

GPAC Meeting #6 Summary

July 30, 2021



Introduction

On July 20, 2021, the City of Ventura General Plan Update team convened the sixth meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The primary objectives of the meeting, which largely focused on visioning, were to:

- Present existing land uses and land use policy;
- Review and brainstorm on a draft set of Core Values and General Plan Strategies, and
- Identify “areas of change” and “areas of stability”.

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
- Melissa Stark, Raimi + Associates
- Peter Gilli, City of Ventura
- Neda Zayer, City of Ventura
- Susan Harden, Circlepoint

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
- Daniel Reardon, GPAC
- Alejandra Tellez, GPAC
- Abagale Thomas, GPAC
- Dana Worsnop, GPAC

Meeting Structure

Lorrie Brown, GPAC Chair, initiated the session and welcomed all participants to the meeting. Susan Harden then provided a brief overview of the agenda before turning it over to Simran Malhotra, who gave a presentation covering existing land uses and land use policy in Ventura. Matt Raimi then led the second half of the presentation, which included a summary of recent input on visioning and review of a draft set of Core Values and General Plan Strategies (see the Appendix). Two rounds of Q&A discussion took place during the presentation.

Following the presentation, participants were broken up into three small groups to conduct a series of interactive visioning exercises, which were held on an online platform – “Miro”. The exercises were designed to both a) elicit feedback on the draft Core Values and General Plan Strategies, and b) identify potential “areas of change” and “areas of stability” in Ventura. Specifically, respondents were prompted to respond to the following questions:

- Are these the right Community Values? What needs to change or be added?
- What other Vision Strategies should be added?
- What types of land use changes are needed, and where?

After approximately one hour, all groups reconvened to debrief and report back their takeaways. Finally, the meeting concluded with public comment.

GPAC Feedback and Discussion

Presentation Q&A

As noted above, the General Plan Team fielded questions and comments from GPAC members at two points during the presentation: first following the review of existing land uses and land use policy, and second following the review of the draft Core Values and General Plan Strategies. These questions and comments – and the accompanying answers – are briefly summarized below (questions are ***bolded and italicized***).

Questions

- ***What does form-based code mean?***
 - A form-based code regulates development based on character and building form. It does not use numerical standards or thresholds in the same way that Euclidean zoning does
- ***Has anyone evaluated which areas could be used for industrial uses?***
 - We have not yet evaluated which specific sites could be suitable for a change of use. We will be examining the feasibility in coming phases of the General Plan Update process.
- ***Could a General Plan identify potential areas for annexation?***
 - Yes.
- ***What is the definition of equity?***
 - That is something we need to define collectively in the course of this process. That said, equity can be broadly defined as providing individuals with the appropriate number of

resources they need to be successful. This differs from equality, which suggests providing the same number of resources to everyone regardless of ability or background.

Comments

- We may need to find some way to prioritize the values and strategies we have identified. In fact, some may conflict with each other (e.g., environmental and economic goals)
- The 2005 General Plan has set a high bar for us moving forward. We should build on the vision and refer to it as we move forward.

Small Group Exercises

The following is a combined summary of what was heard in the small groups.

Core Values

What Needs to Change?

- Develop clear definitions of “diversity”, “equity”, and “small town character”. As is, the meaning of “small town character” is subjective and can cause confusion
- Achieve an optimal balance between economic and environmental health
- Consider changing or removing the term “Fiscal Health”, as it is not very inspiring. The phrase “thriving economy” could be more suitable instead
- Incorporate nature in some way

What Needs to be Added?

- Transparent government
- Unique, family-oriented beach community
- Eclectic neighborhoods
- Connected city
- Bike- and pedestrian-friendly community
- Access to nature
- Carbon net neutrality (if it does not compromise the economy)
- Flexibility as the years progress
- Boldness to chart a new path for the future
- Housing and employment opportunities
- Economic diversity with small businesses that reflect Ventura’s character

General Plan Strategies

What other Vision Strategies should be Added?

- Create a balanced, thriving, and sustainable economy
- Provide quality transit that better serves all areas of the city
- Cultivate bicycle connectivity
- Support, celebrate, and protect the arts
- Promote and support education, including arts in K-12 curricula

- Solve homelessness
- Co-locate housing with jobs
- Address light pollution
- Prioritize historic preservation and adaptive reuse
- Provide well-maintained infrastructure, including expanding the urban forest
- Improve technology and access to technology
- Improve personal safety
- Create a healthy and active environment
- “Green” the city (maintain green spaces, invest in trees)
- Word changes:
 - “Access and mobility” instead of “circulation”
 - “Adapt” instead of “protect”

Areas of Change + Areas of Stability

Westside and Downtown

Mixed-Use /Multifamily Housing

- Build multifamily housing at or along:
 - Ventura Avenue corridor
 - Commercial areas along Olive Street
 - Vacant lots near Grant Park
 - Intersection of Stanley and Ventura Avenues
- Encourage adaptive reuse at Park Row

Transportation/Infrastructure

- Re-route Highway 101
- Retain a pedestrian-only area in some part of Downtown (e.g., Main Street Moves!)
- Reconnect Downtown with the coast
- Redesign the California Street exit to improve safety
- Improve pedestrian and bike conditions on Ventura Avenue

Areas of Stability

- Retain the industrial character of the Westside

Other Comments

- Pursue a managed retreat from the shoreline
- Redevelop the County Fairgrounds while also retaining existing fair activities
- Develop creative spaces for artisans/craftspeople in the industrial area west of Olive Street
- Develop an inviting, multimodal transit station
- Re-imagine the parking structure next to the Crowne Plaza

Midtown, Pierpont, and Marina

Mixed-Use /Multifamily Housing

- Build mixed-use projects and multifamily housing at or along:
 - Pacific View Mall
 - Thompson and Main corridors
 - City-owned parking lots, such as the one near Evergreen and San Nicolas
 - Industrial area east of Seaward Street (adjacent to the railroad tracts)
 - Empty bank on Mills Road
- Pursue denser development near the hospital
- Consider new connections and communities in SOAR areas

Parks/Open Space

- Consider creating a dog park in the vicinity of Cemetery Park

Areas of Stability

- Retain existing small businesses, including the Discovery Ventura building

Other Comments

- Improve signage at Seaward Avenue

Foothill, College Area, Thille, and Arundell/North Bank

Mixed-Use /Multifamily Housing

- Build mixed-use and/or multifamily developments at or near:
 - Ventura College (including student housing)
 - Shopping centers and commercial areas near Highway 101
 - Arundell/North Bank (if it does not compromise the City' job base)
 - Highway 101/126 interchange, such as at the Lowe's shopping center
 - Telegraph Road corridor
- Consider industrial mixed uses on vacant parcels

Commercial/Retail

- Expand retail options in Arundell/North Bank to serve local workers
- Concentrate the number of "big box" retailers

Parks/Open Space

- Provide public open space at Ventura College

Areas of Stability

- Retain employment in the industrial parts of Arundell/North Bank

Transportation/Infrastructure

- Improve bike safety along Victoria Avenue
- Invest in Market Street as a future corridor
- Add street trees in the Arundell/North Bank area
- Improve north-south connections to Arundell/North Bank, as Highways 101 and 126 poses barriers

Other Comments

- Consider redeveloping the Auto Center
- Cultivate a thriving art hub near Ventura College

Southeast/Montalvo, Eastside/Juanamaria, and Eastside/Saticoy

Mixed-Use /Multifamily Housing

- Build mixed use developments and multifamily housing at:
 - Johnson Drive corridor, which should become East Ventura’s “town center” with multifamily housing, retail, and other mixed uses. However, residential uses should be limited near the freeway and railroad
 - Ventura County Government Center
 - Church parking lots
 - Industrial areas (alternative housing. e.g., container housing)
 - Telephone Road corridor
 - SOAR area off of Highway 126 (annex and develop)
- Thoughtfully integrate residential and commercial uses in existing industrial areas to allow for coexistence between uses

Parks/Open Space

- Provide open space at the Wells Road/Highway 126 intersection

Commercial/Retail

- Provide more community amenities in East Ventura (e.g., clinics, drug stores, grocery store, etc.) proximate to homes
- Encourage investment in local East Ventura businesses

Transportation/Infrastructure

- Build a bicycle connection over the bridge at Santa Clara River

Other Comments

- Revitalize the East Ventura train station
- Reimagine the golf course at Wells Road and Highway 126

Public Comment

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

- It is very important to develop a comprehensive transportation plan for Ventura. We need to work with Caltrans, the County, and the State in doing so.
- True sustainability requires an optimal balance among environment, equity, and economy. This relationship needs to be emphasized moving forward in the planning process.
- The “Planning Boundary” in Ventura is unnecessary, as there is seemingly already a consensus that Ventura will not grow into Taylor Ranch or the Hillside.

- We need volunteers to help care for the less fortunate (e.g., street cleaning, offering rooms in homes).
- While Ventura needs to respect its past, it also needs to plan for and acknowledge the change that is going to happen. That includes addressing climate change and housing affordability. We need to allow for different types of housing that are affordable by design.
- Ventura should plan for a non-car dominated future.
- The County needs to develop a local higher preference policy for jobs in multiple sectors.
- Broadband and technology are themes that need to be included in the General Plan.
- To ensure prosperity, Ventura needs to position its residents for success in the emerging industries in the global economy.

Miro Boards

Group 1

Core Values

Ventura is a unique and special place that is "almost paradise".
The residents of the community share these common values that form the bedrock for the future of the city:

Small Town Character	Diverse and Equitable	Balanced Growth and Preservation	Housing for All
Access to Nature and Open Spaces	Resilient and Climate adapted	Innovation and Creativity	Responsible and Accessible Govt.
	Active and Engaged Community	Fiscal Health and Stability	

Are these the right Community Values? What needs to change or be added?

- Responsible, accessible and transparent government
- Address a customer needs and wants and give them a great experience. They are not just looking for a service, they want an experience that is exceptional and memorable.
- Unique family-oriented beach community
- Memorable edge city to attract visitors, this helps people think that it is a great town
- Concern about price "small town" character. Ventura is not a small town. Term is misleading.
- Small town is a special sense of space, hard to define.
- Not LA or San Remondo valley - the community is different.
- Stress place/neighborhood. How does the City enhance identity on the San Luis.
- Transportation should be the focus and not the secondary. Creating a sense of place in areas of the City.

General Plan Strategies

Environment	Economy	Planning and Design	Circulation	Social Activity	Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect against climate change, sea level rise, heat, and wildfires Advance sustainability Model for other coastal areas Protect/Restore natural character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced local economy Expand public services and amenities Transition towards green economy Maintain small town feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain character Address housing crisis Preserve unique neighborhoods Strengthen Downtown Revitalize underutilized commercial areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle network Improve public transit Capitalize on emerging transportation technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to social equity and justice Inclusive and diverse place Access to quality affordable health and social services Cultural, educational & social support program Provide a range of recreational opportunities Celebrate the arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage community involvement with City government Actively participate in regional initiatives

What other Vision Strategies should be added?

- Healthy and active environment
- Change "circulation" to "access and mobility", access to different areas of the community
- Change "protect" to another term, perhaps "adapt"
- Need to cherish and honor public transportation and those members of the community who need the transit. Need to better serve all areas of the City. This could be a value statement.
- Invest in trees, maintaining green spaces broadly throughout the City. "Green the City"

Group 2



Group 3

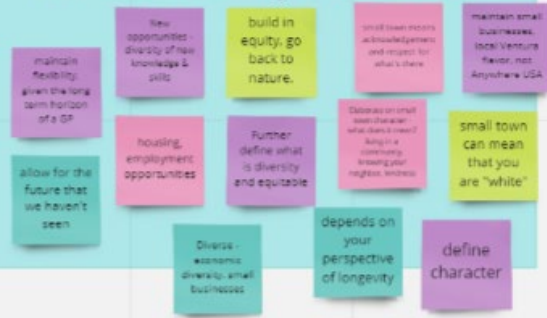
Core Values

Ventura is a unique and special place that is "almost paradise".

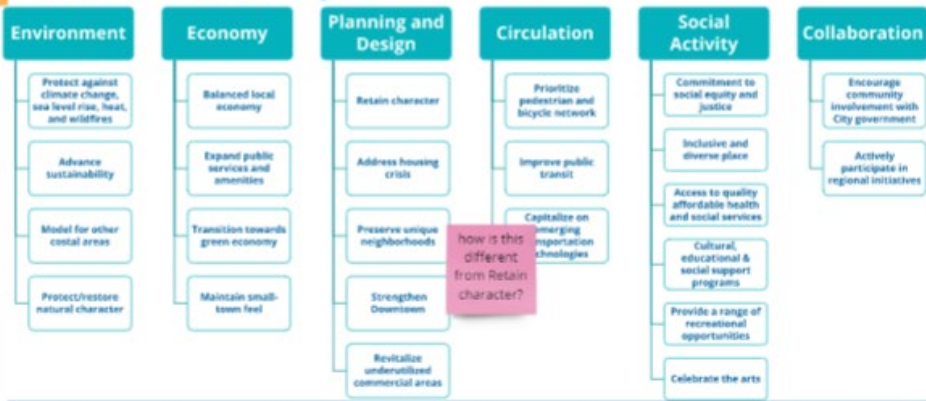
The residents of the community share these common values that form the bedrock for the future of the city:



Are these the right Community Values? What needs to change or be added?



General Plan Strategies



What other Vision Strategies should be added?



Appendix

This Appendix contains the Core Values and General Plan Strategies that were reviewed and evaluated at the session.

City of Ventura

General Plan Update

Draft Revised Vision Statement

The following document provides revisions to the vision statements in the 2005 General Plan based on feedback from the community and GPAC. The document also captures the core values that have emerged from the input so far about a desired future for Ventura.

Core Values

Ventura is a unique and special place that is “almost paradise”. The residents of the community share common values that form the bedrock for the future of the city. These values are...

1. Small Town Character, including unique neighborhoods, a thriving Downtown and beautiful public spaces.
2. A City for all people that promotes diversity and advances equity and justice
3. A balance between the city’s evolution and the preservation of the characteristics that make Ventura unique and special.
4. Housing for all people
5. Access to nature and open spaces
6. Taking dramatic steps to address climate change and resilience
7. A commitment to innovation and creativity
8. Responsive and accessible government
9. An active and engaged community
10. Fiscal health and stability

General Plan Strategies

In order to achieve the vision, Ventura will...

Environment

- Proactively combats climate change, including carbon neutrality, sea level rise, heat and wildfires

- Advance sustainability by simultaneously promoting ecological health, economic vitality, and social well-being for current and future generations
- Act as an environmentally responsible model for other coastal areas
- Protect and restore the natural character of its beaches, coastline, hillsides, barrancas, rivers and other natural areas for their environmental function and as a scenic backdrop that supports a high quality urban environment

Economy

- Develop a flourishing and balanced economy by encouraging a broad range of high quality employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, with a focus on small and local businesses
- Expand economic development opportunities to support public services and amenities associated with high quality of life for Ventura residents
- Promote a transition toward a green economy, attracting environmentally-friendly businesses and businesses practices.
- Support a vital, prosperous, and stable economy while maintaining its small-town feel.

Planning and Design

- Retain its character as an attractive coastal town by growing slowly and sustainably, and by emphasizing its history, diversity, and natural environment
- Address the housing crisis by expanding the number of housing units, the diversity of housing types and range of affordability.
- Preserve the character and uniqueness of the residential neighborhoods.
- Strengthen the Downtown by supporting businesses and expanding the diversity of uses including retail, entertainment, tourism, and housing.
- Revitalize underutilized commercial areas (such as corridors, the mall, and with a diversity of residential and non-residential uses

Circulation

- Prioritizes the expansion of the pedestrian and bicycle network to support multimodal transportation options for residents of all ages.

- Improves public transportation service and access to accommodate local, cross-town and regional travel
- Capitalizes on emerging transportation technologies to improve the quality of life and advance environmental outcomes of Ventura

Social Activity

- Is committed to social equity and justice
- Is an inclusive, diverse, and tolerant place that welcomes and celebrates all people
- Provides all residents access to quality and affordable health and social services
- Recognizes the importance of children and seniors by providing exceptional cultural, educational, and social support programs
- Offers a diverse range of active and passive recreation for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities
- Celebrates and is enriched by the arts and diverse cultural opportunities

Collaboration

- Encourages residents to collaborate with each other and City government in an informed, active, and constructive manner to assess and resolve common issues.
- Actively participates in regional initiatives that support climate change, social equity, resilience, economic development, and innovative transportation solutions, among other topics.

Questions to consider:

- Should some of the industrial areas transition to other uses? If so, what areas and what uses?
- Should the city allow “house form” duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes in single-family residential areas?
- Should the city consider redeveloping the golf course to expand housing?
- Should some or all of the SOAR areas which are surrounded by urban uses and within the city limits be considered for new development?