

GPAC Meeting #20 Summary

March 6-7, 2023



Introduction

On March 6 and 7, 2023, the City of Ventura convened the 20th meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The meeting was held over two consecutive evenings from 6:00-9:00 PM each night. The purpose was for the GPAC to discuss and recommend land use direction for the Eastside, College, Johnson, and Westside Areas of Discussion (*the GPAC also planned to discuss Five Points/Pacific View Mall, Downtown, and the Midtown Corridors, but there was not enough time to discuss these areas*).

Both parts of the meeting were open to the public and held in person in the Community Room at City Hall. They were also livestreamed on YouTube (the recordings can be accessed at the following links: [March 6](#); [March 7](#)). This document summarizes the key conclusions from the meeting.

Meeting Participants

The following participants attended the meeting:

General Plan Team

- Matt Raimi, Raimi + Associates
- Lilly Nie, Raimi + Associates
- Susan Harden, Circlepoint (*present March 7*)
- Neda Zayer, City of Ventura

GPAC Members

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Doug Halter, GPAC Chair | • Peter Freeman, GPAC |
| • Bill McReynolds, GPAC Vice Chair | • Kacie Goff, GPAC |
| • Philip Bohan, GPAC | • Kelsey Jonker, GPAC |
| • Nicholas Bonge, GPAC | • Stephanie Karba, GPAC |
| • Lorrie Brown, GPAC (<i>present March 7</i>) | • Erin Kraus, GPAC (<i>present March 6</i>) |
| • Stephanie Caldwell, GPAC | • Louise Lampara, GPAC |
| • David Comden, GPAC | • Scott McCarty, GPAC |
| • Kyler Carson, GPAC | • Daniel Reardon, GPAC |
| • Joshua Damigo, GPAC | • Sabrena Rodriguez, GPAC |
| • Nicholas Deitch, GPAC | • Dana Worsnop, GPAC |

Absent both evenings: Alejandra Tellez

Meeting Format

March 6, 2023

Matt Raimi welcomed GPAC members and the public to the 20th GPAC meeting. He then turned it over to Doug Halter, GPAC Chair, to provide opening remarks and to introduce a slight change to the GPAC meeting format. *(Note: A decision was made by the Chair that for the remaining GPAC meetings where land use direction will be discussed, there will be 10 minutes at the beginning of the meeting for public comment and 15 minutes at the end of the meeting. The intention is to provide an opportunity for community members to give their comments before GPAC discussion if they wish to do so).* Following public comments, Matt Raimi provided an overview of the meeting agenda, summarized outreach and engagement efforts to date, reviewed the GPAC's process for developing land use recommendations and conducting additional engagement.

Similar to the previous meeting, the GPAC spent the rest of the evening discussing a preferred land use direction for the Eastside, College, and Johnson Areas of Discussion. A vote by "show of hands" was conducted for each sub-geography once the GPAC appeared to reach a consensus on a land use direction. The meeting concluded with public comment.

March 7, 2023

The format of this meeting was identical to March 6, except live Spanish interpretation was provided. The GPAC spent the bulk of the meeting discussing a preferred land use direction for the Westside Area of Discussion. Susan Harden facilitated this discussion session.

GPAC Discussion: Land Use Direction for Areas of Discussion

The following section summarizes the GPAC's land use direction and other policy ideas for each Area of Discussion, organized by sub-geography. Land use direction with consensus from the majority of GPAC members is **bolded**. Note that the GPAC did not reach a final land use decision for Johnson; the GPAC will wrap up their discussion on this area at the April 18th meeting. Broader, citywide policy ideas are listed at the end of this section.

Eastside

Note: Please see the February 21 meeting summary for additional policy ideas on the Eastside Area of Discussion.

Shopping Centers

- **Designate as Neighborhood Center.**
- Create policies which support more walkable "15-minute neighborhoods" around the shopping centers. Ideas include:

- Limiting the amount of parking required for new residences.
- Reducing parking requirements in exchange for streetscape and transit improvements.
- Moving away from car-oriented retail.

Agricultural Lands Within City Limits

City-Owned Agricultural Parcel

- **Maintain as agriculture for now, with a General Plan implementation action to create a Specific Plan for the area.** Ideas discussed include:
 - Affordable housing, including low-density affordable housing types such as mobile homes and tiny homes
 - Farmworker housing
 - Light industrial uses (i.e., packing and storage) to support nearby agriculture
 - Retail
 - Mixed use
 - Public open space and other community benefits

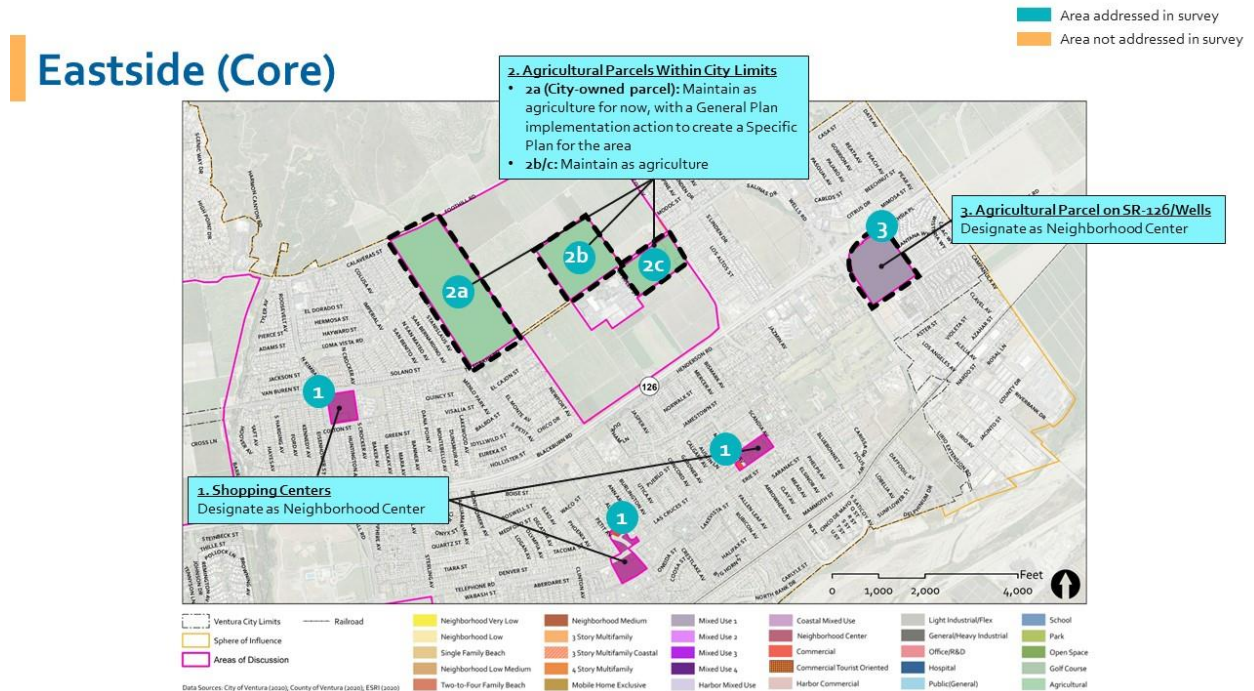
Other Agricultural Parcels

- **Maintain as agriculture.**

Agricultural Parcel at SR-126/Wells

- **Designate as Neighborhood Center.** Acknowledging both the need for and challenges of attracting a grocery store in the area, create policies which help ensure incoming retail is commercially viable.
- Work with Caltrans to create another SR-126 interchange outside of Victoria or Wells to help reduce cross-town traffic impacts from increasing residential density in the area.

Figure 1: GPAC Land Use Direction for Eastside Area of Discussion



College Area

Overall Vision/Thoughts

- Work with Ventura Community College to explore opportunities for additional student housing and better uses for parking lots.
- Need for pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements across the whole area, and in particular Telegraph corridor.
- Need for more student housing near campus (student homelessness is a pressing issue).
- Enhance the campus atmosphere with more restaurants, bars, and social activities. Creating a “15 minute college town” with more fun places to walk to can reduce reliance on cars and reduce the impact of traffic.
- Prioritize meeting the needs of college students.

Area West of VCC

- **Designate strip commercial parcel north of Telegraph as Mixed Use 3 (5 stories).** This area is directly adjacent to the College and would be an ideal location for higher density student housing without impacting any single-family neighborhoods.
- **Designate area south of Telegraph as Mixed Use 1 (3 Stories).** The lower height respects adjacent single-family residences.
- **Keep existing zoning** for remaining parcels in this area.

Area East of VCC

- **For the parcels north of Telegraph and west of Teloma: designate the single family area as 3 Story Multifamily and maintain the mixed use area as Mixed Use 1 (3 Stories).**
- **Change the single family area south of Telegraph to 3-Story Multifamily, since a 3 Story Multifamily project is already entitled there. Maintain current zoning on the commercial parcels south of Telegraph.**
- Split feedback on the parcels north of Telegraph and east of Teloma: about half of the GPAC want to maintain current zoning on the parcels until there is more information on County setback requirements around the barranca; the other half would like to designate the area as 3 Story Multifamily (the properties are owned by churches and there are potential partnership opportunities to build affordable housing).

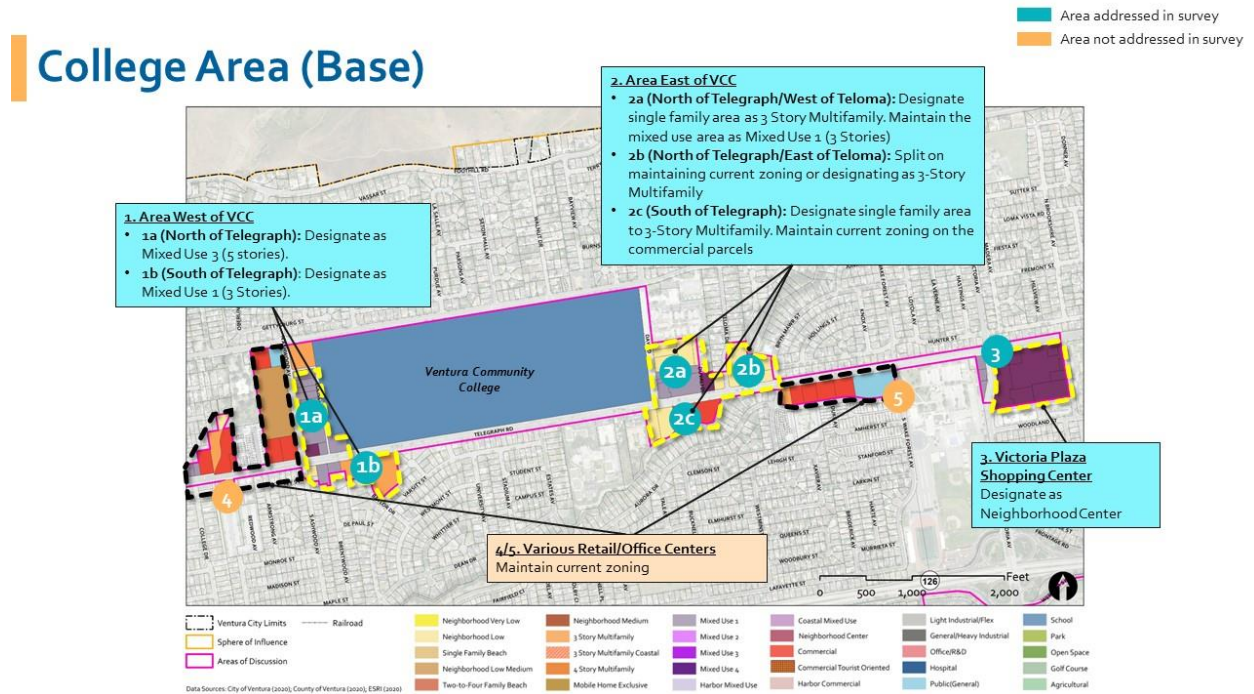
Victoria Plaza Shopping Center

- **Designate as Neighborhood Center.**
- Maintain the existing grocery store; this area is an important shopping center for Eastside residents.
- Provide more efficient parking options.

Various Retail/Office Parcels

- **Maintain current zoning.**

Figure 2: GPAC Land Use Direction for College Area of Discussion



Johnson

Note: The GPAC did not make a decision on land use designations for the Johnson Drive area since there was not enough time. This area will be discussed again at a future GPAC meeting. Comments from the GPAC discussion are summarized below.

Overall Vision/Thoughts

- Create a Specific Plan for this area.
- Transform the area into an Eastside town center that also connects to areas in Oxnard like Riverpark and Wagon Wheel.
- Avoid turning the area into a Riverpark or Wagon Wheel.
- Be cautious about adding more residential near industrial uses.
- Maintain the area as a critical commercial and industrial area of the city and protect viable businesses.
- Either make the Metrolink station a real focal point (with access issues fixed) or relocate the station.
- Study the feasibility of restricting right turns from North Bank Drive onto Ventura Boulevard to improve traffic safety.
- Leverage the Rails to Trails project to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.

Johnson Drive

- Preserve some commercial spaces along Johnson Drive.
- Attract young families by maintaining the area around the freeway as a public entertainment destination. Consider creating a performing arts center at the old theater.

Industrial Areas Around the Metrolink Station

- Consider transit-oriented development in the areas directly north and south of the Metrolink station.
- Improve transit connections from the Metrolink station to other areas of the city. Provide more lighting, signage, and welcoming uses (i.e., retail) for people exiting the train.

Follow Ups

- The General Plan Team will:
 - Provide more information on the Olivas Park/Johnson Drive interchange and Olivas Park Drive extension projects.
 - Look into where the Rails to Trails project starts/ends and whether the trail east of Elba connects to this project.
 - Consider adding the Hiji property, which is outside of the City limits and SOI to the discussion for this area.
- Nick Deitch, Sabrena Rodriguez, and Stephanie Karba will do some more thinking about this area offline. They will bring back policies and ideas for the GPAC to consider when the group resumes discussion on this area.

Westside

Overall Vision/Thoughts

- Preserve the eclectic mix of uses and jobs.
- Promote more low-density housing types such as ADUs and tiny homes.
- Prevent gentrification and displacement.
- Encourage clean industries while phasing out noxious industrial uses (*note that air quality monitoring sites along the Avenue show that most pollution is coming from the freeway, not heavy industrial sites*).
- Explore potential opportunities for more Ventura Housing Authority sites.
- Explore creating a one-way transit loop along Ventura and Olive.
- Make Ventura and Olive more pedestrian and bike friendly streets to reduce reliance on cars.
- Having a transportation plan will help drive land use decisions for the area.

Ventura Avenue South of Stanley

- **Designate parcels along the corridor to Mixed Use 1 (3 Stories) but maintain the ability of current industrial uses to continue to grow their businesses.**
- Preserve the uniqueness of the Avenue and its eclectic mix of uses.

Olive Avenue between Vince and Ramona

- Designate parcels with commercial uses as **Mixed Use 1 (3 Stories)**; designate parcels with residential uses as **3 Story Multifamily**?
- Create more access points to the Ventura River trail.
- Identify key intersections or areas where it makes sense to require some ground floor commercial.

Town Center at Ventura/Stanley

- Designate parcels east of the Avenue as **Commercial** (*note that these are deeper parcels that would be split*). Maintain current zoning on the parcels west of the Avenue.
- Implement the Westside Community Plan's vision for a 'Town Center.'
- Ensure that the Town Center does not compete with other commercial areas along the Avenue.
- Consider other locations for a town center (i.e., north of Stanley).
- Improve circulation by prohibiting southbound traffic from SR-33 to exit onto Stanley.
- Potential location for a community pool.

Ventura Unified School District Site

- Designate as **Mixed Use 1 (3 Stories)** and create a **Specific Plan** that fleshes out a vision for this area. Ideas for the mix of uses include affordable housing, workforce housing, retail, parks, and office/R&D.

Industrial Areas

- Maintain current zoning but phase out noxious industrial uses.
- Move the gas compressor station.
- Consider moving heavy industrial uses to North Avenue.
- Preserve existing laydown yards.
- Outreach to business owners to discuss their needs and vision for the area.

Area around EP Foster Elementary

- Maintain current zoning.

Ventura North of De Anza & Area Around Ventura Charter School

- Maintain current zoning but change the **Mixed Use 4 (6 Stories)** parcels to **Mixed Use 1 (3 Stories)**.

Area North of Seneca

- Maintain current zoning except for:
 - **Old Avenue School site.** The current Neighborhood Low designation should be changed since there is potential to redevelop the site as a trade school, workforce training center, etc. Because there is a storm drain that may preclude development on

- Hold one more transportation-focused GPAC meeting with presentation from Caltrans on what can happen with highway interchanges.
- Look into ways to activate the Saticoy area
- Examine what is needed to maintain agriculture in the region including processing and farmworker housing; ensure that these uses are close to existing agricultural areas in the City.

Public Comments

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

March 6, 2023 (Beginning of meeting)

- Public comment should take place after the General Plan Team present on each Area of Discussion but before GPAC begin deliberating their land use decisions.

March 6, 2023 (End of Meeting)

- The City needs to create a Specific Plan for the Johnson Drive area to transform it into a welcoming and attractive gateway to the city. If we want to achieve buy in for the General Plan, we need to respect existing neighborhoods.
- The property owners of the 6.25-acre site south of the Metrolink Station (6205 Ventura Boulevard) envision the area as a high quality, transit oriented development and would like to see a Mixed Use 3 (5 Stories) designation for this parcel. Existing buildings are 50-70 years and all of the leases are coming up for expiration in the next 2-4 years. The site has already been assessed for its redevelopment potential and financial feasibility, and there have been discussions with senior City Staff, local transit agencies, and the Montalvo Community Council.
- Natives and BIPOC people are largely missing from this discussion, and many can no longer afford to live in the city. Satellite imagery maps would be helpful for future meetings. Avoid using the term 'green space,' since grass is not native to the area. There is currently no space in Saticoy to add a large grocery store or retail center. Ensure that we are making this city 'attractive' for everyone in the community.
- Agriculture contributes to the charm and uniqueness of the city. Consider developing more farmworker housing and hosting educational tours to help preserve farmland within our community. Properties along Johnson Drive should all have the same zoning so that they work together cohesively. Replace the Motel 6 with a different hotel. Consider building skybridges across Johnson to create more of a gateway to the city.
- If transit oriented development around the Metrolink station is being considered, there needs to be a discussion on the adjacency issues with the railroad. The area has critical circulation issues that needs to be addressed and needs a Specific Plan that incorporates community input. I agree with wanting to attract more families to the area. The area around the freeway exit could be an ideal location for a civic auditorium (but not for housing).

March 7, 2023 (Beginning of meeting)

- The City is not capable of accommodating a growth in population. Traffic is already an enormous problem and roadways are old. Traffic studies need to be a part of the GPU. Bike paths in the city also need to be improved.
- Keep in mind the General Plan vision statement, which strives to maintain the City's quintessential California beach town character. Maintain the Downtown Specific Plan and protect the historical character that residents and tourists love.
- We want to maintain our city's character while welcoming new residents and keeping the city affordable for those who currently live and work here.
- It would be helpful to specify percentages for areas with 'mixed feedback.'
 - *Response: The General Plan identified areas with 'mixed feedback' as those where the percentages for different survey choices were roughly the same.*
- There needs to be an equitable distribution of density throughout the city, especially considering evacuation issues from the Thomas Fire. Be precise about what uses are classified as light industrial or heavy industrial. For example, artisan welders could classify as heavy industrial, but we do not want to drive those people out of the community. Businesses on the Westside are open to collaborating on these definitions. The General Plan Team should also look into Surplus Land Act sites deeded from the Foster family.

March 7, 2023 (End of Meeting)

- I never received a mailer about the General Plan Update, and many of my neighbors did not know how to provide input on the land use alternatives. Consider extending future meetings by an hour to avoid adding another meeting.
- Concern about poor architecture and cheaply built buildings across the city.
- Closer employment opportunities and a comprehensive transportation plan will help reduce commute times and vehicular traffic. A town center would be a great addition to the community and I support adding a grocery store on Stanley. Consider implementing a pilot program for one-way streets on Ventura and Olive. Implement the Westside Community Plan.
- When discussing the Downtown and Midtown Corridors, the City should strive to accommodate gentle density in a context sensitive manner. Maintain the Downtown Specific Plan and Midtown Corridors Plan and think very carefully about making any changes.