

GPAC Meeting Summary

November 17, 2022, 6:30-9:00 PM

Introduction

Meeting Access

All GPAC Meetings are public and are accessible via Zoom and television (PCA channel). Meeting information, meeting recordings, presentation slides, and other materials are posted on the City's Meetings site: www.cityofpetaluma.org/meetings/.

Agenda

- Welcome
- General Public Comment
- Project and Staff Updates
- Natural Resources Presentation, Discussion & Public Comment
- Final GPAC Comments

Attendance

There were 16 total members of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) members in attendance, as well as members of the public. The following GPAC members were present:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Dave Alden | 9. Iliana Inzunza Madrigal |
| 2. Phil Boyle | 10. Roberto Rosila Mares |
| 3. Erin Chmielewski | 11. Kris Rebillot |
| 4. Mary Dooley | 12. Bill Rinehart |
| 5. Sierra Downey | 13. John Shribbs |
| 6. Ali Gaylord | 14. Joshua Riley Simmons |
| 7. Yensi Jacobo | 15. Janice Cader Thompson |
| 8. Roger Leventhal | 16. Bill Wolpert |

The following GPAC members were absent:

1. Stephanie Blake
2. Jessie Feller

The following City and consultant staff were present at the meeting:

City of Petaluma:

Heather Hines – *City of Petaluma*

Christina Paul – Principal Planner, *City of Petaluma*

David Garcia – Associate Planner, *City of Petaluma*

Daniel Harrison – *City of Petaluma*

Maria Galvez and Martin Rivarola – *Spanish Interpreters*

Consultant Team:

Ron Whitmore - *Raimi + Associates*

Michelle Hernandez - *Raimi + Associates*

Della Acosta - *Rincon*

Meeting Summary

The focus of the 18th GPAC meeting was to discuss goals and strategy ideas focused on natural resources with the General Plan Update consultant team.

Opening

The Spanish interpreter, Martin Rivarola, explained how to use the simultaneous interpretation tool on Zoom for attendees who wanted to listen in Spanish. Christina Paul followed by taking roll call attendance for GPAC members.

General Public Comment

The following public comment was given at the beginning of the meeting.

- Many of the policies that were put forth to Council were pushed into the purview of the GP. For example, with the riverfront development moratorium, the intent is to protect as much of the riverfront that still exists. These policy ideas are a huge piece of this GP process. It would be great to hear about the North Petaluma River greenway plan for a north river park, as the relationship with the rainier connector was also pushed to the GP. A lot of open space issues that have come up have been pushed to this group and want to lobby for the integration of micro biometers and taking measurements of our soil's health. The City should be training City staff in technology to sample soil and should make this a part of open space management to understand what our soil ecology looks like in Petaluma. Urban forest management, usually relegated to private property maintenance, should be a key part of the GP and should be talked about in City policies.
- The structure of the committee and how the public can interact should be fixed. It is good that the public comment timing is now 3 minutes. But the way that committee work has been structured has made it difficult for people with deep experience on these topics (who aren't on the committee) to give comments and share ideas. As someone who was a part of the previous GP process, there are fewer opportunities to share expertise and input in this one. The committee should want more input from the non-profit sector and should want public input during the breakout groups instead of just having public comment at the end. Re-structuring the process could be more beneficial for the community members who want to be more involved.

Project and Staff Updates

Christina Paul presented project and staff updates.

The City Council has provided direction on the future of the Fairgrounds. Staff will begin to talk about what uses may be appropriate on that site and to elevate the ideas generated by the citizen committee.

The Housing Element was submitted for review by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), and in early 2023, the Housing Element will be revised and presented to the Planning Commission and City Council for adoption. Once adopted, HCD will review the Housing Element for certification.

Please see the presentation slides and the meeting recording for more information about the project and staff updates.

General Plan Policy and Strategy Ideas

During the recent topic-focused technical meetings, City staff and consultant team members brainstormed strategy ideas, including potential policies and actions. Ideas were informed by existing conditions, the community vision, pillars, and principles, GPAC working group recommendations, and industry best practices. The topic-specific policy frameworks will continue to develop these ideas and outline the proposed General Plan goals, policies, and implementation actions for each element of the General Plan.

Della Acosta from the Rincon team gave a presentation on Natural Resources policy and strategy ideas. Her presentation covered existing conditions, the community direction, GPAC recommendations, and draft goals, policies, and strategy ideas. GPAC members discussed each goal and associated policies and strategies. This was followed by public comment on this agenda item.

Please see the Appendix for the rough, unedited discussion notes taken during this discussion and the related public comment, which will be used to develop the Natural Resources policy framework.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

Appendix

Natural Resources Discussion Notes

Are there any high-level goals we aren't covering that should be included?

- Bill R: do think that there were some recurring concepts in the work that was submitted that could be more specifically addressed, like trees. We need one goal that specifically and explicitly calls out the importance of trees in achieving various goals
- John Shribbs: good at high level, touches on all the big things at a high level. The last statement - working group pushed for natural resource department. We need to have interdepartmental staff that is connected to the county and other agencies, and that staff coordinates with other cities so that there can be collaboration and coordination on a regional basis, not just working within our own city. Would like the last goal to be expanded to include a regional perspective, natural resources should include all the above goals/ideas
- Bill W: surprised that these 5 points don't mention the importance of trees and of the river, especially since it's such a significant figure in community and could be something to tie them all together
- Ali: will equal access to natural resources will be called out in this section or will that be included somewhere else?

Did we capture the high-level strategies for this topic? Is there any major topic/strategy missing?

- Goal 1: Petaluma honors and protects its Native American heritage through community consultation and resource prioritization.
 - John Shribbs: EJ and equity is missing, should be included somewhere. Reparations topic in this goal gets into some legal responsibilities and expectations, wonderful goal, but should double check those legal responsibilities that may come with the language "reparations"
 - Bill W: looking at the map, this is a much broader geographic topic than just Petaluma city limits. The efforts we would like to take would be coordinated with others in the county, not just a Petaluma effort. Think that the resources within the city are our responsibility but what's beyond city limit may not be under the city's purview
 - Josh: the caution around reparations - we can get the framing right so that the word and concept is clear in the GP so it is still included
 - Ali: tribal consultation - something in implementation actions should be added about having regular coordination with the tribes instead of consultation on specific projects, meeting regularly with city staff and have a regular dialogue
 - Bill R: it's a regional thing, but our goals should be aligned with the county GP, we should be part of a greater regional effort
 - Sierra: Though I agree we need to strategize regionally; I firmly believe Petaluma can be a leader here. It's important to keep this goal and not punt it to a larger entity.
 - Indigenous knowledge on resource management from our farmworker community. There is a wealth of ecological (and other) knowledge in Petaluma in our migrant farmworker community, many of whom are displaced indigenous peoples from other regions. I think it is vital to also integrate their voices.

- Goal 2: Petaluma has an integrated and proactive “OneWater” approach to water resource management.
 - Roger: some creeks with fish that you don’t want water to stop, its important to allow water to flow into rivers instead of capturing all the water
 - John S: important to mention watershed term, talked about water source but not about the habitat, goal should be updated to include “watershed management.” the enhancement plan that is almost completed should be included in the goals, also the habitat corridor should also be included, either here or in other natural landscape areas
 - Bill R: these are terrific, at high level view, there are very specific examples, which are great but are micro solutions. We were thinking about how we evaluate the sources of water, etc. - just more big picture examples since the concept is much bigger
 - Erin: curious about this goal’s emphasis on people and private partners, doesn’t say much about city responsibility and bring that up, how the city will support the public with these water capture strategies and how city is supporting people put these in place (not just limiting to volunteers, funding mechanisms, grant programs, etc.) — likely state funding being funneled to city programs
 - John S: there are 2 things: inform and educate, then enforcement. the city overseeing the education and enforcement of water resource management strategies. Both need to happen together and needs to be brought into these goals/strategies. We need a staff that can fully regulate and enforce these strategies
 - Janice: enforcement and oversight, like in the river there are many erosion areas that have never been enforced, how does that get rectified, so it doesn’t continue
 - Sierra: local landowners and homeowners - bring renters into the thought process - is there money that homeowners benefit from these grant programs, how can renters be a part of this? Get something back from it? How do homeless folks work into this? If grants/money goes to homeowners, we’re locking out/punishing those who already have less economic resources.
 - Bill R: expand recycled water program! Just a thought

- Goal 3: Petaluma has a cohesive network of healthy, protected, and productive natural lands that facilitates the coexistence of people, animals, and plants.
 - Mary: it’s really good, hits everything well. Strategies in 2nd slide “identify optimal locations to have greenbelt” - we do have a partial greenbelt, is that to replace our greenbelt or to expand? — it’s to complete and expand it, very good!
 - Should be updated within the strategies
 - Kris: Overarching goal - Petaluma has a cohesive network... the healthy coexistence
 - update language
 - Dave: TDR, it doesn’t appear anywhere in municipal code, is this a completely new topic for the city of Petaluma? Is this problematic for establishing one?
 - Della does not think it is since the zoning code will be amended to include it, so its fine if in GP
 - Bill W: curious about big picture, as we look for more open space opportunities within UGB, while we’re trying to create more living space, it should be clear that there has to be some trade-offs between building taller buildings/infill to preserve open space we have. We are asking for everything and its not clearly communicated that there is going to be a lot of give and take in order to accomplish all of our goals

- Phil: are we defining food forest? — yes, it will be defined. It is an urban forest with plants that produce edible fruit/vegetables
- John S:
 - Food forest - food production on small scale needs to be promoted as much as possible, so food forest should be expanded to a large agricultural concept, as food forest seems limited to just fruit orchards
 - Land use - open spaces include viewscales, an airspace that is preserved, and include soil space health. Inclusive of what's above and below the surface of land, not just focusing on the 2D land
- Ali: viewscales/scapes - it can be used poorly to block dense development, typically used by wealthy people to keep not wealthy people out. Bringing this concept up to be careful of language, precedents, and implications around this term
- Sierra: I don't think "food forest" is limiting at all—it can include all sorts of foods. If you include a definition for our use of the term "food forest" I think it should be fine.
 - Suzi Grady's foodshed plan sounds interesting!!
- Goal 4: Biophilic landscaping connects and supports natural spaces and mitigates climate impacts.
 - Mary: this one strikes me as not high level; it's getting into something that's more on the zoning level. Unsure how GPs cover this type of fine grain topics (but supports the idea)
 - GP can set the direction and goals. Zoning code goes into the actual requirements, what studies need to happen to create green roofs, greywater capture
 - Phil: is this goal a definition or a goal? And what is the definition of biophilic? We should be using terms in goals that are commonly known
 - Roger: rebate program, fee waivers, etc. these seem like things that the CC has to vote on
 - Bill R: love green roofs/walls but this goal lists very specific tools and very few of the tools we can use to reach this goal. Have some problems with it being a general goal and incomplete strategies/direction. It's a much bigger topic and could be repackaged to be more general, and what the intent is? Encouraging these tools of green walls or is the goal to have connections between natural spaces? Something to think about
 - Roberto: once goal is refined, how can this goal be applied to new developments? What are future and actionable steps to take that ties in with the housing element? Like if striving for it to be a goal, how would future projects be required to comply and be implemented into recent projects? Consider thinking about the current state and what we need to do to cover the existing gap between current state and goal/end state.
 - A: sometimes cities have minimum requirements and provide incentives for projects that go above and beyond.
 - Bill W: the expense and complexities of green roofs and walls in existing bldgs. We could do a better job of incorporating the landscape to do the same things like shading, through giving better direction to developers, like guidance on proper orientation of buildings and proper tree selection, etc.
 - Mary: if we are encouraging living roofs for stormwater concepts, we should use the land for that and use roofs for solar. Uncomfortable with this as an overarching goal that then drops into building design, given the importance of solar and getting all electric buildings. They are both important, but this does not seem like the correct wording for this.

- John S: this whole concept, am struggling a bit with the details and implications. Use “urban ecosystem” instead of biophilic landscaping. Don’t talk about just natural spaces, since we want this in urban spaces and want to create natural spaces within urban spaces. Want to create expectations for developments like including all these features in a climate-forward development, a list that includes tree replacement, carbon sequestration, building orientation for solar, etc.
 - Need to be a bit broader at its high level and separate natural landscaping, like having water collection ponds in areas north of the river
 - Businesses - add in all developments, not just businesses
 - Roberto: 3rd bullet, reword to something about “develop design guidelines for eco-renovations for new green buildings,” have green roofs and walls as examples so we don’t get dragged down by the details
 - Sierra: additional high-level strategies, opportunities for equity to also be incorporated and included throughout. What would it look like to have a green jobs framework to do a lot of this greening labor? An equitable framework for living wage jobs that could employ people from various backgrounds, disadvantaged backgrounds
 - Equitably paid fire mitigation labor; green jobs program to train low income Petalumans, youth, folks transitioning out of unsustainable industries, etc.
 - How can we use this as an avenue to create equitable opportunities, living-wage jobs, etc.
 - Kris: support the ideas around natural resources and how people can be woven together so it is not just focused around people but how we all work together
- Goal 5: The City’s Natural Resources interdepartmental staff working group effectively protects and supports the natural environment in Petaluma by overseeing General Plan policy implementation.
 - Phil: do we have examples of jurisdictions that have done this?
 - A: yes, but haven’t worked with one that has one focused in this topic
 - Bill R: sat in education sessions about urban forestry management plans, so it has been done, there is a national park initiative it helps cities with this. One thing back to the trees - it’s the one basic tool for improving quality of life, we need every dept to acknowledge that. Examples: relief program in city park to plant trees, heard so many reasons to not plant trees, we need to move past that and realize we need trees everywhere. This section should help change the civic culture around trees
 - Janice: agree with bill, trees are the most cost-effective way to accomplish city goals
 - Bill W: dont want to create more bureaucracy, if we can be specific about the vision we have for the future, that we have the existing infrastructure to carry that out
 - John S: the working group is a huge step forward that has empowerment and channeling, so things go through that working group. Like creating policies and expectations AND enforcing and making things happen, and there is a way to mitigate when things go wrong (fees, etc.)
 - Should say policy creation and enforcement
 - Currently, this topic is like a hot potato being tossed around so there needs to be cohesive, follow through that can actually enforce policies and actions
 - Bill R: at a minimum there needs to be a paid position of an urban forester that manages and supports this group and manages the urban forest and the like.
 - Mary: supports the urban forest staff role that is as important as public works staff

- Kris: really love this idea of interdepartmental group, especially since there are so many silos within government, and this can help achieve the holistic approach and solutions that we want for the city
- Erin: thank you Ron for significant shift in facilitation to having more collaborative discussion
- John S: include the term “green infrastructure” and how it has as equal value to the physical structure that we create and have that be part of the oversight group (this needs to be further defined since there are industry-wide definitions of green infrastructure)
- Sierra: I am highly concerned with some of the ideas of implementation I heard tonight, specifically the alarming idea of police being involved. Police, with their guns, tasers, and qualified immunity, usually create more danger to our citizens, especially when they respond to civil matters that could be handled without violence. I staunchly oppose a police response to natural resource matters that could be better addressed by a civil city department or a team of community members.

Public Comment on Natural Resources

- We really need to have a citizen committee as part of the interdepartmental working group since we’ve learned that our citizens are subject matter experts and have the leading ideas, to keep it fresh and high value, it needs to be expanded to partner with the public. This presentation has felt scattered and needs to have a holistic and Petaluma-centric approach, the watershed impacts, the flooding, etc. Petaluma is special and this feels very generic and does not take into consideration the specific resources Petaluma has, like the river, the old growth forest near the river, the wetlands etc. Don’t understand bringing green roofs into this when they will dry out when we need the water for vegetable gardens, etc. Really need to bring back the public resources comments that have been provided before in the GP process.
- The work Suzi does is around food. The interface between the city and how we get and access our food, it is sometimes implied but not called out in the framework. Need more community food production as an opt-out activity, rather than opt-in, so that it can create a localized food system. Need language around working landscapes to connect our future with our heritage of farming that can help with sustainability and equity considerations. Don’t see much language around the food action plan from Sonoma County, it includes goals about how to have a living landscape that includes food production. There are ways to balance housing with urban open space, because if people cannot interact with these spaces, there is no way people will support them.
- Feels like tonight has been a mixed bag, going from big ideas to small. Thank you to the open space working group, the member of the public supports a dedicated chapter on natural resources, and a department focused on natural resources. Need guidelines on forest type planting, native planting, need stronger language to require rain gardens, pervious surface in new developments. The GP needs to look at how soil contributes to ecological resources, to support the north Petaluma river parkway, and to consider the rights of nature and our ecosystem. We can establish the city as an environmental leader and climate leader by keeping the rights of nature in our GP. We need to support keeping agriculture in cities and lift up the natural resources that exist within the city.
- We talk as if green spaces and open space is out there when it is actually the plane we are flying on, that green system is something we need to respect, especially old growth trees and grasses that have supported habitats for the past hundreds of years. This city would not exist without the

river, and it has been treated as a sewer. Ask that we take this very seriously, like the previous GP had a river plan that has just been ignored. Need to respect the system we live in.

- As we move forward in this discussion, humans have only cared about human interests and have wanted to expand recreation into open spaces instead of focusing on preserving habitats for all species. The city needs to comply with CA 30 by 30 executive order and goal. Community and policy orgs work to expand human enjoyment of green spaces, but we have ignored the needs of other species and wildlife habitats. Many of these creek habitats are being negatively impacted by development, incorrect cleanups, incomplete EIRs, etc.
- A natural resource interdepartmental working group is good. We need a bigger urban forest management plan, need a full-time arborist. Another strategy is to transition the tree committee to an urban ecology commission that can give the public more purview into a lot of these topics. Support including more species and promoting soil health and being cognizant of our underground resources. Petaluma can be on the leading edge in including fungi into our policy. Incorporate micro biometer training into staff that work with open spaces and testing and maintaining ecological health. Need a pervious surface standard and need to rezone spaces to retain them as protected natural spaces.
- “Resources” is an extractive term, many orgs are transitioning to terms like “natural environment, ecosystems, ecology” - suggest we take a look at that and update our terminology. The priorities are just not connected to our actual lands and habitats and existing open spaces. Like the green belt exists and some open spaces that need to be protected, but it doesn’t capture the north/east/west habitats that can be preserved. In the Native American goal - reparations and land back efforts should definitely be included. Everyone is including these ideas and we should too. The Sonoma wildlife corridors are not really related to Petaluma since Petaluma has its own wildlife corridors and her work on this topic needs to be included in this effort.
- I second all the comments made tonight and am blown away by the level of sophistication and wisdom that we have in this community. Hope to see all the comments provided reflected in the final document

Final GPAC Comments

- The Petaluma wildlife corridors were not shown but they connect with Marin county, why was the Sonoma wildlife corridor shown instead?
 - A: The team does have data on the Petaluma corridor, as the information is gathered from public and state databases. If additional Petaluma wildlife corridors data is shared with the team, it will be considered.
- We need to make clear which term is used: either Native American or Indigenous, and the preference is Indigenous.
- We didn’t hear anything about how the east and west sides of town would be physically connected in the consideration of open spaces, unsure if it would be talked about in other topics.
 - A: It is covered at a high level, but the specifics will be worked out with the Alternatives since physical changes require consideration of land use, parks, and infrastructure goals.
- The natural resource section does need to acknowledge streets as a public realm and the importance of incorporating natural resources into the street realm. New legislation around rewilding, the 30 by 30 executive order, for example, could make it possible in the future. It would be helpful to get a summary of all legislative tools available to downzone or re-designate land for open space. If we understand what tools can be used/have at our disposal, actual change can be done to create public open space out of private land.

- Many existing conditions reports are lacking information, like on water. This is a huge topic and hope that the policy frameworks will be brought back to GPAC so they can provide edits to the whole document and can review the work that is being done.
 - A: We are going through an iterative process; the exact timing of the review is TBD due to the flood modeling work that is still ongoing. The intent is that as we get the work more refined, we go through GPAC review at each stage.