I. SUBJECT

The purpose of this Planning Commission Work Session is to present an overview of the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report (Exhibit 1a and 1b), and its related project outreach efforts, the Draft Background Report (Exhibit 2a through 2n) and to receive the Commission’s input on the Draft Background Report, and proposed Vision Statement and Guiding Principles.¹

II. BACKGROUND

From the outset of the General Plan Update (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 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.

To help carry out these roles and responsibilities, the Planning Commission is scheduled to hold several “Planning Commission Work Sessions” throughout the GPU process; this is the second of 13 Work Sessions. Several of the Work Sessions, including this one, correspond to the release of public documents. As noted above, this Work Session will include a review of the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report (AIO Summary) and the Draft Background Report. Each Planning Commission Work Session is identified in Exhibit 3 (List of Project Phases and Major Tasks).

As discussed during Work Session No. 1 (April 2016), staff noted that in order to solicit as much public input as possible, some Work Sessions may be held in the evening to encourage participation from people who cannot attend meetings during the work day. Because this Work Session addresses several key topics of interest to the public, including a discussion of the proposed Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, staff believes it was important to hold this meeting at night.

¹ Due to the large electronic file sizes associated with Exhibits 1 and 2, these documents are provided in multiple sub-sections.
III. REVIEW OF RECENT PROJECT MILESTONES

This section presents summary information related to the Assets, Issues, Opportunities Summary Report (Exhibit 1a and 1b), and the related public outreach program conducted to date, and the Draft Background Report (Exhibit 2a through 2n).

A. The Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report & Public Outreach

One of the primary tasks in Phase 2 of the General Plan Update project was the completion of the A/O Report, which summarizes and categorizes residents' responses to the three questions shown below.

- What do you love about your community (i.e., assets)?
- What do you see as the biggest challenges for the future (i.e., issues)?
- What might help address those challenges and improve Ventura County (i.e., opportunities)?

The A/O Report consists of three parts: a comprehensive summary of the community's comments; a discussion of issues and opportunities that emerged from that input; and appendices that include all public input. The A/O Report does not draw conclusions or suggest how the County should proceed in the development of the General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs. Rather, it provides a summary of public input to facilitate discussion on important topics.

How was Public Input for the A/O Report Gathered?

To reach a wide variety of County residents and stakeholders, GPU staff conducted extensive community outreach during the summer of 2016.

Outreach activities included the following:

- Twelve community workshops were held throughout the County in the communities listed below. A total of 254 people attended a workshop and approximately 4,700 comments were received.
  - Central Coast Communities
  - Conejo Valley
  - Heritage Valley
  - Lockwood Valley
  - Oak Park
  - Ojai Valley
  - Santa Monica Mountains
  - Santa Rosa Valley
  - Saticoy and El Rio
  - Somis
Three of the above workshops (Ojai, Heritage Valley, Saticoy/El Rio) included a certified Spanish language interpreter with wireless headsets available to members of the public for simultaneous translation services. Additionally, the GPU team includes Spanish-speaking staff who announced at the commencement of all community workshops that assistance was available for translation services, if needed. Finally, all outreach materials were printed in English, Spanish and depicted pictorially (to assist participants with limited reading proficiency).

- Staff created a “What I Love about Ventura County” Fair Booth (with English, Spanish and pictorially depicted materials) at the Ventura County Fair and over 330 booth visitors provided comments. Staff also spoke with English- and Spanish-speaking fair attendees while working the booth.

- An online questionnaire was made available on the GPU project website and 135 questionnaire responses were received.

In addition, all seven Focus Groups met in April 2016 to discuss assets, issues, and opportunities and over 1,000 comments were received during this process. The seven Focus Groups include agriculture, economic development, water, housing, climate change, open space and recreation, and transportation and infrastructure.

The County publicized community workshop opportunities using English and Spanish press releases and flyers through a variety of methods including but not limited to the General Plan email listserv (535 contacts as of December 2016), Chambers of Commerce throughout Ventura County, Ventura County’s ten incorporated cities, approximately 80 public information officers throughout the county, targeted publicity to various community non-profits and announcements to 20 Homeowner Associations throughout the county. Flyers were also posted for the community workshop series in both English and Spanish throughout public gathering spaces located in Ventura County-owned facilities. The County also publicized the General Plan Update through print media and social media (Facebook and Instagram). This resulted in free media exposure highlighted in eight articles in local newspapers (Ventura County Star and The Acorn newspapers) and interviews with project staff on local radio programs, including National Public Radio/KCLU and KVTA Radio.

**What Did We Hear from the Public?**

Synthesizing and summarizing over 5,700 public comments was a considerable challenge. However, broad themes emerged resulting in the table below that links the top five response themes/categories with the three primary questions that we posed to County stakeholders.

- Tierra Rejada Valley
- Ventura Area/North Coast
### Top Five Responses from Community Outreach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I love most about Ventura County</td>
<td>Mountains &amp; Open Space</td>
<td>Agriculture &amp; Farms</td>
<td>Habitat &amp; Nature</td>
<td>Beaches</td>
<td>Safe Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our biggest challenges</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Agriculture &amp; Farms</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could make our community better?</td>
<td>Roads and Transit</td>
<td>Agriculture &amp; Farms</td>
<td>Open Space &amp; Greenbelts</td>
<td>Wildlife &amp; Habitats</td>
<td>Economy &amp; Jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, this table is simply a summary. The AIO Report contains a comprehensive analysis of community responses by topic, question, and workshop location, as well as a discussion of all other outreach activities conducted last year. Staff also produced a newsletter that summarizes outreach activities, provides general information about the project, and includes “Frequently Asked Questions.” It is attached herein as Exhibit 6.

### B. Draft Background Report

A general plan is typically comprised of two primary documents: a background report and a policy document. Currently, the County’s General Plan is comprised of five documents, including the General Plan Goals, Policies, and Programs and the following four technical appendices that together comprise the existing background report: Resources, Hazards, Land Use, and Public Facilities and Services.

As part of the GPU project, a revised Draft Background Report has been completed, which describes existing conditions and trends in Ventura County as of 2016. Unlike a policy document, a background report is written to be objective and policy-neutral and provides decision-makers, the public, and local agencies with context for making policy decisions. The County’s revised Background Report will also be used to describe the environmental setting in the Environmental Impact Report that will be written for the General Plan.

**Report Format and Major Findings**

As noted above, the Draft Background Report is intended to provide a “snapshot” in time of the County’s existing conditions as of 2016. It is a wide-ranging and comprehensive document that presents the physical, social, and economic resource information required to support the preparation of the General Plan. It also serves as the foundation document from which subsequent planning policies and programs will be formulated. The Draft Background Report is approximately 900 pages and includes the following 12 chapters:

**Chapter 1 - Introduction.** This chapter provides background information on the purpose of the General Plan, describes the regional setting, and outlines the organization and content of the General Plan.

**Chapter 2 - Demographics and Economics.** This chapter describes the fiscal setting and economic conditions in Ventura County, as well as population and employment projections.
Chapter 3 - Land Use. This chapter summarizes existing land use, describes local and regional land use plans, and explains land use designations in Ventura County.

Chapter 4 - Health and Well-Being. This chapter describes public health and accessibility to food, active transportation, and economic opportunities.

Chapter 5 - Housing. This chapter describes the current Housing Element (2014-2021) and projected housing needs for Ventura County.

Chapter 6 - Transportation and Mobility. This chapter describes the transportation networks in Ventura County, including roadways, active transportation, aviation facilities, and vehicle miles travelled.

Chapter 7 - Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure. This chapter describes all of the services offered by Ventura County and other local governments and agencies, including water supply, utilities, law enforcement, schools, and other local services.

Chapter 8 - Natural Resources. This chapter provides an overview of energy, mineral, and biological features, as well as cultural and paleontological resources in Ventura County.

Chapter 9 - Agriculture. This chapter provides an overview of agricultural trends and issues. Summaries of existing agricultural land patterns and production in the county are described and evaluated.

Chapter 10 - Water Resources. This chapter discusses water resources found in the county and focuses on water availability, quality, systems in place for delivery, and conservation measures.

Chapter 11 - Hazards and Safety. This chapter describes geologic, seismic, flood, fire, and human-made hazards, as well as noise and aviation hazards.

Chapter 12 - Climate Change. This chapter describes Ventura County’s greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of climate change in Ventura County.
Many of the chapters contain several topic areas. Each topical discussion includes the following sections:

**Introduction.** The introduction provides a brief description of the issues covered in the section.

**Major Findings.** The major findings present key facts and preliminary issues from the section. It is anticipated that several of these findings will serve as the basis for the identification of issues to be addressed in the policy document.

**Existing Conditions.** Existing conditions for each resource or issue area are described in detail.

**Regulatory Setting.** Laws and regulations pertaining to the topic are identified and federal, state, and local regulations are described, as applicable. In the case of local regulations, each section cites where relevant content can be found in the 2005 General Plan, the Initial Study Assessment Guidelines, the Non-Coastal and Coastal zoning ordinances.

**Key Terms.** A list of terms that are unique to the topical areas within each chapter are listed and defined.

**References.** A list of documents and websites referenced and persons consulted are provided.

As stated above, the Major Findings section is intended to highlight key facts and issues from each section and chapter. Because many of these findings will likely serve as the basis for the identification of issues to be addressed during the policy development phase, the discussions contained within the Major Findings section are a key part of the Draft Background Report.

### Major Findings Linked to Community Outreach Themes

There are approximately 250 major findings in the Draft Background Report. To facilitate the review of major findings, an Executive Summary was prepared and provided to Focus Group members and the public (Exhibit 4). Additionally, Focus Group members were provided with the website links to download all Draft Background Report Chapters in their entirety.

An exhaustive summary of major findings is beyond the scope of this staff report. This staff report presents several major findings linked to the broad themes identified in the AIO Report are highlighted below. Not surprisingly, many of the issues that are important to County residents and businesses also emerged as major findings. To review all major findings, please refer to the Draft Background Report (Exhibit 2a through 2n).

- Natural resources, wildlife, habitats and recreational open spaces emerged as a common response to all three questions asked during public outreach, and several major findings deal with these issues.
Ventura County has one of the few major coastal to inland habitat connections remaining in the South Coast Ecoregion. It stretches from the Santa Monica Mountains at the coast to the Santa Susana Mountains and the Sierra Madre Ranges of the Los Padres National Forest... (Chapter 8; Section 8.2)

- Ventura County is home to unique and sensitive biological resources, including rare plant and animal species, coastal wetlands, extensive chaparral habitat, and riverine systems maintained mostly in a natural state. (Chapter 8; Section 8.2)

- Ventura County owns 5,321 acres of parks, open spaces, and golf courses as well as 23.25 miles of trails... (Chapter 8; Section 8.3)

- Fifty-four percent of the County’s lands are comprised of protected local, state, or federal open space areas. (Chapter 8; Section 8.4)

- As shown in the Community Outreach table, agriculture also figured prominently as a priority for the community, and in the Draft Background Report. Several major findings reflect this interest.

  - Approximately 430,000 acres (77 percent) of land designated as part of the Important Farmland Land Program by the Department of Conservation is in the unincorporated county. The remaining 126,000 acres (23 percent) of land is within incorporated cities. (Chapter 9; Section 9.1)

  - Ventura County is the tenth largest agricultural producing county in the State, with over 95 varieties of crops and 2,150 farms totaling over 281,000 acres. (Chapter 9; Section 9.2)

  - Approximately 65 percent of soil associations within Ventura County are suitable for agricultural production (Chapter 9, Section 9.1)

  - Between 2004 and 2014, land designated as Prime Farmland decreased by 6,049 acres of 12.8 percent, and land designated as Unique Farmland decreased by 375 acres or 1.3 percent (Chapter 9, Section 9.1)

- Though it only appears once in the Community Outreach table, water was listed as the County’s biggest challenge. Indeed, the Draft Background Report has a lengthy chapter on water and several important major findings were identified.

  - Drought has significantly affected local water supplies. More than 850,000 residents and 156 square miles of irrigated farmland in Ventura County experienced direct impacts from the drought that began in 2012. (Chapter 10; Section 10.1)
- There are inadequate water supplies to meet future demands in some areas of the county. Developing new water supplies is costly and requires a significant amount of time for planning, environmental review, permitting, and construction. Some of the new supplies being considered include advanced treatment of wastewater for use as potable water, stormwater capture and reuse treatment of brackish groundwater, and ocean desalination... (Chapter 10; Section 10.1)

- Groundwater basins in the County are experiencing overdraft conditions. Groundwater is estimated to provide 67 percent of the local water supply. (Chapter 10; Section 10.1)

- Groundwater information is limited. The locations and volumes of groundwater extracted are not accurately known in some areas of the County. This inhibits analysis and planning. (Chapter 10; Section 10.1)

- Community resources such as housing, transit and roads, public safety and a strong economy were also important themes identified during the outreach process. These issues were also addressed in the Draft Background Report.

- The County’s remaining residential development potential on vacant residential land yields an average of 1.9 dwelling units per acre (722.9 acres/1,361 dwelling units). At this density, vacant residential land would support approximately 24 percent of the projected dwelling unit demand of 5,670 units between 2012 and 2040. Accommodating the remainder of the projected residential demand at this density (i.e., 4,309 units at 1.9 dwelling units peracre), would require rezoning up to 2,268 acres of land. (Chapter 3; Section 3.7)

- A robust source of funding for local active transportation projects in other jurisdictions is through transportation sales tax measures. At this time, Ventura County does not have such a funding source. Currently, most of Ventura County’s funding for transportation comes from state and federal funding sources. (Chapter 6; Section 6.3)

- According to the 2015 American Community Survey (reflecting 2014 totals), 11.2 percent of the County’s population is aged 65 years or older, 25.9 percent are under 16 years of age, 11.9 percent are disabled, 27.4 percent live below poverty level. These populations are more likely to be dependent on transit for some of their mobility needs. Additionally, the 65 years or older demographic has grown more in Ventura County than any other demographic age group over the past 20 years. This trend is projected to continue in the future. (Chapter 6; Section 6.4)
- The Ventura County Sheriff’s Office of Emergency Services administers the largest annual homeland security and emergency management grant program in the county. (Chapter 7; Section 7.7)

- The industry output for Ventura County indicates that the value of economic activity within the county totals more than $70.8 billion. Overall, the Ventura County economy showed a slight decline in constant dollar (inflation-adjusted) terms between 2007 and 2014. The largest output is from the manufacturing sector, at $14.1 billion, which represents a higher concentration of manufacturing than the state average. (Chapter 2; Section 2.3)

As noted above, these major findings represent a very small subset of the 250 major findings incorporated into the Draft Background Report. They are included here to demonstrate the important link between what we heard from the public during our outreach last year, what emerged from the analysis of existing conditions as documented in the Draft Background Report, and how this information was used to inform the development of a proposed vision and set of guiding principles, as discussed below.

**Drafting Process for Background Report**

The project consultant team began drafting the Background Report in early 2016 and completed an administrative (internal) draft in early August 2016. Upon completion, staff held a meeting on August 9, 2016 to release the administrative draft to members of the County’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC members provide data, information and feedback at key points during the General Plan Update process. The TAC is comprised of County Directors, Deputy Directors or Senior Management staff who manage agencies, departments or programs and implement policies addressed by the General Plan. TAC members review and provide input on administrative draft documents prior to their release as public review draft documents. TAC members were asked to comment on the following:

- **Findings**
  - Do the findings accurately reflect the description of existing conditions?
  - Do the findings capture the most important topical issues?
  - Are there additional findings that should be added?

- **Existing Conditions**
  - Is the information included in this section accurate?
  - Does the text tell the entire story? Are there any critical missing pieces? Are there significant issues that have not been identified in the Administrative Draft Background Report?
  - Are there emerging issues that should be discussed?

- **Regulatory Setting**
  - Are there any plans, documents, or ordinances that have been adopted by the County or other agencies that should be listed in this section? Please also provide
a copy of any new document (e.g., plan, report, policy, ordinance, etc.) that you reference in your comments or explain where it can be obtained.

- Are there federal, state, regional, or local statutes or policies that govern the subject matter that have not been cited?

- **Key Terms**
  - Are there any key terms that have been overlooked?
  - Are the definitions correct?

Hundreds of comments on the administrative draft were received from the County staff through the TAC. All comments were reviewed and revisions were integrated into the public review draft, which was released in March 2017. Similar to publicity for the community workshops, the release of the *Draft Background Report* included coordinating with the County’s Public Information Officer (PIO) to send a press release to multiple media outlets and approximately 80 PIOs representing agencies or organizations throughout the county, emailing contacts on the General Plan “Interested Parties” list (approximately 850 as of the date of this report), Chambers of Commerce throughout Ventura County, Ventura County’s ten incorporated cities, targeted publicity to various community non-profits and announcements to 20 Homeowner Associations throughout the county, emails to all 80 of our project Focus Group members, and updates to the project website to announce the release and provide access to the *Draft Background Report*. This outreach resulted in radio coverage on National Public Radio (KCLU) and an article in *Citizen’s Journal*.

On March 2829, 2017, staff and members of the consultant team facilitated six Focus Group meetings to discuss the *Draft Background Report* with our subject-matter experts. These meetings were open to the public and public participants actively participated in the meetings. Numerous comments were shared during these Focus Group meetings and many additional comments were received through other outreach methods, such as by email, and through an on-line comment form that was designed specifically to receive comments on the *Draft Background Report* (Exhibit 5) A discussion of how these comments will be addressed follows below.

**Public Comments**

It is important to note that the *Draft Background Report* will remain in Draft form and is not finalized until this Report, in combination with the Environmental Impact Report and General Plan are adopted by the Board of Supervisors. The scope of public comments received to date was wide-ranging. Many comments will result in clarifications, revisions or additions to the *Draft Background Report*. These changes will be made over the next several months due to the staff resources needed to fully integrate necessary revisions. In addition, staff determined that several comments are more relevant for future project phases and will be contemplated later in the process. For example, comments related to developing definitions for use in the General Plan will be addressed in the Phase 5 during the drafting of the General Plan.
IV. LAUNCH OF PHASE 3—VISION STATEMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The focus of Phase 3 is the development of a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. Staff will seek input throughout Phase 3 from the Planning Commission, the public, and the broad array of established advisory bodies, to affirm and refine a proposed vision statement and set of guiding principles that will ultimately be approved by the Board of Supervisors at the end of Phase 3 – tentatively scheduled for the fall/winter of 2017. The proposed Vision Statement and Guiding Principles are included below for your review and comment. Subsequent to this Work Session, staff will share the Vision and Guiding Principles with the public during community workshops to be held later this summer.

A. Proposed Vision Statement

A vision statement is intended to be aspirational. It describes what the County wants to become through the implementation of the General Plan and establishes a framework and purpose for the policies and programs within the General Plan. The proposed Vision Statement and Guiding Principles reflect existing County values, comments received during extensive community outreach and new themes incorporating priorities identified by the Board of Supervisors including climate change, economic vitality, housing and healthy communities.

Ventura County is a remarkable place to live, work, and play. Our exceptional quality of life and economic vitality is rooted in the stewardship of our rich natural resources including our world class beaches, fertile agricultural plains, and scenic mountains. The General Plan reflects the County’s ongoing commitment to collaborate with Ventura County’s cities to address our environmental, social, and economic needs and allow our safe, healthy, vibrant and diverse communities to thrive.

B. Proposed Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are central ideas that articulate the County’s commitment to achieving the vision of the General Plan. They establish the framework for decisions concerning preparation, adoption, and implementation of the General Plan, as well as the touchstones for determining the consistency of goals, policies, and implementation programs with the overarching vision. They are derived, in part, from the General Plan Update outreach program, including input received through community workshops and Focus Group meetings.

1. Direct urban growth away from agriculture and open space lands, in favor of locating it in cities and unincorporated communities where public facilities, services, and infrastructure are available or can be provided. (Land Use and Community Character)
2. Foster economic growth that is responsive to the evolving needs and opportunities of the County's economy, while enhancing our quality of life and promoting environmental sustainability. (Economic Vitality)

3. Encourage the long-term viability of Ventura County's agricultural economy by conserving agricultural lands and supporting a diverse and globally-competitive agricultural industry. (Agriculture)

4. Support the development of a balanced and coordinated multi-modal transportation system that meets the mobility and accessibility needs of all residents, businesses and visitors. (Circulation/Transportation/Mobility)

5. Provide affordable and equitable housing opportunities by preserving the existing housing supply and supporting diverse new housing types. (Housing)

6. Manage the County's natural resources, such as soils, water, air quality, minerals, and wildlife and its habitat, and guard against premature urban development. (Conservation and Open Space)

7. Manage water resources in a manner that addresses current demand without compromising the ability to meet future demand, and balances the needs of urban and agricultural uses while sustaining ecosystem health. (Water Resources)

8. Invest in infrastructure and services, including renewable energy, to promote economic vitality, ensure public safety, and improve our quality of life. (Public Facilities and Services)

9. Protect residents, businesses and visitors from hazards such as, flooding, wildland fires, hazardous materials, noise, air and water pollution and geologic hazards. (Health and Safety)

10. Reduce County greenhouse gas emissions to achieve reduction targets and decrease vulnerability to the effects of climate change. (Climate Change Resilience)

11. Promote economic, social, and physical health and wellness by encouraging walking, biking, and access to healthy foods, and integrating Health in All Policies into the built environment. (Healthy Communities)

C. Planning Commission Action

Staff is seeking the Commission's input on the Draft Background Report as well as the proposed Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. Input by your Commission on the Draft Background Report will be addressed as staff, and our consulting team, revise the Draft Background Report. The intent of the Commission's input on the proposed Vision and Guiding Principles is to present a version that is supported by the Planning Commission during community workshops to be held
later this summer. Therefore, staff is requesting that the Planning Commission recommend moving forward with the Vision Statement and guiding principles as proposed above, or with recommended revisions.

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

Exhibit 1a – Assets Issues and Opportunities Summary Report
Exhibit 1b – Assets Issues and Opportunities Summary Report – Appendix E
Exhibit 2a – Background Report – Table of Contents
Exhibit 2b – Background Report Chapter 1 Introduction
Exhibit 2c – Background Report Chapter 2 Demographics and Economics
Exhibit 2d – Background Report Chapter 3 Land Use Part 1 of 2
Exhibit 2e – Background Report Chapter 3 Land Use Part 2 of 2
Exhibit 2f – Background Report Chapter 4 Health and Well-Being
Exhibit 2g – Background Report Chapter 5 Housing
Exhibit 2h – Background Report Chapter 6 Transportation and Mobility
Exhibit 2i – Background Report Chapter 7 Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure
Exhibit 2j – Background Report Chapter 8 Natural Resources
Exhibit 2k – Background Report Chapter 9 Agriculture
Exhibit 2l – Background Report Chapter 10 Water Resources
Exhibit 2m – Background Report Chapter 11 Hazards and Safety
Exhibit 2n – Background Report Chapter 12 Climate Change
Exhibit 3 – List of Project Phases and Major Tasks
Exhibit 4 – Major Findings Executive Summary from Draft Background Report
Exhibit 5 – Public Comments Received on Draft Background Report
Exhibit 6 – GPU Newsletter No.1, March 2017