

City of Arroyo Grande, CA

City Council Goal Setting Workshop

Held February 10, 2025

The City of Arroyo Grande, California, held a Goal Setting Workshop on February 10th, 2025. The retreat was planned and facilitated by Raftelis.

Introductions and Expectations

The workshop began with the City Council and staff introducing themselves, and then the Council shared their expectations for the retreat. Expectations included:

- Learning
- Productivity and being concise
- Clarifying goals
- Giving shape and form to ideas
- Identifying what we hope to achieve

Hometown Headlines

Council members were asked to think about the future of Arroyo Grande and develop a front-page newspaper headline they would be proud to see in two years. Headlines are captured below:

- Arroyo Grande Opening Slew of Small Businesses in the Next Month
- Arroyo Grande Emerges as The Gem of The Central Coast
- Arroyo Grande Wins the Strong Town, Strong City Contest
- Arroyo Grande Expands Inventory of Low and Extremely Low-Income Housing
- Arroyo Grande Secures Third Permanent Source of Water
- Ten Year Financial Forecast Indicates Strong Reserves and an Increased Pavement Index

Accomplishments

The facilitator reviewed accomplishments mentioned during Council interviews in preparation for the retreat. These included:

Governance and Budgeting

- Hired the City Manager and City Attorney, bringing stability to those positions
- Passage of Measure E sales tax measure

Public Safety and Services

- Resetting the Fire Joint Powers Authority (JPA)
- Collaborating with the Five Cities Homeless Coalition on a warming center
- Implementing complete streets for safer crossings and securing grants

Infrastructure and Maintenance

- Funding for infrastructure (Measure E)
- Taking over the state highway that runs through the City
- Progress on the Traffic Way Bridge
- Swinging bridge improvements
- Smart planning (sidewalks, crosswalks in downtown Arroyo Grande)

Community Engagement

- Engaging community volunteers to maintain the village's landscaping and streetscape
- Fostering community pride
- Supporting recreation and events with a small budget, achieving a big impact



Organizational Context

The Human Resources Officer, Ashley Garcia, reviewed community survey results, providing context for the priority-setting work to follow. A copy of this presentation is included in the appendix.

In addition, the facilitator reviewed information regarding the overlap of political acceptability and administrative sustainability for balancing council priorities and day-to-day operations, as well as typical capacity expectations for effective management. These materials are included in the appendix.

Focus Areas and Council Priorities

Starting with the “big rocks,” the facilitator reviewed the themes that emerged from the Council interviews and presented a draft set of focus areas based on the themes. The Council discussed the broad focus areas and the specific interests within them. After getting consensus on the focus areas and potential priorities, Council members used a dot exercise to identify their top priorities.

The table below contains the focus areas and how many Councilmembers voted for the potential priorities. Each Council member was given six dots to place next to the items most important to them for the next two years. There was agreement that all of the options were important for the City and choosing was difficult.

Focus Areas and Priorities	Dot Exercise Results
Infrastructure and Resilience	
Road maintenance (implement the pavement plan)	4
Water resilience	3
Emergency preparedness (wildfire, flood, earthquake)	2
Transportation planning (circulation and interchanges)	1
Investment in aging infrastructure	0
Economic Development and Vitality	
Pursue new revenue sources (cannabis, TOT)	5
Redevelopment of East Grand Avenue corridor	4
General plan update	1
Arroyo Grande Village	0
Support for local businesses	0
Quality of Life	
Affordable housing	2
Access to open spaces and recreational amenities	1

Community events	0
Public spaces (i.e., Elm Street Park, Short Street Plaza)	0
Organizational Effectiveness	
Regional partnership	3
Community engagement	2
Financial resources	1
Attraction and retention of employees	1
Use of technology and efficiency	0
Forward-thinking policies	0
Continuous improvement	0

The dot exercise activity set the stage for a more extensive discussion of the Council's priorities. Council members clarified that although public safety does not show up as a top priority, it does not mean it's not important. It simply indicates that there are other areas that require greater attention. In addition, although the General Plan Update did not receive as many votes, Council Members agreed it remains a top priority, and they do not want to lose momentum. They also noted that regional partnerships touch a number of areas (i.e., water, emergency preparedness, and transportation planning) and that it be placed on the Bike Rack for discussion at a future meeting. Following their discussion, the Council agreed on the final set of priorities as displayed in the table below:

COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- **Complete the General Plan Update**
- **Redevelop the East Grand Avenue Corridor (Halcyon Road to Elm Street)**
- **Pursue New Revenue Sources**
 - Consider cannabis as a means of economic development
 - TOT (reallocation)
- **Implement Road and Sidewalk Improvements**
 - Create five-year pavement plan
 - Implement and communicate the pavement plan
- **Achieve Water Resilience**
 - Pursuing a ballot measure in 2026

Intentional Governance

The Mayor, Council, and the City Manager had an opportunity to discuss their aspirations for how they work together to lead the community. The guiding question and the key themes from the discussion are captured below:

WHAT IS AN IDEAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNING BODY AND THE MANAGER? HOW WILL YOU FOSTER IT?

- The relationship should be civil, friendly, and open, where the City Manager feels comfortable exchanging ideas and raising questions or concerns. Everyone is working toward the best outcomes for the City.
- Respect for roles and responsibilities is key. The City Manager should feel empowered to guide the Council in the right direction, while the Council should bring constituent perspectives forward in a respectful and constructive manner.
- Understanding the limits of the Council's role is essential. Governing as a collective body comes with significant responsibility, and recognizing those boundaries helps maintain balance.
- The biggest challenges often arise from navigating constituent concerns, requiring thoughtful collaboration between the Council and the Manager.
- Staff operate under team guidelines that define working relationships, including the principle of assuming good intent, which fosters a productive and respectful environment.

During the discussion on the governing body's relationship with the City Manager, the Council expressed interest in reviewing sample Council norms for potential adoption. Norms serve as an effective self-accountability mechanism, helping to maintain productive and respectful governance. It was noted that the best time to implement norms is when things are going well, ensuring a strong foundation for future collaboration.

SAMPLE COUNCIL NORMS

- Assume good intent.
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement.
- Inspire public confidence in our City government.
- Work for the common good, not personal interest.
- Respect the roles of elected officials and City staff in ensuring open and effective government.
- Communicate through the City Manager.
- Prepare in advance of Council meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda.
- Fully participate in City Council meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, consideration, and courtesy to others.
- Work for win-win -- strive for consensus and seek common ground.
- Honor "discussion" before "decisions" – reserve making formal motions until initial discussions have taken place.
- Disagree agreeably and professionally.

Bike Rack

The “Bike Rack” was used as a time management tool to keep track of items that require further discussion outside of the retreat. These items were:

- Transportation planning
- Regional partnerships
 - Water
 - Emergency preparedness
 - Transportation

Parting Thoughts

As the day came to a close, each participant was asked to share one word to describe how they felt having reached the end of the workshop. Responses included the following:

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| • Enthused | • Opportunity | • Productive |
| • Optimistic | • Clarity | • Calibrated |
| • Gauntlet | • Defined | • Optimistic |
| • Hopeful | • Optimistic | • Relieved |
| • Encouraged | • Intentional | |
| • Bright | • Stable | |

APPENDIX:

Community Survey Results and Governance Slides

CITY COUNCIL




2025 ARROYO GRANDE
COMMUNITY PRIORITIES SURVEY RESULTS

2/10/2025 • Item 5.a.

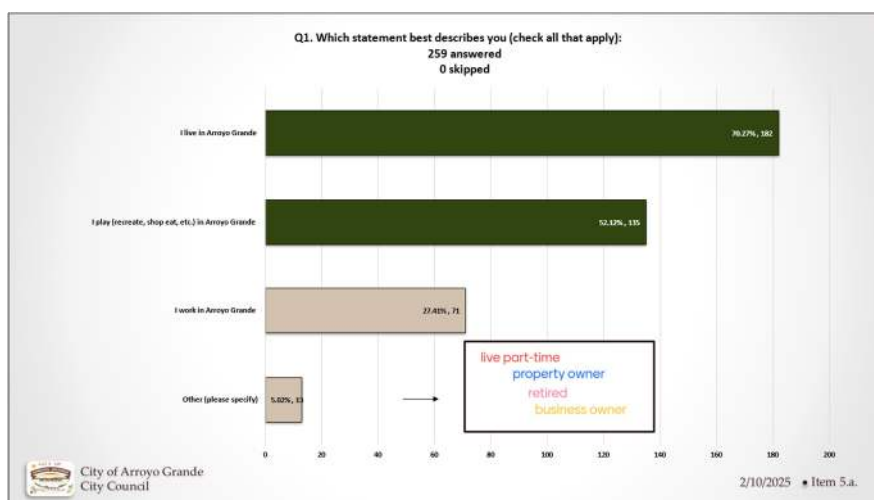
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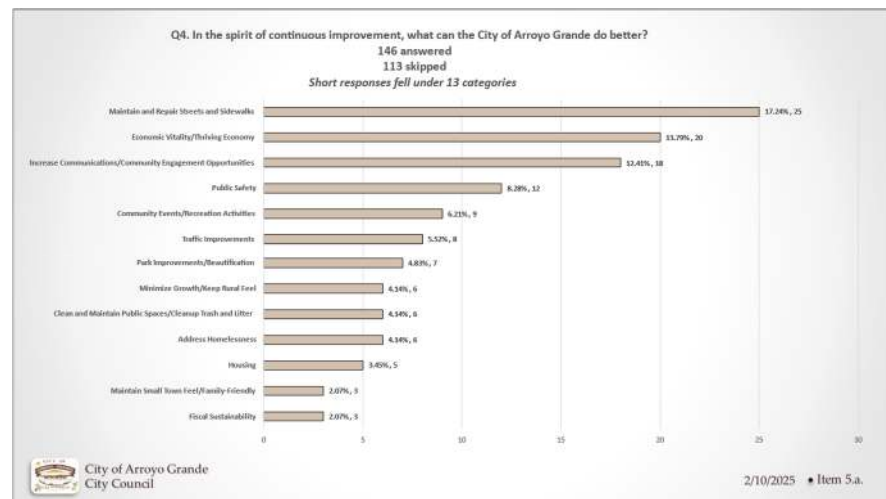
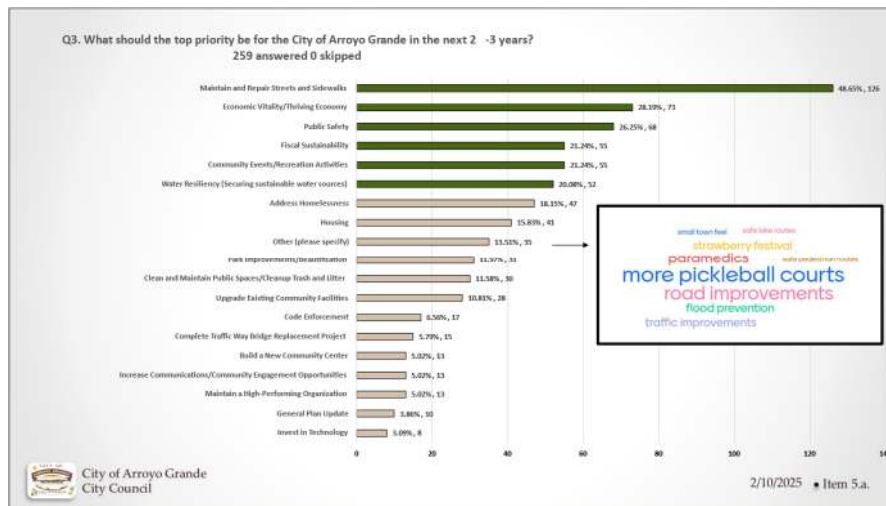
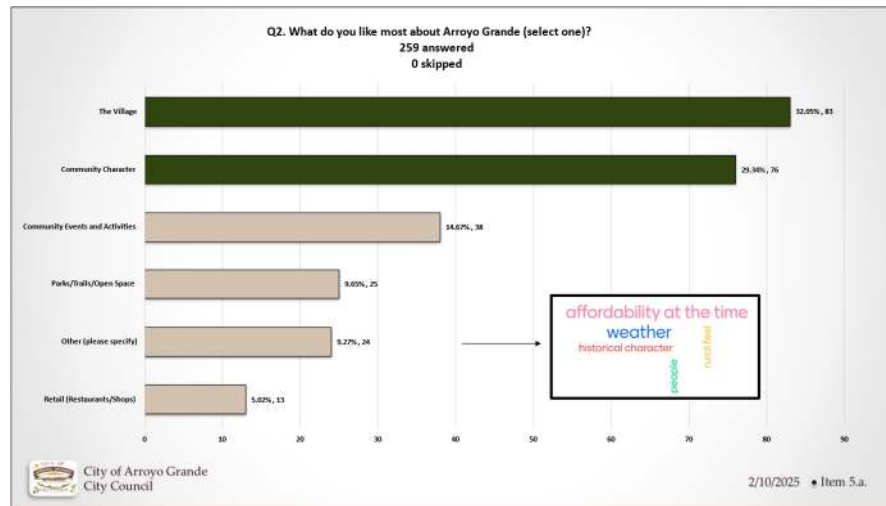
- 4 question survey
- Survey was deployed December 9 - January 15
- 259 total respondents



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Q4. In the spirit of continuous improvement, what can the City of Arroyo Grande do better?

Examples from Maintain and Repair Streets and Sidewalks

Fix **potholes**

Full depth
repairs instead
of overlays

Street
maintenance

Striping

Close **Brisco**
ramp

Repair **Halcyon**
Road

Fix broken
sidewalk



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Q4. In the spirit of continuous improvement, what can the City of Arroyo Grande do better?

Examples from Economic Vitality/Thriving Economy

Streamline
entitlement/
development
process

Support **local**
businesses

Welcome **new**
businesses

Build the Village
into a **tourism**
destination

Increase **TOT**
revenue
opportunities

Fill empty
storefronts



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Q4. In the spirit of continuous improvement, what can the City of Arroyo Grande do better?

Examples from Increase Communication/Public Engagement

Increase
engagement from
young professionals
and families

Communicate with
residents about
large upcoming
projects

Prioritize projects
based on **resident**
feedback



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Effective Management Requires *Attention and Time*

