



General Plan Advisory Committee

Rules and Responsibilities

The following rules and responsibilities are intended to provide General Plan Advisory Committee members with an overview of the purpose and expectations for participation in the group. The Committee will be a key part of the General Plan Update and will need to work together as an effective, efficient, and collaborative committee in order to keep the project on schedule and within budget.

GPAC Purpose

The GPAC is comprised of community representatives who will serve as advisors and project ambassadors throughout the General Plan process. The committee will work collaboratively with the consultant team, led by Raimi + Associates, and City staff to provide input on General Plan issues and offer feedback on draft materials.

The GPAC will:

- Supplement community input provided at public workshops and provide feedback and guidance throughout the General Plan process.
- Provide feedback and direction to the project consultant and City staff, with the goal of developing policies and objectives of the new General Plan that are responsive to community input, conditions, goals, and vision.
- Help tailor the project to local conditions, including the approach taken for each major step in the process as well as public engagement strategies employed.
- Review plan materials and provide guidance at key project milestones, including crafting a vision, considering alternatives, and selecting preferred policies, to help ensure that they are responsive to community input and conditions.
- Communicate information about the General Plan to Petaluma community members and encourage all interested parties to participate in the process.

Membership

- The Committee is considered an ad-hoc committee that will be dissolved upon the completion and adoption of the General Plan Update process. This process is expected to run until the end of 2022 but may be extended if needed.
- If an Advisory Committee member is absent from two (2) Advisory Committee meetings in a row or misses a total of three (3) meetings, the City may remove that member.
- Committee members are not allowed to select an alternate if they cannot attend a meeting.

Level of Commitment and Responsibility

- There will be approximately 18 Advisory Committee meetings during the General Plan update process. The meetings will be held approximately monthly on a regular basis over the next two years.
- Advisory Committee meetings will be held in the evening from approximately 6:30 to 9:00 pm. Meeting times and dates may change depending on circumstances. These meetings will be held virtually until public health guidance for COVID-19 allows for in-person meetings. Following this, meetings may be held either in person or virtually.
- Advisory Committee members are expected to prepare for, attend, and participate to the greatest extent feasible. Preferably materials will be provided to the Advisory Committee one week prior to each meeting via email. These materials will be the subject of the discussion, so it is important that each committee member read the materials and come to the meeting prepared to discuss the information.
- Throughout the process, there will be many community engagement activities including public workshops, “pop-up” workshops, surveys, and focus groups. Advisory Committee members are strongly encouraged to help publicize, attend and assist with all public workshops and other events, as necessary.

When members cannot attend a meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee, they should notify Christina Paul, Principal Policy Planner, at cpaul@cityofpetaluma.org or at 707.778.4367 in advance of the meeting.

Committee Meeting Format

- The Committee is not a decision-making body. It is a forum in which varying points of view are shared and considered for transmission by staff to City Council.
- The intent is for meetings to be dynamic, interactive and informal.
- Roll call votes will not occur on specific topics or issues, as the purpose of the Advisory Committee is to serve as a sounding board for City staff and the consultants. However, “straw polls” may be taken to understand the direction of the Committee.
- The Advisory Committee will play a critical role in guiding the General Plan update process. However, it is only one of many forms of input. Additional input will come from public workshops, pop-up workshops, online surveys, focus groups, Planning Commission meetings and City Council Workshops. Thus, direction provided by GPAC members may not be the ultimate direction for a particular topic or policy.
- Every participant is encouraged to communicate his or her position on issues under consideration and to clearly state their intentions and concerns at the earliest possible time in the course of the discussions.
- Following each meeting, City staff and the consultants will summarize the direction and conclusions from that meeting. This will be a summary of the meeting; it will not be a transcript listing every comment made by each Committee member.
- When referencing GPAC meetings, Committee members will rely on meeting summaries to the extent possible and will refer questions about the views of others to those Committee members.

Meeting Structure and Basic Conduct

- The Advisory Committee will not have a Chair or Vice Chair. A structure of equality amongst all community members will ensure that all members have an equal voice in discussions. City staff and/or a member of the Raimi + Associates' consultant team will act as the facilitator for the Advisory Committee meetings and set meeting agendas. Committee members are welcome to suggest topics of discussion they wish to cover.
- All Committee members agree to participate in good faith, as well as to respect the concerns of the other members. All Advisory Committee members are expected to participate in a constructive and professional manner and in a way that encourages constructive dialogue, mutual respect and a commitment to collaboration. The following points are offered as examples of behavior expected of the Advisory Committee members:
 - Share the floor and make sure all members have an opportunity to express their point of view.
 - Offer respect of different viewpoints and attention when others speak.
 - Share the responsibility of ensuring the success of the process.
 - Represent the diversity of perspectives, concerns and interests of residents, businesses and other stakeholders in Petaluma.
 - Ask questions of each other for clarification and mutual understanding.
 - Verify assumptions when necessary and avoid characterizing the motives of others.
 - Acknowledge and try to understand others' perspectives.
 - Refrain from side conversations, both during the meeting and between meetings.
 - Silence all electronic devices during the meetings.
 - Concentrate on the content of discussions and allow the facilitator to focus on how to promote productive discussion.
- Unprofessional, divisive, and disrespectful behavior during or between meetings is unacceptable. Members who act in this manner may be removed from the GPAC. Examples of this behavior include:
 - Using foul language in meetings.
 - Making derogatory or disrespectful comments about other members.
 - Yelling during meetings.
 - Minimizing the viewpoints of others.
 - Any other behavior that is deemed to be detrimental to Committee or disrespectful of any individual Committee member.

External Communications

- If speaking to members of the press, GPAC members should describe only their own ideas and opinions.
- Committee members should not characterize the position of any other committee member or the GPAC when speaking with the press, other community members or organizations. When GPAC members share their ideas, they should refrain from using statements such as: "Petaluma residents want...", "We want...", and "I have spoken with people and know what residents want..." or other similar statements. You may express your personal opinions. Please do not attempt to represent the ideas of other GPAC members or other residents outside of GPAC meetings.

Public Participation

- All Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public and will be noticed on the project website.
- Meetings will be recorded and televised.
- Opportunity for public comments will be allowed at each Advisory Committee meeting. These comments can help inform the Advisory Committee about broader public opinion. During formal public comment, comments will be two minutes per participant but may be modified as time allows. Time sharing between participants will not be allowed.
- There are likely to be opportunities for informal public participation in some meetings. Members of the public will be invited to address the same topics and questions as GPAC members. This will occur either during small group discussions during the meeting or via separate feedback forms.
- Meeting schedules, meeting materials and notes will be published on Petaluma's General Plan website, as well as the City's meetings site.

Brown Act

The GPAC is subject to [the Brown Act](#). The Brown Act requires government business to be conducted at open, public, noticed meetings. It is based on the state policy that people can be informed on the "people's business" of governance.

The heart of the Brown Act is a single sentence.

"All meetings of the legislative body of a local agency shall be open and public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the legislative body of a local agency, except as otherwise provided in this chapter."

This law governs GPAC and requires that these advisory body meetings ensure public access. The Brown Act also means that members of GPAC cannot discuss GPAC-related issues with each other informally (such as at a private barbecue, on an internet message board, or over text messages) without violating the law.

GPAC subcommittees may be able to meet without Brown Act requirements if they are an ad hoc committee consisting of less than a quorum of GPAC members and are dissolved after completing a specific task.

The Brown Act can be complicated for individuals new to public service in California. The City Attorney's Office will provide training on the Brown Act at the first GPAC meeting.

[Click here](#) for more information on the Brown Act.

Information Requests and Direction to Consultants

Relevant information can play an important role in the development of informed consent. At the same time, too much information or information of limited relevance can cause confusion and slow down the process. Where individual members wish to share written or printed information with the larger group, such information should be provided to City Staff approximately 1 week and not less than 72 hours prior to any scheduled meeting to allow for distribution prior to the meeting.

In addition, requests for development of significant information or data from committee members must be raised at scheduled Advisory Committee meetings or in writing to City staff. Staff will make reasonable attempts to address information requests by Committee members.