

# GPAC Meeting Summary

*October 20, 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/](http://www.cityofpetaluma.org/meetings/).

## Agenda

- Welcome
- General Public Comment
- Project and Staff Updates
- General Plan Policy and Strategy Ideas Presentations, Discussion & Public Comment
- Final GPAC Comments

## Attendance

There were 12 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              | 7. Roberto Rosila Mares   |
| 2. Phil Boyle              | 8. Kris Rebillot          |
| 3. Erin Chmielewski        | 9. Bill Rinehart          |
| 4. Mary Dooley             | 10. John Shribbs          |
| 5. Sierra Downey           | 11. Janice Cader Thompson |
| 6. Iliana Inzunza Madrigal | 12. Bill Wolpert          |

The following GPAC members were absent:

1. Stephanie Blake
2. Delia Diaz
3. Jessie Feller
4. Yensi Jacobo
5. Ali Gaylord
6. Roger Leventhal
7. Joshua Riley Simmons

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*

Eric Roberts – Planner, *City of Petaluma*

Daniel Harrison – *City of Petaluma*

Andrew Trippel – *City of Petaluma*

Maria Galvez and Monica Aparicio – *Spanish Interpreters*

**Consultant Team:**

Ron Whitmore - *Raimi + Associates*

Michelle Hernandez - *Raimi + Associates*

Meghan McNulty – *Raimi + Associates*

Dena Belzer – *Strategic Economics*

Arpita Banerjee – *Strategic Economics*

David Plettner-Saunders – *Cultural Planning Group*

Matt Goynes – *Fehr & Peers*

Allison Quach – *Fehr & Peers*

## Meeting Summary

The focus of the 17<sup>th</sup> GPAC meeting was to discuss policy and strategy ideas with the General Plan Update consultant team, focusing on the topics of transportation, parks, economic development, and arts and culture.

### 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.

### General Public Comment

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

- A member of the public is curious to see how the General Plan and the GPAC will elevate two issues that have been brought up with the City Council: protecting the forest area north of the Petaluma River and crosstown connectors. At a recent City Council meeting, there was a discussion of using the General Plan to create policy that would direct the city to explore river crossing in locations other than the proposed Rainier connection. Additionally, there is a need to create either a city arborist staff position or create an urban forestry department and it could be discussed as a part of the General Plan Update or by the GPAC.

### Project and Staff Updates

Christina Paul presented project and staff updates. The Housing Element was available for public review between August 29<sup>th</sup> and September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. During this period, the draft element was presented to Planning Commission, the GPAC, the Climate Action Commission, City Council, and the public through a virtual open house meeting. Staff received feedback from over 200 community members and multiple community organizations. Staff has been working to integrate the feedback heard from the community. In the draft for HCD review, they have updated the Sites Inventory to remove sites proximate to Cinnabar Avenue and added a site (Washington Commons). The Policies and Programs portion of the element emphasize the importance of the City's climate action goals and adds the City's efforts to receive the Pro-Housing Designation from the California State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). Before the end of October, staff will submit the Housing Element to HCD for review, and in early

2023, the Housing Element will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council for adoption. Once adopted, HCD will review the Housing Element for certification.

The Fairgrounds Visioning Process is underway, and on October 24th, the City Council will host a workshop to consider all of the community input and provide direction on the next steps.

City staff are reviewing greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction 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.

Over the next few months, staff will continue to develop draft General Plan Policy Frameworks and Alternatives, which will continue to be discussed in the upcoming GPAC meetings. In the Spring of 2023, staff will host topic- and area-focused community meetings.

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

## GPAC Clarifying Questions

A member of the GPAC asked the following clarifying question.

- What are the implications of Petaluma receiving the Pro-housing Designation from HCD?
  - Answer: It is a program that allows the City to be eligible for additional funding from the State. The City of Petaluma already fulfills most of the HCD requirements for the designation.

## 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.

The General Plan consultant team gave presentations on the current status of policy frameworks focused on parks, economic development, arts and culture, and transportation. These presentations were followed by small group discussions about each topic focused on policy and strategy ideas. The presentations occurred in two rounds, where in the first round Raimi + Associates and Strategic Economics presented the parks and economic development policy and strategy ideas. In the second round, Cultural Planning Group and Fehr & Peers presented the arts and culture and transportation policy and strategy ideas.

Please see the Appendix for the rough, unedited discussion notes taken in each breakout room.

# Public Comment on Policy and Strategy Ideas

## Parks & Natural Environment

- To start making the city parks into climate-ready parks, we need to change the whole philosophy of how parks are maintained and the standards we have for new parks and open spaces. This includes moving away from heavy watering, stopping the use of pesticides, etc., and prioritizing regenerative practices. The design of new parks should include more natural typologies and materials, and the location of these parks needs to be thoughtful in completing 15-minute neighborhoods.
- The metrics used in the Parks & Recreation framework should include ones that measure trees, flora, fauna, and soil health. From the transportation discussion, want to lift up micro-mobility as a topic that should be included in the General Plan.
- The City could also add more signs like those along Ellis Creek throughout the city that identify historic sites but also share information about the surrounding natural environment. The City could also develop a river commission similar to the Coastal Commission so that projects proximate to the river would have to undergo an approval process.
- Susan Kirks was pleased to hear that the Parks framework is using both environmental considerations and equity to set the foundation for the work and was appreciative to hear the discussion of wildlife corridors. Susan is open to meeting with the consultants to discuss her work on identifying wildlife corridors and crossings in the Petaluma Valley.

## Economics

- Is there specific information on the jobs workers commute into Petaluma for? Knowing this information can influence the type of housing that is constructed here and the range of housing affordability the city needs. With transportation, we have externalized the cost of driving for so long and need to start appropriately pricing the cost of transportation.

## Arts & Culture

- A member of the public is supportive of more information signs, like wayfinding signs, that are placed at community centers and congregation places that would list the town activities for that day, and there could be an online version of this as well.
- As for the community centers in each neighborhood idea, the centers would be even better if the centers emphasized culture sharing.
- There is so much room to implement the arts in future projects, such as involving local nonprofits, like the one in town that makes large mural installations. There should also be an expansion of the budget that allows for more investment in the arts and can equitably pay local artists, like those working in underserved communities.

## Participation

- It would have been nice to participate in this meeting's process much earlier, especially during the small group discussion. Please open up more time or public comment.
- Many big issues brought up at City Council have been relegated to the General Plan Process and have encouraged the public to attend these meetings. But it has felt difficult to be a part of the process so far, especially when these are issues that members of the public want to discuss.

## Large Group GPAC Discussion Comments

The following are comments given by the GPAC in the larger group after the breakout rooms closed.

- For future meetings, we could have longer meetings and more topics but it may be more helpful to have fewer topics so there is more time to have robust conversations.
- Are the comments and letters received from the public being collected and shared with the consultants?
  - Answer: Staff do collect every comment and public letter that is sent to them. If there is a comment on a particular topic, staff have brought it up to the GPAC, but there are some topics the process has not covered yet, and it is a bit premature.
- Future meetings could have longer conversations but hesitant to have meetings go beyond the usual 2.5 hours. If needed, we could explore adding a second meeting in the same month if more items need discussion.
- Will the topics at the November meeting be different?
  - Answer: Yes, tentatively the topics are land use, open space & natural environment, environmental justice, and safety.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

# Appendix

## Parks & Facilities Breakout Room Discussion Notes

### Any questions or immediate comments or reactions from the presentation?

- Mary Dooley
  - Question - You referenced Parks and Facilities Working Group?
    - Ron - Many working Groups touched on parks and facilities
- Bill Rinehart
  - Separate Open Space and Natural Resources element?
    - Meghan - Open Span and Natural Resource Element will cover conservation, natural resources, preservation
    - This element will cover various topics but more related to parks
- Mary Dooley
  - Our Working group on open space and natural resources focused discussion on the central park of the North River Area, the area that extends all the way down to the McNear Peninsula

### How should the City measure quality of parks service?

- Mary Dooley
  - Is there a comparison for so many parks at our target?
    - Meghan - Look at other surrounding communities and see how we stand.
  - People's access to the parks - 87% within a 5 min walk - many areas are small or dried up. How can we have a small pocket park serve a neighborhood?
    - Meghan
      - We do need to look at the quality of parks
      - Capture the nuance of parks
      - Equity-based parks metric
    - Ron
      - What are the best metrics to show that everyone has access? This one is not serving us, so what do we need?
    - Meghan
      - What else should the City consider?
      - Areas of the City that do not have access?

### Who should the City partner with for programming and maintenance of parks, recreational facilities, and public facilities?

- Janice Cader-Thompson
  - At Kenilworth Park Meeting - more neighborhood parks and smaller parks, consider art for children and adults alike
  - Look at different ways for neighborhood parks to be utilized
  - River Park - consider the interconnectedness - How do you connect parks and natural areas?
  - In the parks - more infrastructure for all ages?
  - Meghan - What do you mean by Creative?
    - Janice

- More places with tree cover to gather, spend birthdays, more multi-use activity areas
    - Do not need to make a reservation
- Kristine Rebillot
  - Intergeneration use of parks
    - Grandparent parks
    - Areas for both youth and seniors
    - Parks as physical places
  - Recreational programming - only one Senior Center in Town
    - They want bigger and better
  - Future of the Fairgrounds and parks at the Fairgrounds
    - Potential senior center at the Fairgrounds
  - Senior Center on the West side of town as well
  - City thinks about facilities and less about programming
    - City needs to prioritize programming that will pull people into the parks

### What other ideas do you have related to parks and recreation?

- Bill Rinehart
  - Different scales of parks so that the city itself feels more parklike
  - The city should think about connectors and corridors
    - Think about corridors in this discussion of parks
  - Need to have a diversity of uses and distinct uses
  - All parks should support healthy wildlife and mobility
  - Habitat needs to be as much an asset as the other facilities
    - Ron
      - We heard that all public spaces are part of an ecosystem
      - Facilities and public spaces are part of the web
      - We are intrigued by that idea
      - Is that the direction we want to go in?
        - Kris
          - Love that wholistic approach
          - Downtown - green and active - everything is one whole body
  - Programming
    - Community engagement officer as a hub for coordination with the community
  - The economics of parks is always an issue and need to think about revenue generators
- Janice
  - Support Bill and Kris - other community members are saying that all areas are connected and integrated
  - Think about the connection between all areas

## Economic Development Breakout Room

### Discussion Notes

#### What is your highest priority?

- Bill Wolpert
  - Likes the idea of having residents work here in town, eases congestion, good for the climate. In order to do that we need good-paying jobs, but companies often don't have the workforce we need. We need training programs and education, don't know what it means beyond university and a junior college
- Dave



- Economic Development Policy with a housing policy, living and working in this town or getting transit to get here - and turning housing + economics into a climate action plan
- John
  - It was the telecom valley no. 2 when Don Green was running the business of the day, yet it collapsed, there is a whole range of buildings coming up - continue attracting green-based businesses, but do we have to go further, to get a wide number of jobs, what is the balance?
  - We need housing but we need to attract industries and find businesses that want to come here (Don Green's model) - Target certain kinds of businesses, which have knowledgeable workers but also at different levels of educational attainment. Do we want an Amazon center here? How do we develop a 15-minute community where we can have 15-minute away drop-offs (distributional systems and have local folks working there - analysis of a distribution system by working with Amazon to counter a door-to-door model, instead of a Target or Home Depot)?
- Roberto
  - economies inner circulating v/s globally facing - What are we currently? What % of the economic sector involves what? What is the current state of the jobs that we offer? Could correlate to housing development
  - It would be good to use the universities around us, leveraging them to develop good jobs - how your current economy stands with respect to future-facing goals.

#### **To what extent should City resources focus on experimental programs versus established tools?**

- Bill Wolpert
  - Are we forced into an experimental situation? Work from home? Shopping online? Outward facing economy, large agricultural % of the economy, a lot of it leaves the area - so we are stepping that direction too
- Roberto
  - Talked about spreading the tech out, CAVs could be an opportunity, people are interested in having a conversation about what we have here and what we can do with it.
- John
  - Experimental can burn staff time and effort, but what if it is futile, and we have staff time limits

## **Arts & Culture Breakout Room Discussion Notes**

#### **Any questions or immediate comments or reactions from the presentation?**

- Phil Boyle
  - Employment sector 10% of workers - what is typical?
    - David
      - That is a high number
      - Absolute numbers are not large given the size
- Bill Rinehart
  - Being a leader locally and globally
  - Build into the General Plan - quick build policies
  - More evolution in ways things
  - Hard to change policy
- Kris Rebillot
  - It goes with the whole economic development as a way to build wealth
  - Food and beverage realm

- In our Latinx community
- What do we do with big box stores?
  - Repurpose multiuse
- Janice
  - Transportation and arts and how they can help the community be much safer
  - Arts on the streets to slow traffic
  - McDowell intersection - biggest complaint was the four kiosks and eliminating a blank space that feels unsafe
    - Why would a community waste money 20 years ago - now it is valued for slowing traffic and supporting people in the community who are moving
  - Education is very important
- Bill Wolpert
  - All the ways artists are involved did not consider architects and landscape architects
  - The amount of money that goes to art can help support materials and landscape
  - Architecture is something that affects our lives and it can bring more art into our lives than we consider it to have
- Kristine Rebillot
  - People complain about not knowing what is happening
  - Think about what is going on and art is announcing what is happening
  - Appreciate our specific neighborhoods
- Mary Dooley
  - Public art ordinance - 1% of construction costs go to art or applicant that applicant can put something into a new project
  - The ordinance needs to be bolstered and supported - more political
  - When we build anything we need to go beyond and put art and artfulness into every public structure that we build
  - Care more and use creativity to incorporate more details and arts and beauty into every aspect of our lives
  - Our alleys are places for art - instead of spaces for dumpsters
  - We need to look at places that we normally turn our backs on
- Bill Rinehart
  - Bring back art design review
  - Invest in architecture
  - Petaluma Arts Center is great but struggling, we are too small to provide the funding
  - City must carry weight there
  - ED at the arts center could be a city employee
  - Hold out for good architecture
- Janice
  - Agree with the last few comments
  - Originally it was 2-3 % for art
    - Would this be included in a Master Plan for art? Where can we include that rate increase?
  - Including art in the architecture
  - Looks at architecture as art in other places
  - Strong language for the need for art in multiple ways
    - David
      - Arts Master Plan

### What is your highest priority?

- Bill Rinehart
  - Community Engagement and coordination - Petaluma Arts Center as a hub
  - Give people places and opportunities to get into art
  - Like pop-ups and spaces that go up on a Saturday
  - Opportunities to get people involved

- Artaluma is trying to get off the ground
- Bill Wolpert
  - City should give more support to cultural street festivals
  - Dia de Los Muertos never has the support it needs
  - Struggles to occur
  - The downtown association sponsors a window display competition that recognizes the work and encourages
- Sierra Downey
  - 15 Minutes walkable community center
  - Neighborhood community heartbeat
  - Kids can access free or equitably priced arts, music,
  - Make it also accessible to community members who are older and may be able to teach
  - Artist in residency
    - Multiple artists in residency centers - there to provide experiences and support
    - David
      - Boston artist in residency program
      - Teaching artists that go into rec centers for that
- Kristine
  - Important to take care of downtown space
  - Alleyways need to be reimagined for pop-ups, arts
  - The area near the trestle - including new chess tables - is ripe for intergenerational collaboration
  - Things are colorful and that color permeates
  - Branding - an identity that shows that Petaluma cares about the arts
  - Part of the fabric of the city
  - Wayfinding signs - make it colorful Place that appreciates arts and culture
- Mary
  - How these ideas become part of the General Plan
  - Parks and rec department
    - Need a position and staffing to make this happen
    - Needs policy to change personnel
  - Thinking about making Petaluma look like it cares
    - Gateways
    - Position art as an important factor
    - Expansive ideas
    - Theater arts at schools come together
- Janice Cader-Thompson
  - Work with school boards since schools and cities are often separated
  - For kids learning the arts
- Kris Rebillot
  - What is the parks and rec department?
  - Does the city need to reorganize itself?
  - Does what we have work?
  - Does the structure and organization that we have work now?

**Can we expand Petaluma's arts and culture element to encompass a broader definition of creativity?**

- David
  - Does the room agree with the idea?
    - Confirmed

# Transportation Breakout Room Discussion Notes

## Are outcome-based Goals helpful and understandable?

- Roberto
  - For these to be achievable, what changes do we need to make? 80% of the people are commuting out, so how do we tangibly deal with that structural problem? Relationships with schools as well will be critical due to the extreme congestion during the time.
  - Wants subgoals that can be achievable given how ambitious the outcome-based goals are
- Dave
  - Outcome-based goals are helpful for this. But everyday people want tangible examples of what these high-level goals will mean on a day-to-day basis.

## Does establishing a modal hierarchy to inform a Complete Streets framework make sense?

- John
  - Need to make sure that make this is understandable. Create great examples that the city can point to so we don't need to fight quite as hard. Education is critical to bring the public along about the purpose of why we are doing this, not just to make their lives harder.
- Iliana
  - In reaction to other comments about moving slowly, we have gone too slowly when it comes to transit improvements. The public needs to see action.
- Erin
  - Communication around how the current streets are serving specific needs and not others. For example - East Washington is at max capacity, it will never be wider, so what is the outer limit of what we can do for this street as we consider adding bike and ped accessibility? What is the realm of feasibility for these streets?
- Dave
  - Agrees with priorities. The effectiveness of interconnectedness is key. The main transit hubs are not good places for these facilities. We need to make progress in connecting these facilities to housing and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Dave - thumbs up to UBM.

## What transportation network changes should be included?

- John
  - Transportation to schools needs to improve. Safe routes to schools and grocery stores are critical. You need to get the three blocks off of safe long routes, and individual intersections can be challenging, so need to address longer and shorter trips with safe networks.
- Roberto
  - How much change do we have to work with within our street network? The streets are currently at the limit so it is not clear what changes can be feasible. Wants examples to show how the new changes could look (road diets, lane narrowing, greening, more space for people walking and biking, etc) so that the changes are less scary when we bring this to the public.
- Interactive
  - Christina sent Streetmix to Roberto. He wants a temporary pop-up display and other engagement methods to educate people about how different street designs would feel.

Could also point out the bright spots around Petaluma or other similar cities to allow people to picture what the changes would look like. John wants to know if this interactive tool can show what effects this would have on traffic speeds and congestion to illustrate what it would feel like.

- Heather
  - Highlight successful examples, bright spots, where measures that are being considered have been implemented.

### **What are your priorities?**

- Illiana
  - Prioritization of transit infrastructure near low-income communities. Don't want to work for a car. Has a mentee who wants to save money.
- Dave
  - The big picture is climate action. Goal or mode oriented is fine. Thrilled to hear about curb management.
- Bill
  - The top issue of traffic congestion brought up by schools is being addressed. The schools are not participating in the discussions which is a challenge. The congestion between when schools are in versus not is dramatic.
- Roberto
  - Traffic congestion and parking with new development are challenging.
- Erin
  - Access is not just ADA for curbs, the fact the city is only accessible to cars. Bus stops are not accessible right now.
- John
  - A huge proponent of bikes and paths, a top priority is public education and how to deal with blowback against change. But while knocking on the door, hearing a huge backlash about the Rainier road diet. Hearing a lot that people hate that they feel like they are being pushed onto bicycles when they think they will never feel safe. Feel that streets are not being maintained for cars and that things are being redesigned around bicycles without any investments going to improve automobile travel. Comments such as - How dare you put one lane in Washington?