

# City of Palmdale General Plan Update Joint General Plan Advisory Committee #17 and Public Workshop: Health, Equity, Parks and Recreation

August 11, 2021 | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

*Virtual Meeting via Zoom livestreamed to YouTube*

## Special Meeting Minutes (Approved July 28, 2022)

### Meeting Objectives

- Review existing setting related to health, equity, parks, and recreation topics
- Review and refine preliminary health, equity, parks, and recreation recommendations for the General Plan Update

### Attendees

#### GPAC Members

##### Present:

Tony Avila, Juan Blanco, Colby Estes, Lourdes T. Everett, Laura Gordon, Theresa Hambro, Matthew Harris, Aurora Hernandez, Pat Hunt, Teresa Lamping and Jason Zink

**Absent:** Deborah Rutkowski-Hines and Sheri Kaneshiro

#### City Staff

Carlene Saxton, Director of Economic and Community Development; Megan Taggart, Planning Manager; Ben Fiss, Senior Planner; Drew Pletcher, Deputy City Attorney; Ruben Hovanesian, Associate Engineer; Steven Montenegro, Landscape Superintendent; Keri Smith, Director of Parks and Recreation, and Eric Dombrowski, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation

#### Consultant Team

Raimi + Associates: Simran Malhotra and Melissa Stark

#### Public

Thirteen members of the community joined the Zoom meeting, though no public sign-in is available.

# Meeting Summary

## 1. Introduction

The virtual meeting began with a review of the joint meeting agenda, roll call of GPAC Members, introductions of City staff and the consultant team, and recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pat Hunt made a motion to approve GPAC #16 special meeting minutes (August 5, 2021) and Juan Blanco seconded the motion. None opposed so the motion passed.

## 2. Presentation & Feedback

Simran Malhotra provided an overview of the General Plan, which included the project schedule and an introduction to the policy frameworks.

The presentation was led by Simran who reviewed the background health and equity information and proposed draft policies. Melissa Stark provided an overview of the parks and recreation background including existing plans, programs, feedback from the community, and proposed draft policies.

During the presentation, the group stopped for questions and to answer interactive polls. All poll questions—except for the meeting minute approval poll—were available to members of the public and GPAC, but please note that not all participants responded to all polls.

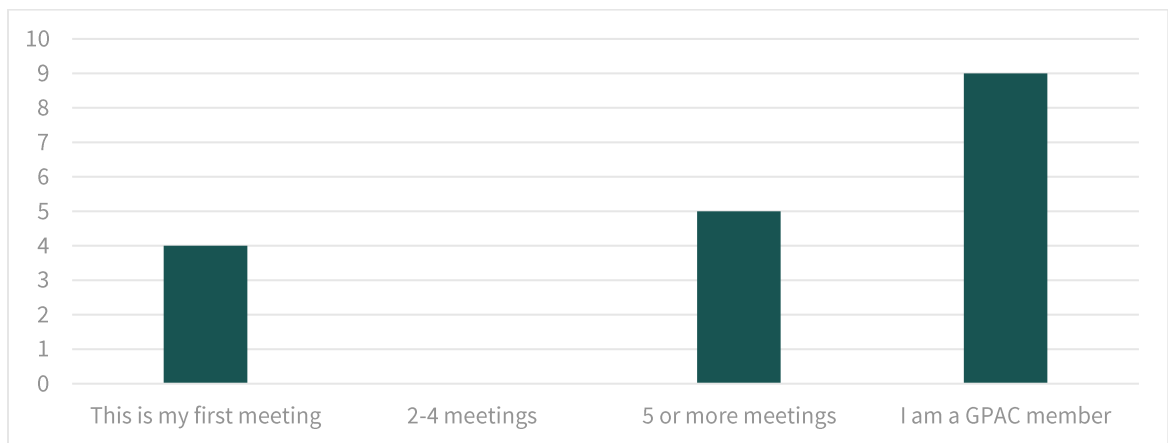
In advance of the meeting, the project website was updated with background materials, which were also emailed to GPAC members to review as context for the meeting.

Below are descriptions of each presentation section and summaries of responses to each poll question. Poll responses are combined for GPAC members and members of the public.

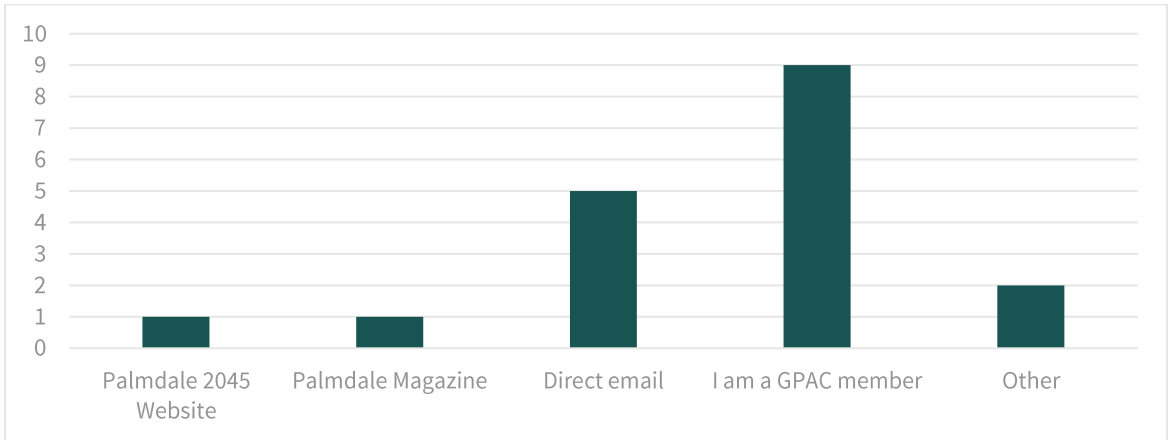
### General Plan Overview

The background component of the presentation began with an overview of the General Plan process, how it is defined, the Palmdale 2045 schedule, and an introduction to the policy frameworks.

### How many General Plan related meetings have you attended?



**How did you hear about this meeting? (Select all that apply)**



**Existing Setting**

As a precursor to the draft goals and policies, Simran and Melissa provided background on health, equity, parks, and recreation conditions in Palmdale, including defining both general plan elements and key requirements.

**Existing Plans/Policies and Feedback from Community Engagement**

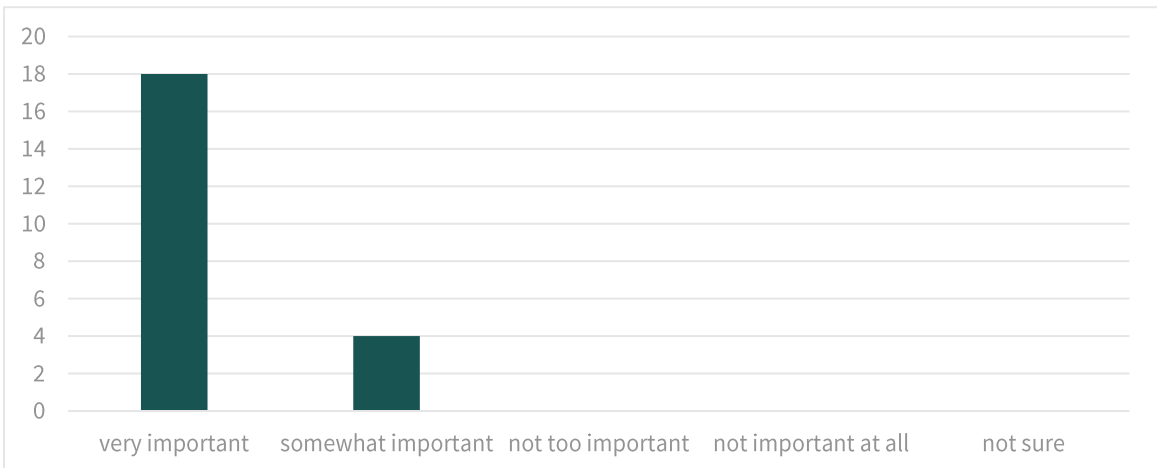
Simran and Melissa reviewed existing plans and programs in Palmdale and highlighted community feedback related to both topics.

**Policy Framework**

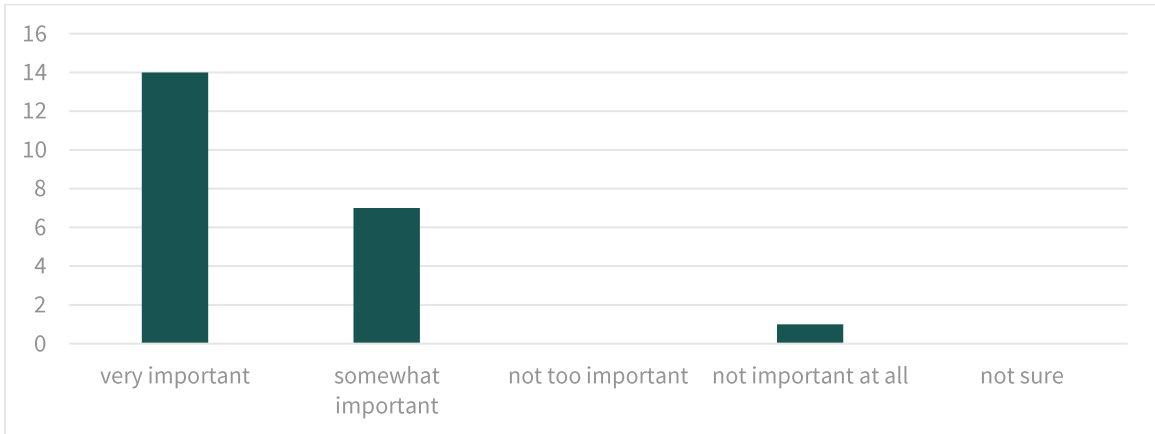
Proposed goals and policies were introduced in this section of the presentation. Simran and Melissa provided an overview of the framework structure, followed by review of desired outcomes, performance metrics, and draft goals and policies for health, equity, parks, and recreation.

**How important are the following health and equity outcomes for the future of Palmdale?**

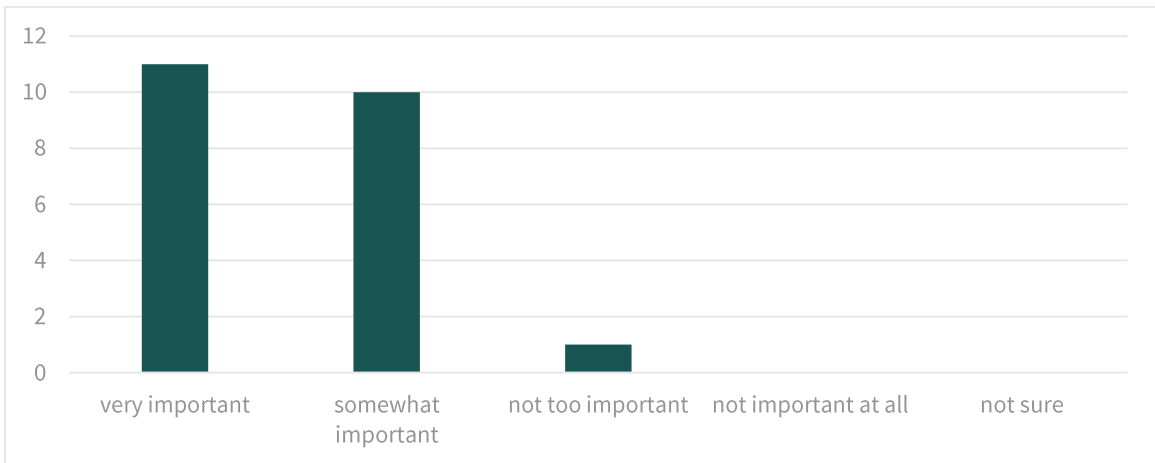
*Expanded economic opportunity for residents*



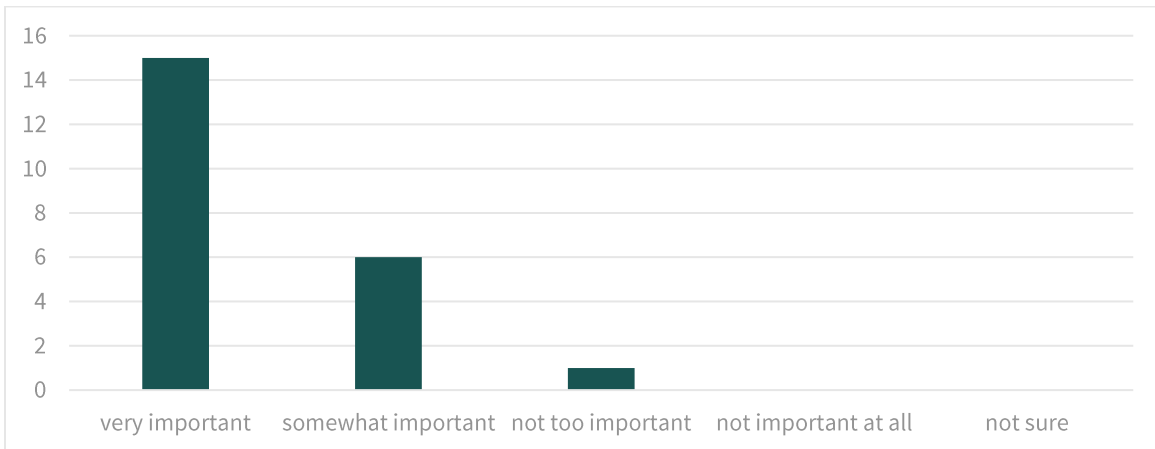
*Increased number of multifamily housing units*



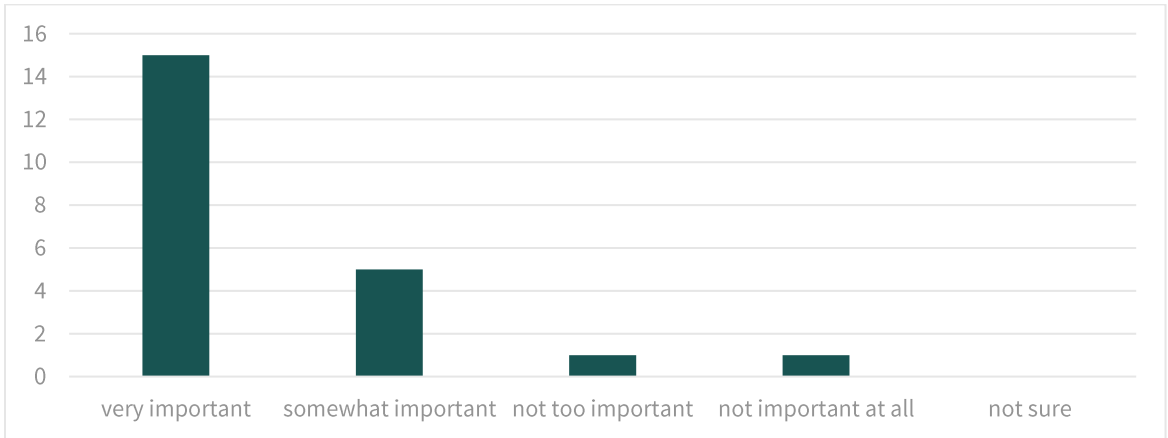
*Improved opportunities for physical activity*



*Improved air quality*

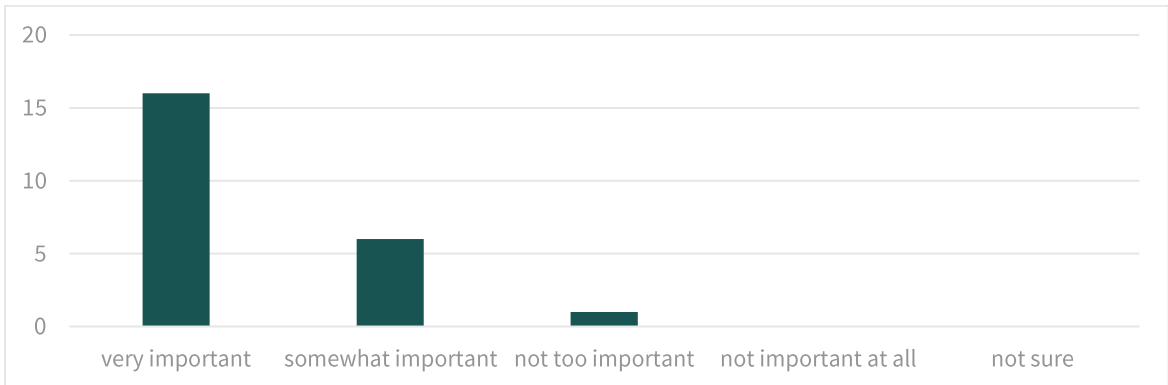


*Strengthened access to healthy food*

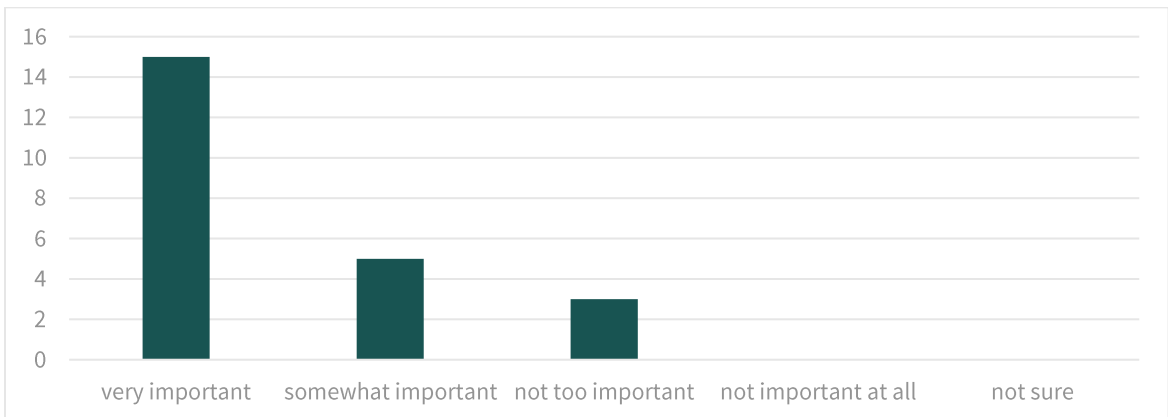


**How important are the following parks and recreation outcomes for the future of Palmdale?**

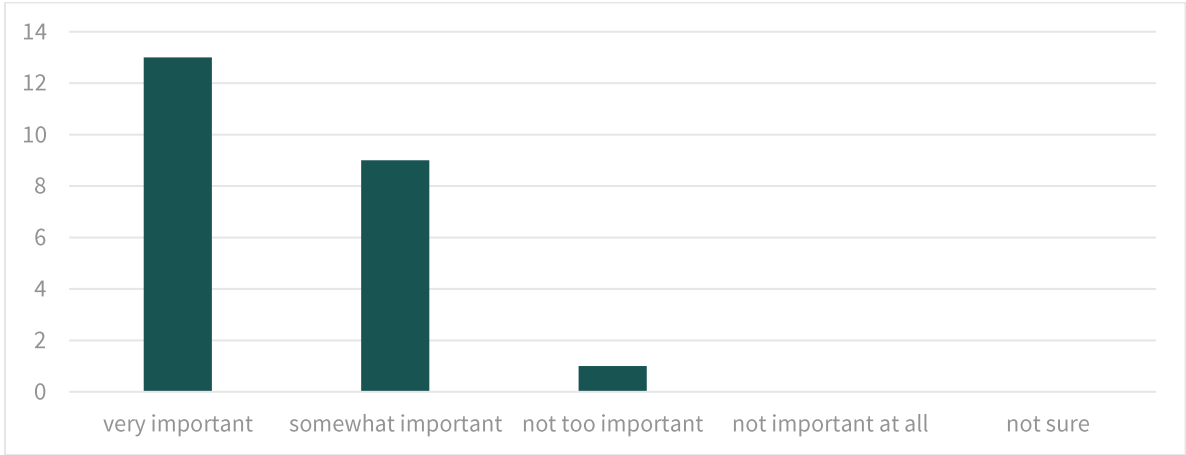
*Connectivity*



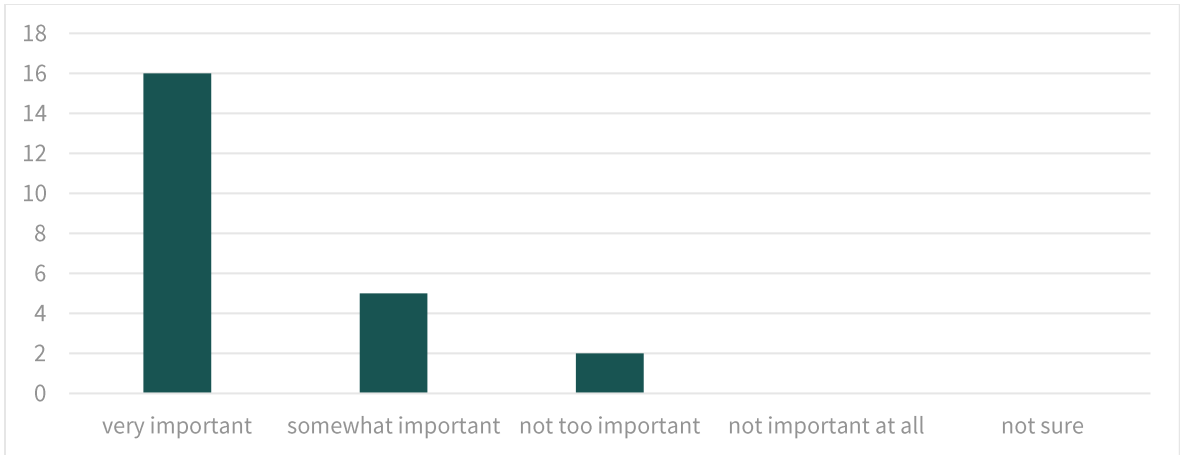
*New Parkland*



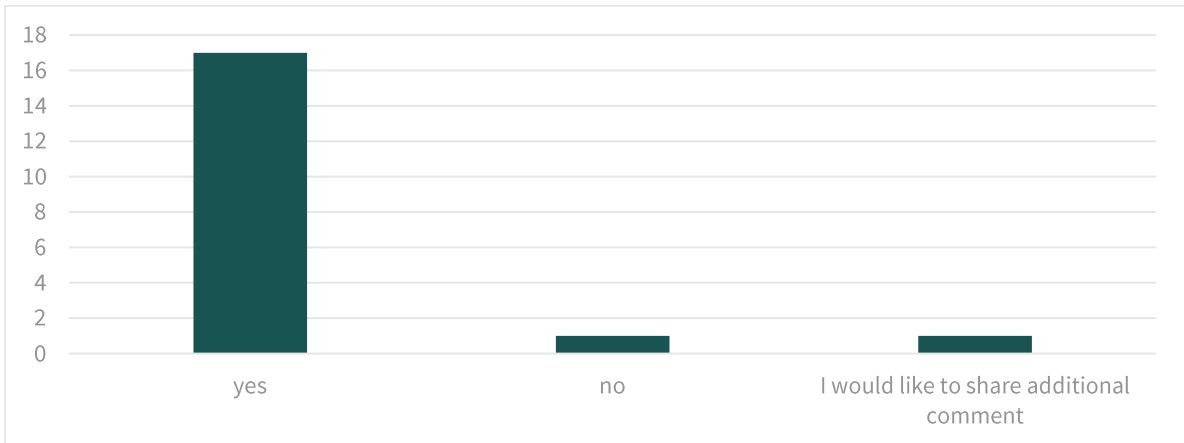
*Partnerships*



*Upgrades to Existing Facilities*



**Do these goals address the vision themes and outcomes identified for parks and recreation for the General Plan Update?**



## Other Questions and Comments

During the presentation GPAC members asked various questions. These questions and the General Plan Team's responses are below.

- Why do we have higher levels of Ozone pollution? And is it contributing to our lower life expectancy? If so, what are we doing to mitigate it in the General Plan?
  - *Ozone levels are largely due to the geography of the Antelope Valley and how pollution moves across the Los Angeles basin. There are limitations to what the City can do to offset this pollution, but one specific thing we can do is plant trees, which is being addressed in the General Plan.*
- Is the lower life expectancy only due to Ozone pollution?
  - *No, there are several other factors called social determinants of health. There is no one specific cause for the lower life expectancy.*
- Shocked at the poverty level citywide. Interested in what the levels would be if you looked at poverty for the east and west sides of Palmdale.
  - *The Health and Equity Existing Conditions Report has greater detail about poverty and other issues in Palmdale.*
- The parks access map has some areas that are shaded in dark purple, but there are no parks in that area.
- The future parks map should have priority areas on the far west side and between 40<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Street East on Palmdale Boulevard.
- How are disadvantaged communities determined?
  - *We are required to use the State established methodology to establish census tracts that are disadvantaged. We covered this in detailed at the October 2020 meeting (GPAC #8). We can explain this in further detail after the meeting or point you to the materials from that meeting for reference.*
- The disadvantaged maps include industrial areas that have no homes, how can we better pinpoint the areas that are disadvantaged?
  - *Unfortunately, we are required to use the State methodology, which is determined at the census tract level. We were able to isolate areas that are not populated, but are required to follow the census tracts per the methodology. We will share that caveat with the Planning Commission and City Council workshops.*
- What types of trees are we proposing to plant as part of the General Plan policies?
  - *Identifying tree species is too detailed for the General Plan. The General Plan will establish criteria, like drought-tolerant, shade, pest, and disease resistant, among others. The City has an approved plant palette and maintains an inventory of all trees to track their health and performance in the desert climate.*
- I have seen grocery stores in Palmdale close because neighbors don't patronize the store. Specifically, a grocer with a lot of fresh produce declined and eventually went out of business due to low sales from the neighboring residents. I think education is needed around fresh produce and the importance of eating healthy. Palmdale has a lot of fast-food restaurants, which detracts from purchasing fresh produce.
  - *You raise a great point; education is extremely important. This could be accomplished by partnering with local schools to educate students about healthy food choices.*
- One suggested policy limiting concentration of alcohol stores. What role does the GPAC play in pushing for those kinds of policies?
  - *All final decisions will be made by the City Council. Regarding location of liquor stores, the City already has distance requirements established to limit the*

*proliferation of liquor and tobacco stores and established sensitive uses that have further restrictions for separation.*

- In my experience I've seen exemptions made to allow liquor and/or tobacco stores to locate within the restrictions, hoping we can push for policy changes moving forward.
- Regarding mental health and collaborations with Los Angeles County, maybe we can collaborate with local schools to educate students about identifying and coping with different mental illnesses.
- I think there should be more areas identified on the map for parks. The railroad owns land that could be considered for pocket parks.
- The City should consider starting a conservancy district and job corps to open up opportunities for grants, jobs for youth and foster youth.
- The City should also consider a youth commission, parks and recreation commission, and senior commission.
- Regarding walk access to parks, I think our target should be 10-minutes instead of 20-minutes.
- We should aim to plant 1,000 trees through our policies instead of only 600.
- We need double the jobs training, instead of 5,000 we should offer 10,000, based on the number of students who graduate annually.
- In the Antelope Valley, 50% of future residential development should be affordable.

### 3. Small Group Discussions and Report Out

Following the presentation, the GPAC and members of the public separated into two small groups for further discussion. Once completed, a member of each group shared highlights to all attendees of the meeting. More detailed notes from each small group discussion are attached to these minutes.

#### Public Group Report Out

- Ensure new affordable multifamily housing is available for existing Palmdale residents, rather than people who relocate to Palmdale
- Strengthen access to healthy foods by reducing liquor and tobacco stores and limiting fast food retailers, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Resident benefits may offer double credit for healthy food purchases
- Healthy food program education for youth in schools

#### GPAC Group Report Out

- Consider our parks standard moving forward
- Provide new senior centers across town
- School parks and recreation areas should be accessible to the public
- Certain areas of Palmdale lack access to grocery stores
- Other recreation amenities like a public zoo or pond
- Disparities in investment across Palmdale
- Tree types and parks should consider desert climate
- Policy to work with school districts to educate students about mental health
- Programs to celebrate Palmdale pride and helping community groups reach their desired constituents
- Data sources and further analysis on resident health in Palmdale



#### 4. Public Comment

Members of the public who joined the meeting were invited to share public comments. Three elected to participate, a summary of their comments is below with one General Plan Team response in italics.

- To have health equity in Palmdale, new apartment buildings should not be placed in one area, it burdens schools among other things. New restaurants should be healthy food options, no more junk foods. Build a bridge from the eastside to access the Palmdale Regional Medical Center.
- To preserve the desert atmosphere in Palmdale we should have spaces with wild Joshua Trees and increase equitable access to nature – it can improve mental and physical health. I think it is a good idea for schools to share their park and recreation facilities with the rest of the community. The City has done a good job of planning and growing over the years.
- Community members don't always feel that same way about adding bike lanes or multifamily housing, but even if it is zoned for multifamily, it doesn't mean that will get developed. Investors are required, and it must be profitable for them to develop. Does the City have plans to attract inventors to build? What happens when some community members come forward against multifamily developments?
  - *State law requires cities to allow housing by-right in areas where they are designated. Therefore, there is limited opportunity for neighbors to request that a project is denied.*

#### 5. Policy Framework Comments

Melissa shared how to comment and review the policy framework document, by visiting the Palmdale2045.org website and clicking on "Policy." All policy framework documents will be uploaded to the website and will remain open for review and comment through August 2021.

#### 6. Next Steps and Wrap Up

Simran shared upcoming meetings and next steps at the close of the meeting. Presentations to Planning Commission will take place on Thursday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, and City Council will take place on Tuesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

*Attached: Facilitator notes from the small group discussions.*

*A recording of this meeting is available on the [Palmdale 2045 YouTube Channel](#)*

# Facilitator Worksheet

Meeting: Joint GPAC and Public Workshop

Policy Framework Series: Health, Equity, Parks and Recreation | August 11, 2021

*GPAC Breakout Group*

## Questions, Notes, and Report Out:

### 1. Are there any outcomes we should consider?

#### Notes

- Civic pride

### 2. Are there any policy ideas that we should consider?

#### Notes

- Promote commissions in Palmdale for youth, parks and recreation, and senior citizens
- Provide more senior centers with community rooms near public parks
- New schools should plan their parks and recreation areas to allow for public access
- Emphasize manufacturing in Palmdale

### 3. Of the policy ideas, which resonate the most?

N/A

### 4. Is there anything else you'd like to share about these topics?

#### Notes

- Future park acreage targets, is 5 acres a good standard?
- The Courson Park area of Palmdale needs a grocery store
- The City should provide a public zoo
- More parks could be prioritized near existing ponds
- There are health disparities between the east and west sides of Palmdale
- Need senior centers on both the east and west side of Palmdale
- Health data available from Healthy Places Index
- Trees and parks must consider the extreme climate in Palmdale
- The City must prioritize what it can do with limited funds

# Facilitator Worksheet

Meeting: Joint GPAC and Public Workshop

Policy Framework Series: Health, Equity, Parks and Recreation | August 11, 2021

*Public Breakout Group*

## Questions, Notes, and Report Out:

### 1. Are there any outcomes we should consider?

Notes

- 

### 2. Are there any policy ideas that we should consider?

Notes

- Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the City
- Multiple family housing that is affordable should be dedicated to existing residents, rather than for those relocating from the Valley or DTLA
- 

### 3. Of the policy ideas, which resonate the most?

Notes

- Strengthen access to healthy foods, limiting fast food and liquor stores in disadvantaged communities and in areas that have the highest crime rates and the lowest health rates; not only concerned about sensitive sites
- Preserve the desert atmosphere including preserving Joshua tree wildlands
- Better food for the community; residents on benefits – offering a program where you get more funds if they are spent on healthy items like produce
- Educating children on healthy eating habits/lifestyles
- Programs to get healthier foods into schools

### 4. Is there anything else you'd like to share about these topics?

Notes