

GPAC MEETING #1

Azusa 2050 General Plan Update

August 27, 2026 | 6:00PM–8:00PM | Azusa Light & Water Building, Conference Room

Meeting Purpose

The focus of the first General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) meeting was to introduce the members of the GPAC to each other and the project team; review the purpose and process for the General Plan Update (GPU); discuss roles and responsibilities of the GPAC; and gather feedback on the community engagement process, community assets, and issues affecting quality of life in Azusa.

Key Takeaways

- Committee members highlighted Azusa's strong sense of community, access to the San Gabriel Mountains, local businesses, community pride, and multigenerational residents, as defining assets to preserve and enhance.
- Engagement should be easy to understand, multilingual, family-friendly, and intentionally engage youth and older adults. Outreach should include trusted messengers and be conducted at places where residents frequent or gather.
- A more active, distinctive, and connected downtown was a major theme, including local, small, family-owned businesses, arts and entertainment, live music, evening activity, and stronger connectivity across the downtown, Citrus Crossing, APU, and the Metro stations.
- Safety and mobility concerns focused on speeding, difficult crossings, limited bicycle facilities, and the need for safer, more comfortable walking and biking routes, particularly near schools and along major corridors.
- Other issues raised included housing affordability and options for aging in place, homelessness and services for families and veterans, public safety, access to arts and culture, tree canopy, and air quality concerns.

GPAC Members in Attendance

- Kim Antol, Library Commission
- Jesse Avila, City Council
- Juan Cabrera
- Maricela Cueva
- Donald Davis
- Christopher Dodson, Planning Commission
- Jessica Esparza
- Craig Jimenez
- Mitchell Loera, Parks and Recreation Commission
- Selisa Loeza
- Alessandra Lopez, Art, Cultural, and Historic Preservation Commission
- Elizabeth Ramirez

1. Welcome and Introductions

Knarik Vizcarra, Planning Manager for the City of Azusa, opened the meeting with a welcome to the GPAC members. She introduced the lead consultant, Alta Planning + Design (Alta) represented by Simran Malhotra, Principal, and Sarah Perez, Planner. After project team introductions, the GPAC participated in an exercise to introduce themselves to each other, including their affiliation, how long they have lived in Azusa, and their favorite restaurant in Azusa.

2. General Plan and GPAC Overview

GPAC Rules and Responsibilities

Simran Malhotra from Alta led the GPAC through an overview of the GPAC's purpose, roles, responsibilities, level of commitment, meeting formats and the ground rules as established by the City. There were no questions or comments related to the content presented.

General Plan Update Process and Background

Simran continued with a summary of the General Plan process and background. Topics included the purpose of a General Plan and their focus, why an update is needed and key outcomes. Next, potential future meeting topics were introduced, along with the project roadmap that illustrated phases of the project and related planned engagement activities and deliverables. The following were questions and comments shared related to the general plan update process:

- **Environmental justice.** A couple of GPAC members asked for more information on the screening for "Priority Areas" (more commonly known as disadvantaged communities) process and the tools used to identify Priority Areas. The project team explained that the analysis will use CalEnviroScreen, a tool established by State of California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), and local socioeconomic data to identify communities experiencing disproportionate pollution and health burdens. Committee members asked about examples of burdens, the definition of disadvantaged communities, income thresholds, and the geographic scale of the data. A fuller analysis will be presented at a future meeting.

3. Community Engagement and Outreach

Simran presented an overview of the community engagement and outreach activities that will be held throughout the general plan update process. The engagement includes five community workshops, up to eight pop-up events, three online surveys, a project website, 10 GPAC meetings, presentations to the Planning Commission and City Council, and focused environmental justice engagement and related activities. The GPAC members were asked the following questions "***What are the best ways to engage the community in the General Plan Update process?***" and "***How should we notify the community about upcoming engagement activities?***". The following bullets summarize committee's responses:

- **Explain the project in plain language.** Use short, accessible terminology and messaging that explain why the General Plan matters and connect participation to shaping Azusa's future. Several members supported brief social media videos, while others noted that the survey itself should remain simple and focused on residents' vision rather than technical planning concepts.
 - **Use multiple communication channels.** Consider City social media, a dedicated Azusa 2050 social media presence, posting flyers in local businesses, the City's community television channel (Spectrum channel), quarterly City mailers/newsletters, utility-bill inserts when schedules allow, and opt-in text reminders, potentially through existing City programs such as Shop Azusa.
 - **Engage trusted messengers.** Partner with schools, student groups and clubs, community school specialists, local businesses and restaurants, faith-based leaders and communities, community-based organizations (CBOs), commissions, and other established networks.
 - **Reach youth and families.** Include high school and middle school students through classrooms, clubs, student leadership, multimedia programs, and family networks. Design workshops to be family-friendly, especially related to their schedules and level of engagement.
-

- **Connect at key destinations and in community spaces.** Conduct pop-ups at the night market, school events and athletic games, the library, senior center, parks and recreation programs, seasonal events, and other community gathering places.
- **Make participation immediate and welcoming.** Provide tablets or laptops at events, use QR codes, and consider small incentives tied to event activities to reduce barriers for survey participation.
- **Expand language access.** Continue English and Spanish language engagement, consider Spanish-language meetings facilitated with CBOs, and explore Mandarin or platform-based language options for future surveys.
- **Include Tribal perspectives.** Begin consultation with Tribal representatives early and offer additional opportunities for representatives to participate in or attend GPAC meetings. City staff and the consultant team will coordinate on the appropriate approach.

The project team also encouraged the GPAC members to help get the word out about the ongoing survey. GPAC members asked for the flyer to be sent to them so that they can share with their networks.

4. Community Assets

Using an interactive word-cloud exercise, followed by a facilitated discussion, members were asked ***“what is unique and special about Azusa you want to preserve?”***. The following image shows the themes that emerged, where the larger the word or phrase, the more often that answer was shared.

What is **unique and special** about the City of Azusa that you want to **preserve**?



- **Community composition and pride.** Azusa was described as a close-knit community with multigenerational families, active volunteers, newcomers who want to contribute, and strong pride in being from Azusa.

- **History and character.** Members valued both cultural history and the built environment, including historic commercial buildings, orchard preservation, and residential bungalows. Members underscored the importance of restoration of buildings to preserve history.
- **Open space access.** Access to the San Gabriel Mountains, canyon, parks, trails, regional bicycle connection toward the beach were underscored as vital and unique community assets. One member noted an interest in expanding connectivity to and from Azusa Avenue. Another member mentioned promoting Azusa's unique canyon-to-coast connectivity. Members encouraged the City to strengthen these connections and connectivity, making them part of Azusa's identity.
- **Local businesses and small town feel.** Core Azusa restaurants and businesses were repeatedly linked to community identity and recognition. Members valued locally owned and distinctive destinations where people know one another.
- **College town culture.** Members noted that despite having two local colleges, the city doesn't feel like a college town. They expressed interest in cultivating the positive aspects of college town culture to enhance Azusa's uniqueness.
- **Arts and culture.** Local artists, historic and cultural resources, and opportunities for performances and live music (e.g., similar to the old Smart City Grinds) were identified as assets that could be more fully integrated into community life.
- **Economic development.** Members expressed interest in making downtown a stronger destination with a mix of independent shops, restaurants, entertainment, arts, live music, evening activity, and public spaces that invite people to stay. Discussion emphasized that business recruitment should focus on durable, high-quality businesses and experiences that cannot be replicated online. Participants also discussed creating better connections between downtown and the Citrus Crossing area, APU, and the City's transit assets so these areas feel less separate and reinforce one another.

5. Issues and Challenges

Using an interactive word-cloud exercise, followed by a facilitated discussion, members were asked *“what issues and challenges should the City address to ensure a high quality of life for all?”*.

What **issues and challenges** should the City address to ensure a **high quality of life** for all?



The following image shows the themes that emerged, where the larger the word or phrase, the more that answer was shared:

- **Walking, bicycling, and traffic safety.** Members noted speeding and difficult street crossings as barriers to walking, especially along Azusa Avenue and San Gabriel Avenue and near schools. Members supported evaluating road diets, protected bicycle facilities/lanes, street trees, improved crossings, and other traffic-calming measures. The ongoing feasibility review of converting the Azusa/San Gabriel one-way couplet to two-way operation was noted. Specific areas mentioned for further attention included Sierra Madre Avenue and locations near Azusa High School, including at the intersection of Cerritos Avenue and First Street/Baseline Road. Members also discussed conflicts between motorists and groups of bicyclists where lanes of traffic are taken over completely, putting both in unsafe conditions.
- **Housing and aging in place.** Housing affordability and density were identified as topics requiring further discussion as the update evaluates how to meet the needs of existing and future residents. Members emphasized the need for a broader continuum of older adult housing, including accessible homes, independent living, and assisted-living options that allow longtime residents to remain in Azusa as their needs change.
- **Public safety, homelessness, and community well-being.** Public safety and gang-related concerns were discussed. City representatives noted that the Police Department is addressing activity involving both local and non-local gang individuals. Members also emphasized prevention and long-term support that strengthens youth, family, and household dynamics. Members raised the need for more effective responses to homelessness, including services and housing for veterans and families who currently cannot be supported at the ARC. Partnerships with nonprofit organizations were suggested. Additional concerns included smoke and air quality near recreation areas, uneven tree canopy, and limited access to arts and cultural activities.

6. Public Comment

There were no members of the community present, and no public comments were received.

7. Next Steps

- **Project team/City staff.** Complete existing conditions reports (ECR) and send them to City staff for review. Circulate the reviewed and revised ECRs to GPAC members with enough time for review before the next meeting. Continue community engagement efforts.
 - **GPAC members.** Review ECRs ahead of meeting and identify incorrect/missing information and other issues and opportunities. Support final push for outreach for the community issues and opportunities survey.
-