

Chapter 1

Introduction to Santa Paula Citywide Vision Plan



Introduction

The guidance that is found in this Plan originates from the people of Santa Paula and reflects a balance between ideals and realities. The Vision for Santa Paula is based on the collective values and desires of community members interested in preserving, protecting, and enhancing their City. This Chapter describes the community-based process that was used to develop the Citywide Vision and also introduces some of the unique historical, cultural, social, and economic factors that contribute to understanding Santa Paula. The information included in this Chapter establishes the foundation for the Citywide Vision.



A Community-Based Process

The Visioning process, led by a committed Visioning Steering Committee, incorporated a variety of different ways to engage the community throughout the nine-month effort. Opportunities to provide ideas and thoughts and to engage in community dialogue included the following:

- ***Visioning Steering Committee*** – Fifteen-members of the Santa Paula community volunteered countless hours during the nine-month Visioning process helping to plan, organize, and carry out the many different visioning activities and events. Additionally, they took the lead in compiling and processing community input in order to develop a community-based vision statement, goals, and action steps.



- ***Visioning Comment Cards*** – Small cards were distributed throughout the community that asked people to respond to three basic questions: What do you love about Santa Paula?, What do you believe are the major challenges facing Santa Paula?, and, What are your visions for the future of Santa Paula?. Over 1,000 cards were submitted.
- ***Logo Contest*** – In September 2003, eager and energetic fourth and fifth graders from McKeveitt School submitted creative logo designs to reflect what they love about Santa Paula. One logo was chosen to represent the Visioning process.



- ***Neighborhood Block Parties*** – Two informal block parties were held during the Visioning process – one took place in the Beckwith Block in November 2003, and the other in Las Piedras Park Neighborhood in February 2004. These festive events allowed neighborhood residents to talk informally with Committee members about the future of Santa Paula. During the Las Piedras event, 40 students from Santa Paula High School surveyed residents of the neighborhood and helped plant trees at the park in conjunction with Santa Paula Beautiful.



- ***Youth Involvement*** – Youth were involved in the Visioning Process in a variety of ways. Youth of all ages participated in many of the planned events. Over 600 high school students completed Visioning Comment Cards in their classrooms. Many of those high school students continued to stay involved by taking active roles in Community Workshops and attending Steering Committee meetings. The ideas and participation of the youth were essential to the final Vision Plan.

- ***Visioning Festival*** – This December 2003 weekend activity included an introduction to Santa Paula Visioning, a community-wide movie showing, and a Festival at the Railroad Plaza that included food, interactive activities, prizes, and music. At the Festival, community members expressed what they love about their City, bragged about their neighbors, and described their visions for Santa Paula.



“THE FUTURE BELONGS TO
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DREAMS.”
- ELEANOR ROOSEVELT



- ***Committee/Volunteer Work Session*** – At a joint meeting between the Steering Committee and numerous community volunteers in April 2004, small groups worked on reviewing and revising a draft vision statement, along with a set of draft goals and actions steps.



- ***Community Workshops*** – Two community-wide workshops were held in Santa Paula during the Visioning process, one in March 2004 and one in May 2004. The goal of these workshops was to involve the community in Visioning by discussing with them their visions for Santa Paula’s future, establishing priorities, and creating action steps. Community members participated in interactive exercises, small work groups, and open dialogue.
- ***City Council/Planning Commission Involvement*** – Televised updates to and workshops with the City Council and the Planning Commission provided additional opportunities to learn about the community’s visions and goals for the future.
- ***Service Club Presentations*** – Steering Committee members gave informational presentations at the meetings of local organizations, groups and clubs. The presentations, provided to more than twenty different groups, were designed to encourage maximum community involvement in the development of the vision and its implementation.



A Foundation for the Santa Paula Vision

“well reasoned growth and revitalization that pays respect to our history, architecture, and cultural diversity...and keep[ing] our small town character and sense of place.”

As noted, many Santa Paula values, challenges, and opportunities were identified through the Visioning process. These community-identified themes, combined with existing data and the regional context, help to set the stage for the Santa Paula Vision. The following section attempts to provide this foundation through a discussion of Santa Paula history, its people, economics, and geography. In each discussion section, a brief explanation of the existing values and opportunities in Santa Paula, as well as the issues facing the City, are addressed.

History

Being one of the oldest cities in Ventura County, Santa Paula has a rich history. Present day Santa Paula was originally established by the Chumash Indian villages of Mupu and Srswa. In 1840, the land was given away as part of a Spanish land grant to Rancho Santa Paula and Saticoy. Twenty years later the land was subdivided into small farms. Several of these farms were further subdivided and the town of Santa Paula began to take shape. The City of Santa Paula was incorporated on April 22, 1902; the beginning of the “old, classic hillside neighborhood.”



In the late 19th Century, oil was discovered within Santa Paula. This discovery led to the founding of the Union Oil Company in 1890. The oil industry became one of the economic mainstays for the community. The oil industry has since declined in importance and size. Agriculture has been, and is, a thriving, important industry for Santa Paula. Not only has agriculture historically defined Santa Paula, but it has also historically been and continues to be economically important for Santa Paula. The City of Santa Paula remains a major distributor of citrus fruits and avocados for the United States. The citizens of Santa Paula also value the agricultural land for the natural views it provides. Many say their favorite thing about the natural environment in Santa Paula is the agriculture, “I appreciate having the country and the agriculture around.”

In addition to the agricultural industry, film is another important industry within Santa Paula. In the early 1900's, prior to Hollywood, Santa Paula was considered the film capital of the United States. Santa Paula's quaint, picturesque streets and scenic surroundings have made it a popular location for the entertainment industry. Today, Santa Paula is noted for its movie personalities (both silent and sound) who lived in or adjacent to the city; a TV or movie crew is not a rare sight in the City. Some residents would like to see a "Santa Paula Walk of Fame" consisting of celebrity pavement plaques to celebrate the Hollywood history of Santa Paula. Along with the film industry, the tourism industry has also grown.



Even today, Santa Paula has festivals and fairs to celebrate its history and diverse cultures. There are the "fiestas" downtown, the Citrus Festival, De Colores Art Show, car shows, and farmer's markets. In addition to its festivals and fairs, Santa Paula celebrates its history through museums and murals. Santa Paula has an Oil Museum and the John Nichols Gallery, to name a few. The history of Santa Paula and the surrounding valleys are illustrated throughout the city on murals. Santa Paulans take pride in the history of their town and describe it as "a small, historic town, full of life".

Retaining, enhancing, and promoting Santa Paula's history is an important component of the vision for the City.

Small Town Character

The existing land use pattern of Santa Paula reflects over 100 years of development history. Most of the City was developed prior to the advent of zoning. Therefore, there is a great mix of land uses throughout the community. Santa Paula has developed primarily with human-scale buildings and a grid street pattern common in older communities; a design that encourages walking and bicycling.

Santa Paula prides itself on its small town feel. Santa Paulans enjoy "the ability to walk anywhere." Santa Paula has an older style of architecture within its downtown. Many of buildings in the City are over 50 years old; a number of which are national, state, and locally-designated historic structures. Certain districts in Santa Paula, in addition to individual buildings, have also been identified as having historic significance. Many

"My favorite thing about Santa Paula is the beauty and value of the buildings".



citizens of Santa Paula say their favorite thing about their home is the “quaint, old town feel of downtown.”



Preserving the small town character of Santa Paula must be addressed in the development of a vision for the future.

People

“My favorite thing about Santa Paula is the people”. It is these “loving, generous, supportive people” that make Santa Paula the small, friendly community it is and give the residents such pride to live in Santa Paula. In addition to loving their neighbors, Santa Paulans enjoy the “small town feel” their city has. According to the 2000 Census, Santa Paula’s population is approximately 28,598 – 3.6% of Ventura County’s 773,500 people. There are approximately 8,231 households within Santa Paula and is described by community members as a having “a sense of true, cohesive community”. The average household size is 3.49 people and the average family size is 3.86 people.

Santa Paulans take great pride in the “ethnicity and cultural richness” and the “diversity of customs” within the City. According to the 2003 Census, Santa Paula is approximately 71% Hispanic (71.2%) and 26% Caucasian. Over 56% of the population in Santa Paula speaks Spanish in their homes, 42% speaks English, and 1% speaks other languages.



*Over 70% of Santa
Paula’s population
is Hispanic.*

Santa Paula is a relatively young community. Approximately 35% of the residents are under the age of 19 and the average age of the City's residents is approximately 29.6 years. The young population of Santa Paula gives rise to a need for more recreational facilities and activities for the youth. The residents of Santa Paula, youth and adults, want to see "more activities for kids [and] teenagers," and more ways for youth to become involved in civic life. Residents hope that an increase in recreational activities will keep youth from "get[ting] into things they shouldn't be doing". One resident of Santa Paula has a vision that envelops the concerns of a majority of the residents; it is to create "a city that values all its citizens and works together to provide healthy, supportive experiences for all its children, youth, and families."

The young population in Santa Paula creates the necessity for high quality education for the youth. Of the 8,237 youth (3 years or older) who are enrolled in school, 350 are in nursery school/preschool, 547 are in kindergarten, 4,262 are in elementary school, 1,867 are in high school, and 1,211 are in college or graduate school. In order to address the needs of the youth of Santa Paula, residents would like to see improvements to the infrastructure of existing schools and the construction of new schools. Currently, there is one high school for Santa Paula students to attend. One frequent concern of Santa Paula residents is the need for post-high school educational and training opportunities. Santa Paulans would like to see their youth receive a higher education. In addition to higher education, Santa Paulans would like a community center with preschool programs.

Promoting diversity among residents, and finding methods to support and involve youth are key elements of a community-based vision for Santa Paula.



Economics

Since the mid-1800's agriculture has been, and continues to be an important, thriving economy in Santa Paula. Because of this, over 10% of the work force in Santa Paula works in the farming, fishing, and forestry industry. The major industries in which Santa Paulans work are: Management, Professional (18.2%); Service Occupations (14.5%); Sales and Office Occupations (27.6%); Farming, Fishing, and Forestry (11.2%); Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance (11.2%); and Production, Transportation, and Material Moving (17.3%).

Over a 1/3 of Santa Paula's population is under the age of 19.

Over 10% of Santa Paula's work force is in the agricultural, fishing, and forestry field.



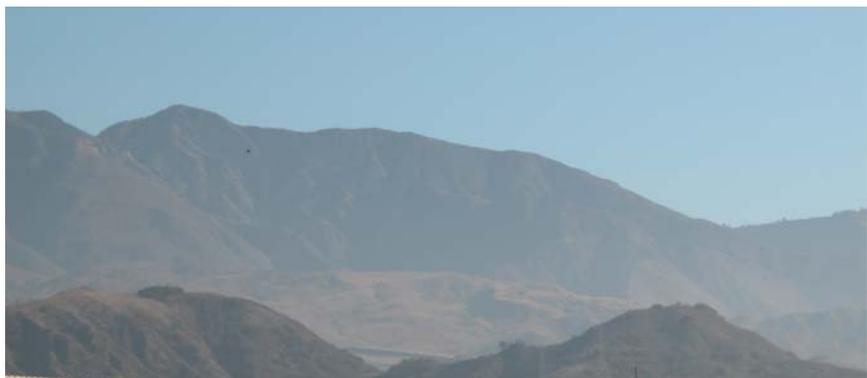
“Increasing pressures for growth and the constantly changing community must be addressed in the vision for the City, while at the same time maintaining the natural beauty, agricultural character, and small town feel of Santa Paula.”

The residents of Santa Paula would like to see their city as “an economically viable community with full employment [and] retail opportunities which allow residents to spend more of their dollars within the city.” Santa Paula is currently experiencing a resurgence of interest in the downtown. Completion of the Downtown Improvement Plan, purchase of the Glen Tavern Inn, and seismic retrofitting of most buildings is bringing renewed investment to the downtown. Nearly all storefronts are filled or are undergoing renovations prior to lease. Lack of diversity in shopping available to residents will be transformed as the city's newly appointed Retail Specialist works with property owners to attract a variety of appropriate businesses to the downtown. Santa Paulans would like to see a “mix of quaint stores downtown [and] a small but vital industrial area offering jobs to local residents.” Other concerns of Santa Paulans are the lack of job opportunities and the lack of affordable housing; “[we] need jobs and [a] better economic future for ordinary people; [there is a] lack [of] affordable housing for low incomes.” There is a need for economic growth within Santa Paula, and the residents would like to see “industrial/commercial/housing [growth] without ruining [the] character of [the] town.”

As the community of Santa Paula changes and grows, the economic well being of the residents and the City must be a part of the vision.

Regional Context

The City of Santa Paula, the “Citrus Capital of the World” is located within central Ventura County, approximately 65 miles northwest of Los Angeles and 14 miles east of Ventura and the coast. The City comprises approximately 4.6 square miles. It is located at the center of the Ventura County, nestled in the agricultural Santa Clara River Valley, surrounded by hills, rugged mountain peaks, and orange, lemon, and avocado groves. Several creeks and barrancas traverse the City and urban land.



“I love the climate, natural beauty, and access to the mountains.”

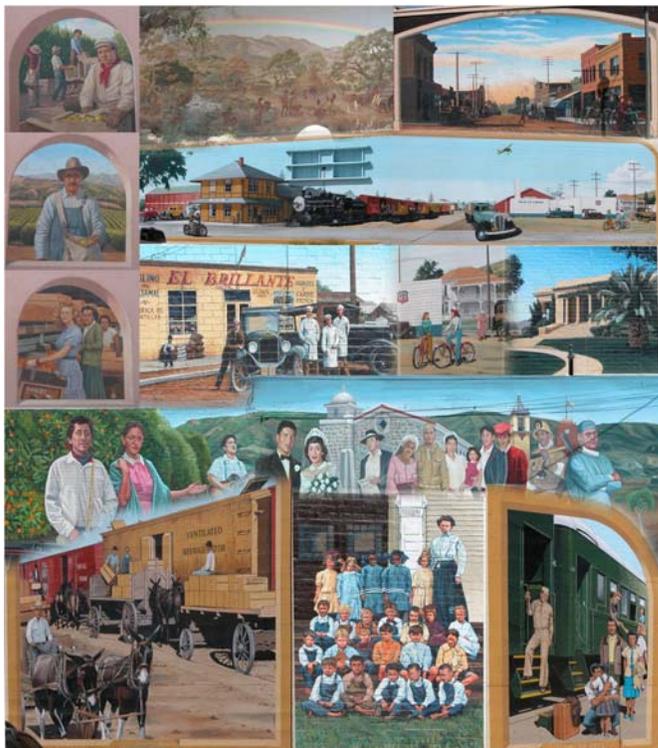
Through discussions with Santa Paulans, it was discovered that several of the favorite aspects of their city are the climate, the agriculture, and the surrounding views. One Santa Paula resident said, “[my] favorite thing about Santa Paula is the weather, the beautiful mountains that majestically envelop our city, the agriculture, and the rivers. Several Santa Paulans have

mentioned that their favorite thing about Santa Paula is the “Nature – the mountains, the views, climate, clean air!”

Ventura County is one of the leading agricultural areas in the nation, and Santa Paula is in the center of the County’s most productive area. The most important crops are avocados, oranges, and lemons. Santa Paulans have expressed their concern over the loss of agriculture to create space for development. They would “like to continue to see nature and agriculture around the city” while at the same time “utilize our natural beauty to increase tourism and small business growth.”

The small town character, ideal climate, and strong sense of neighborhood found in Santa Paula give it the “Hometown USA” name. Additionally, Santa Paula is in close proximity to the many tourist, recreational, and cultural activities within Southern California. However, Ventura County is undergoing widespread regional growth. Santa Paula, being the center of Ventura County, is facing great pressure from the surrounding regions to expand. Effectively managing growth is viewed as a challenge by many in the Santa Paula community who want to see the City “grow [while] maintaining small town values” and “retaining its historical past”.

Santa Paula’s regional context and surrounding environment are key considerations in creating a vision to the future.



Credit: Murals of Santa Paula



