

CITY OF PETALUMA

MEMORANDUM

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DATE: December 21, 2023

TO: Peggy Flynn, City Manager

FROM: Christina Paul, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: General Plan Update Year End Status and Activity Summary, 2023

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## **Background**

This document provides a summary of the City of Petaluma General Plan update process currently underway. Additional plan materials and documents, including those cited below, are available at [planpetaluma.org](http://planpetaluma.org).

The City of Petaluma is currently operating under the City of Petaluma: General Plan 2025, which was written in 2006-2007, adopted in 2008, and minorly updated in 2012. The City is in the process of developing an update to its General Plan. The General Plan serves as the guiding vision document and provides policies and implementation programs to achieve the City's goals. The General Plan also establishes the City's legal right to regulate Land Use. There are eight mandatory topical areas, referred to as Elements, that must be included in a General Plan including Land Use, Open Space, Conservation, Housing, Circulation, Noise, Safety, and Environmental Justice. Unlike the other elements, the Housing Element is required by State regulations to be updated every eight years. General Plans do not expire.

The General Plan planning process kicked off in 2020 with an extensive public engagement process designed to identify community and decision-maker priorities for the General Plan. This effort resulted in a Request for Proposals for urban planning consultants to assist the City in developing its General Plan.

In late 2020, the City hosted an Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel Report (TAP) to help the City understand major uses related to housing production and capacity. The TAP report provides recommendations on development in the Downtown, East Washington, and Corona Road areas of the city, as well as citywide approaches to ensuring housing feasibility and encouraging the best possible projects for Petaluma. It was a critical step in the development of the Housing Element.

In early 2021, the City assembled a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), a group of community members entrusted with providing detailed input into and feedback on the General Plan. The City also selected a consultant team led by Raimi and Associates (R+A) to assist in developing the General Plan.

Following an initial period of data gathering, R+A completed numerous Existing Conditions Reports which establish the baseline conditions for:

- Arts and Culture
- Biological Resources
- Climate Hazards
- Green House Gas Inventory
- Health and Environmental Justice
- Historic Resources
- Land Use
- Manmade Hazards
- Market Analysis
- Water
- Natural Hazards
- Natural Resources
- Noise
- Parks, Recreation & Public Facilities
- Retail
- Sea Level Rise
- Socioeconomic Profile
- Transportation
- Utilities Infrastructure

Simultaneously, the consultant team and staff engaged in a robust public engagement process that included public surveys, listening sessions, area meetings, pop-up workshops, focus groups, and engagement of the General Plan Advisory Committee. This work informed the Existing Conditions Reports as well as a Vision Statement, Pillars, Guiding Principles, and Supporting Concepts document that was developed and unanimously recommended by GPAC to the City Council on February 17, 2022. The document was accepted by City Council on March 21, 2022.

- The **Vision Statement** describes the desired future conditions and characteristics of the city.
- The **Pillars** are the core community values.
- The **Guiding Principles and Supporting Concepts** provide the broad direction and pathways to achieve the vision and honor community values, with a focus on the community's specific challenges and opportunities.

Together, the Vision Statement, Pillars, Guiding Principles, and Supporting Concepts provide the foundation for developing Land Use Alternatives and Policy Frameworks during the subsequent stages in the General Plan Update. The Land Use Alternatives will outline potential directions the City can elect to take to regulate land uses across the city through the General Plan, including potential changes to or intensifications of land uses. This work will ultimately lead to the General Plan Land Use Map, which identifies land uses for all parcels in the city. The Policy Frameworks will be draft policy documents that reflect the topics covered in the General Plan, as captured by the last of existing conditions reports, above. Policy areas may be combined in the final Elements of the General Plan.

The Petaluma community is active in its pursuit of planning ideas and innovations. In 2019, the City, along with a group of community volunteers, was granted an opportunity to work with planning and development experts through the American Institute of Architects. This work was delayed due to the pandemic. In August of 2022, the Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT), visited the city, completed tours and analysis, and facilitated a large public input event put together by volunteers. The SDAT developed a report and set of recommendations on supporting walkable neighborhoods in which people can meet their everyday needs, or "15-Minute Neighborhoods." 15-Minute Neighborhoods are a central concept for the General Plan, and will be integrated into draft Land Use Alternatives and Policy Frameworks.

Through mid- to late-2022, the General Plan effort focused on the development of a Housing Element, which was required to be updated by State Law. This work included very extensive public outreach,

which is detailed in Appendix F of the Housing Element, but which included numerous mailings and newsletters, pop-up meetings, a community survey with over 1,000 respondents, GPAC meetings, convening a GPAC Ad Hoc committee, community meetings, and multiple meetings of the Planning Commission and City Council. Work also included coordinating with the California Department of Housing and Community Development. The Housing Element is Petaluma's plan to facilitate the creation of needed housing and increase housing equity over the next 8 years.

### **General Plan Milestones in 2023**

#### *6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Adopted and Certified*

On March 20, 2023, the City Council adopted the 2023-2031 Housing Element. The Housing Element was certified by the State of California in May 2023.

#### *Sea Level Rise and Flood Maps*

As part of the General Plan update, the City has been taking a hard look at flood risks in the community. To gain the best possible understanding of flooding in Petaluma over the next 20 years and out to the end of the century, the City engaged experts to develop state-of-the-art computer models that closely examine flood hazards. The models examine several factors, including terrain, anticipated storm and rainfall patterns, and water coming up the Petaluma River due to sea levels, tides, and storm surges.

Another major consideration when thinking about flooding over time is how climate change will impact flooding. Climate change will bring higher seas, extreme weather events, and higher San Francisco Bay waters, along with potential changes in rain intensity and frequency. Because the Petaluma River is tidal, river levels are also influenced by sea level rise (SLR). There is guidance from the State and general agreement in the scientific community on probability ranges of sea level rise we can anticipate over time. The modeling team used these ranges to help predict potential future flooding.

The Community Development team worked closely with Public Works to understand the potential impacts of the mapping results, and to bring them to the public. Preliminary maps of the updated flood models were presented to the GPAC and the public in September 2023. These maps are being used to inform General Plan Land Use and policy decisions. The modeling will also inform a 2-year process undertaken by Public Works to update Petaluma's FEMA maps.

#### *Public Draft Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality (Climate Action Plan)*

In October 2023, the City published a Public Draft of the Blueprint for Climate Neutrality, the City's Climate Action Plan. The Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality (Blueprint) is the plan for our community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work towards the bold goal of carbon neutrality by 2030. The Blueprint is the product of Petaluma's ambitious Climate Emergency Framework and extensive engagement with City staff, the Climate Action Commission, and the community. It includes city-specific actions that include City-funded programs, requirements for new and future development in the city, and partnerships with businesses, community-based organizations, and individuals. It is designed with 22 cornerstone actions across the sectors of buildings, energy, transportation, resource consumption, and ecosystems. Raimi and Associates assisted the City with the development of the Blueprint.

### **Continuing General Plan Update Activities**

Through 2023, the General Plan team has been working to draft and refine Policy Frameworks. Based on the Vision, Pillars, and Guiding Principles, analysis of the existing conditions, existing plans, and an ongoing and extensive public engagement process, the Policy Frameworks include:

1. Governance and Implementation
2. Arts, Culture, and Creativity
3. Equity and Environmental Justice
4. Historic Resources
5. Infrastructure and Utilities
6. Economic Development
7. Natural Environment and Resources
8. Noise
9. Parks
10. Public Facilities
11. Mobility and Transportation
12. Safety
13. Flood and Sea Level Rise Adaptation
14. Land Use

Planning staff have worked collaboratively with consultants and all City departments to circulate and conduct an internal review of the draft Policy Frameworks and provide feedback to the consultants. Consistent with community direction, the team is working to ensure that the frameworks are comprehensive, thoughtful, visionary, and technically excellent. The public draft Policy Frameworks, which will ultimately be consolidated into General Plan Elements, will be available for community review and discussion in 2024. The community review will be supported by GPAC working groups, who will provide in-depth feedback on key frameworks.

Simultaneously, City staff have been working with the Raimi & Associates consulting team and the GPAC to develop the Land Use Alternatives, which will become the City's updated General Plan Land Use Map. The alternatives will also be released for discussion in 2024.

## **Looking to the Future**

The extensive process of developing the City's General Plan has included collaboration between City staff and project consultants, as well as an intensive time commitment from members of the General Plan Advisory Committee. 2024 will be a very active year for the General Plan process. In 2024, we look forward to:

- Community discussion and educational opportunities related to General Plan topics
- Community meetings on specific areas in the city
- Public review of the 14 draft Policy Frameworks
- Ongoing GPAC meetings
- Presenting the Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality to the Climate Action Commission and City Council
- Public review of the Land Use Alternatives
- City leadership review of draft General Plan policies and Land Use Alternatives
- Commencement of an Initial Study and Environmental Review under California Environmental Quality Act

We want to especially acknowledge the members of the General Plan Advisory Committee who provide key feedback and engage in the General Plan process:

Dave Alden  
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Mary Dooley  
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Sharon Kirk  
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Iliana Inzunza Madrigal  
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Brent Newell  
Kris Rebillot  
Bill Rinehart  
Joshua Riley Simmons  
Lizzie Wallack  
Bill Wolpert

We would also like to recognize past GPAC members Panama Bartholomy, John Shribbs, Janet Cader-Thompson, Erin Chmielewski, Jessie Feller, Sierra Downey, Kevin Kelley, and Matt Brown. We would like to acknowledge and thank all of them for their work, care, and contributions.

### **Public Participation**

As we are moving forward with the release of Policy Frameworks and Land Use Alternatives, we will continue to hold approximately monthly meetings with the General Plan Advisory Committee, or as needed. Regular meetings take place on the third Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm. Depending on the content of the meetings, they are either online or in person. The public is invited to attend.

Additionally, we continue to update the General Plan website and maintain a record of all the activities and publicly available documents on the site. We invite you to visit the site: [planpetaluma.org](http://planpetaluma.org) to see the latest updates and review the work that has been completed to date.

Interested people are also very welcome to sign up for the General Plan email list to receive updates on the process and invitations to participate. Public and decision-maker input is vital to this process. <https://www.planpetaluma.org/getinvolved#sign-up>

### **Referenced Materials**

All documents and materials referenced herein can be found on the General Plan website at <https://www.planpetaluma.org/documents>.