

GPAC Meeting #17 Summary

November 15, 2022



Introduction

On November 15, 2022, the City of Ventura convened the 17th meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide an overview of the community outreach and engagement activities related to the land use alternatives survey
- Release the land use alternatives survey responses and identify high-level observations and trends from the survey
- Identify how the GPAC can take a leadership role in reviewing the results of the survey
- Discuss the process to develop the preferred land use alternative, including the GPAC's role in this process

The meeting was open to the public and held in person in the Community Room at City Hall. The meeting was livestreamed on [YouTube](#). This document summarizes the key content presented and themes discussed.

Meeting Participants

The following participants attended the meeting:

General Plan Team

- Matt Raimi, Raimi + Associates
- Susan Harden, Circlepoint
- Neda Zayer, City of Ventura

GPAC Members

- Lorrie Brown, GPAC Chair
- Doug Halter, GPAC Vice Chair
- Philip Bohan, GPAC
- David Comden, GPAC
- Kyler Carson, GPAC
- Joshua Damigo, GPAC
- Peter Freeman, GPAC
- Kacie Goff, GPAC
- Scott McCarty, GPAC
- Bill McReynolds, GPAC
- Sabrena Rodriguez, GPAC
- Dana Worsnop, GPAC

Absent: Nicholas Bonge, Stephanie Caldwell, Nicholas Deitch, Kelsey Jonker, Stephanie Karba, Erin Kraus, Louise Lampara, Daniel Reardon, Alejandra Tellez

Meeting Format

Susan Harden welcomed GPAC members and the public to the 17th GPAC meeting and followed with an overview of the meeting agenda. Matt Raimi then gave a brief presentation covering outreach and engagement activities completed to date, as well as a high-level overview of the land use alternatives survey results. Following the presentation, Susan and Matt facilitated a brief Q&A session to answer questions from the GPAC. For the bulk of the meeting time, GPAC members split into small groups to discuss the process for analyzing the survey results and recommending a preferred land use alternative. The GPAC reconvened after the small group discussion to report back on each of their ideas. Susan synthesized the suggestions from each small group and proposed next steps in the process. The meeting concluded with public comment.

Q&A Session

Following the presentation, GPAC members had the opportunity to ask questions about the survey results and the small group discussion. This section summarizes their questions and comments, as well as accompanying responses from the General Plan Team.

- **If the GPAC were to divide into small groups, would the subcommittee meetings be subject to the Brown Act and require opportunity for public comment?**
 - The small groups are not subject to Brown Act regulations if they represent less than a quorum of the GPAC, as long as the results of their work and discussions are presented back to the large group.
 - *Note: The Brown Act is a State law which guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies.*

- **There were changes made to some of the land use alternatives maps on October 6, 2022. Is this considered when reviewing surveys that were completed before October 6?**
 - The updates made to the maps did not influence the survey results. Aside from correcting the land use designation for a school on the Westside, the General Plan Team revised the land use designation for a specific area in the Downtown (the Urban Core) based on a change in City staff's interpretation of the Downtown Specific Plan. There were no survey questions which asked about this area, nor were there any land use alternatives proposed for the area.
 - *Note: All of the map changes are documented on the [project website](#).*

- **If the GPAC decides to review the survey results in small groups, how will GPAC members who are absent from this meeting be included?**
 - The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the process for reviewing the survey results. If the GPAC decides to have small groups outside of regular meetings, the actual group assignments would be determined offline.

Other Comments

- The GPAC needs to hear from the public whether they trust the GPAC to move forward with this process. If they do not, they should share ideas for how the GPAC can gain the public's trust.
- We need to be mindful of the fact that the people attending this meeting are not representative of the whole community or all the survey respondents.
- The City is experiencing a lot of leadership changes at both the staff and Council level, so it is important that we have as much transparency and participation as possible during this next step of the General Plan process. We have heard a general distrust of how the process has happened thus far and need to own and address that to earn the public's buy-in. Holding area-specific meetings would allow people to engage more meaningfully with the areas that matter most to them.

GPAC Small Group Discussion

The GPAC broke into three small groups to discuss the process for reviewing the land use alternatives survey results and arriving at a preferred land use direction. Specifically, they were asked to think about:

- **Format:** whether GPAC should analyze the survey results all together, in small groups, or through some other hybrid method
- **Geographic Focus:** whether GPAC should look at the whole city or focus on specific geographic areas
- **Level of Detail:** how detailed their land use recommendations should be (parcel level, high level, or somewhere in between)
- **Timing:** how long they need to review and interpret the survey results
- **Resources:** any additional data or materials they need to review the survey results or make recommendations

The GPAC members were provided worksheets to help organize their notes and reported their ideas to the large group at the end of the discussion session. Their suggestions are summarized below.

Group 1 – David, Bill, Kacie, Kyler

- Would like to hear recommendations on the survey findings from the General Plan Team, given their experience and expertise.
- Conduct additional outreach and engagement with younger adults, renters, Latinx populations, and other underrepresented groups.
- GPAC members should meet as a large group over four consecutive nights and discuss three areas per night. The public will be notified of these meetings and invited to attend the area-specific meetings they are most interested in.
- Given that it will be challenging to engage the community during the holidays, no meetings should be held until January.

Group 2 – Josh, Pete, Scott, Sabrena

- Decision-making from the GPAC and/or City Council should not start until April, given all the recent changes in City leadership. There is no need to rush anything. Time can be spent before then working with the community to discuss the land use ideas.
- GPAC members should split into small groups and leverage their personal networks to conduct targeted outreach that touches a broader cross-section of the community.
- All GPAC members should look at the whole city. Each group will decide how to best engage people within their communities, but they will all ask specific questions intended to gain more clarity around topics or areas with unclear survey results. The small groups will bring this feedback to the large group and hold informational meetings, organized around different geographic areas, to discuss the input heard from the community.
- General Plan Team should provide map printouts that can be used with the public and cross-tabbing analysis of specific survey results as requested.

Group 3 – Lorrie, Doug, Philip, Dana

- GPAC members should split into small groups, and each will look at three geographic areas. Anyone with interest in areas outside of their group can also share their input.
- Would like to hear recommendations on the survey findings from the General Plan Team.
- Give a higher weight to feedback from survey respondents who live in the respective geographic area and younger people who are going to inherit the future.
- Do not oversimplify the dialogue - land use is a complex, multifaceted topic that is much more than just building heights. All land use decisions should consider the tradeoffs related to transportation, design, housing, etc.
- We cannot lose sight of the community vision, and the process should not be driven by a few hot button topics.

Summary of Next Steps

After hearing from each small group, Susan synthesized the GPAC members' ideas and proposed a tentative timeline for the coming months.

- **January:**
 - Prior to the January meeting, the General Plan Team will conduct additional interpretation of the survey results and share with the GPAC, including a comparison to existing demographics in different geographic sub-areas.
 - At the January GPAC meeting, the GPAC will identify which geographic areas have clear direction and which do not. The GPAC will then decide how to divide into smaller groups to engage with the specific geographic areas. Each group will discuss various sub-areas of the city and not the whole city.
 - GPAC members will identify specific questions that should be asked to the community so there is consistency in outreach methods and results.

- **February-March:** GPAC members will conduct targeted outreach. As needed, the General Plan Team will provide support with maps, handouts, additional data analysis, etc.
- **March:** The GPAC will review and discuss input heard from the community. They will also determine the meeting approach for geographic area review and recommendations in April.
- **April:** There will be three or four GPAC meetings to review and provide land use direction for each specific set of geographic areas.
- **May:** The General Plan Team will come back with a preferred land use alternative for Planning Commission and City Council to review and endorse.

Public Comments

Several individuals spoke during public comment at the close of each meeting. Comments are summarized below.

- The process should be conducted holistically (this is a citywide General Plan and not a neighborhood-by-neighborhood plan). Coordinate planning efforts throughout the city. Conduct more robust outreach to young people, who will be most impacted by this process. Integrate State housing laws into the conversation to remind the public of the broader framework that the General Plan operates in and the ground rules that are outside of the control of City staff or consultants.
- We are entering into a new “phase” of engagement with the GPAC. The General Plan process has to be community-driven, and the GPAC is the right group to help make that connection. As the GPAC members go out into the community and meet with different groups, public trust will naturally be built. In the future, create simpler surveys to help the average resident participate.
- The surveys required too much time and knowledge from the respondents. I am retired and had the time to take the surveys, but that would not be the case if I was raising kids. The office hours were helpful. The survey unnecessarily included SOAR development in two of the alternatives, leaving people opposed to SOAR development with no choice except the Base and Core; this likely skewed the survey results. Many people do not agree with planning for three RHNA cycles. Take the proposed land use recommendation to the public before going to City Council. Pause the General Plan process until “phase 2” of engagement is more fleshed out. Remove item 18.3 in the Housing Element.
- I am skeptical about the survey, because it is self-selected and participants had a vested interest in their completion of the survey. I suggest making a quota-based sample separated by Council districts, with random sampling in each district that requires various age ranges and demographics. Incentivize participation by paying respondents to complete the survey.
- I am skeptical about the survey. The nomenclature of the proposed land use designations is confusing and should be renamed. The City should only plan for one RHNA cycle. Zone for lower building heights to account for the State Density Bonus. Create simpler surveys.
- If we want to be able to live and work closer to our homes, we need to attract more businesses into the area and improve how we move people around. Many of us came to this “little cow town by the sea” because of its agricultural character and friendly community spirit. Let’s not lose that identity in the process of trying to accommodate State mandates.

- Building new housing in a tsunami zone where there is one exit to higher ground is irresponsible. No new homes should be built until another higher ground exit for residents exists. No upzoning is needed.