

GPAC Meeting #24 Summary: Parks and Open Space

January 29, 2024



Introduction

On January 29, 2024, the City of Ventura convened for the 24th meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The purpose of the meeting was to recap the changes to the land use map and review the Parks and Open Space Policy Framework's goals, policies, and actions.

The meeting was open to the public and held in person in the Community Room at City Hall. The meeting recording is available on YouTube. This document summarizes the key conclusions from the meeting.

Meeting Participants

The following participants attended the meeting:

General Plan Team

- Matt Raimi, Raimi + Associates
- Sasha Cheechov, Raimi + Associates
- Rachel Dimond, City of Ventura
- Susan Harden, Circlepoint

GPAC Members

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|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Dana Worsnop, GPAC | • Louise Lampara, GPAC |
| • David Comden, GPAC | • Nicholas Bonge, GPAC |
| • Doug Halter, GPAC Chair | • Peter Freeman, GPAC |
| • Kacie Goff, GPAC | • Philip Bohan, GPAC |
| • Karba, GPAC | • Scott McCarty, GPAC |
| • Kyler Carson, GPAC | • Stephanie Caldwell, GPAC |

Absent: Alejandra Tellez, Bill McReynolds, Daniel Reardon, Erin Kraus, Joshua Damigo, Kelsey Jonker, Lorrie Brown, Nicholas Deitch, Sabrena Rodriguez

Meeting Format

The meeting began with a round of introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda led by Susan Harden. Matt Raimi then reviewed the process of creating the land use designation map, including the final direction from the City Council. After discussing all changes, there was time for questions from GPAC members. This was followed by an overview of the remaining project schedule and proposed general plan outline and structure. Finally, Matt reviewed the Parks and Open Space existing conditions, issues and strengths, and proposed goals. This was followed by public comment and general comments and questions from the GPAC. Afterwards, the GPAC split into three working groups to discuss the parks and open space goals, policies, and actions. Each group had a large-scale map displaying existing parks and open space and copies of the Draft Policy Framework. The meeting concluded with representatives of each group sharing their proposed ideas for the parks and open space network and their edits to the Draft Policy Framework.

Land Use Designation Discussion

The following section summarizes the GPAC's questions and comments regarding the land use designation map.

- If you find out we are not in compliance with no net loss, what is that process going to look like?
- How are we going to make it open and transparent for the public as far as the technical process that staff must conduct?
- Is there an already established, State-endorsed analysis process to calculate growth projections or will staff be using in-house methodology? If we are doing in-house, why would we do that as opposed to taking projections that are already in place/have been vetted?

Schedule and General Plan Outline Discussion

The following section summarizes the GPAC's questions and comments regarding the project schedule and proposed General Plan outline.

- Could the methodology behind growth projections and technical analysis be placed in Section 2 of the General Plan?
- The GPAC concluded that they needed more time to think about the proposed GPAC schedule.

Parks and Open Space Presentation Discussion

- Why are SOAR areas included with parks if they are privately owned and there for agriculture and commercial farming, not recreation? Seems at odds with the issues discussed in the policy framework, which are generally trying to increase access.
- In the presentation it says the city standard is 4.6 acres/1000 residents, but in the existing conditions section it states the goal is 10 acres/1000 residents.
- Ventura Community Park/Aquatic Center on Kimball has lots of unused space. Is there a completion date for when these plans will come to fruition?

- As far as accessibility, if you draw a half mile radius anywhere in the City, will there be a park in any of those radii?
- How were issues and strengths identified? Why are there discrepancies?

Public Comment

Several members of the public provided public comments. A summary of the comments is below.

- Midtown Ventura Community Council strongly supports Goal 1.12 of collaborating with Ventura USD to have joint use agreements and open school grounds for public use after school hours. Other Community Councils support this goal as well.
- Ventura Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) NPO that operates in and around the City. Currently the VLT owns 4,000 acres of land shown on the map. Their goal is to conserve open space and provide access for the community. VLT would encourage GPAC and the City Council to consider designating the lands the VLT owns that fall within the city limits and sphere of influence as “open space” rather than current designations. VLT also recommends adding a policy about partnering with NGOs.
- A parks strategic plan is needed. There is support for collaboration with the school district to open school yards for public use in order to provide ten-minute walk to open spaces. Ventura must develop a revenue stream to fund park maintenance, whether it is an open space district, neighborhood land trust, or other method. The City should work with Community College district to reopen Ventura Community College fields for public use after hours. Other ideas recommended are:
 - Require parcels to develop additional community gardens with or without adjacent parks.
 - Provide the budget necessary for the Parks Department to accomplish their goals.
 - Create more access points to Ventura River Trail.
 - Continue greening community with trees along trails, parks, and elsewhere in community.
 - Implement all new paths and trails in the safest possible manner.
 - Make sure that all plans are coordinated, such as the Active Transportation Plan, Senior Strategic Plan, General Plan, etc.
- Where does the impact fee for open space go? If it goes to general fund, maybe we could use some to fund open spaces.
- In lieu fees need to be re-evaluated or alternatives presented because land is much more expensive now. Purchasing one acre in Downtown would cost north of \$3 million. We could require larger setbacks to include linear parks along the properties.
- When a new development is required to have open space, we should not let developers use city-owned properties adjacent to it as their required open space. At one point the city had offered KB Homes the Bluffs to be part of their open space. They should create their own park. This should be the same with barrancas, beaches, etc.
- Include dark sky initiative as a policy to benefit wildlife. Red lighting could also be used.
- Thousand Oaks has 10 acres/1000 residents and we have ~5 acres/1000. A lot of cities in the state have ~5 but that's not a good way to set a goal. The City should have a stronger goal of 10 acres/1000 residents. We can require the developers to create more open space and parks. There are no parks under 2 acres in Thousand Oaks.

Parks and Open Space Report Out

GPAC members were asked to give high-level feedback on the policies and actions after their small group discussions. A summary of the comments is below.

- Prioritize adding new parks in high density areas.
- As more housing is created along Thompson, create Chumash Park where San Miguel Chapel used to be to honor the native peoples and their traditions. Make it more of a restful space than an activity-focused park.
- Consider a park district.
- Invest in school property, do joint operations, and share expenses. Utilize the schools as the assets that they are. Work with the Community college district as well.
- Change implementation goal of converting one school/year into a park to 3-5 schools/year.
- Establish a Master Plan for Parks and Recreation Department.
- Cap the 101.
- Connect all the bike paths on the map.
- Change one or both golf courses to open space.
- Expand dark sky ordinance; could be included in Goal 1.
- Have a City vote on golf courses (niche versus serving entire community). There is not a need to subsidize golf courses especially when they flood frequently. City money goes to repairing golf courses every 5 years or so.
- SOAR may not have a place in Parks and Open Space element since it is not publicly accessible.
- Do people want the SOAR lands because it is commercial agriculture, or because they are associating it with open space, parks, and greenery?
- Do not say striving for safety by providing lighting; instead, just "providing lighting", as we already have a safe park.
- The public does not want to see residential development on SOAR lands.
- City needs to put strong policies in GP to protect farming if this is something that is desired.
- Fully support VLT in making open space accessible to the public.
- Main Street would be a perfect place for a linear park if Main Street Moves becomes permanent.
- Pacific View Mall would be a good location for green space if the parcel is redeveloped.
- "Accessible trails" should be changed to "accessible beaches, parks, and trails." The General Plan should embrace an accessibility mindset and go above and beyond to make places welcoming to people of all ability levels.
- AstroTurf is not a good or sustainable option for the City. Prefer natural alternatives. Delete this reference in the Policy Framework.
- City should partner with groups such as the Botanical Gardens or VLT to diversifying funding for park and open space maintenance.
- Support on-site requirement for new developments over certain size.
- Make connections with community partners (i.e. Kaiser, CMH, VCMC, County Government Center) to create spaces for activity. See Kaiser's exercise loops and natural environments for inspiration.

- Improve wayfinding signage, mile markers, and other things that encourage using outdoor spaces.

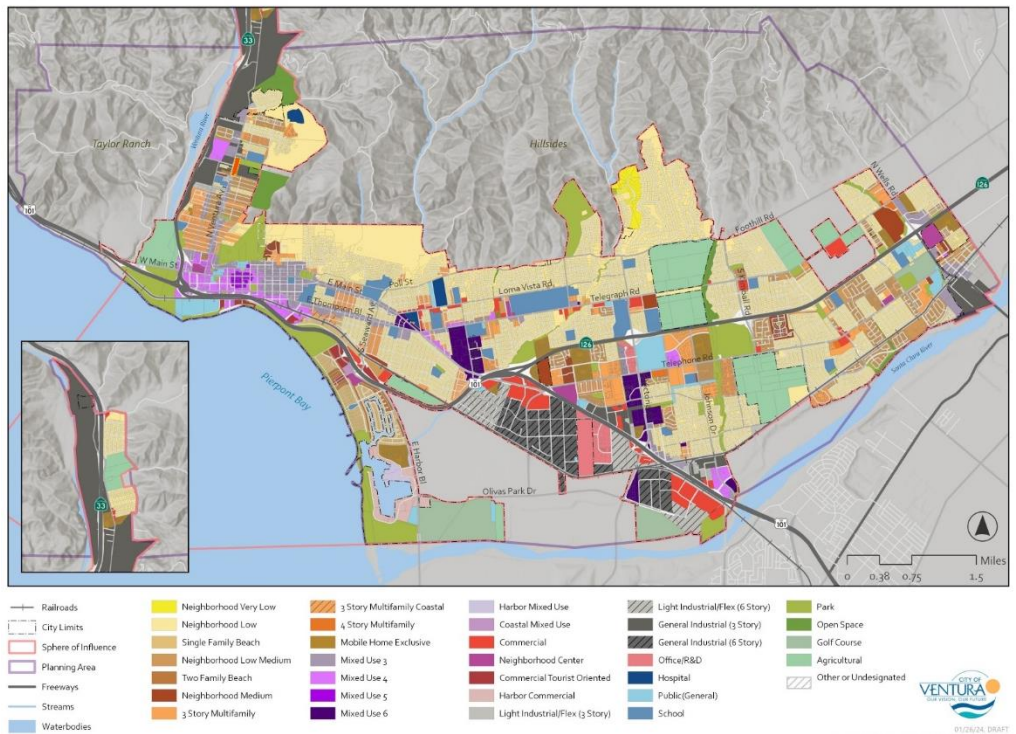
Group Working Session

The following parks and open space map was provided for the GPAC to leave comments on. They were also provided with a land use map (also shown below) for context.

City of Ventura Parks and Open Space



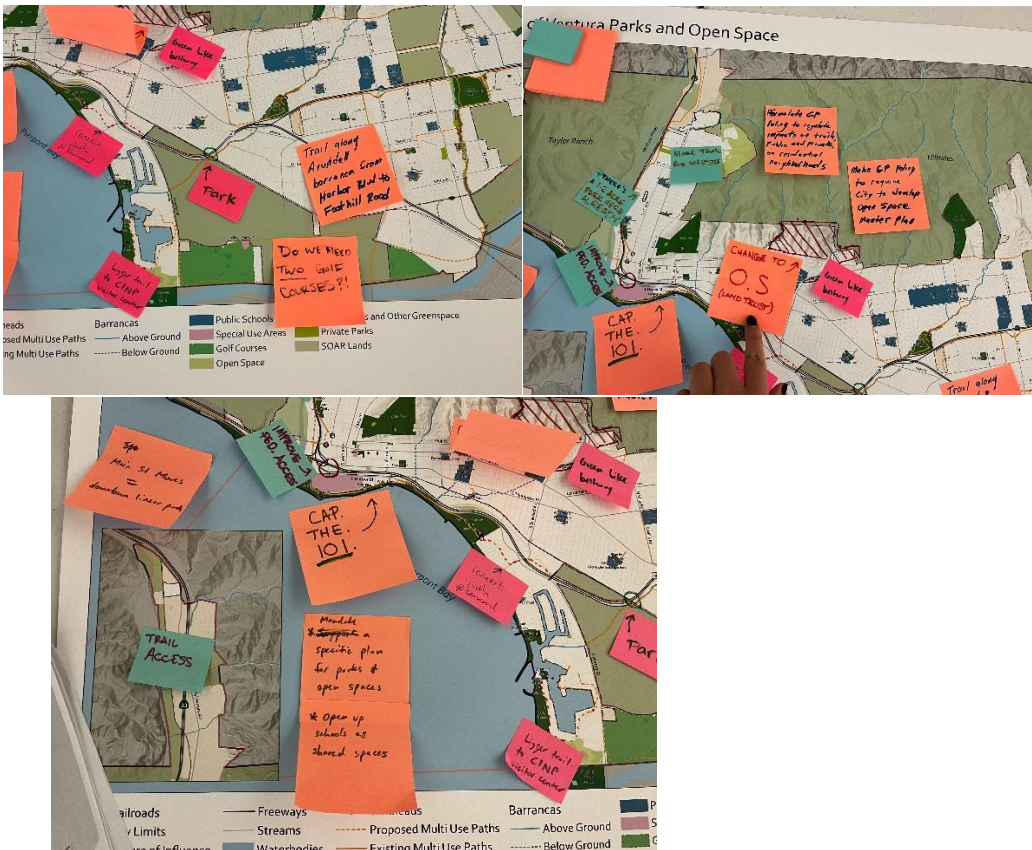
City of Ventura Preferred General Plan Land Use



Group 1 Map Notes



Group 2 Map Notes



Group 3 Map Notes



Barrancas	Public Schools	Public Parks and Other Greenspace
Use Paths	Special Use Areas	Private Parks
— Above Ground		

Transcribed Map Notes

- Make GP Policy to require city to develop open space master plan
- Formulate GP policy to regulate impacts of trails, public and private on residential neighborhoods
- Trail along Arundell barranca from Harbor BLVD to Foothill Rd.
- Do we need two golf courses
- CAP the 101
- Mandate a specific plan for parks and open spaces
- Open schools as shared space
- Main St. moves = downtown liner park
- Bigger trail to CINP visitor center
- Improve pedestrian access at the fair grounds
- Connect the San Buenaventura beach path to seaward/Pierpont
- Create park at the 101/railroad tracks - between seaward and main St./126/telephone exits
- Change open space about Ventura high school to O.S. Land Trust
- Green bike beltway along Poli/Foothill
- More trails for Westside
- There's a 1.2 acre park at olive street/James? West of Ventura Avenue
- Better trail access for Westside
- Use agreement schools enforcement of use hours, waivers, etc.
- If Main Street Moves becomes permanent, create liner park (incorporate emergency access)
- Support public comment to zone hillside above downtown/midtown as open space
- Greenbelt/liner park along Alessandro
- Include beaches in open space
- Incorporate open public space as a component as part of the Pacific View Mall reimagine
- Eastend - more public engagement - does the public really want commercial agriculture or do they want park/greenbelt/open space
- Park on Ventura Avenue School property
- Harbor Blvd - east of Fairgrounds, hidden gem - interpretive center Chumash Heritage
- Cover the Freeway!
- Multi-use trail along Alessandro
- Park in Pacific View Mall - redevelopment
- Parkland when auto-mall dies at Johnson