

GPAC Meeting #5 Summary

July 6, 2021



Introduction

On June 29, 2021, the City of Ventura General Plan Update team convened the fifth meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The session was the second in a two-part series on housing, the first of which was held on June 15 and focused on existing housing conditions, Housing Element requirements, and housing-related engagement. This session built on the first and focused primarily on:

- Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) Obligations
- Sites Inventory Update
- Existing and Potential Housing Programs

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

- Matt Raimi, Raimi + Associates
- Simran Malhotra, Raimi + Associates
- Aram Kamali, Raimi + Associates
- 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
- 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 Ventura’s RHNA obligations, status of the Housing Element sites inventory, and existing and potential programs to promote in the forthcoming Housing Element. Two rounds of Q&A discussion and prioritization polling took place during the presentation.

Finally, the meeting concluded with a public comment session.

GPAC Feedback and Discussion

As noted above, the session broke into a discussion period at two key junctures: first following the presentation of the sites inventory update, and second following the presentation of existing and potential housing programs. Below is a summary of key content discussed, including questions (**bolded and italicized**) and accompanying responses from City staff and/or the Consultant Team.

Discussion: Sites Inventory

Q&A

- ***Why is the allowed density on Pacific View Mall confined to 27 dwelling units per acre (du/ac)?***
 - It is simply a zoning limit. The site could be rezoned to a higher density if desired by the community.
- ***There are some underutilized school-owned lands that could feasibly be redeveloped as housing. Is such a scenario possible?***
 - Yes, but we need to evaluate existing conditions (and other regulations) to determine whether redevelopment is actually feasible.
- ***How can the City bump up ADU numbers so that the Housing Element can show more robust trends, and therefore, rely more heavily on ADUs in the sites inventory?***
 - It is possible to show an upward trend in ADU permitting from 2018-2020 to 2021. Additionally, the Housing Element can demonstrate programmatic approaches to incentivizing ADU development in the future. However, the State is quite stringent on the conditions under which municipalities can significantly inflate projections based on verifiable ADU trends. Some sort of monitoring program would likely be required to be implemented in that case.
- ***Can existing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) be retroactively permitted if needed?***
 - If there is a program to legalize existing ADUs, it is possible. However, success depends on what kinds of incentives are provided to entice someone to come forward (e.g., assurance of not being cited for code violations, etc.).
- ***Would potential development in Saticoy and the SOAR areas require more cooperation with the County?***
 - Yes, but we will deal with that later if needed.

- ***How can we densify East Ventura?***
 - That can be part of the broader General Plan Update process. For the Housing Element, parcels with existing medium-density housing may not be considered financially feasible redevelopment sites. Low- to high-density redevelopment is more likely to be feasible, but medium- to high- may not be.
- ***How and why do we distinguish between low and moderate sites?***
 - Density is used as a proxy for development feasibility at different income levels.
- ***How do conversions of hotels/motels factor in?***
 - We generally cannot consider conversions in the coastal zone, but elsewhere we can.
- ***Does the sites inventory factor in mobility or transit?***
 - No, but the General Plan can provide policy direction.
- ***What is the use of the buffer for the sites inventory?***
 - It provides more certainty that the RHNA target will be met. For example, it is conceivable that a mixed-use site included in the sites inventory is ultimately developed as only commercial. A buffer allows us to prepare for that type of scenario with alternative sites.
 - When identifying sites, we need to be as realistic as possible in terms of development feasibility.
- ***If Pacific View Mall were to be rezoned and included in the sites inventory, what is a realistic density target for a property of that size?***
 - We could perhaps assume 50 du/ac, which is consistent with other mall redevelopment projects. However, it is worth noting that the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing law requires that we don't concentrate Low Income housing in only a few areas.
- ***Have we considered properties burned in the Thomas Fire for the sites inventory?***
 - We have not looked at those lots yet. They also would only qualify for the above-moderate category, for which we already have enough sites.
- ***Are there any prospects for adaptive reuse and/or redeveloping business parks for housing?***
 - Yes, that is one potential strategy we can include in the Housing Element.
- ***How do the different low-income categories (extremely-low, very-low, and low-) all fit together in the Housing Element?***
 - For the sites inventory, we are allowed to combine these three categories into one "lower-income" category, using 30 du/ac as a proxy for affordability.

Discussion Comments

- Places to be redeveloped/rezoned for housing include:
 - Pacific View Mall
 - SOAR property near the Ventura Harbor
 - Saticoy
 - Johnson Corridor
- The nexus of housing and transit needs to be emphasized. Transit-oriented development is especially important for lower-income households.
- It is important that we move toward car-free housing. VCTC is discussing this on a regional scale, and it would be beneficial for Ventura to join these discussions.

- Pacific View Mall should be zoned for at least 50 du/ac, perhaps with a car-free component.
- It is important to spread housing development equitably across the city.
- Single-family homes with alley access should be studied for ADU development.
- In addition to ADUs, we should consider relaxing code to allowed for an extra kitchenette and/or bedroom door to be added to single-family homes. In an ideal world, that would help us satisfy low-income unit requirements for the Housing Element.
- There is a lot of opportunity in Montalvo, and housing could also accelerate needed infrastructure improvements. Parcels near the train station could also be developed as TOD projects.
- Pacific View Mall is a priority, as it is easy to rezone and close to transit facilities. Hillside and SOAR housing would be unpopular, with the potential exception of the site at the Harbor.

Prioritization Poll

Following the Q&A, a poll was conducted to identify areas of the city that could accommodate new housing development. The poll was hosted on the Mentimeter online platform and was available to both GPAC members and the public. Key takeaways are summarized below, and raw results are provided in the Appendix:

- The Pacific View Mall (18%) and Johnson Drive Corridor (15%) were cited most frequently by meeting participants.
- Saticoy and other commercial corridors, including Victoria, Telephone, Main, and Thompson, were also popular choices.
- Hillside (0%) and SOAR lands (2%), and single-family neighborhoods (4%) were the least popular choices.

Discussion: Housing Programs

Q&A

- ***Why are there ADU fees, and what are they used for?***
 - State law already mostly prohibits cities from charging impact fees for ADUs, so at this point, most of the fees are associated with staff time (plan review, etc.). If there were no fees, then the General Fund would have to cover the costs.
- ***Would the conversion of hotels and/or motels entail the use of eminent domain?***
 - No. The sites inventory simply identifies opportunity sites for rezoning and redevelopment.
- ***What are the in-lieu fees associated with hotel/motel conversions in the coastal zone?***
 - Fees could potentially be collected to eventually fund the construction of hotels/motels in other parts of the coastal zone. This would help comply with the Coastal Commission's "no net loss" policy regarding hotels/motels.
- ***Is there inclusionary housing in the Downtown Specific Plan area for rental and owner housing?***
 - In the redevelopment area, which is most of the planning area, we are able to get some inclusionary rental units.

- ***Net zero fee for water has been a constraint in the past to development. Has the City considering waiving that? Maybe seriously study that, perhaps for lower-income housing***
 - It is technically possible, but we need to identify an alternative funding source that can be substituted for the waived fee.
- ***How do high quality transit areas factor in?***
 - If a project is within a half-mile of high-quality transit, it is exempt from minimum parking requirements. That said, the City currently does not have any high-quality transit lines, but it could occur if frequency increases.
- ***Are we including discussion of collaboration with nonprofits and other community partners? In the past, the City has contributed the Housing Trust Fund, and we should consider this as part of our strategy moving forward.***
 - The Housing Element will emphasize the importance of partnering with these groups for the provision of affordable housing.
- ***What are some example cities that have implemented local rent stabilization programs, and what have the impacts been on the economy?***
 - About 20 cities in the State that have rent stabilization, including Los Angeles, West Hollywood, Santa Monica, Mountain View, and East Palo Alto, among others. There are more programs for mobile home parks. In most cases, these programs don't impact the new construction because it only applies to older housing stock. Other cities have Just Cause for Eviction programs, which prohibit arbitrary and/or unjust evictions.

Discussion Comments

- We need to focus on strengthening public transportation before removing parking requirements for housing.
- We need to be careful to think about the reality of car needs, parking requirements, etc. We should not generalize and assume that all (or most) lower-income households don't need personal automobiles.
- Open space is an especially important amenity for residents.
- Permanent streamlining ordinance will address a lot of these things.
- Code flexibility (e.g., building heights) is needed to facilitate adaptive reuse and micro-unit development.
- Removing height limitations in some areas could be appropriate.
- Let's not build our communities around cars.
- It is important to remember that the City needs fee revenues to pay for services, including housing development. Since we have a supply shortage, we shouldn't promote fee reductions/waivers or new assistance programs just yet; instead, we should focus on removing major constraints to housing production.
- New housing assistance programs represent noble ideas, but they need to be considered in the context of the broader City budget and competing funding requirements. Such programs may not be budgetary priorities.
- We need protection for people who are being caused to leave Ventura because of economic impacts of COVID-19.
- We need to think about improving Veterans' protection in housing.

- We need to consider how potential streamlining efforts (e.g., design review, fee reductions/waivers, etc.) might impact community character.
- Housing assistance programs are noble, but we have budgetary constraints. We need to know how well this would fit into the overall City budget.

Prioritization Poll

Following the Q&A, a poll was conducted to determine which potential programs and strategies are most popular. The poll was hosted on the Mentimeter online platform and was available to both GPAC members and the general public. Key takeaways are summarized below, and raw results are provided in the Appendix:

- Inclusionary Housing, Adaptive Reuse, and Streamlined Processing for all Housing were the most popular strategies.
- A second tier of popular programs include promotion of ADUs, an affordable housing overlay, by-right approval for affordable housing projects, and fee reductions for affordable housing.
- Flexible funding pools, rehabilitation assistances, homebuyer assistance, and institutional use overlays were the least popular strategies.

Public Comment

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

- An affordable housing overlay would be very impactful for the city. To facilitate multifamily affordable housing development, Ventura needs parcels of at least two acres in size that or zoned at 30 du/ac or higher.
- Expanding inclusionary housing for rental housing is a huge priority. We need it preferably by the end of the year.
- We need to study impact of short-term vacation rentals (STVRs) on housing issues in the city.
- Affordable housing in TCAC high opportunity areas is critical to address fair housing issues, as these are areas rich in educational and economic opportunities. The City should also participate in the County's farmworker housing study, since these are households that are critical to the region's economy.
- The plan check process needs to be streamlined as well.
- Ventura should consider adopting a requirement for hiring local skilled and trained labor.
- Infrastructure improvements need to accompany new housing projects in Midtown, Downtown, and the Westside.
- Promoting smaller unit sizes across Ventura is an important strategy. These have been successful in Downtown and need to expand in other areas as well.
- Ventura should consider requiring tree development and greywater system programs for new development.
- Many people on the waiting list for affordable housing (particularly Latinos and households on the Westside) have not received units for years. Ventura needs an inclusionary housing

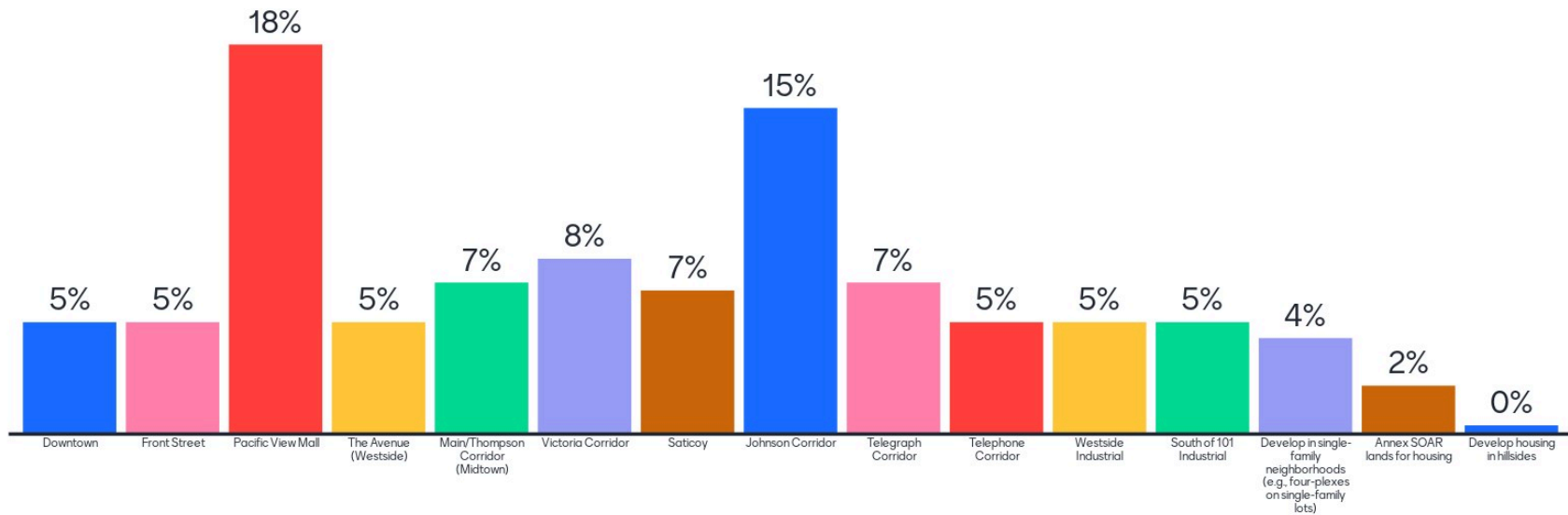
ordinance that expands opportunities for both renters and prospective homeowners. The program should also cater to very-low-income households.

- Inclusionary housing also needs to address very-low-income needs.
- A rent stabilization program would be impactful in Ventura
- We should consider upzoning single-family (R-1) neighborhoods. These areas could accommodate duplexes, triplexes, and four-plexes, without changing their character.
- The City should explore creating high-density tiny home communities in the hillsides.
- We need to reduce height and/or parking requirements, particularly near Downtown.

Appendix

This Appendix contains raw results from the two prioritization polls conducted in this session.

Additional sites are needed to meet the RHNA requirements. What are your priority locations to add additional housing? (Pick 5)





New programs require funding and staff resources. Given limited resources, what are your priorities for new housing programs? (Pick 5)

