I. SUBJECT
The Planning Division, General Plan Update (GPU) staff and consultant will present an overview of the Planning Commission roles and responsibilities, final work program and schedule, and proposed Community Engagement Strategy.

II. BACKGROUND
In early 2015, the Planning Division began scoping activities for a comprehensive update of the County's General Plan. The scoping process included interviews with community stakeholders and other interested parties, three public workshops, a joint study session with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, as well as two additional Board meetings to get direction and clarification regarding several key aspects of the GPU.

On September 22, 2015, the Board approved the final scope of work for the GPU and authorized staff to prepare and release a request for proposals to select a consultant to assist in the preparation of the GPU. On December 15, 2015, the Board approved and authorized the Resource Management Agency to execute a contract with the consulting firm Mintier Harnish LP, for the preparation of the Ventura County General Plan Update. Mintier Harnish will serve as the lead consultant for the project, with support from a team of sub-consultants which include MIG, Ascent Environmental, Kimley Horn, Applied Development Economics, Kennedy/Jenks, True North Research, and NRG Consulting.

The Board of Supervisors also authorized the Planning Division to assemble a team of planners dedicated to the GPU. The team includes: Susan Curtis, Project Manager, Shelley Sussman, Senior Planner, and Clay Downing, Planning Technician. The GPU team will work closely with the consultants and be fully engaged in all facets of the project including document review and policy development. The GPU team, in collaboration with the project consultants, will facilitate Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings, Focus Group meetings, and other public outreach. (The purpose and general composition of the TAC and Focus Groups are fully described below in Section C. Community Engagement Strategy.)

III. DISCUSSION
This section will discuss the Planning Commission’s roles and responsibilities throughout the GPU process and the GPU work program and project schedule prepared by Mintier Harnish (MH), attached herein as Exhibit 1 and summarized below. Additionally, the Community Engagement Strategy prepared by MH, in collaboration with the GPU team, is presented and attached herein as Exhibit 3.
A. **Planning Commission Roles and Responsibilities**

From the outset of the GPU process, the Board of Supervisors expressed its desire to rely on the Planning Commission as its principal advisory body with the key task of gathering public input. To that end, the Commission’s roles and responsibilities will include the following:

- Help to build community ownership of the GPU process and products;
- Advise the GPU team on ideas and content for draft GPU documents; and
- Make formal recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

In order to carry out these roles and responsibilities, the Planning Commission will host 13 “Planning Commission Work Sessions” throughout the GPU process. Several of the Work Sessions correspond to the release of documents that the public will have the opportunity to review (e.g., draft Background Report, draft Vision and Guiding Principles Report, draft Alternative Concepts Report and Preliminary Public Review Draft General Plan). Each Planning Commission Work Session is identified in Exhibit 2 (List of Project Phases and Major Tasks).

**Conducting Work Sessions**

One goal of the Work Sessions is to solicit as much public input as possible by creating an environment where people feel comfortable contributing ideas and opinions. For this reason, the Planning Commissioners may wish to consider exploring different options for conducting these meetings. For example, a subset of meetings could be held at night to encourage participation from people who can’t attend during the day. Room configurations could be modified so Planning Commissioners are not always at the dais, and those wishing to share ideas would not be required to speak at a podium. Also, depending on the issue being discussed, translators may be integrated into meeting proceedings.

In addition to potential changes to Work Session meeting protocols, GPU staff has modified the format of staff reports prepared for these Work Sessions. Specifically, we’ve deleted the portions of the standard Planning Commission staff report template that are not applicable and added flexibility to the format to best suit the wide range of documents and activities that we expect to be discussed and considered throughout the GPU.

At the conclusion of the GPU process (during Phase 7), the Planning Commission will hold adoption hearings and will be responsible for making formal recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

B. **Work Program and Project Schedule**

In authorizing the update to the General Plan, the Board of Supervisors directed the Planning Division to complete the project by March 2020. Accordingly, MH prepared a work program and project schedule which are divided into the seven phases containing several major tasks within each phase. (Exhibit 2 contains the list of project phases with major tasks identified.) Approximate durations for each phase are also indicated below.
Phase 1: **Project Initiation (Winter 2015 to Spring 2016)** – Finalize project management documents, establish a Technical Advisory Committee and various issue-specific Focus Groups and develop a Community Engagement Strategy.

Phase 2: **Background Report (Winter 2015 to Summer 2016)** – Complete the General Plan Background Report, which synthesizes information and data on existing conditions in the County, and analyzes regulations affecting development and resource management.

Phase 3: **Vision and Guiding Principles (Summer 2016 to Winter 2016)** – Develop guiding principles to support the County’s existing land use framework (e.g., Save Our Open Space and Agriculture [SOAR] the Guidelines for Orderly Development), and to support other key General Plan themes such as “Health in All Policies”, climate change resilience, sustainable water management and economic development. Guiding principles will be affirmed, in part, through a community survey and community outreach.

Phase 4: **Evaluate Alternatives (Winter 2016 to Fall 2017)** – Develop and explore options for the General Plan 20-year planning horizon and identify strategies to address major policy issues.

Phase 5: **Prepare the General Plan (Winter 2017 to Winter 2018)** – Complete a public review draft of the General Plan, to address six required topical elements (i.e., Open Space, Circulation/Mobility, Land Use, Conservation, Noise, and Safety) as well as optional Water, Agricultural and Economic Development elements. The General Plan will also include a Climate Action Plan and address additional issues such as climate change resilience, healthy communities and specific guidance for updating the structure and content of the Area Plans, as appropriate.

Phase 6: **Environmental Review (Spring 2018 to Winter 2019)** – Complete a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the goals, policies and programs of the General Plan.

Phase 7: **Preparation of Final Documents, Public Review, and Adoption (Winter 2019 to Spring 2020)** – Complete all final documents, including the Final EIR and General Plan, and conduct adoption hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

In addition to the work conducted during the major phases described above, the Planning Division identified additional General Plan related tasks that may be completed with support from the MH team:

- **Update the Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance** to address changes in State law, and ensure consistency with the updated General Plan.

- **Integrate a draft Housing Element Update** into the GPU. The current Housing Element term runs from 2014 to October 15, 2021. It is likely that the Regional Housing Needs Assessment numbers, (data that determines the number of dwelling units that each jurisdiction must plan for), will be available prior to adoption of the updated General Plan. To efficiently complete the Housing Element revision and ensure that adequate sites are
available for all housing types, a Draft Housing Element will be prepared as part of the General Plan update.

- **Complete the Habitat Connectivity Overlay Zone**, which may include a range of measures that will be developed by Planning Division staff for consideration by the Board of Supervisors. This effort will be coordinated with the GPU project to ensure consistency.

C. **Community Engagement Strategy**

A key task in Phase 1 is the development of a Community Engagement Strategy (attached herein as Exhibit 3). Of course, County decision-makers and GPU staff already recognize the importance of community engagement, and the Community Engagement Strategy is designed to address the breadth of issues related to keeping the community informed and obtaining meaningful input. In addition to the advisory role identified above for the Planning Commission, the following discussion summarizes additional key elements of our Community Engagement Strategy.

**Additional Advisory Bodies**

There are three other important advisory groups that will be consulted at key points throughout the GPU process: a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC); the six existing Municipal Advisory Councils; and several subject-area Focus Groups.

- **Technical Advisory Committee** – The TAC consists of senior-level staff from County agencies most involved in issues relevant to the GPU. Over the course of six meetings, facilitated by staff and supported by the consultant team, the TAC will provide technical input and review of administrative draft documents. The TAC has been formulated specifically for the GPU, and will meet this afternoon to receive an orientation on member roles and responsibilities.

- **Municipal Advisory Councils (Community Workshops)** – Community workshops will serve as the primary activity for engaging the broader public in the process. The workshops will be scheduled at key points in the planning process, and will provide updates on the process and the latest technical data. Public input will be solicited through interactive exercises and group discussions. A broad range of community members will be invited to attend the workshops, which will be held at well-known and easily-accessible locations throughout the County. To that end, the County's Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs) will serve as the primary convening organizations for the community workshops. There are six existing MACs throughout the County in the communities of the Ojai Valley, El Rio, Somis, Casa Conejo, Santa Rosa Valley, and Oak Park. Outreach for these communities will be coordinated through the applicable MAC. The GPU team will hold additional meetings in convenient locations for those areas of the County not served by a MAC.
Focus Groups – Seven Focus Groups have been formed around key General Plan topics including: Water, Transportation & Infrastructure, Agriculture, Open Space, Economic Development, Climate Change, and Housing. The members of each Focus Group were selected to represent a variety of disciplines and viewpoints on a given issue. The Focus Groups will provide technical and policy input throughout the GPU process. Each group will meet five times over the course of the project, including the first introductory meeting, which will be held this afternoon.

Community Engagement Tools

A variety of outreach tools will be used to inform the public and solicit feedback. Common to all of the outreach materials will be the use of the “Ventura County General Plan 2040” logo that appears on the first page of this staff report. The logo was designed to create a “brand” for the project and visually communicate the central themes that will be integrated into the General Plan. The GPU team will also coordinate closely with the County’s Public Information Office to ensure that we’re making the most of the County’s existing community engagement tools and expertise. Other project-related engagement tools include, but are not limited to the following:

- General Plan Update website – A website is currently under construction and will be a “one-stop shop” for GPU information including meetings, documents, background, comment forms, links to other relevant information, and contact information. The website will be maintained jointly by GPU staff and MH consultants.

- Contact Database – A contact database with the names and contact information of all individuals and organizations who wish to be regularly informed about project developments will be maintained by the GPU team and MH consultants. Each contact listing may also include reference to key interests and/or stakeholder groups to support targeted outreach during the project, as needed. The existing General Plan Update mailing list will serve as the starting point, and will be expanded by adding other County departments’ mailing lists, and as more community members sign-up to join the database. To confirm that individuals in the initial contact database wish to be included, the first “email blast” notification will provide initial project information and the option to “opt out” of the database.

- Email Blasts – Email blasts are a simple and cost effective tool for disseminating project information to large groups of people. MH will develop a unique template in the Constant Contact platform for the email blasts that is consistent with the overall project brand. When necessary, The GPU team will use the template to provide updates on project developments, upcoming engagement activities, new web and social networking content, and to solicit feedback on draft documents. The GPU team will provide the email blast to the MH team, who will disseminate the information using the contact database.

- Social Media – The MH and GPU teams will collaborate on possible social media platforms. Use of social media may allow us to reach a broad range of people,
to and leverage other networks that use social media outreach tools, and disseminate information almost instantly.

- Newsletters – The MH and GPU teams will produce a minimum of four newsletters throughout the GPU process that will summarize key milestones and activities. These newsletters will be available electronically and in hard-copy. The use of hard-copy newsletters will help us achieve the goal of reaching community members who may not have computer access but still want to be involved. These newsletters can also be used by local news outlets to generate media coverage for the GPU.

- Print Media – The GPU team will coordinate public noticing for all PC and Board hearings. Additionally, the GPU team will prepare and submit press releases to news agencies publicizing community workshops throughout key phases of the GPU project.

- Public Opinion Survey- In keeping with the Board’s direction, MH will design and conduct a public opinion survey during Phase 3 (development of Guiding Principles).

If you have any questions please contact me at (805) 654-2481 via email at kim.prillhart@ventura.org or Susan Curtis, General Plan Update Project Manager at (805) 654-2497 or at susan.curtis@ventura.org.

Kim L. Prillhart, Director
Ventura County Planning Division

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1 – Final Work Program
Exhibit 2 – List of Phases and Tasks
Exhibit 3 – Community Engagement Strategy