/Botanical Gardens, and Harmon Canyon, among others.
- **Ventura Harbor:** Great shopping and recreational asset for the community.
- **Downtown:** Great mix of amenities with walkable streets and vibrant architecture. Outdoor dining on Main Street could become a more permanent fixture.
- **Westside/The Avenue:** Great cultural vibrancy, sense of history, and "bohemian" feel.
- **Oceanfront promenade:** Great public gathering space
- **City Hall:** Beautiful historic asset
- **Hillsides:** Great natural amenity
- **Trail and Bike Paths to Ojai:** Great asset, could be connected to Ventura Avenue

Needs Love

- **Pacific View Mall:** Severely underutilized and could be redeveloped, perhaps as a new mixed-use housing community or outdoor commercial center.
- **Midtown corridors:** Vacant and underutilized buildings on streets like Thompson, Main, and Victoria could be either rehabilitated or redeveloped as new uses. Pedestrian features like walking paths, street trees, and other landscaping could also improve the pedestrian environment and bring more "charm."
- **Ventura Fairgrounds:** Located at a prime location but not regularly activated or programmed for public use. More frequent use of this asset could create real value for the community.
- **East Ventura:** Lacks amenities (e.g., grocery stores, restaurants, parks, etc.), infrastructure, and a strong sense of identity.
- **Industrial areas near 101:** Areas like the Johnson Drive corridor and North Bank industrial district host blighted and underutilized uses (including the McGrath Property). These areas could be revitalized to attract new types of employers to Ventura. Workforce housing could also be provided.
- **EP Foster Library:** Needs to be renovated and reestablished as a usable community asset
- **Surfers' Point:** Great asset that reflects Ventura's authentic beach town character
- **Saticoy:** Could be annexed, remediated, and revitalized.

- **Kimball Park:** Has the potential to be a key gathering space for East Ventura, but it remains incomplete.
- **Beach Environment:** Needs to be cleaned up and improved for regular public use
- **Westside Land Use Conflicts:** People should not live next to heavy industry. Hiking access nearby should also be expanded
- **Toys R Us Center:** Underutilized site that should be redeveloped
- **Victoria Avenue:** Corridor is too auto-dependent
- **Ventura River bike lanes:** Should be expanded and improved through to Pierpont
- **Downtown Infrastructure:** Traffic conditions and sidewalks should be improved
- **River Bottom:** Inaccessible and needs a public restroom
- **Ventura County district Offices:** Could be redeveloped into a town center for the Westside
- **Harbor-to-Midtown Connection:** Safe and effective connection needs to be established to link these neighborhoods
- **Strip mall on Ashwood:** Could improve
- **Santa Clara River Crossing:** Needs to be improved with multimodal access to Oxnard
- **County Government Center:** Surrounding could be redeveloped into a town center
- **Selby Trail:** Make into a public space

Appendices

Polling Results

Figure 1: Have you Attended a General Plan Event Before?



Figure 2: How familiar are you with the existing GP?

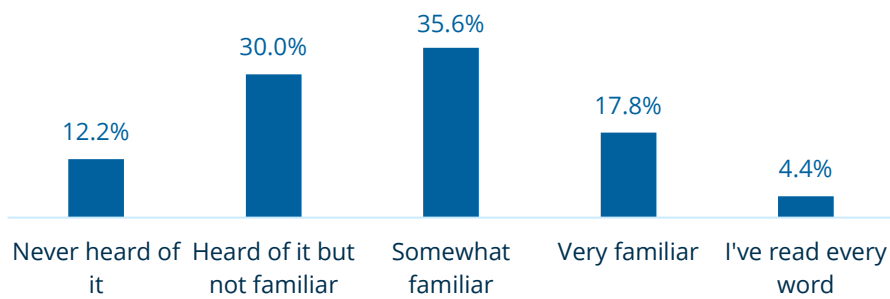


Figure 3: How did you hear about this workshop?

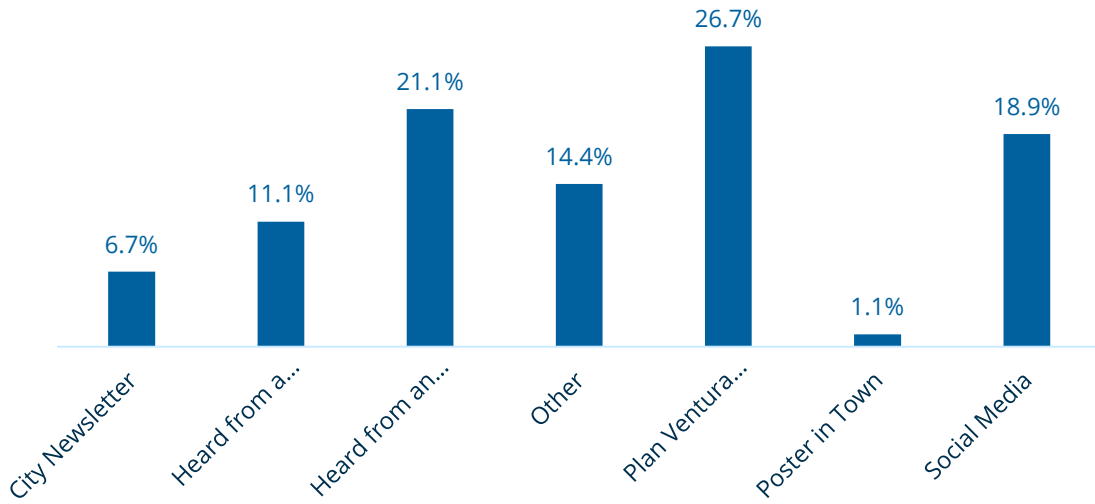


Figure 4: What is your age range?

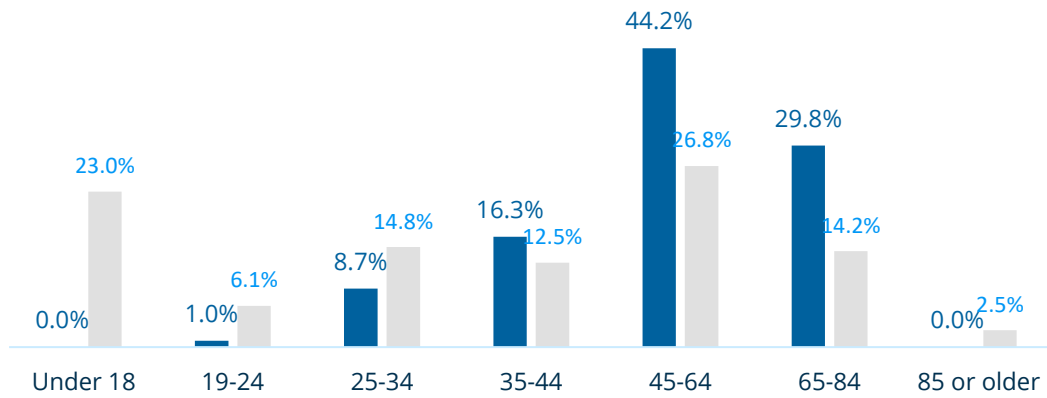


Figure 5: What best describes your background?

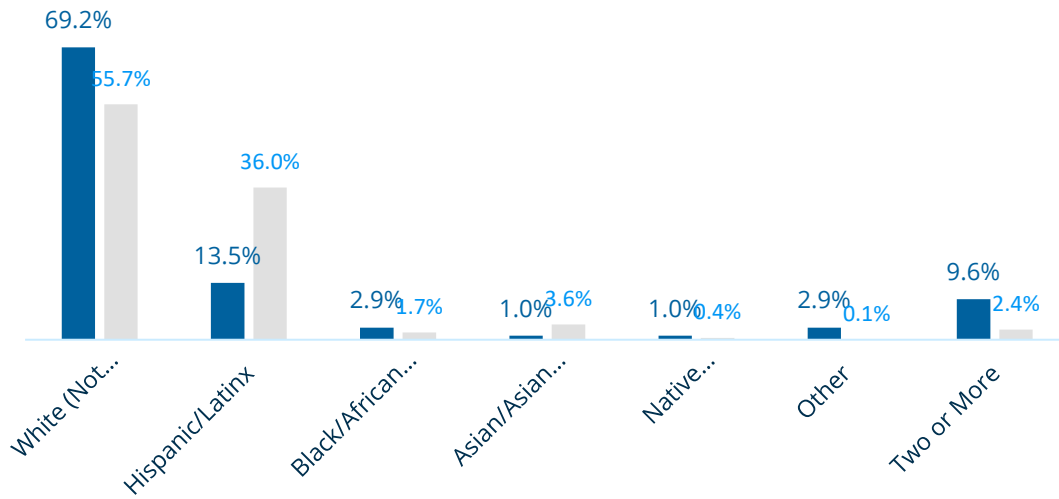


Figure 6: How long have you lived in Ventura?

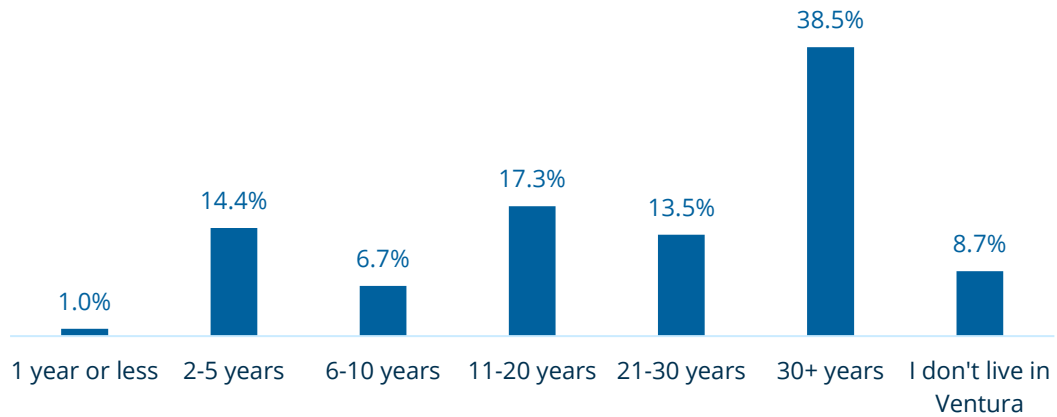


Figure 7: What area best describes your neighborhood?

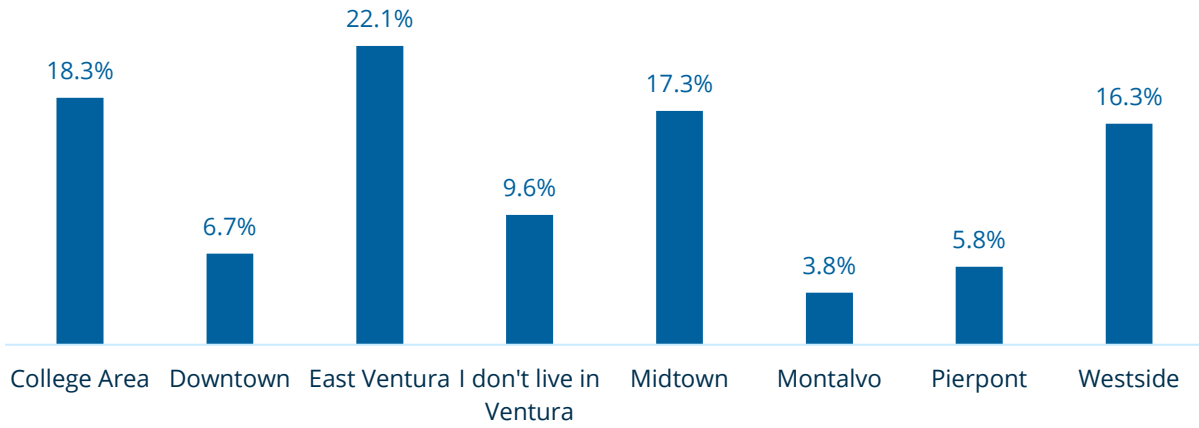
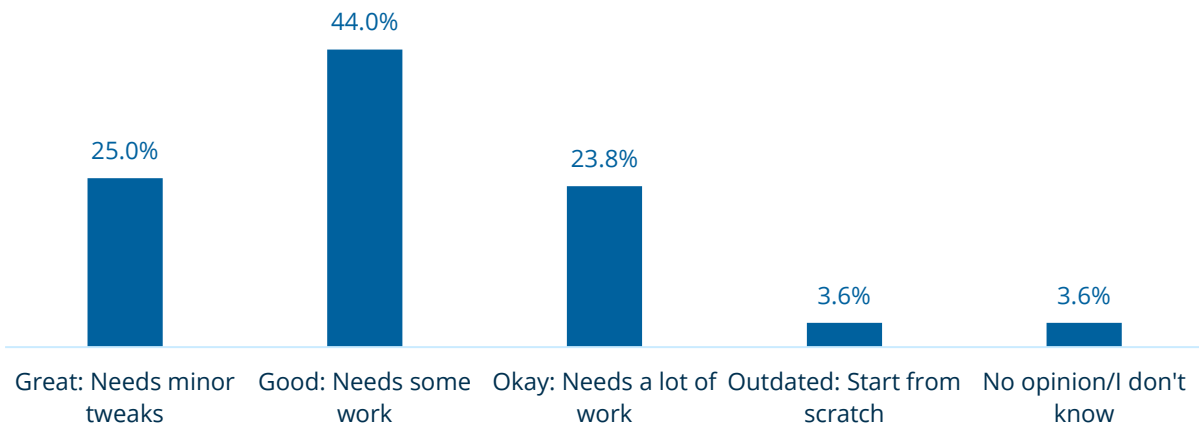


Figure 8: Overall, what do you think of the 2005 Vision Statement?



Small Group Exercises

The following pages contain raw exercise results from the small-group discussions.

Group #2

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| <p>What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We need to do more for environmental sustainability (clean and green the city, enact climate action, create jobs) 2. Improve walkability and access to nature (trail connectivity, beach access) 3. Address erosion along the coastline and sea-level rise |
| <p>Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. End homelessness and offer holistic (mental health, job support, etc.) services to our unsheltered community 2. Greening and beautifying throughout the city, emphasis on improving public spaces 3. Potential zoning/land use changes (repurpose San Buenaventura Golf Course land, rethink Fairgrounds land use) |
| <p>Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Midtown 2. Oceanfront 3. Hospital |

Group #3

| Question | Answer |
|---|--|
| <p>What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need to address water. 2. Greater diversity in housing options and support for first time buyers. 3. What is the future of transportation in Ventura? Balancing drivers with walkers, bikers, and commuters/alternative transportation 4. Equity in approaching these issues |
| <p>Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Desalination plant, gray water and greater options for future water. 2. Improving walkability of downtown, including covering freeway, expanding biking trails, Main St. closure for dining/visitors 3. Buried utilities (including broadband for all). |
| <p>Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Love: Downtown, Parks, Harbor, Hillside, Beaches 2. Needs Love: Expanded Trails, Toys R Us/Vacant Store Fronts along main roads, Grocery/Services shortage on East End. |

Group #4

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| <p>What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Better transportation – public and active transit (bikes, walking) ; connected paths 2. More sustainable practices – packaging, no oil wells 3. Balance sustainable growth and slow growth |
| <p>Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Urban forestry – more trees! 2. No freeway! Better access to the beach 3. Better connectivity of trails |
| <p>Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ventura River and Avenue – need improvement and address homelessness 2. Park love – Harmon, Kellogg, Cemetery 3. Liven up Midtown and the Victoria/Johnson corridors |

Group #5

| Question | Answer |
|--|---|
| What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need inclusive, affordable housing in a sustainable economy for all socioeconomic groups. 2. Need to disperse attractions across the city (Avenue, west side, east side) 3. Want to live and work locally! |
| Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need better/safer bike connectivity throughout the city. 2. Take environment and climate into consideration in building plans. 3. Have a locally-built community center. |
| Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. East end & Avenue need lots of love in many ways – coastal area & downtown are good. 2. Love the green open spaces – must protect them! 3. Do something about Pacific View Mall & city gateways/corridors. |

Group #6

| Question | Answer |
|--|--|
| What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things) | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Climate Change2. Disadvantaged Communities3. Environmental Justice |
| Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things) | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Affordability2. Aging in Place3. Connecting Downtown to the Beach4. Trade Desk parking issue |
| Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places) | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Westside2. Downtown3. Johnson Drive Corridor |

Group #7

| Question | Answer |
|--|---|
| What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Consideration 2. Transportation alternatives important. Tension with Growth. 3. Social Connection important |
| Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate change resilience (big solar) 2. Vibrant Human-centric (walkable/bikeable) based communities 3. Green well-paid Businesses |
| Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harmon, VBG, Beaches 2. Needs love rivers and homeless 3. Needs love the East End business |

Group #8

| Question | Answer |
|---|--|
| <p>What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community needs to evolve 2. Transportation: Bus service, bike lanes, encourage walkability, creative design to enhance public's use (inter-neighborhood connectivity). 3. Ocean views (code for don't build anything over 2 stories); recommendation from half of group 8 to remove "ocean views" from this statement. |
| <p>Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revitalize and reuse underutilized areas, need to have creative land uses, protect agricultural resources 2. More affordable housing 3. Transportation connectivity throughout the City |
| <p>Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Mall 2. Johnson Dr. - Blighted properties, repurpose areas with creative land uses. 3. Westside (need to support Westside Community Council, build a Town Center, reduce blight/pollution for residents) |

Group #9

| Question | Answer |
|--|---|
| What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environment is too broad, be more specific 2. Bring more private sector for economic vitality, keep/bring younger population 3. Importance of parks and recreation 4. Improve broadband opportunities |
| Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address homelessness and low income, add more affordable housing 2. Add more bike lanes and improve safety (bike lanes not next to cars, improve sidewalks) 3. Appeal to large private companies |
| Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Downtown 2. Midtown (Pacific View Mall, improve restaurants and businesses in Midtown) 3. Our parks need more love (ex: Community Park) |

Group #10

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| <p>What are your main takeaways from the Vision Statement? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2005 Vision statement lacked implementation at odds with zoning and logistical considerations. Let's create a vision that's in alignment with what can be done. 2. Emphasize urgency in regards to climate change. Economics, and housing. 3. Need infrastructure to match growth. |
| <p>Which themes or wishes were most popular, if any? (choose 3 things)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More public resources: bathrooms, libraries, community centers. 2. More collaboration and communication between the City and the communities. 3. More City support to local businesses and the City needs to attract new businesses. |
| <p>Which places in the city were mentioned frequently? (choose 3 places)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ventura River mouth/estuary and City beaches. 2. Market St/ Industrial area 3. Selby Trail, Arroyo Verde, Harmon Canyon. We need more of these open spaces. |