GENERAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CITY OF SHAFTER

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

February 2025 (Updated February 26, 2025)



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1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The General Plan Update (GPU) is a major community-wide effort that involves a number of diverse participants. The purpose of this guidance document is to summarize the roles and responsibilities of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) so their involvement in the GPU process is clearly defined and understood. In addition, the document provides a set of rules and procedures for the GPAC, which will function as the committee's by-laws. For more information, please visit www.planshafter.com or contact the project email address Myinput@planshafter.com.

2. WHAT IS THE GPAC?

The GPAC is an ad-hoc committee established by the City to advise on topics and issues addressed in the GPU. The GPAC will serve as an important channel for the community to provide input and make recommendations on the topics addressed during the General Plan Update process. The purpose of the GPAC is to establish a public forum for constructive dialogue and create a set of ambassadors who help educate, inform, and encourage participation from others in the community. The GPAC will be charged with reviewing and providing recommendations to City Staff, the consultant team, and the City Council. Below is more specific information on what the GPAC is, including its roles and responsibilities, how it functions, and what it is not.

What the GPAC does and how it functions:

- **Conveys the community's perspective.** The GPAC ensures City Staff and the consultant team are aware of and understand community concerns, values, interests, and expectations. The GPAC is also a vehicle for obtaining a sampling of community opinions and attitudes.
- **Identifies critical issues and relevant information.** The GPAC assists City Staff and the consultant team in identifying critical issues that must be addressed in the planning process. The GPAC also provides information that is valuable to the process or issues/opinions that should be taken into consideration.
- **Identifies and suggests resolutions to potential conflicts.** Identifies areas of existing or potential conflicts and finds ways to constructively resolve them.
- **Expands public awareness and participation.** GPAC members expand public awareness and knowledge about the General Plan and related material. GPAC members also keep community organizations and interested citizens informed about the status of the planning process and encourage additional public participation.
- **Considers ideas and reviews material.** The GPAC serves as a sounding board for ideas, items, and draft products presented by City Staff and its consultants.
- **Suggests policy consistent with the Vision.** The GPAC helps craft, stays familiar with, and seeks policy direction consistent with the City's Vision.
- **Seeks community benefit.** The GPAC is a group of individuals who, irrespective of their own perspectives or preferences, seek the benefit of the entire community in their recommendations.

- **Makes recommendations for decision makers.** The GPAC provides recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council.
- **Provides a public forum for other members of the public.** The GPAC meetings will be subject to the Brown Act, California's Open Meeting Law, and will hold regular, noticed and agendized public meetings. There will be specific time for public comments, both on agenda items and items not on the agenda.

What the GPAC is NOT:

- A replacement for either the City Council or Planning Commission.
- A decision-making body, except as to offer recommendations to City Staff, the consultant team, and decision makers.
- A place to discuss projects currently under consideration, except as they may relate in broad strokes to future general plan land use direction and policy.
- A forum for political position taking.
- A substitute for the public hearing process required by law.

3. GPAC MEMBERSHIP

The following table provides a list of GPAC members approved by City Council. Participation by members appointed to the GPAC is temporary. The GPAC-related roles and responsibilities of its members will terminate with City Council adoption of the General Plan, which is estimated to occur in Spring 2027.

Table 1. List of GPAC Members

Name & Representation		
1. Lynnda Martin Chair, Resident	2. Gary Nelson Vice-Chair, At-large resident	3. Chad Givens City Council, Mayor
4. Gustavo Olvera Jr. City Council, Mayor Pro Tem	5. John Sanchez Planning Commissioner	6. Marco Avendano Resident
7. Allen DeWitt Resident	8. Elena Espinoza Resident	9. Jonathan Hudson Minter Field Airport District
10. Jed Hwang Wonderful Company	11. Phillip Jimenez Shafter Recreation & Park District	12. Rosa Romero Richland School District
13. Brandon Slater Suburban Land Reserve	14. Brett Sills Sill Properties	15. VACANT SEAT Resident
Martin Rodriguez (*Alt.)* Alternative for Richland School District	Nelson Salinas *(Alt.)* Alternative for Shafter Recreation & Park District	

4. MEETING TOPICS AND DATES

The GPAC is structured to meet a minimum of five times during the General Plan update process, with meetings held periodically throughout 2025 and early 2026 (dates subject to change). Meetings will begin at 6:00 PM and are expected to last 2-3 hours. Meetings will take place at the Shafter City Hall Council Chambers, unless otherwise notified. All meetings will be in person. Action minutes will be prepared, as required for public meetings. The following table provides a schedule for each meeting along with preliminary topics to be covered. Note that the date identified for the first GPAC meeting is confirmed, but the remaining meeting dates are shown only with an estimate month or season. Please identify any scheduling conflicts as soon as possible, ideally with substantial lead time (e.g., a planned 2-week trip or busy period at your place of business). The time frames and topics in Table 2 are subject to change based on adjustments made by the City to the project scope, schedule, or other circumstances beyond the City's control.

Table 2. GPAC Schedule and Topics

Meeting	Date	Anticipated Topics
GPAC Meeting 1	Feb 25, 2025	▪ Introduction of the GPAC (role, rules, responsibilities) ▪ Overview of GPU and current General Plan ▪ Preliminary discussion of issues and opportunities in the community.
GPAC Meeting 2	March/April 2025	▪ Review Draft Vision Statement ▪ Preliminary identification and discussion of potential areas of change
GPAC Meeting 3	Summer 2025	▪ Review potential changes for opportunity areas ▪ Evaluate costs, trade-offs, and phasing of changes ▪ Make recommendations for opportunity areas and priorities
GPAC Meeting 4	Fall 2025	▪ Review draft land use and circulation plans ▪ Make recommendations on draft land use and circulation concepts
GPAC Meeting 5	Winter 2026	▪ Review preliminary draft GP content: goals, policies, strategies, and implementation measures

5. PARTICIPATION IN THE GENERAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The following is a summary of important considerations to remember as you commit to the City of Shafter and the GPU.

Representing the GPAC
Individual GPAC members must be careful not to represent their own views or recommendations as those of the entire GPAC body unless the majority has officially voted on the issue. Public or private statements should contain no promises that would bind the GPAC, Planning Commission, or the City Council.

Maintaining Community-wide Perspective
Although GPAC members may be selected in part on the basis of representing clearly defined groups or neighborhoods, in order to assure that all interests are voiced and considered, each member should represent the overall public and not that of an exclusive group or interest.

Keeping the Lines of Communication Open
The GPAC members will serve as liaisons between the City and the general public in helping to educate and receive input from the community. Therefore, each member must serve as a communication link between the community and the City, explaining City programs and recommendations, as well as providing a channel for citizen expression. To properly represent the community, members must be accessible to the public to receive input on the sentiment/opinions of fellow residents.

Establishing a Good Relationship with Other Members
On many occasions, the success or failure of a GPAC will depend upon the degree of cooperation among the individual members. In order to build a consensus around common goals and objectives, members will often first have to reconcile contradictory viewpoints and show a willingness to objectively consider the issues.

Another way of developing this cooperation is for each member to do their part to ensure that meetings proceed in an orderly manner. The Chairperson is primarily responsible for seeing that meetings are conducted in an expeditious and thorough fashion. However, each member can help by becoming familiar with the basic rules of parliamentary procedure and by adequately preparing for meetings.

Be Conscious of your Relationship to Elected and Appointed Officials and City Staff
Good relations with elected and appointed officials and City Staff are necessary for the successful operation of any Committee. It is important that each member respects the authority of those who, in the end, will be charged with the final responsibility for action taken by the City.

To avoid placing the City Staff in a compromising position and to facilitate effective communication, your actions as a member should be done with the approval of the body. Any communication intended for

city or consultant staff should be sent only through the Planning Director, who is the staff liaison appointed to this advisory group.

Other Important Points to Consider

GPAC participants shall always show respect for other individuals' viewpoints and shall allow other members adequate time to present their views before making comments. It is essential to be open and honest at all times, welcome new members and see that they become acquainted with their duties and strive to minimize political action among members.

Be aware that, in the public's eye, GPAC members represent the City they serve. Comments and actions of the GPAC, therefore, should express sensitivity to the diverse viewpoints held within the City. Membership on the GPAC does not entitle participants to exercise undue influence upon individuals in the community.

6. RULES AND PROCEDURES

1. **Brown Act.** All meetings of the General Plan Advisory Committee will be open to the public pursuant to the Ralph M. Brown Act enacted in 1953. The intent of the Act is to ensure that "actions be taken openly and that deliberations be conducted openly." Once selected, the time, place, and date for regularly scheduled GPAC meetings shall be publicly posted or announced.

2. **Chair/Vice Chair.** The GPAC shall elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson to serve as the representatives for the GPAC. The Chairperson shall be responsible for managing the meeting, facilitating discussion, and gaining consensus from the GPAC on various components of the GPU. Should the Chairperson leave their position on the GPAC for any reason, the Vice Chair shall assume the role of Chairperson and a new Vice Chair would be selected by a majority vote of the GPAC. The GPAC Chair and Vice Chair would also serve as the official representatives of the GPAC and shall attend meetings with other committees, the Planning Commission or City Council, if requested. However, all GPAC members act as "ambassadors" of the General Plan to the community and are encouraged to share their knowledge about the process to ensure the community's exposure to the process is as far-reaching as possible.

3. **Provision and review of materials.** Meeting materials that require review will be distributed to GPAC members approximately one week prior to scheduled meetings. Prior to each meeting, members are expected to review the materials provided (which may be lengthy) and be ready to discuss key issues and opportunities with the group. Some meetings may require more or less preparation. In some cases, a limited amount of material may be provided as late as the day of the GPAC. Materials will be provided electronically for all GPAC meetings, either as email attachments or as links to the www.planshafter.com website. The City can provide hardcopies upon a GPAC member's request.

4. **Timeliness.** The schedule for the General Plan preparation is driven by a statutory deadline related to housing element rezoning requirements. GPAC members need to have read the materials provided before each meeting and be prepared to make recommendations and decisions in a timely manner that allows the process to move forward according to the adopted schedule. Committee

meetings should be conducted formally and carefully to avoid long conversations on non-critical tangents that result in delayed action and/or trigger a need for additional budget.

5. **Limitations on directing the City.** GPAC members are encouraged to review and comment on relevant department programs as they pertain to the implementation of the General Plan. However, while operating in the capacity of the GPAC, members must not become involved in the administration or operation of City departments, and should not direct the administrative staff or its consultants to initiate programs, conduct studies, or establish official policy without approval of the City Council and/or the City Manager.

6. **Community input and requests.** Community input is a very important component of the General Plan process. GPAC members will need to carefully consider input from a wide range of stakeholders. GPAC members should bring other stakeholder comments to the table, as appropriate. GPAC members that receive requests from the community for information or presentations about the General Plan should advise the project team prior to any commitment to providing information or presentations.

7. **Simple majority voting.** Where consensus cannot be reached on major decisions by the full committee, the GPAC shall form its recommendations based on the affirmative vote of a simple majority of the GPAC membership in attendance, provided there is a quorum. As currently set, the GPAC is a 14-member body (14 members with 2 alternates), and one open seat. A quorum requires a majority of members to be in attendance (8 people). On decisions regarding recommendations to City Staff, dissenting members may submit a separate report to ensure both sides are represented for City Council consideration. It is important to reiterate that the GPAC will not be a policy-setting body. Rather, the GPAC is an advisory committee, providing recommendations to City Staff for their consideration.

8. **Implied agreement.** It is hoped that agreement can be reached by the full GPAC for as many issues as possible. Where a committee member does not agree with the direction being taken by the committee, they are expected to offer a constructive alternative approach(es). Concerns and issues should be brought up early in the process so that they can be addressed to the extent possible. Lack of comment will be considered agreement with the majority opinion.

9. **Conflict of interest.** The Political Reform Act is intended to prevent conflict of interest by requiring designated public officials to disclose financial interests which could potentially cause conflicts. You may be required to disqualify yourself from making, participating in, or attempting to influence any governmental decision which will affect your financial interests, including those required to be reported on a statement of economic interest where appropriate. The Fair Political Practices Commission explains what a conflict is and when disqualification is required by law. If in doubt, the project team will assist in acquiring legal clarification.

10. **Attendance and absence.** In accepting appointment to the GPAC, each member accepts responsibility for devoting sufficient time to the project to effectively represent the views of the community. Attendance is required at every GPAC meeting, with five such meetings scheduled for the duration of the process. Members shall notify City Staff prior to a scheduled meeting if they are unable to attend and request an excused absence. Two unexcused absences may constitute grounds for dismissal from the GPAC, subject to approval by the City Council.

11. **Questions or concerns.** If members have questions or are concerned with particular issues, the Planning Director should be contacted to review the matter.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OTHER ENTITIES

While the GPAC is a primary channel for the community to participate in the General Plan update, six other entities also play a role in the preparation and adoption of the updated General Plan: City Council, Planning Commission, City Staff, consultants, the Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (EJAC), and other members of the general public. Below is a list of roles and responsibilities for each entity or group.

CITY COUNCIL

Legislative body directing the affairs of the City

- Authorized the preparation of the GPU and approved the budget.
- Provides overall policy direction for the GPU.
- Resolves policy issues and major budget/scope adjustments as necessary throughout the project.
- Adopts the updated General Plan as recommended by the Planning Commission or as modified by the City Council.
- Certifies the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that accompanies the General Plan.
- Conducts public study sessions and/or hearings on the General Plan and EIR.

PLANNING COMMISSION

Chief advisory body on community planning and development matters

- Advises the City Council on recommendations for approval, modification, or deletion of goals, policies or implementation proposed through the GPU.
- Conducts public study sessions and public hearings on the General Plan and EIR.

CITY STAFF

Key city resources facilitating the preparation of the GPU and providing technical and logistical support

- Provides input regarding professional, technical, administrative, and policy insights and implications on topics discussed.
- Manages consultant team's work program and products.
- Oversees schedule modifications and compliance.
- Reviews and modifies consultant products as necessary to ensure consistency with City policy and practice.
- Arranges for logistics and support of each GPAC meeting.
- Distributes materials for the GPAC approximately one week prior to scheduled meetings (note that some material may be provided or presented at various times up until and including the day of the GPAC).
- Prepares and presents staff reports as appropriate.

- Helps coordinate and lead public outreach efforts, as well as communication and coordination with other stakeholders, organizations, and agencies.
- Keeps consultant team informed of current City activities and issues that relate to the GPU.

CONSULTANT TEAM

Advisors hired by the City to provide technical support and serve as an extension of City Staff during the GPU process

- Complies with the adopted scope of work.
- Submits draft documents identified in the scope of work to City Staff for review, revision and distribution as required.
- Prepares technical reports as specified in the scope of work.
- Provides input regarding professional, technical, and policy insights.
- Assists in clarifying issues, providing options, and evaluating the implications of topics being discussed.
- Recommends methods to resolve policy issues when conflict arises.
- Advises on schedule or procedural matters.
- Presents consultant-prepared work products to decision-makers, City Staff, and the public.
- Documents meeting deliberations in the form of summary notes on key outcomes and decisions (note that neither City Staff nor the consultant will provide detailed minutes, recordings, or transcripts).
- Helps coordinate, lead, and summarize results from public outreach efforts.
- Coordinates with agencies and other organizations outside of City Hall in the preparation of work products.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

- Serves as a citizen advisory committee, operated in parallel to the GPAC, with a similar role focusing on environmental justice issues.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Those members of the public that are not already represented on the GPAC, including local residents, property owners, business owners, employees of Shafter businesses, service providers, governmental agencies, and nongovernmental organizations

- Provides input—through public outreach events, venues, and tools hosted or distributed by the City—on how they want the City of Shafter to be maintained and improved over the next 20+ years.
- Provides feedback on draft products distributed for public review; e.g., Land Use Plan, Circulation Plan, and EIR.
- Encourages participation from and attendance by others in the GPU process.