



MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: Brian Pedrotti, Community Development Director

BY: Andrew Perez, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Adoption of a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles for the Comprehensive General Plan Update and Finding this Action is Not a Project Under the California Environmental Quality Act

DATE: August 13, 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Adopt a vision statement and guiding principles for the General Plan Update; and
- 2) Find this action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15061(b).

IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES:

The financial and personnel impacts associated with the adoption of the vision statement are included in the budget for the Comprehensive General Plan Update.

BACKGROUND:

On [March 28, 2023](#), Council approved a consultant services agreement with Mintier Harnish, a planning consultant firm based out of Sacramento, to assist City staff with the Comprehensive General Plan Update. The update is anticipated to take three years to complete, and also includes an update to the Climate Action Plan, an Alternatives Report, evaluation of development standards, an East Grand Avenue Corridor Overlay District, objective design standards, development code update, retail market analysis, and market demand study.

The project scope is divided among eleven (11) phases. The first three phases (Project Initiation, Public Outreach Strategy, and Background Data and Analysis) are complete and the visioning phase represents the fourth phase of the project. The vision statement and guiding principles should reflect what community members value most about their community and the shared aspirations of how they envision their community developing during the lifespan of the General Plan. The vision statement should be inspirational and set the key values and aspirations for the guiding principles. The guiding principles should

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provide more specific guidance that establishes the foundation for the General Plan's goals, policies, and programs.

A General Plan visioning workshop was held on February 28, 2024, to solicit information from the public about their vision for their community. A series of interactive exercises were designed to obtain community feedback, which was ultimately used to develop the draft vision statements and guiding principles for consideration during the study session. An online survey to gather community input on the draft vision statement and guiding principles was active between June 17, 2024, and July 31, 2024. The survey garnered 189 responses. A summary of the responses is included as Attachment 1.

Feedback received from the public from February 2024 through May 2024 highlights the community's values, aspirations, and concerns, and provides a foundation for future planning and development. An evaluation of the public comment revealed six (6) major themes:

1. Preservation of Historic Charm and Community Identity
2. Recreation and Community Spaces
3. Inclusivity and Diversity
4. Infrastructure and Smart Growth
5. Economic Development and Local Business
6. Environmental Sustainability

The guiding principles for this project have been developed around these themes. The input collected from the public workshop, online survey, and Planning Commission study session should be considered by City Council, in the adoption of one (1) vision statement and one guiding principle for each of the six (6) major themes. The feedback obtained from the online survey are provided in Attachment 1.

Planning Commission Study Session

On [July 2, 2024](#), a Planning Commission study session was held to receive public comment and discuss the options presented for the vision statement and guiding principles. For the purposes of the study session discussion, three (3) vision statements and two (2) guiding principles for each of the six (6) major themes were provided for the Planning Commission's consideration. Minutes from that meeting are provided as Attachment 2.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES:

After a robust discussion, including recognition of the preferences that came out of the community survey, the Planning Commission revised staff's recommendations, resulting in one vision statement and six guiding principles being forwarded Council for its consideration. Council can adopt the following statements as presented or revise them as appropriate.

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Vision Statement

A vision statement is an aspirational description of what the community would like to be in the future. It is a summary of high-level goals to be achieved by the updated General Plan. The visioning process is valuable in identifying issues important to the community and in providing early direction for alternative development and analysis.

During its discussion, Planning Commission identified three main priorities that need to be included in the vision statement: revitalization of the East Grand Avenue corridor, development of a range of housing options, and prioritization of infrastructure to facilitate multi-modal transportation options. It was also noted by the Commission that a reference to the city's parks and recreation facilities should be included in the statement but did not specify the exact language. The statement below includes a sentence added by staff about these amenities that is intended to capture the sentiment of the Commission's discussion. The vision statement for Council's consideration reads as follows:

- The City of Arroyo Grande is a welcoming and vibrant community that takes pride in its charming character while celebrating its citizens and valuing its visitors. The City maintains public parks and recreational facilities to serve individuals of all ages and abilities and is designed to be walkable and bike-friendly, reducing the need for driving and promoting a healthier lifestyle. Arroyo Grande features a historic Village and lively and accessible East Grand Avenue. The City's dedication to strategic growth ensures a diverse housing supply which complements market demands while embracing people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles should express the key values and aspirations for Arroyo Grande's future and act as guideposts for the goals, policies, and implementation measures contained within the General Plan. These principles expand on the main ideas contained in the vision statement so that important concepts are given more weight. Guiding principles are purposefully broad to guide the city throughout development of the updated General Plan. All General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs need to be consistent with the Vision and Guiding Principles.

The Planning Commission's recommendation for the six (6) guiding principles, one for each of the themes identified during the evaluation of public comment, are provided for the Council's consideration. The options provided to the Planning Commission for purposes of the study session discussion are also included in the following sections for reference.

Guiding Principle #1: Preservation of Community Pride and Identity.

Planning Commission Options:

- *Option 1: Prioritize the preservation of historic resources and landmarks*

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to recognize the unique history and character of Arroyo Grande. Promote community events, education, and engagement to foster a strong sense of pride. Encourage quality local businesses, restaurants, and cultural events that balance the City's small-town feel with the need for inclusivity, equity, and growth.

- *Option 2: Maintain an historic charm by preserving and enhancing historic landmarks and fostering a close-knit, welcoming community. Support the development of a lively Village and East Grand Avenue with local businesses, restaurants, and cultural events, creating social gathering places where neighbors can connect and celebrate the City's history.*

The Planning Commission preferred Option 1 indicating that it struck a good balance between the City's history and its current identity, whereas Option 2 leaned too heavily into the past. Agricultural heritage is an aspect of the community that the Commission wanted included in this statement but did not provide specific language for its inclusion. Therefore, the mention of agricultural heritage in the first sentence was an addition by staff to recognize the intent of the Commission. The Planning Commission's recommendation for this guiding principle is:

- Prioritize the preservation of historic resources and landmarks to recognize the unique history, character, and agricultural heritage of Arroyo Grande. Promote community events, education, and engagement to foster a strong sense of pride. Encourage quality local businesses, restaurants, and cultural events that incorporate the City's small-town feel with the need for inclusivity, equity, and growth.
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Guiding Principle #2: Recreation and Community Spaces.

Planning Commission Options:

- *Option 1: Invest in public parks, community gathering spaces, and recreational facilities to provide inclusive spaces for all ages. Expand and maintain safe bike lanes and interconnected walking and biking trails to promote healthy, active lifestyles and reduce car reliance.*
- *Option 2: Support physical activity, social interactions, and events by enhancing and maintaining public parks, recreation trails, and community spaces.*

The Planning Commission unanimously preferred Option 1 because of its emphasis on parks and recreational facilities and promotion of multi-modal transportation options. The Planning Commission's recommendation for this guiding principle is:

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- Invest in public parks, community gathering spaces, and recreational facilities to provide inclusive spaces for all ages and abilities. Expand and maintain safe bike lanes and interconnected walking and biking trails to promote healthy, active lifestyles and reduce car reliance.

Guiding Principle #3: Inclusivity and Diversity

Planning Commission Options:

- *Option 1: Foster a welcoming community where all residents feel a sense of belonging and inclusion and can be different together. Promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity, and encourage a community where everyone's voices are considered and valued.*
- *Option 2: Promote diversity and equity across ethnic, cultural, and income levels, and strive to create an inclusive environment where every resident has equal opportunities to thrive.*

The Planning Commission preferred Option 1 because it succinctly encapsulates the City's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy. However, it is recommended that the phrase "equal opportunities to thrive" is added to this guiding principle. The Planning Commission's recommendation for this guiding principle is:

- Foster a welcoming community where all residents feel a sense of belonging and inclusion and can be different together. Promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity, and encourage a community where everyone's voices are considered and valued, and every resident has equal opportunities to thrive.

Guiding Principle 4: Infrastructure and Smart Growth

Planning Commission Options:

- *Option 1: Protect scenic assets, including open space preserves, recreational trails, hillsides, and waterways. Prioritize sustainable infrastructure development, integrating practices and technologies to minimize environmental impacts. Support the development of diverse housing options that cater to different income levels and living situations.*
- *Option 2: Implement strategies to balance economic growth opportunities with the preservation of natural resources. Prioritize infrastructure investment in roads, public transportation, and community facilities to support community growth while enhancing quality of life for all residents. Support diverse housing options, catering to different income levels and family structures.*

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The Planning Commission preferred Option #2 because of specific references to infrastructure investments into roads and community facilities. Planning Commissioners recommended that the statement incorporate efforts to mitigate extreme weather events as part of future infrastructure investments. The Planning Commission's recommendation for this guiding principle is:

- Implement strategies to balance economic growth opportunities with the preservation of natural resources. Prioritize infrastructure investment in roads, public transportation, and community facilities to support community growth and mitigate extreme weather events while enhancing quality of life for all residents. Support diverse housing options, catering to different income levels and living situations.

Guiding Principle #5: Economic Development and Local Business

Planning Commission Options:

- *Option 1: Prioritize local businesses to enhance the city's economy and create a vibrant hub of community activity through a mixture of commercial and residential uses. Foster economic opportunities aligned with the job and housing market to ensure economic diversity and vitality for all residents.*
- *Option 2: Support the local retail base and revitalize the East Grand Avenue corridor to create a vibrant hub of community activity and diverse housing opportunities, focusing on multi-family and missing middle housing types. Enhance existing retail centers and attract diverse commercial and housing options to ensure financial security for the city and provide residents with access to a broad range of goods and services.*

The Planning Commission preferred Option #2 because of the emphasis on future development of the East Grand Avenue corridor for generating tax revenue and a range of housing options. It was also recommended that the statement reference visitors due to the importance of tourism on the City's tax base. The Planning Commission's recommendation for this guiding principle is:

- Support the local retail base and revitalize the East Grand Avenue corridor to create a vibrant hub of community activity and diverse housing opportunities, focusing on multi-family and missing middle housing types. Enhance existing retail centers, hospitality options, and attract diverse commercial and housing options to ensure financial security for the city while providing residents and visitors with access to a broad range of goods and services.

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Guiding Principle #6: Environmental Sustainability

Planning Commission Options:

- *Option 1: Protect scenic landscapes and natural resources from urban sprawl to preserve the city's natural beauty and agricultural heritage. Balance resource conservation with economic growth and equity to ensure that meeting today's needs does not compromise the ability of the community to meet future needs.*
- *Option 2: Encourage sustainable practices in all community sectors, including energy efficiency, waste reduction, and renewable energy use. Balance resource conservation with economic growth and equity, ensuring a sustainable future through municipal leadership and policy commitments.*

The Planning Commission preferred Option #2 because it more clearly states what the City's objectives are regarding sustainability and balancing current demands with future needs. The Planning Commission's recommendation for this guiding principle is:

- Encourage sustainable practices in all community sectors, including energy efficiency, waste reduction, and renewable energy use. Balance resource conservation with economic growth and equity to ensure that meeting today's needs does not compromise the ability of the community to meet future needs.

ALTERNATIVES:

The following alternatives are provided for the Council's consideration:

1. Adopt the vision statement and one guiding principle from each of the major themes;
2. Revise and adopt a vision statement and guiding principles; or
3. Provide other direction to staff.

ADVANTAGES:

Establishing a vision statement and guiding principles that align with the community's vision will become the overarching policy document that guides the development of the General Plan update.

DISADVANTAGES:

None identified.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Adoption of the vision statement and guiding principles is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") because it has no potential to result in

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either a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment. (State CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15060, subd. (b)(2)-(3)).

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENTS:

The Agenda was posted at City Hall and on the City's website in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Community Comments from Visioning Workshop and Online Survey
2. Minutes of the July 2, 2024, Planning Commission Meeting