

GPAC Meeting #9 Summary

November 30, 2021



Introduction

On November 30, 2021, the City of Ventura General Plan Update (GPU) team convened the 9th meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The primary meeting objectives were to:

- Continue the discussion of the results of the Vision Survey
- Review community feedback on the location of new development from other engagement activities (including pop-up workshops)
- Review and discuss the draft “Areas of Discussion” map

The meeting was open to the public and live-streamed to YouTube. This document summarizes the key content presented and themes discussed in the meeting.

Meeting Participants

The following participants attended the meeting:

General Plan Team

- Matt Raimi, Raimi + Associates
- Lilly Nie, Raimi + Associates
- Gabriela Zayas del Rio, Raimi + Associates
- Susan Harden, Circlepoint
- Peter Gilli, City of Ventura
- Neda Zayer, City of Ventura

GPAC Members

- Lorrie Brown, GPAC Chair
- Doug Halter, GPAC Vice Chair
- Philip Bohan, GPAC
- Nicholas Bonge, GPAC
- David Comden, GPAC
- Joshua Damigo, GPAC
- Nicholas Deitch, GPAC
- Peter Freeman, GPAC
- Kacie Goff, GPAC
- Kelsey Jonker, GPAC
- Stephanie Karba, GPAC
- Erin Kraus, GPAC
- Louise Lampara, GPAC
- Scott McCarty, GPAC
- Bill McReynolds, GPAC
- Daniel Reardon, GPAC
- Alejandra Tellez, GPAC
- Abagale Thomas, GPAC
- Dana Worsnop, GPAC

Absent: Stephanie Caldwell, Kyler Carson, Sabrena Rodriguez

Meeting Format

Doug Halter welcomed GPAC members and the public to the 9th GPAC meeting. Susan Harden followed with a brief overview of the meeting agenda and then handed it over to Matt Raimi to share staff updates. Notable updates included the Draft Housing Element going out to the Planning Commission and to City Council on January 12th and 31st, respectively, and recent engagement efforts from the General Plan Team since the last GPAC meeting, including individual meetings with every City Council member, a tour of the Westside to learn more about the unique challenges this part of the city faces, and a meeting with the Ventura Keys Association.

Matt then presented the results of the pop-up workshops that took place from August to mid-October throughout Ventura. He followed up with a review of additional “cross-tab” analysis that the General Plan Team conducted for the Vision Survey results. After the presentation, Susan moderated questions from the GPAC on the additional engagement results. A summary of the discussion is below.

Following the questions on engagement, Matt provided background information on the inputs to the “Areas of Discussion” map. These included the July GPAC meeting, meetings with Community Councils, the Vision Survey, the pop-up workshops, and the existing General Plan. Following this brief presentation, Susan facilitated a discussion to obtain feedback on the identified areas. Feedback from the GPAC members was captured using the online application, Miro. This exercise was an interim step to developing land use alternatives and a preferred land use plan. Finally, the meeting concluded with public comment.

GPAC Feedback and Discussion

Pop-Up Workshops & Additional Vision Survey Results

Following Matt’s presentation on additional outreach activities and engagement results, GPAC members provided a few comments and questions. Their feedback, along with accompanying answers from the General Plan team, is briefly summarized below (questions are ***bolded and italicized***).

Questions

- ***During the tour of the Westside, what kind of issues related to social justice were discussed with community groups?***
 - The conversation was focused on environmental justice, the legacy of gas compressor stations and oil fields on the Westside, incompatible mixes of industrial and residential uses, and the overall health implications for the area.
- ***How much importance should we place on the pop-up workshop results, considering there was a low number of participants?***
 - There were over 500 people who stopped by and heard about the process through the pop-up workshops. The actual number of participants varied, because not everyone completed every activity. Often, people just wanted to stop by and not necessarily spend time putting information down. Note that none of the survey results should be interpreted as statistically valid. Instead, they should be understood as individual datapoints that when added together with other forms of input, such as the

stakeholder meetings and conversations with councilmembers and community groups, provide high-level direction for the values and themes of the General Plan.

Comments

- Pesticide use should remain a central focus of discussion on the Westside.
- The General Plan Team should consider other forms of community engagement, including reaching out to business groups, putting flyers on water bills, and attending little league and soccer practices

“Areas of Discussion”

GPAC members were asked to provide comments on the “Areas of Discussion” map prepared by the General Plan Team. The purpose of the Areas of Discussion is to identify locations where new development could occur over the next 20-30 years. This map will form the basis for the land use alternatives.

Specifically, GPAC members were asked to consider the following questions:

1. Are the geographic locations in the map for potential development correct?
 - Should any areas be added to the map? If so, where and why?
 - Should any areas be removed from the map? If so, where and why?
2. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments about new uses or the amount of development in specific geographic areas?

To focus the conversation, the “Areas of Discussion” map was divided into three geographic areas (see maps below for reference).

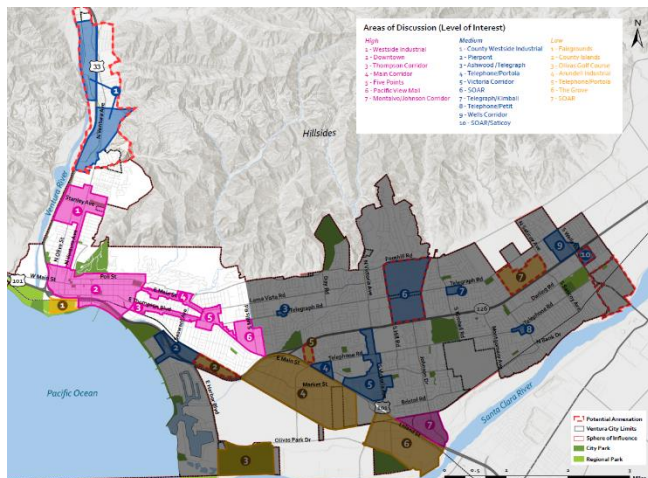


Figure 1: Westside/Downtown

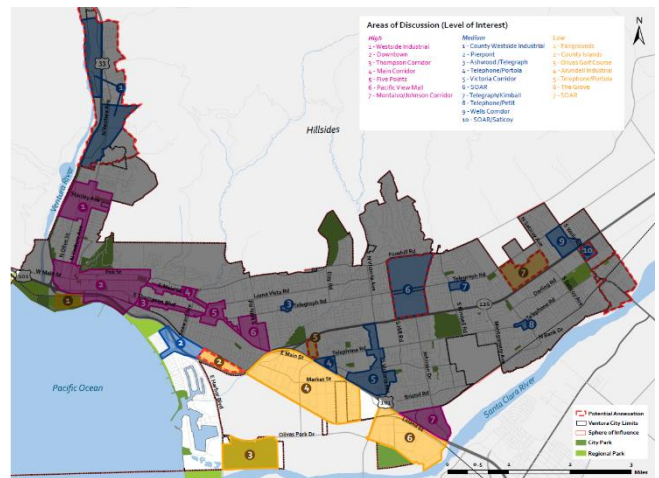


Figure 2: Below US-101

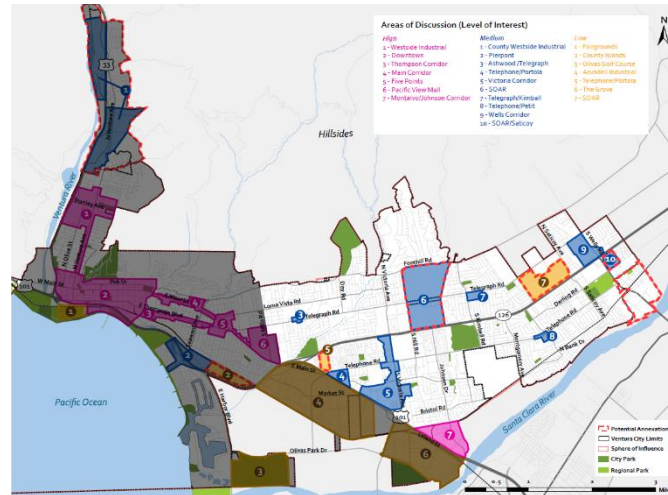


Figure 3: Eastside

Overall, GPAC members felt that the map accurately reflected the locations where new development would occur in the future. GPAC members did provide suggestions for additional locations that could be added to the map. GPAC members also provided ideas about the type of development that could occur in some locations. A summary of their detailed feedback is below, categorized by the three geographic areas:

Westside/Downtown

- Main and Thompson corridors don't seem financially feasible for development, considering how small the parcels are and how difficult it is to assemble land. The General Plan should identify strategies to address this.
- The Westside industrial area and the Thompson corridor are two of the most affordable areas of city. We need to maintain current levels of affordable housing in these areas while meeting the need for new development.
- Bottom of Seaward Avenue should also be considered as an area of discussion; much of the land is vacant and underutilized, and it is also an entry point for the city and its beaches.
- The General Plan should encourage small infill development by eliminating parking requirements and other barriers to development, and improving pedestrian and transit access in the downtown and midtown corridors.
- Unattractive, underutilized one-level stores on Ventura and Main Street could be reimaged as mixed-use spaces that increase housing and provide nicer retail environments.
- Need to balance redevelopment with preservation of historic buildings in the Downtown and the Westside.
- Consider repurposing the Ford dealership at Mills/Main. The dealer could move to the Auto Mall south of 101.
- East side of Mills in the Pacific View Mall area could be excluded from the discussion; there are already homes, a church, and a Lowe's. The General Plan Team should confirm that these areas should be included in the alternatives discussion.
- Matt proposed that the area west of Ventura Avenue, which contains a mixture of potentially incompatible residential, industrial, and retail uses, should be considered an area of discussion.

GPAC members agreed that this area should be included in the map. In addition, GPAC members provided the following comments:

- This question should be asked of the Westside community members specifically.
- Industrial uses should be made more environmentally friendly.
- Should be reticent of chasing away jobs and industry; don't want to become a bedroom community.
- Would like to see industrial uses reimaged here and have environmentally-friendly businesses that are competitive with firms like Amazon.

Below US-101

- Should consider integrating housing into the Arundell industrial area; there are already plenty of services, restaurants, and groceries located in the area.
- Would like to see Arundell and the Grove maintain their jobs focus.
- Should consider more live/work at Arundell and the Grove.
- Need to be careful not to mix incompatible residential and industrial uses.
- Need to preserve opportunities for small businesses and rework zoning code to make live/work legal in industrial areas.
- Should consider McGrath property (north of Olivas Park Drive) as an opportunity area.
- Pierpont area might not make sense to consider as an area of discussion with its risk of sea level rise.
- Should consider more commercial and retail uses in Arundell, particularly along Market Street; there aren't a lot of food options available for workers in the area and plenty of vacant spaces.
- Arundell is a lively community during the daytime but dead at night; encouraging light industrial and mixed uses in the area will ensure it remains the key economic engine for the city.
- Should continue encouraging light industrial uses that provide local services and goods (cabinetry, welding, distilleries, etc.).
- Consider adding the Marina area to the discussion.
- Corner of Olivas Golf Course at the southeast corner of the harbor is a potential opportunity site.
- Remove the Olivas golf course from the map.
- Off-ramp at the end of Seaward and Seaward corridor has opportunities for improvement.

Eastside

- There is not enough emphasis on corridors in the Eastside: Telephone, Telegraph, Victoria, Kimball, and Wells corridors should all be considered for areas of discussion.
- Church sites along Telephone corridor could be opportunity areas.
- Should work with the County of Ventura to consider infill development (housing, community center and other uses) at the Government Center that can house public employees.
- Area near East Ventura Station in the Montalvo/Johnson corridor would be a great candidate for Transit Oriented Development.
- Parklands area along Wells Road is already being developed, so it should be taken out of the "Areas for Discussion" map.
- Traffic mitigation needs to be considered for all new developments on the Eastside.

- Any existing shopping center with a large parking lot should be a candidate for redevelopment.
- Victoria/Telegraph and Hills/Telephone are two intersections that could be opportunity areas.
- Look into the possibility of bringing down sound walls adjacent to single family neighborhoods along corridors.
- Need to ensure full access to Downtown for residents of the Eastside. Consider transportation improvements along with land use concepts.
- Would be great to break this geographic area into smaller areas of focus for future discussions.

General/Other Comments

- Would like to see “15-minute neighborhoods” implemented throughout all of Ventura.
- Given the uncertain viability of retail in the next few decades, all retail properties should be rezoned for the possibility of mixed-use development to allow for flexibility in development.
- Multifamily/mixed-use should be located all over the city, not just the corridors on the Westside, Downtown, and in Midtown.
- Sea level rise and managed retreat must be a critical consideration of the General Plan.

Public Comment

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

- Members of the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters discussed the need to invest in local jobs training and apprenticeship programs, hire locally, provide living wages, and build affordable housing so that residents of the city can continue to work in the city.
- A comprehensive traffic plan is integral to the General Plan Update process and must be a key consideration in all future development plans.
- Jobs and transportation are both important issues that must be addressed by the General Plan.