

# GPAC Meeting #4 Summary

June 17, 2021



## Introduction

On June 15, 2021, the City of Ventura General Plan Update team convened the fourth meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The session was held jointly as an educational forum and focused on housing – the first in a two-part series, with the second scheduled for June 29<sup>th</sup>. The primary meeting objectives were to provide an overview of:

- Existing housing conditions in the City
- Housing Element requirements and update process
- Housing-related engagement

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
- Veronica Tam, Veronica Tam & Associates

### 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
- Bill McReynolds, GPAC
- Daniel Reardon, GPAC
- Sabrena Rodriguez, GPAC
- Alejandra Tellez, GPAC
- Abagale Thomas, GPAC
- Dana Worsnop, GPAC

# Presentation

Lorrie Brown, GPAC Chair, initiated the session and welcomed all participants to the meeting. Matt Raimi then provided a brief overview of the agenda and summarized the General Plan Update process, before turning it over to Veronica Tam – the City’s housing consultant – who gave an in-depth presentation on existing housing conditions, the purpose and requirements of the Housing Element, and upcoming housing-related engagement. At the conclusion of the presentation, the General Plan team initiated a Q&A session fielding questions first from the GPAC and subsequently from members of the public.

Finally, the meeting concluded with a public comment session.

# GPAC Feedback and Discussion

## Q&A Session

Following the presentation, GPAC members asked several questions and made comments related to housing policy and development. Below is a summary of these questions (***bolded and italicized***) and accompanying responses from City staff and/or the Consultant Team.

- ***What is the deliverable or outcome of the sites inventory?***
  - It will be a parcel-specific database, with an accompanying map, that identifies vacant and underutilized sites that are suitable for housing.
- ***Would build-out of our full RHNA help reduce housing costs?***
  - The RHNA only covers housing for the City of Ventura. Housing costs result from many macroeconomic factors and the relationship is very complex.
- ***Do Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) count toward the City’s RHNA?***
  - Yes, ADUs count toward RHNA. However, projections are not based on existing capacity, but rather on historical trends of ADU development (annual average between 2018-19).
- ***What regulations concern hotel/motel conversions in the Coastal Zone? Several in Ventura are run-down and could be redeveloped as housing.***
  - The Coastal Commission discourages the conversion of hotels and motels, so it is more likely that hotels/motels outside the Coastal Zone can be redeveloped. This is something that will be evaluated during the process.
- ***Does Ventura’s relatively old housing stock hold it back relative to other cities, and is there a point at which housing is considered too old?***
  - There is no standard or target age for housing stock. Housing quality is the primary consideration, which means that preservation and rehabilitation are important in older cities like Ventura.
- ***Is it possible to mandate inclusionary housing in Ventura?***
  - Yes. The City of Ventura is working on updating its inclusionary housing program.
- ***What is the status of Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH), and when will that analysis come in the Housing Element Update process?***

- The consultant team will perform the analysis concurrent with the Housing Element Update. However, the team needs to finish the sites inventory first.
- ***Could the State conceivably force Ventura to reconsider its SOAR initiative in the interest of growth and development?***
  - The State prohibits growth management programs that would limit the number of housing units built in a community until 2025. That said, the State does not have any specific policy concerning the implementation or elimination of SOAR since it is not a growth management ordinance.
- ***Could any vacant or underutilized lands be redeveloped as mobile and/or manufactured homes?***
  - Technically yes, but this is not a popular strategy. Mobile home development is not a land efficient strategy due to its relatively low density (~12-15 du/ac), and the financing is difficult. Furthermore, this model is generally unattractive to younger households.
- ***Does Ventura currently have rent control, and if not, could that conceivably be part of a housing plan moving forward?***
  - State law permits municipalities to adopt rent stabilization, which regulates annual rent increases. Ventura currently has a rent stabilization for mobile home parks and could conceivably develop a similar program for other unit types.
- ***Can the Housing Element identify potential sites in the Sphere of Influence (SOI)?***
  - Only if there is an annexation plan in place that can occur within three years. However, the City would have to negotiate with the County to annex the RHNA allocation associated with the annexed land.
- ***Can the City currently implement new design guidelines?***
  - Possibly, but we will need to check and confirm.
- ***Are there any cities to study in terms of best housing practices?***
  - This is difficult to answer because every city is unique and faces a different set of challenges. That said, cities like Long Beach, West Hollywood, and Ojai have some progressive housing policies that could be worth replicating.
- ***Can the City consider rezoning and redeveloping of vacant, underutilized, or otherwise aging properties that are not included in the Housing Element?***
  - Yes, the City can rezone any area at any time.

## Other Comments

- Ventura has experienced an influx of new residents during the pandemic given the flexibility that remote work provides for many professionals. This has caused a noticeable increase in going rents, which has not yet subsided.
- An affordable housing overlay could be a powerful tool in Ventura, as it has been effective elsewhere in facilitating affordable housing development. A strategy could be to include sites greater than two acres and zoned for at least 30 du/ac.
- A by-right housing ordinance could also be helpful, permitting affordable multifamily housing in specific zones via a ministerial review process.

- Community members should consider opening up spare rooms in their homes for people in need.
- It is important to promote affordable farmworker housing, as these households perform a key role in the economy.
- The City should explore eliminating single-family zoning as a way to address fair housing issues.
- The Housing Trust Fund, as well as other potential sources, should be leveraged to fund affordable housing in Ventura.
- There is significant capacity on corridors and aging commercial areas to build new housing. We need to make sure we're focusing on building community, not simply building housing.

## Public Comment

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

- The housing crisis is severely impacting young people, who worry that they cannot afford to live in Ventura. The City should eliminate single-family zoning to expand housing opportunities and ease pressure on households.
- The Housing Element should pursue goals/policies that not only help produce new units, but also preserve existing affordable housing.
- As a result of the pandemic, many people will continue to work from home, and millennials are increasingly interested in single-family homes. These have implications for local planning moving forward.
- It is imperative to make Ventura a more affordable and inclusive place – we can't continue to displace people.
- Our community is paying the price for bad decisions in the past. Codes and regulations are so onerous that they increase the price of housing.
- We need an effective mass transit system across the whole state.
- We need to look at our corridors, urban forest, housing proximate to jobs.