

GPAC Meeting Summary

October 19, 2023, 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 and the Petaluma General Plan website: www.cityofpetaluma.org/meetings/ and <https://www.planpetaluma.org/>

Agenda

- Welcome
- Project and Staff Updates
- General Plan Policy and Strategy Ideas – Flood Resilience
- Public Comment & Discussion
- GPAC Working Group Participation Discussion
- General GPAC Member Comment
- General Public Comment

Attendance

There were 11 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:

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|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Dave Alden | 7. Iliana Inzunza Madrigal |
| 2. Phil Boyle | 8. Kris Rebillot |
| 3. Ali Gaylord | 9. Bill Rinehart |
| 4. Yensi Jacobo | 10. Joshua Riley Simmons |
| 5. Sharon Kirk | 11. Lizzie Wallack |
| 6. Roger Leventhal | 12. Bill Wolpert |

The following GPAC members were absent:

1. Stephanie Blake
2. Erin Chmielewski
3. Mary Dooley
4. Jessie Feller
5. Roberto Rosila Mares
6. Elda Vazquez-Izaguirre
7. Brent Newell

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

City of Petaluma:

Brian Oh – Director of Community Development, *City of Petaluma*

Heather Hines – Special Projects Manager, *City of Petaluma*

Heather Gurewitz – Senior Planner, *City of Petaluma*

Monica Aparicio and Katherine Mejia – *Spanish Interpreters*

Consultant Team:

Ron Whitmore – *Raimi + Associates*

Michelle Hernandez - *Raimi + Associates*

Sebastian Bertsch – *Sherwood Design Engineers*

Jenna Scott – *Sherwood Design Engineers*

Meeting Summary

The focus of the 26th GPAC meeting was to discuss flood resilience and adaptation policy and strategy ideas with the General Plan Update consultant team.

Opening

The Spanish interpreters explained how live interpretation listening devices were available for this in-person meeting. Brian Oh followed by taking roll call attendance for GPAC members.

Project and Staff Updates

Brian Oh presented project and staff updates:

- The Public Review Draft of the Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality (the City's Climate Action Plan) was released for community review in October. Community engagement on the Draft Blueprint will include an open house, an online comment form, and CAC meetings in October and November.
- The next steps in the General Plan Update process include the development and review of land use alternatives and public draft policy frameworks. Upcoming GPAC meetings will dive deeper into each of these topics.
- The GPAC Working Groups that were first launched in early 2022 will be restarting to gather GPAC members' feedback and input on the draft policy frameworks. The planning team is proposing a reorganization of the focus of most Working Groups to better align with the policy framework topics. An online poll was sent to the GPAC to better understand which members are interested in participating.

Please see the presentation slides and the project website (<https://www.planpetaluma.org/>) for more information about the project and staff updates.

GPAC Clarifying Questions & Comments

No questions were asked by GPAC members.

Flood Resilience General Plan Policy and Strategy Ideas

The Draft Flood Resilience General Plan Strategies and Policies were developed with the community direction in mind, using the General Plan's Vision, Pillars, and Principles as the foundation for the development of the strategies and policies. The Vision, Pillars, and Principles set resiliency and climate action goals that the flood resilience policies and strategies aim to meet. The City has conducted projects to reduce flood risk and improve flood resilience in Petaluma, but using the updated flood maps will aid the City in planning for long-term resilience.

The City has used the FEMA flood maps for the past 20 years, and while they have been updated with new data, they do not account for king tides and sea level rise. The updated maps being presented show the effects of all three phenomena (flooding, king tides, sea level rise). The maps do not anticipate any adaptation measures, as their intent is to be used to guide the City as it develops flood and sea level rise mitigation and adaptation measures in the upcoming decades.

The Draft Flood Resilience General Plan Strategies and Policies cover four goal areas: understanding changing potential flood impacts, developing plans and regulations to reduce vulnerability, reducing future flood risk with flood protections and other adaptation strategies, and empower stakeholders to collaborate on flood resilience solutions. The policies under each goal describe actions the City can take to meet these goals.

Please see the presentation slides and meeting materials for more information about the flood and sea level rise modeling and maps and the proposed flood resilience policy and strategy ideas.

GPAC Clarifying Questions & Comments

- It is unclear what the criteria are for improving the existing floodwalls and flood protection infrastructure, or by how much they are expanded.
- How is an atmospheric event different from a rain event?
 - Extreme rain events, such as atmospheric rivers, are accounted for in the rainfall flood models. Atmospheric events are rain events occurring far away from a site, such as in the Pacific Ocean, that are causing storm surging and flooding at the site.
- NOAA has determined that atmospheric rivers are becoming more common and going to bring the greatest winter rainfalls. Why aren't rain events considered at the same time as a king tide?
 - The model assumes the river is at high tide, but the model does not assume what would happen when king tide peaks at the same time as a storm surge.
- Why are all three flood types not on the same map? What about the inability of the stormwater system to drain?

Public Comment on Agenda

No public comments were presented after the presentation.

GPAC Discussion

After the presentation and public comments, GPAC members provided the following comments and questions for the presenters and team.

- The overall package of goals is logical and compelling. Have other cities done something similar? Are there any successes or failures you can tell us about?
 - Having an adaptation pathway structure is a new concept, so there is a lot that needs to be figured out during the planning process. Cities do need to figure out what tools it has for enforcement, the impacts on disadvantaged communities, etc. Other cities have raised the standard and have a better understanding of the full development and infrastructure cost. With a risk-based process, it can better show which types of uses are safe to be in flood-prone areas and which critical and vulnerable uses should be moved out.
- One policy that concerns me is the incremental improvements after the trigger point is reached, does that only apply to new development or significant remodels? What are the impacts on regular homeowners? Would the policy describing a deed restriction note for properties within a flood zone only apply to newer buildings? What would happen to older homes and buildings that are in a flood zone and if the trigger happens, would they have to make an upgrade at that point?
 - The policy is based on practices the City already uses and example policies from other jurisdictions. While it does focus on new construction and significant remodels, the implementation structure of this policy will have to consider the equity concerns related to the buildings not covered by it. There are two sides to these concerns: the burden of cost on existing property owners to improve their property, and the burden of not requiring improvement but leaving them out of the safety benefits. The overlay attempts to incentivize projects to be built resiliently and in areas that are not flood-prone.
 - It is important to note that just because certain areas of the city are shown to have flood risk, it does not mean that flooding will occur. The City will make future investments in infrastructure to reduce and prevent the flooding of certain areas. Those areas are yet to be decided but will likely be guided by the community's values, primarily equity and protecting the natural environment.
- An action individual property owners could take to increase the flood resilience of their homes is to incorporate more resilient landscaping strategies that can contribute to both stormwater management and lessening urban heat island effects.
 - The policies do include low-impact development (LID) strategies, but it is important to note that the water runoff in the City does not contribute much to the flooding that occurs. The policies include the idea of working to lessen the headwaters within the watershed that flow down and add to the flooding in the city.
- Infiltration LID is not much of a flood mitigation strategy, but a detention LID is a good one. In developing the stormwater plan, this difference will likely be explored. The team should clarify when talking to the public that you need a holistic approach to sea level rise flooding mitigation, especially in constructing a holistic levee.

GPAC Working Group Participation

The online poll that was shared with the GPAC to understand which members will be participating in each Working Group will stay open after the meeting for members who were not present. The planning team will share the results with the GPAC once it has closed.

General GPAC Member Comment

GPAC members provided the following comments at the end of the meeting.

- The planning team should be aware that the perception of this discussion is that we are not taking large steps to mitigate flooding or to prepare for the impacts of flooding. What about the mobility implications? What do you do when your street is flooded? It seems like there are lots more details that need to be discussed.
- There are buildings in town that were built in the 1800s; we should be making buildings last just as long and making them water and fire-resistant. It seems like we are talking about waiting until there is a trigger event to make changes. There is a concern that the natural environment is changing faster than the City can respond to it and prepare for future events.
 - The Flood Adaptation Plan can set the direction for more critical actions that the City needs to take now to protect critical and vulnerable areas.
- What is the timing for the Implementing Zoning Ordinance (IZO) Update?
 - The City would like to have this update occur as concurrently with the adoption of the General Plan as possible, possibly starting it once the Preferred Land Use Plan is adopted.

General Public Comment

The following public comment was made at the meeting.

- Resonated with the idea and perspective of taking individual, homeowner action to enhance the resiliency of their property. Would like to encourage the team to expand the methods in which information is presented, combining the technical with more relatable discussion and examples.
- The message from this presentation does not include the specific actions the City needs to take given the climate crisis, and it seems like we are saving actions for later.
- The Open Space and Natural Resources Working Group should be opened to the public because there are community members who have lots of ideas and comments to rework the drafted policy frameworks. One such idea is for the City to begin recording and monitoring its soil health, which can be tracked over time.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9 PM.