

GPAC Meeting Summary

August 18, 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, and materials are posted on the City's Meetings site:

www.cityofpetaluma.org/meetings/.

Agenda

- Welcome
- General Public Comment
- Project and Staff Updates
- GPAC Working Groups Presentations and Discussion
- Final Public Comment
- Final GPAC Comments

Attendance

There were 14 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 | 8. Ali Gaylord |
| 2. Stephanie Blake | 9. Iliana Inzunza Madrigal |
| 3. Phil Boyle | 10. Kris Rebillot |
| 4. Erin Chmielewski | 11. Bill Rinehart |
| 5. Mary Dooley | 12. John Shribbs |
| 6. Yensi Jacobo | 13. Joshua Riley Simmons |
| 7. Jessie Feller | 14. Janice Cader Thompson |

The following GPAC members were absent:

1. Delia Diaz
2. Sierra Downey
3. Roger Leventhal
4. Roberto Rosila Mares
5. Bill Wolpert

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 – Planner, *City of Petaluma*

Maria Galvez and Monica Aparicio – *Spanish Interpreters*

Consultant Team:

Ron Whitmore - *Raimi + Associates*

Michelle Hernandez - *Raimi + Associates*
Dave Javid - *Plan to Place*

Meeting Summary

The focus of the 15th GPAC meeting was to receive and discuss topic-specific recommendations from the GPAC Working Groups, in addition to hearing staff and project updates.

The start of the meeting was delayed approximately 45 minutes while technical issues with the Zoom platform were resolved. To maximize use of meeting time, agenda items were also taken out of order.

Opening

The Spanish interpreter, Maria Galvez, 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.

GPAC Working Group Presentations

The GPAC Working Groups provide an opportunity for GPAC members to collaborate with other knowledgeable and active community members to make topic-specific recommendations in support of the General Plan Update. This work will complement the work of the General Plan team and related City and community-based initiatives. During the February GPAC meeting, GPAC members decided to form the following working groups:

- Climate Action
- Equity and Intersectional Justice
- Open Space and Natural Resources
- Mobility
- Sense of Place and Quality of Life
- Economic Development
- Housing

The Working Groups are self-directed and self-facilitated.

At the August meeting, each group provided a presentation on their topic-specific recommendations for the General Plan Update. Please refer to the written reports, presentation slides, and meeting recording for more information.

Climate Change

The Climate Change Working Group held an open meeting to hear feedback on their policy brief. They emphasized the group's focus on sea level rise and flooding, the impact it will have on current housing and future development, and strategies to mitigate the impacts of extreme flooding. They recognize the need for the General Plan to be usable and practical and able to meet the current and future needs of the Petaluma community. The group looked at the land use aspects of climate change issues and the adaptation strategies needed to deal with water related issues. The brief includes 11 pragmatic adaptation measures (such as levee construction, water pumps, etc.) that consider the limits of human

engineering and support the view that the City needs to protect existing and future structures and communities. For example, the expansion of EV charging stations needs to be an equitable expansion, be part of an extended electrical grid, have the needed maintenance support, and be placed outside of future flood zones.

Equity

The Equity Working Group has identified policies and ideas that further equity in various parts of the city, such as: establishing greater landlord oversight, expanding free transit services to more demographics, and expanding the bilingual and non-English language access at City meetings, services, and online. As the General Plan Update process continues, the team needs to continue thinking about how to build on the existing connections with community organizations and leaders and to take strong action in bringing diverse voices into the process.

Open Space and Natural Resources

The Open Space Working Group has created a report that includes original recommendations and supporting documents (such as the Sonoma County Land Use Resiliency Plan). The group hopes to redefine the previous definition of “open space” into one that includes all outdoor systems where wildlife, people, and ecological systems interact. Their list of recommendations includes some of the following:

- Preserve, restore, plant, and connect open spaces and the urban forest
- Create a separate section in the General Plan that is specifically about open space and natural resources
- Elevate the Parks/Natural Resources department to have the same capacity as Public Works (such as creating an urban forest staff position)
- Acknowledge the prior inhabitants of our land and implement their practices and perspectives
- Incorporate natural systems approach in all future planning
- Rethink water sources and use and clearly communicate the status of development & water use/sources
- Create and improve open spaces
- Reinvent the Fairgrounds, like keeping old functionalities but having new structures that are new and support multiple uses.

Mobility

The Working Group is continuing to welcome written comments and ideas from the public and will be creating position papers centered on different sub-topics, such as walkability and transit-oriented development. Some of the main ideas the group has discussed include strategies to improve east-west bicycle connections and how to reach the carbon neutrality goal through the lens of mobility. The group aims to have position papers finalized in September.

Sense of Place

The Sense of Place Working Group sorted characteristics that make Petaluma special into three categories: the physical environment (natural and built), the socio-economic environment, and management & operations. The natural features that surround and make up Petaluma are the factors that people react to and influence the quality of life of the town – they are what makes some people visit and

stay in this town. For the socio-economic category, the group identified the sense of volunteering, the traditional events that bring people together, the active and diverse arts community, and the growth of bilingual information and services as examples of the values and actions of the Petaluma community. For management & operations, the group recognizes the history of forward-thinking government within the city and point out that the actions within this category will determine how the General Plan will be implemented.

The group created specific recommendations for the General Plan within each of the categories. Some are included below.

Physical Environment (Natural and Built):

- Improved east/west connection with Washington Blvd
- Centralized City facilities
- Increased walkability that encourages more social interaction

Socio-economic:

- Further support for diverse events and programming in City facilities that can improve engagement and community access to information
- Work with well-known community organizations and leaders to maintain the connections between government and communities and to better distribute information

Management & operations:

- Revising parking standards
- The creation of a City department to maintain the urban forest
- Implement a more enforceable General Plan that can prohibit detrimental practices and enhance positive actions.

Economic Development

The Economic Development Working Group created a list of recommendations that can transform the way the local economy works and shift it towards a circular system that turns away from extractive and exploitative systems. Some of these recommendations include the following:

- Expansion of support for diverse businesses that are spread throughout neighborhoods
- Creation of a city that all workers can live in and have a reduced work commute
- Support of repair and mending-based local economies
- Support of food sovereignty and local food systems.

Housing

The Housing Working Group have submitted their housing platform document to City staff, and it was a part of the staff presentation on the Housing Element (HE) to the City Council. Council encouraged staff to include the working group's policies and ideas into the next draft of Housing Element. Once the HE work has been completed, and the Housing Element is certified by the State Department of Community Development (HCD), the working group will shift their focus to the General Plan Land Use Alternatives and how to best prioritize certain areas for housing as a part of the General Plan Update process.

GPAC Comments

GPAC members provided some reflections after all the groups presented.

- All of the working group topics are interconnected and intersectional – actions taken in the name of one topic will impact the goals of other topics and can support each other. Equitable access and climate adaptation may be central to all of the actions taken, especially as the community commits to a forward-thinking view of climate change, so that we can create a city where future generations can continue living in.
- It may be productive to have each group nominate one person to meet in-person as the GPU process continues to have in-person dialogue and further develop ideas.

Project and Staff Updates

Christina Paul presented project and staff updates. The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) led by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) held an in-person workshop with the Petaluma community in early August to create a plan to create 15-minute neighborhoods and living streets throughout the city. The AIA made a preliminary presentation to City Council and will follow-up with a report.

The Fairgrounds Visioning Process is underway, and the lottery-selected panel led by Healthy Democracy presented its recommendations to Council and the 4th District Agriculture Association in July. On September 10th, there will be an in-person, open-house style community workshop at the Petaluma Regional Library. In October, City Council will host a workshop to consider the feedback heard at the September workshop and provide direction on next steps.

City staff are continuing to work with West Consultants and Sherwood Engineering to refine flood and sea level rise modeling work.

City staff are reviewing greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction action policies and aim to release a public draft in the fall. These policies will continue to align with the General Plan, VMT reductions, adaptation planning, and the General Plan EIR.

The Public Review Draft Housing Element (HE) will be released at the end of August, to be followed by a 30-day public review period. A Planning Commission meeting and a GPAC meeting in September will be focused on reviewing the Housing Element. Additionally, there will be a Public Review Housing Element virtual community open house on September 20th. After the public review period ends, the HE will be updated by City and consultant staff and reviewed by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The final Housing Element will be reviewed by Planning Commission and adopted by City Council before HCD conducts a final certification in spring 2023.

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

GPAC Clarifying Question

The GPAC did not ask any clarifying questions.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

- A member of the public is happy with all of the comments and ideas presented by the working groups, especially since it is difficult to change the way society thinks and acts with concern to all of these topics. They hope that most, if not all, of the GPAC suggestions are incorporated into the final General Plan and that the City Council supports it as well.
- Susan Kirks appreciates all the work done by all of the working groups, but the term “open space and natural resources” should be changed since resource is an extractive term. She has lead the Wildlife Corridors Project and has worked on a map that can be presented to the group and can discuss the research they have done in Petaluma. High use, low impact project design should be included in the recommendations as it helps balance habitat protection with nature access.
- Another member of the public is appreciative of all the great work happening, keep it up!
- A member of the public thinks the project has a wonderful vision. They also live on Hill Blvd and the 10 acres of La Cresta have just been fenced it for the first time ever; Petalumans have used this area of open space for years to connect the neighborhood with Helen Putnam Park. There are local groups that have advocated to preserve this space for years, now is the moment to bring that work back up and have the City, County, and other agencies look for a way to keep this as open space as much as possible.

General Public Comment

No general public comments were presented at this meeting.

Final GPAC Thoughts

There were no final GPAC comments.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9 PM.