

ATASCADERO 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY: 09/27/2022

I. Introduction

Atascadero is ready to advance the city towards a safe, healthy, sustainable, and equitable future. The General Plan is the City of Atascadero’s overarching policy document and will establish direction and programs that support housing for all, improve neighborhood quality and connectivity, foster economic development, and reinforce environmental protection citywide.

The City is committed to designing and implementing an inclusive and dynamic engagement process to ensure the 2045 General Plan Update (GPU) is based on robust and genuine feedback from the community, civic and city leaders, and the private sector. The development of the General Plan will require inclusive engagement across many different platforms detailed in this Community Involvement Strategy.

Atascadero has a history of making and implementing great plans. As the City approaches 2025, residents, business owners, and City leaders can reflect on what has been achieved as envisioned in Atascadero’s previous General Plan: new housing types, public and private reinvestments in downtown, development focused within the Urban Services Line, continued protection of hillsides and habitats, and a citywide Bikeway Master Plan. Planning for the next two to three decades will build upon these successes while accounting for the rapid technological and societal changes affecting how people work, shop, recreate, and move around. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many shifts likely to be permanent—particularly work-at-home jobs, online shopping, and home food delivery. These conditions, as well as the impacts of climate change, will be critical topics for discussion with the community as we develop Atascadero’s General Plan 2045.

Impact of Covid-19 on Outreach

Considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on group gatherings and distancing, we expect there may be a continued emphasis on virtual engagement due to the ongoing need for social distancing; however, we will also conduct in-person and/or outdoor activities as health and safety protocols. It is possible that even if restrictions on in-person gatherings are loosened, people may continue to choose to keep their distance and prefer methods that allow for online and telephone participation. Our community engagement experts are at the forefront of virtual meetings, online community engagement techniques, and other strategies for interacting with the community during this challenging time, and beyond. The Project Team is committed to **bridging the digital divide** during COVID-19 to ensure that a broad cross-section of Atascadero community members can access and fully participate in all engagement activities.

II. Approach

The Community Involvement Strategy (CIS) offers numerous opportunities for the public, key civic and business leaders, as well as City staff and elected officials to be involved in the General Plan process. The CIS highlights ways that specific outreach activities will seek out and consider the viewpoints of a wide cross-section of Atascadero communities, with a targeted focus on reaching populations that are traditionally under-represented in planning processes (e.g., communities of color, low-income communities, immigrants, youth and seniors). Our approach includes the following goals:

1. **Leverage Local Networks and Existing Community Engagement Efforts.** Build on the variety and depth of existing community involvement initiatives in Atascadero to engage the public effectively and efficiently in the General Plan process. Tap into existing community-based networks of local leaders and groups to connect with a wider range of community members.
2. **Identify Barriers to Participation.** Cultivate an understanding of existing or potential barriers to the full participation of all community members, particularly communities of color and low-income populations, in the General Plan process.
3. **Create Opportunities for Inclusive and Equitable Participation.** Provide multiple and varied opportunities for a broad range of community members, businesses and interest groups to share meaningful input.
4. **Collaborate and Inform General Plan Decision-Making.** Collect useful and relevant public input that reflects local expertise and values and informs decision-making related to the General Plan.
5. **Build Long-Term Capacity for Civic Engagement around Growth, Development and Community Design.** Build social capital and support those engaged through the process to stay involved and share not only concerns and issues, but also solutions and strategies necessary to implement the General Plan.

III. Guiding Principles

The overarching goal of the community engagement process is to provide opportunities for meaningful participation and consensus-building among residents, community groups, partner agencies, City departments, and other stakeholders to define a shared vision for Atascadero's future. The CIS is based on the following guiding principles:

- **Authentic and Equitable.** One of the principles of this outreach effort is to start and/or continue authentic dialogue, rooted in planning research and data, to establish a framework for future development and investments. Community education regarding existing conditions and the current degree of equity in the distribution of services, amenities and opportunities for housing and jobs in the City of Atascadero will help ground these conversations. We will work with community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and others working directly with a variety of Atascadero communities to meaningfully connect with Atascadero's residents.
- **Inclusive and Flexible.** Using a mix of creative and traditional approaches, the Project Team will proactively reach out and engage a full range of community and stakeholder groups across Atascadero.

- **Interwoven Equity.** The General Plan Update process will provide a focus on equity issues and offer opportunities to have constructive conversations in communities of color and low-income communities regarding challenges to upward mobility and access to educational and economic advancement.
- **High-Touch and High-Tech.** We know that many people respond well to personal, face-to-face communication. Outreach methods such as focus groups, interviews and pop-up events will allow the Project Team to interact with community members in a “high touch” fashion. Many of these same materials will be adapted to the digital environment to supplement a “high tech” aspect to the engagement – through social media, online questionnaires and websites.
- **Clear, Focused and Understandable.** Activities will have a clear purpose and use for the input and will be described in language that is easy to understand.
- **Integrated Framework for Growth, Development and Community Design.** Our approach will focus on synthesizing the best of what is working in terms of growth policies, and creating new, community-centered strategies for addressing Atascadero’s opportunities and priorities.
- **Respect.** All participants, including Project Team, City staff, residents, and civic and elected leaders, demonstrate respect in words and actions and approach decisions with open-mindedness so that everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinion regardless of differences. We will work with community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and others working directly with communities of color and low-income communities to develop culturally relevant outreach approaches, most appropriate to meaningfully connect with Atascadero’s residents.

IV. Key Audiences

The General Plan Update is an opportunity for Atascadero to further build a network of increasingly diverse and engaged community members to collectively contribute to the City’s quality of life. In particular, the community outreach will seek out and consider the viewpoints of hard-to-reach groups such as communities of color, low- and moderate-income residents, seniors, youth, limited-English proficient individuals, and people with disabilities, while conducting public outreach and involvement activities. The key audiences below will be targeted through the appropriate engagement methods. This is a “living list” and the Project Team will continue to add stakeholders/audiences to the list to ensure strong representation from across the City.

- Atascadero residents and community members
- City Council and elected officials
- City of Atascadero Departments
- County of San Luis Obispo Departments
- Transportation Service Providers
- Community and volunteer organizations
- Neighborhood associations and “Friends of” groups
- Faith-based organizations
- Educational institutions (schools and universities)
- Large employers and local businesses
- Chambers of Commerce and business associations
- Transportation, public health, open space and environmental advocacy groups

V. Phases of Engagement Activities

The matrix below outlines each of the tasks in the CIS and details if the engagement activity will be provided in-person, virtually or some combination of both. The Project Team will revisit and update this matrix in accordance with guidance from health officials. The General Plan Update is anticipated to be a two-year planning process. The time frames outlined below are subject to change.

Task / Purpose		Time Frame	In Person	Virtual
Ongoing				
1.	Project Branding: Project branding will be used throughout the General Plan Update process to associate information presented with the City’s efforts to facilitate housing and development downtown. The branding will be developed in partnership with City staff to ensure that it is something that the community can relate to and be inspired by.	Summer 2022		✓
2.	Project eNewsletters (3) and eBlasts: Electronic newsletters (eNewsletters) will inform the community of project progress and provide notice of opportunities for community input. Regularly scheduled email blasts (eBlasts) will be sent to people who sign up through existing City databases and meeting sign-in sheets.	Ongoing		✓
3.	Social Media Updates: MIG will prepare up to 20 social media postings about the project for distribution through the City of Atascadero’s existing social media accounts.	Ongoing		✓
4.	Online Surveys (3): Three online surveys will coincide with each round of stakeholder and community meetings to elicit as much community input as possible, providing people with different ways to get involved in the planning process.	Ongoing		✓
5.	Interactive Project Portal: A stand-alone General Plan Update website will be created to contain current information on the status of the project, downloadable documents and presentations, and a method to send information and input to appropriate project staff.	Launch Summer 2022, ongoing updates		✓
6.	Other Agency or Stakeholder Group Meetings (10): MIG will coordinate up to 10 meetings with other public agencies throughout the General Plan Update process. These meetings allow for flexible and timely engagement with key groups that may have specific issues or require in-depth conversations that help ensure community workshops are focused and remain on topic and schedule.	Ongoing		✓
Phase 1: General Plan Update Scoping				
1.	Develop Community Involvement Strategy (CIS): This document will identify how best to conduct outreach to all community members regarding the General Plan update (especially people who are not typically involved in the planning process due to language, comfort with a public process, or time). The Strategy will include all components: a schedule, key priorities, structure, public involvement, outreach activities, and identification of key relationships.	Fall 2021 through Winter 2022		✓

Task / Purpose		Time Frame	In Person	Virtual
Phase 2: Discovery and Visioning				
1.	Pop-Up Events Series #1: MIG will coordinate with City staff to identify key events to integrate the visioning phase of the General Plan update into existing community events, fairs, festivals, and other events. MIG will prepare a pop-up materials kit that can be used independently by City staff or others as needed.	Summer-Fall 2022	✓	
2.	Form Technical Advisory Committee (TAC): The TAC will be comprised of staff from all City departments, the City Attorney's office, and other partner public agencies.	Summer-Fall 2022		✓
3.	Stakeholder Discussions: MIG will conduct one-on-one interviews with City Council members, City Commissioners, and key community stakeholders to form key findings and major takeaways.	Summer-Fall 2022	✓	✓
4.	TAC Meeting #1: MIG will present the Conditions and Policy Implications Analysis to TAC members to collect their feedback and confirm all content, data, and identified opportunities are correct.	Fall 2022- Winter 2023		✓
5.	City Council Advisory Session #1: MIG will present the Conditions and Policy Implications Analysis to City Council members to collect feedback to inform the materials and concepts for Community Workshop #1.	Fall 2022- Winter 2023		✓
6.	Targeted Stakeholder Outreach #1 (20 stakeholders): MIG will contact key stakeholders including key property owners and developers to engage them on the General Plan Update process, discuss major issues and opportunities, and fully understand their desires and concerns.	Fall 2022- Winter 2023		✓
7.	Community Workshop #1: MIG will facilitate a community workshop to discuss and confirm the long-term vision for Atascadero, and discuss community assets, opportunities, and challenges.	Fall 2022- Winter 2023	✓	
8.	Planning Commission Study Session: This study session will provide the Planning Commission an opportunity to share feedback on the Existing Conditions and Policy Implications Atlas and Community Engagement Series #1 and ensure there is alignment on the emerging vision and guiding principles for the General Plan.	Fall 2022- Winter 2023		✓
9.	City Council Advisory Session #2: This study session will provide the City Council an opportunity to share feedback on the Existing Conditions and Policy Implications Atlas and Community Engagement Series #1 and ensure there is alignment on the emerging vision and guiding principles for the General Plan.	Fall 2022- Winter 2023		✓
Phase 3: Exploring Alternatives				
1.	Team Planning Charrette #1: City staff and consultant team members will develop a series of initial General Plan alternatives, including areas of stability and change mapping, potential land uses, mobility enhancements, sustainability principles, and community safety strategies.	Winter-Spring 2023	✓	
2.	Pop-Up Events Series #2: MIG will coordinate with City staff to identify key events to integrate the visioning phase of the General	Winter-Spring 2023	✓	

Task / Purpose		Time Frame	In Person	Virtual
	Plan update into existing community events, fairs, festivals, and other events. MIG will prepare a pop-up materials kit that can be used independently by City staff or others as needed.			
3.	TAC Meeting #2: MIG will present the Concept Alternatives Summary and Multi-Modal Transportation Study to TAC members to collect their feedback.	Winter-Spring 2023		✓
4.	City Council Advisory Session #3: MIG will present the Concept Alternatives Summary to City Council members to collect their feedback and help refine the materials for Community Workshop #2.	Winter-Spring 2023	✓	
5.	Targeted Stakeholder Outreach #2 (20 stakeholders): MIG will contact key stakeholders to engage them on the General Plan Update process, discuss major issues and opportunities, and fully understand their desires and concerns.	Winter-Spring 2023		✓
6.	Community Workshop #2: MIG will facilitate a community workshop to review and discuss the Concept Alternatives with several different formats and exercises to illustrate improvements and concepts. Feedback on planning, design, and mobility elements will be collected.	Winter-Spring 2023	✓	
7.	Planning Commission Study Session: This study session will provide the Planning Commission an opportunity to share feedback on the Concept Alternatives Summary and ensure there is alignment on the emerging vision and guiding principles for the General Plan.	Winter-Spring 2023		✓
8.	City Council Advisory Session #4: This study session will provide the City Council an opportunity to share feedback on the Concept Alternatives Summary and ensure there is alignment on the emerging vision and guiding principles for the General Plan.	Winter-Spring 2023		✓
Phase 4: A Plan for Atascadero				
1.	TAC Meeting #3: MIG will meet with the TAC to present and obtain feedback on the Administrative Draft 2045 General Plan. This will include a facilitated discussion to review and confirm all draft elements and policy content.	Summer 2023- Winter 2024		✓
2.	City Council Advisory Sessions #5: This study session will be to discuss the goals and process for this phase and provide preliminary input on the Draft 2045 General Plan. These discussions will help refine the materials before they are presented to the broader community during the Community Open House.	Summer 2023- Winter 2024		✓
3.	Pop-Up Events Series #3: MIG will coordinate with City staff to identify key events to integrate the alternatives phase of the General Plan update into existing community events, fairs, festivals, and other events. MIG will prepare a pop-up materials kit that can be used independently by City staff or others as needed.	Summer 2023- Winter 2024	✓	
4.	Community Open House: The citywide open house will provide an opportunity for members of the public to provide feedback on the draft elements, including the vision, goals, policies, and programs. MIG will facilitate discussions and prepare visuals that describe each	Summer 2023- Winter 2024	✓	

Task / Purpose		Time Frame	In Person	Virtual
	of the draft elements, highlighting new policy concepts and major changes from the existing General Plan.			
5.	Planning Commission Study Session: This study session will provide an opportunity for the Planning Commission to formally receive public comments on the Community Draft 2045 General Plan, ask questions to the consultant team and City staff, and discuss draft policies, programs, and actions. *This study session can be held as a joint working session with the Planning Commission and City Council.	Summer 2023- Winter 2024		✓
6.	City Council Advisory Session #6: This study session will provide an opportunity for the City Council to formally receive public comments on the Community Draft 2045 General Plan, ask questions to the consultant team and City staff, and discuss draft policies, programs, and actions. *This study session can be held as a joint working session with the Planning Commission and City Council.	Summer 2023- Winter 2024	✓	
Phase 5: Celebrate Our Future				
1.	Planning Commission Public Hearings (2): MIG will attend two Planning Commission public hearings to present, discuss, and receive comments on the Draft General Plan and Final EIR. The first hearing will provide an opportunity for the Planning Commission to receive formal public comments, ask questions to the MIG Team, and begin deliberations. The second hearing will provide an opportunity to continue the discussion and deliberations, with the Planning Commission making a formal recommendation on the Draft General Plan and EIR.	Spring 2024	✓	
2.	City Council Public Hearings (2): MIG will attend two City Council public hearings to present, discuss, and receive comments on the Draft General Plan and Final EIR. The first hearing will provide an opportunity for the City Council to receive formal public comments, ask questions to the MIG Team, and begin deliberations. The second hearing will provide an opportunity to continue the discussion and deliberations, with the City Council taking formal action to adopt the new General Plan and certify the EIR.	Spring 2024	✓	

VI. Metrics of Success

The Project Team will regularly evaluate the Community Involvement Strategy based on the objectives outlined below, complemented by a set of targets and metrics to be developed:

1. **Accessibility.** The community involvement process will be accessible, understandable, and welcoming to all who wish to participate. Participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the planning process on the accessibility of the GPU engagement process as part of the online surveys and in-person workshops and pop-up events.
2. **Reach.** The community involvement process will involve and inform as many members of the public as possible. The Project Team will use a wide variety of engagement activities, tools and communication methods to reach community members, including workshops, focus groups, surveys, newsletters, and social media, among other approaches.
3. **Diversity.** Participants will reflect the diversity of age groups, ethnicities, incomes, geographies, and special needs of the Atascadero population. The Project Team will track and measure the diversity of participants to ensure participants reflect the demographic and geographic composition of the Atascadero population.
4. **Impact.** Participation will influence and inform the decision-making process for the General Plan. Participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the planning process on how their input informed the engagement process and key project documents. The Project Team will highlight how community input influenced process and policy decisions in the engagement summary documents.