

FEBRUARY 16, 2022



MEMORANDUM TO: GPAC

FROM: RELEAF PETALUMA (submitted by Wendy Jacobs, Chair)

SUBJECT: PROPOSED PETALUMA RIVER ACCESS AND ENHANCEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Greetings to the GPAC, its Leadership, and its Staff from ReLeaf Petaluma and thank you very much for your important and much respected service!

ReLeaf Petaluma writes to request that the GPAC formally incorporate an update of the Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan in the current General Plan process, at the earliest possible opportunity. ReLeaf suggests that this important matter might be assigned to one of the new working groups as a matter of highest priority.

Incorporated into the city's General Plan at least since 1987, and elaborately formalized in 1996, the Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan establishes the value of the Petaluma River corridor. ReLeaf thinks it should continue to be used to guide all future development. To ensure the document is most effective, it would be updated and further resolved as part of the General Plan update process.

The 1966 approved River Access Plan defined the River Corridor as a significant open space and visual environmental amenity to all existing and future development along its edges, providing important linkage to and from the Downtown area. It is important to maintain a vision for this corridor that preserves its integrity as a total environment, river channel, trail, visual corridor and open space resource before more development takes place. It would be advantageous for the city to establish a set of guidelines as part of the River Access Plan update to ensure that future development benefits from being on the river corridor and that development is equally beneficial to the corridor in return.

ReLeaf suggests that an understanding of successful green belts in other cities and towns would underpin a strong commitment to the quality of life and widespread economic wealth creation that are possible. Since the prescient adoption of Petaluma's River Access Plan in 1996, these benefits have become accepted and well documented. ReLeaf suggests that Petaluma should use the General Plan process to the utmost to see that an updated River Access Plan is included centrally, and poised for successful implementation. There is no time to spare.

We recommend that a thorough study of the River Access and Enhancement Plan Update include the following process:

1. Define the Study Area. Use existing aerial photographs to review existing conditions, ownership boundaries, agency controls, adjacent land use, existing/future zoning and zoning requirements/procedures. Review with city staff.

2. Define Key Issues and Constraints: Corps of Engineers requirements, water quality and runoff, climate change issues, access/availability of utilities and maintenance, interface issues with existing and future adjacent development, visual interface issues.
3. Define Key Opportunities. Climate Action opportunities from stormwater management, cooling, non-vehicular transportation, and biodiversity; Quality of Life and Total Economic Return opportunities by expanding the scenic River corridor northward and low impact linkage with existing development, potential interface with existing and future adjacent development parcels, appropriate guidelines to guide the interface of adjacent parcels of future development, potential tree planting opportunities to create shade, slow stormwater runoff and improve wildlife, pedestrian, and cyclist environment, possible maintenance and irrigation opportunities.
4. Review with city staff.
5. Document the next steps to implement an Updated River Enhancement Plan.
6. Submit proposed Updated River Enhancement Plan to the GPAC for discussion, approval, and incorporation into the General Plan.

ReLeaf thanks you for considering this matter of great concern to our community, and looks forward to the next phase of the process!