

GPAC Meeting Summary

October 21, 2021, 6:30-9:00 PM

Introduction

Meeting Access

All GPAC Meetings are public and are accessible via Zoom and television (PCA channel). Meeting details are posted on the City's Meetings site: www.cityofpetaluma.org/meetings/

Agenda

- Welcome
- Public Comment
- Project Updates
- Visioning Workshop Debrief
- ECR Review + Discussion
- Public Comment
- Next Steps
- Final GPAC Thoughts

Attendance

There were 17 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 | 10. Iliana Inzunza Madrigal |
| 2. Erin Chmielewski | 11. Kris Rebillot |
| 3. Jessie Feller | 12. Bill Rinehart |
| 4. Delia Diaz | 13. John Shribbs |
| 5. Mary Dooley | 14. Joshua Riley Simmons |
| 6. Sierra Downey | 15. Janice Cader Thompson |
| 7. Ali Gaylord | 16. Bill Wolpert |
| 8. Yensi Jacobo | 17. Roberto Rosila Mares |
| 9. Roger Leventhal | |

The following GPAC members were absent:

1. Stephanie Blake
2. Phil Boyle
3. Panama Bartholomy

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

City of Petaluma:

Heather Hines – Community Development Director, *City of Petaluma*

David Garcia – Planner, *City of Petaluma*

Eric Roberts – Planner, *City of Petaluma*

Mariana Rivarola – *Spanish Interpreter*

Consultant Team:

Ron Whitmore - *Raimi + Associates*

Michelle Hernandez - *Raimi + Associates*

Dave Javid - *Plan to Place*

Meeting Summary

The focus of the 6th GPAC meeting was to discuss key findings from the Existing Conditions Reports and White Papers prepared by the General Plan team. Other key objectives included: presenting preliminary results from recent engagement events and discussing the upcoming steps of the planning process. The following notes summarize key agenda items and the related discussion.

Welcome

The Spanish interpreter, Mariana, explained how to utilize the simultaneous interpretation tool on Zoom for attendees who wanted to listen in Spanish. Dave followed by taking a roll call attendance for GPAC members.

Public Comment

The following public comments were presented at the beginning of the meeting.

- Groups that advocate for the protection and maintenance of the Petaluma River could have been more involved in the Parks ECR and should be involved in this planning process.
- To enhance the walkability along the River, there could be a pedestrian and bike path that connects the McNear Peninsula to the river frontage that leads to Shollenberger Park.

Project Updates

The primary work products within the Discovery phase of the planning process are the Existing Conditions Reports and White Papers, technical reports that analyze the current conditions of the city. The reports and white papers are being finalized, and many are already available for public viewing on the project website. The findings from these reports were presented at this meeting and will be presented to a variety of City Committees and Commissions in October and November.

Virtual and in-person community engagement activities that have occurred in the past few months have shaped the development of the Vision & Guiding Principles, a document that provides the basis for the goals, policies, and programs within General Plan elements. The Pillars and Guiding Principles will be further refined and discussed before they are presented to the City Council for approval.

Visioning Workshop Debrief

The September 29th, 2021, Visioning Workshop was held in an open-house format where participants could engage in a variety of activities at their own pace. These activities were also developed to be completed asynchronously and were available on the project website after the workshop meeting until October 22nd, 2021. The input gathered through the workshop's activities helped develop ideas for Petaluma's future, inform the development of the Vision & Guiding Principles, and confirm the Areas of Discussion.

Many GPAC members attended the Visioning Workshop and served as community resources within many of the activity rooms. Below are reflections on the workshop and suggestions for future engagement activities from GPAC members.

- Youth engagement strategies should be discussed and there should be more collaboration with the Youth Commission to host in-person pop-ups at the local schools.
- The city has a higher percentage of population that identifies as Latinx or Hispanic than what the Census data shows. The school district Demographics and Language Spoken at Home data is likely a more accurate representation of the Latinx or Hispanic population living in Petaluma.
- The planning team should partner with the school district to create a visioning survey that can be sent out to parents, especially those with younger children.
- Some GPAC members stated that they enjoyed the workshop and appreciated the virtual tools that helped bring in a larger range of comments than previous tools had (specifically, the Konveio document tool).
- There needs to be some more consideration about how working families are reached by this process.

Existing Conditions Overview and Discussion

The Existing Conditions Overview is a single, integrative report that provides a common level of understanding for the community and the planning team. It summarizes key considerations to understand the context of the General Plan Update, including past trends, current and future issues, and opportunities for positive changes.

After presenting the key findings of each report and white paper, GPAC members were invited to respond to the following discussion prompts or bring up other questions they had about the reports. All the responses to the questions are captured in the Appendix.

- What was surprising?
- What are the major trends that are driving the overall direction of the city for the next 20-30+ years?

- Based on the existing conditions reports, what are the most critical issues that need to be resolved during the update process?

Public Comment

The following is a summary of comments received from members of the public during the final round of public comment.

- A member of the public appreciated that the presentation was thorough and readable.
- One person was surprised that the ECR downplays the climate crisis and that the only GHG emissions talked about are activity-based (direct emissions), not consumption-based. This is an important facet of the conversation that should not be overlooked.
- The future maps created to address sea level rise should consider that the 2017 FEMA maps do not include the sea level rise statistics and are not fully accurate.
- The team should learn more about the thousands of people who commute into Petaluma for work and learn how to get them to stay and live in the city.
- Many of the areas of interest that have been discussed have high renter population, are along the 101 Highway, are vulnerable to gentrification, and are already undergoing some displacement. These characteristics need to be considered in this process.
 - The areas along the 101 corridor are at the intersections of different quadrants and do not have strong metrics to gauge their participation.
 - The team needs to make sure to bring in the perspective of low-income renters that could benefit from the future development of affordable housing.
- Flood modeling is multivariate but there is also a human aspect to it – the people who are renters and who have lived in the floodplain area for decades.
- The northern part of the Petaluma River isn't dredged and needs to be maintained. The Northern River Access Plan outlines specific actions to take that have not been addressed in the ECR.
- The co-benefits of urban forestry and an urban forest management plan could help address many issues and be brought into a variety of General Plan elements.
- There needs to be a radical shift in transportation planning. How do we make the assumptions that we will still be in our cars and planning for roads when we could be looking at how to get people out of their cars?
- Some recent project proposals have not been reviewed through the Climate emergency Framework, which should be the first layer of review.
- The reports neglect to mention the people who live right outside the city boundaries who go into town to shop, dine, etc.
- The marshland is a natural carbon sink that should be protected from any development.
- Too many of our processes are too focused on the human perspective, and we need to consider how we can live alongside the natural systems that have always existed.
- Floodable infrastructure should not be an option because it implies that development is happening in ecologically sensitive floodplains and marshlands.

Next Steps and Upcoming Meetings

The next steps in the General Plan Process include presentations on the Existing Conditions Report to various City Committees and Commissions, ECR presentations to the City Council, and a summary presentation of the visioning phase of community input to the GPAC.

Final GPAC Thoughts

There was only one question brought up at the end of the meeting:

- Is there a package of the current priorities of the current government leadership? This would bring context to the potential agreements and disagreements that can occur over development or projects that are related to the General Plan.
 - Answer: The City Council adopted citywide goals and priorities for the next 2 years, good place to start looking and thinking about when comparing to the reports

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9 PM.

Appendix

GPAC Email Comments & Questions

The table below captures the comments and questions received from GPAC members through email – either before or after the meeting.

<p>Making the General Plan action-oriented</p>
<p>I read through the summary yesterday and with some concern of being curmudgeonly, I do not see the “Key Insights”. What I see are a repeat of the same issues that anyone involved with a City Committee or Planning Commission already knows. I understand that we need to see how the demographics are changing. But to read that “Petaluma has the potential for infill” or “Petaluma is auto-oriented and must expand biking and walking” or “Retail is changing due to greater online presence” or “Aggressive strategies are needed to meet Climate Goals”.....these are not insights. This is restating the issues that we are already aware of. The issue of making our community more bicycle and pedestrian friendly was stated in the General Plan from 1987. We cannot afford to “look for opportunities” to solve these problems, we need an action plan to implement solutions to problems that we already know exist. I have raised my concerns previously and was told that the reports from consultants would address the issues in more detail. I have not read any of the full reports, so maybe there is more to find. I hope so. But we are about to have our 7th meeting and I don’t see us dealing with any substance.</p>
<p>Various ECR Questions – integrated into the Discussion Notes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you place the GP language in the report for Historic? I have not read all the sections, but the ones I read did not have GP 2025 language. And the reason behind this question is that I think the Historic section needs someone thinking. Not all buildings in the historic district are contributors. • "Opportunity to cross major barriers" and the symbol - Page 21 Transportation report. Some identified major barriers did not appear to be barriers. Lakeville and River Payran and River did not make sense to me. What’s the meaning of major barrier? • Ely and Sonoma Mountain Parkway is a truck route. I know it’s wide; so is it a necessary bypass past all those houses? • Demographics - I disagree with the with highlighting the 55 and over population. If you break it up differently, 55% of the demographic is under 45. 28.6% is 0 - 24 years old. I just don’t think it’s a proper conclusion to say Petaluma is aging at a faster rate. • Health and Env Justice - Disadvantages Community Map highlights some areas where there are no buildings or extremely low density. It’s very misleading to have the large swaths of purple. I brought this up initially when we first saw the map and I understand the variety of dwellings in those areas. Is there a more fine grain way to paint a clear picture? I think we agree that maps matter. • What is specifically meant by Roadway Safety? It was noted many times in the docs. I am concerned that it’s building a case for new crosstown connectors. (I am not opposed to Caulfield unless I hear something environmentally significant). • Regarding susceptibility to wildfire due to proximity to open space, I think it’s a valid concern. Is it possible to have language that creates fire breaks at the urban growth boundaries on red flag warning fire season days?

Age-Friendly Feedback

Given that the #1 finding highlights our burgeoning aging population, I think it's important to include that in the discussion. All of my feedback is related to either age-friendly or to overall concerns for our 65+ population.

My feedback tracks the ECR overview deck:

- Slide 51 – under “Barriers and Gaps”. I think this bullet point should mention older adults – who often do their shopping on foot and need access to retail on the east side.
- Slide 57 – under “Barriers and Gaps”. Older homeowners often do not have the resources to maintain their homes or to adapt them for age-friendly living.
- Slides 100 – 104: Is there a way to weave/include ‘aging’ demographics in the discussion of DAC’s? Where do the majority of older adults live in Petaluma? (I think at least one of the census tracts has a lot of seniors) My colleague Nancy Frank sent me this link – which could be helpful:
- <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/usa/metrosantarosa/>
- Slide 105: Given its wide applicability, I’d like to add Age-Friendly to the list of policies, plans and programs. Here is some language to use. We actually meet with Peggy Flynn regarding the “action plan” tomorrow (Wednesday) afternoon.
- **Age-Friendly Petaluma:** Petaluma has committed to becoming an age-friendly city. (We joined the AARP Network in 2020). The city will begin developing its’ Action Plan as required by that commitment in the near future. Age-Friendly is focused on eight domains: Housing, Outdoor Spaces/Buildings, Transportation, Communications and Information, Civic Participation and Employment, Respect and Social Inclusion, Health Service and Community Support, and Social Participation. <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2016/8-domains-of-livability-introduction.html>
- Slide 110: Given its wide applicability, I’d like to add Age-Friendly to the list of programs.
- Slide 136: Under Equity and Connectivity. Can you add this phrase to the end of the sentence? “among its diverse populations, including older adults who often deal with social isolation

Public Comment Received after GPAC Meeting

“I respectfully request that you take action to prioritize saving our city’s North Petaluma River Heritage Trees and the last remaining stretch of the untouched Petaluma River by making it a park and canceling the Rainier Connector in the next General Plan.

This North River and Forest area is an amazing gem of our city. It is needed for everyone, and especially the families of the 9 low-income apartment complexes located within a 3-block radius of the area (5 near Pet Blvd and Payran; 4 toward McKinley School). These children, many of Spanish-speaking families, especially need natural open space for their physical and spiritual health. Also, because this area of Midtown is documented as underserved for parks. Please take immediate action to decertify the Rainier Connector’s Environmental Impact Report. That is a half-century-old idea that is an affront to our climate change goals. According to its EIR, it will chop down most, if not all, of the Forest (65+ Heritage Trees); put endangered species at risk of extinction; and traffic analysis shows it actually delivers extremely minimal traffic relief for its price tag. If we do not prioritize action on these two actions, we will lose a very special part of the soul of our city. We must save this area from Rainier and deliver the 1996 North Petaluma River Park Enhancement Plan, which has been promised in our past/current General Plans.”

GPAC Discussion of Existing Conditions Key Insights

10/21/21

What was surprising?

- The number of people **commuting out of town** to work and the number commuting in: need to provide jobs for the people who live in town and improve the public transportation system for the travel that happens within town
- Surprised about the **increases in sewage waste** within the next few decades
- **⅔ of GHG emissions come from transportation** was eye-opening, need to follow through on improving infrastructure for people and to get people out of cars
- Why are **total GHG emissions going up** instead of emissions per capita? Is it because of population growth?
 - The answer may be in the report, can also follow up with the authors of report if not there

What are the major trends that are driving the overall direction of the city for the next 20-30+ years?

- The city has a goal of **carbon neutrality**, but how is the City Council prioritizing actions as the General Plan planning process goes on? City needs to invest in infrastructure and certain priorities before other things; investment that occurs out of order could have even greater negative impacts (ex. Fixing existing transportation issues before building more housing that would cause more transportation and traffic issues, on top of creating more transportation based GHG emissions).
- **Transformation of retail:** Need to consolidate retail experiences, transform retail destinations into civic gathering spaces - more than just parking lots and storefronts (x3)

Based on the Existing Conditions Reports, what are the most critical issues that need to be resolved during the update process?

- **Petaluma as a complete community:** The notion that we need to make Petaluma a place where people are living and working within the city is important and should be tackled head-on.
 - The number of people that live and work in the town is currently so low (thousands of people commute out and thousands commute in) - this needs to be improved to resolve climate change issues, GHG emissions from car travel, housing issues, and transportation issues.
- Need **flexible building types** that can shift uses when needed
 - Reimagine our buildings and how we use them: shifting the uses of these spaces to have new and varied uses (x2)
 - Ex. There are great demands for housing but also there are many empty sites that could be reused
- **Alternative transportation:** Make sure to improve the existing crosstown connectors for pedestrians and bicyclists instead of just creating new, car-centric connections that don't prioritize other modes of transportation and would disturb sensitive ecological habitats.
- **The role of urban forestry:** Urban forest management has to be funded to improve the city's mitigation efforts and to follow through on the urgency expressed in the climate emergency framework
 - Urban forest & canopy management plan should be given the same emphasis as the roads due to the financial benefits and health co-benefits the urban forest can bring.
- **The River & flooding:** How is the GP taking future river dredging into account? And how is the city going to incorporate future river level/flooding modeling into the GP?
 - Need to be clear about the floodplain areas, how they can be preserved, and how future residents will interact with them given the flooding hazards that might be exacerbated by the impacts of climate change
 - If anything is developed in sea level rise zones, they have to be floodable in order to be resilient to future hazards
- This community really needs to address **EJ issues** and help its current disadvantaged communities; the state of housing unaffordability was sadly not surprising

Specific ECR Questions and Concerns

Wildfires

- Wildfire hazards could be growing with climate change but shouldn't be the only focus when air quality issues impact the city more than the actual fires that have occurred in surrounding areas (example brought up that there hasn't been a fire within city boundaries for decades but the smoke from nearby fires has created poor air quality conditions within the city for multiple years)
- There is concern about the west side of town and its potential susceptibility to wildfires + the basements of downtown buildings could potentially spread a fire throughout this district

Water Resources (SLR or Environmental Reports)

- There needs to be more clarification on the state of the water issues and how susceptible the water sources are to climate change hazards, seems contradictory within the report (page 116)
 - The language needs to be real about what the situation is, especially if drought and hazards could greatly impact the system in the future

Flooding

- There will be more flooding north and need to look at it, a commission meeting talked about potentially changing a certain number of parcels in the floodway zone and adding them to the 2025 GP maps?
 - Answer from Heather: The boundary of the floodway is specific, is very restricted about what can happen there, the maps are determined by FEMA - legally, the floodway zoning district has to be updated and match the FEMA maps. The commission was discussing updating the existing GP map so to match the new FEMA maps and the already approved zoning maps; this will lead to new modeling and analysis that does not disrupt the conversations we are all having about flooding
- Need to be clear about how we are talking about the floodplains because it should be preserved (unavailable land for development), even if it is currently "open, undeveloped" space
- How is the GP taking future river dredging into account? And how is the city going to incorporate future river level/flooding modeling into the GP?
 - A: there isn't a perfect model to predict the future flood levels but the new modeling that will happen will be looked at by the planning team

Sea Level Rise

- The maps should include the entire marsh as being flooded over time, especially since many folks live and work in that area
 - The maps in this report are focused in southern part of town, but there are many flooding hazards in the north that haven't been captured so far
- Maps should include the northern part of town because there are 13 natural tributaries in the northern area of town that impact flooding but also the potential roads and transportation network that was mentioned in the Transportation ECR report
- Some measures included that are not right fit for the city, but there are others that haven't been included or thoroughly discussed, such as:
 - Groundwater flooding (happens when there is flooding under and behind levees), adaptive retreat, floodable redevelopment (x2)
 - Dredging may not be as effective

Transportation

- (Graphic on pg 14) included proposed arterials, do those count as existing conditions if they are proposed?
 - Answer: the ECR also looks at existing plans and proposals
- Wanted to see the intersections within the existing conditions to shed light on the problems
 - For example, transportation ECR shows various route maps but would like to see the hotspots of where people go within Petaluma? Like the traffic and transportation impacts schools have on a daily basis.
 - Avg trip distance and data below that section is contradictory
- Surprised that the bus lines section didn't discuss their existing conditions and what issues exist with the current public transportation system
- Pg 21: "Opportunity to cross major barriers" and the symbol. Some identified major barriers did not appear to be barriers. Lakeville and River Payran and River did not make sense. What's the meaning of major barrier?

Parks, Recreation, and Facilities

- Include dredging, need a plan for the parks system, but also an urban forest & canopy management plan, should be given the same emphasis as the roads due to the financial benefits the urban forest can bring
- Surprised that the traffic generated by the schools was not included. Would like to see an analysis of which roads can be adaptable in the future near hotspots (like schools)

- Surprised that there wasn't a metric about schools (classroom size, etc) since it would be helpful to have that base knowledge of the school system's current conditions

Economic

- Is it possible to find the data on people who have permanent remote work or people who have moved to Petaluma to stay as remote workers? To inform transportation and other planning areas?
 - ACS is usually used because of the wide range of survey questions they have, could look at other sources like ABAG

Retail

- Is there data on empty retail and storefronts from the last 20 months? Sidewalk survey maybe?

GHG Inventory

- The percentage breakdown of GHG emissions should be explained and is currently confusing (the % that comes from buildings, transportation, industry)

Health and Environmental Justice

- Would like more demographics on the DACs to understand the analysis
- Disadvantaged Community Map highlights some areas where there are no buildings or extremely low density. It's very misleading to have the large swaths of purple. I brought this up initially when we first saw the map and I understand the variety of dwellings in those areas. Is there a finer grain way to paint a clear picture? I think we agree that maps matter.
 - Saw this in the summary, HEJ page ~100
- Unsure about DAC classifying all the areas along the highway as disadvantaged - is it just air quality issues leading to this classification?
- Another GPAC member's response to the purple DAC map discussion: have to think about how the intersectionality within the analysis (much of the land near the highway is rented land, another layer of socioeconomic disadvantage on top of the air quality issues) that lead to these areas being classified as potentially disadvantaged communities

Other Text or Data Edits/Comments

- The key insights section of the ECR presentation could be added to and improved throughout the discovery process

- Clearly define BIPOC to have everyone on the same page
- Historic: brought in more of the language from the existing GP than other ECRs did, was that because of there is not much change within that element?