



General Plan Advisory Committee – Overview and Ground Rules

The following ground rules are intended to provide Advisory Committee members with an overview of the purpose and expectations for participation in the group as well as a summary of the decision-making process that will be followed. The ground rules are needed to keep the Committee on schedule, as a key part of the General Plan Update project.

Advisory Committee Purpose

The Ventura General Plan Advisory Committee will serve as a sounding board for the General Plan team throughout the General Plan update process. Guidance related to goals and objectives for all the topics in the General Plan will be discussed with a focus on land use and transportation decisions. It is the Advisory Committee's charge to represent the community's interests in the development of a plan that reflects the vision for Ventura's future. The Advisory Committee will serve as a sounding board for ideas presented by the team and will be asked to come up with creative solutions that address the challenges facing Ventura today and over the next 25 years. Advisory Committee members are also expected to serve as "ambassadors" for the General Plan by promoting the process, talking with other residents and assisting with community engagement activities.

Membership

- The Committee consists of up to twenty-two (22) permanent members. Two of the members will be City Councilpersons, and two will be Planning Commissioners.
- Committee members are not allowed to select an alternate if they cannot attend a meeting.
- Committee members are appointed to advise on the General Plan update process. This process is expected to run until the end of 2022 but may be extended if needed. The Committee is considered an ad-hoc committee that will be dissolved upon the completion and adoption of the General Plan Update process.
- While not required, the Advisory Committee will have a quorum when twelve (12) members are present. Due to the fact that meetings must occur to keep the General Plan update process on schedule, meetings may be held without a quorum.

Level of Commitment and Responsibility

- There will be approximately 18 Advisory Committee meetings during the General Plan update process. The meetings will be held approximately monthly on a regular basis over the next two years.
- If an Advisory Committee member is absent from two (2) Advisory Committee meetings in a row or misses a total of three (3) meetings, the City may remove that member and an Alternate will be installed as a permanent member.

- Advisory Committee meetings will be held in the evening from approximately 6:00 to 8:30 pm. Meeting times and dates may change depending on circumstances. These meetings will be held virtually until public health guidance for COVID-19 allows for in-person meetings. Following this, meetings may be held either in person or virtually.
- Advisory Committee members are expected to prepare for, attend and participate in every meeting, to the greatest extent feasible. As needed, materials will be provided to the Advisory Committee one week prior to each meeting via email. These materials will be the subject of the discussion, so it is important that each committee member read the materials and come to the meeting prepared to discuss the information.
- Throughout the process, there will be many community engagement activities including public workshops, “pop-up” workshops, surveys, and focus groups. Advisory Committee members are also strongly encouraged to attend and assist with all public workshops and other events, as necessary.
- When members cannot attend a meeting of the Advisory Committee, they should notify Neda Zayer, Assistant Community Development Director at planventura@cityofventura.ca.gov or at (805) 515-9119 as far in advance as possible. Members must be present to participate in consensus decision making.

Decision-Making Process

- The Advisory Committee will operate in the spirit of consensus. Consensus does not connote 100 percent agreement on every issue, but rather, support for the recommendations taken as a whole. Where no consensus emerges, varying points of view will be presented to the General Plan consultant team and City staff.
- The Advisory Committee will play a critical role in guiding the General Plan update process. However, it is only one of many forms of input for decision-making. Additional input will come from public workshops, stakeholder interviews, pop-up workshops, online surveys, focus groups, Planning Commission meetings and City Council Workshops. Thus, direction provided by the GPAC may not be the ultimate direction for a particular topic or policy.
- Roll call votes will not occur on any topic or specific issue as the purpose of the Advisory Committee is to serve as a sounding board for City staff and the consultants. However, “straw polls” may be taken to understand the direction of the Committee.
- Every participant is responsible for communicating his or her position on issues under consideration. Each participant is also encouraged to clearly state their intentions and concerns at the earliest possible time in the course of the discussions.
- Following each meeting, City staff and the consultants will summarize the direction and conclusions from that meeting. This will be a summary of the meeting; it will not be a transcript listing every comment made by each Committee member. This summary will be included in the meeting minutes that will be reviewed at the following General Plan Advisory Committee meeting. This information will be used to set the broad policy direction of the General Plan.
- Committee members will rely on meeting summaries to the extent possible and will refer questions about the views of others to those Committee members.

Meeting Structure and Basic Conduct

- The Advisory Committee will have a Chair and a Vice Chair. These roles will be filled by the two Councilmembers on the Committee. The Chair (or Vice Chair in the absence of the Chair) will open and close the meeting and help resolve any dispute or differences of opinions among Committee members. City staff and/or a member of the Raimi + Associates consultant team (the City's lead General Plan consultant) will act as the facilitators for the Advisory Committee meetings, set meeting agendas, and determine the overall direction of the GPAC, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair.
- Committee members may not characterize the position of any other committee member or the GPAC as a whole in public statements or in discussions with the press.
- Committee members should not speak with the press about the General Plan Update unless approval is provided in writing by the City's General Plan project manager.
- All members agree to participate in good faith, as well as to respect the concerns of the other members. All Advisory Committee members are expected to participate in a constructive and professional manner and in a way that encourages constructive dialogue, mutual respect and a commitment to collaboration. The following points are offered as examples of behavior expected of the Advisory Committee members:
 - Share the floor and make sure all members have an opportunity to express their point of view.
 - Offer respect of different viewpoints and attention when others speak.
 - Share the responsibility of ensuring the success of the process and the quality of recommendations.
 - Make a best good faith effort to work towards reaching a consensus.
 - Represent the perspectives, concerns, and interests of agencies or constituencies whenever possible to ensure that agreements and recommendations developed by the group are acceptable to the organizations, agencies, or constituents being represented.
 - Ask questions of each other for clarification and mutual understanding.
 - Verify assumptions when necessary and avoid characterizing the motives of others.
 - Acknowledge and try to understand others' perspectives.
 - Refrain from side conversations, both during the meeting and between meetings.
 - Silence all electronic devices during the meetings.
 - Concentrate on the content of discussions and allow the facilitator to focus on how to promote productive discussion.
- Unprofessional, divisive, and disrespectful behavior during or between meetings will not be tolerated. Members who act in this manner may be removed from the GPAC. Examples of this behavior include:
 - Using foul language in meetings.
 - Making derogatory or disrespectful comments about other members.
 - Yelling during meetings.
 - Minimizing the viewpoints of others.
 - Any other behavior that is deemed to be detrimental to Committee or disrespectful of any individual Committee member.

Public Participation

- The General Plan Advisory Committee is governed by the Ralph M. Brown Act. Discussions regarding the subject matter of the General Plan Advisory Committee should take place during a noticed, public meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee. Please refrain from having such conversations outside a public meeting. This includes in person meetings, email chains or social media.
- All Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public and will be noticed on the project website.
- Opportunities for public comments will be allowed at the end of each Advisory Committee meeting. These comments can help inform the Advisory Committee about broader public opinion. Public comments will ideally be two minutes per participant but may be modified if more speakers are present than time allows. Time sharing between participants will not be allowed.
- Members of the public will be invited to address the same topics and questions as GPAC members. This will occur either during small group discussions during the meeting or via separate feedback forms.
- Meeting schedules, meeting materials and notes will be published on Ventura's General Plan website.

Conflicts of Interest

Committee members must comply with all regulations prohibiting participation by officials with conflicts of interest. If a member has a conflict of interest for a topic or property that is before the Committee, the member must leave the room when the Committee discusses the item and not participate in the review or consideration of an item for which they have a conflict. Members should contact the City Attorney's office if they are concerned about potential conflicts.

Information Requests and Direction to Consultants

Relevant information can play an important role in the development of informed consent. At the same time, too much information or information of limited relevance can cause confusion and slow down the process. Where individual members wish to share written or printed information with the larger group, such information should be provided to City Staff approximately 1 week and not less than 72 hours prior to any scheduled meeting to allow for duplication and/or distribution prior to the meeting.

In addition, requests for development of significant information or data from committee members must be raised at scheduled Advisory Committee meetings or in writing to City staff. Staff will make reasonable attempts to address information requests by Committee members.