

For: Climate Action Commission

From: Susan Kirks, Naturalist (President, Madrone Audubon; Chair, Board of Directors, Paula Lane Action Network)

Date: 11/16/2021

Re: General Plan Existing Conditions Discussion, Agenda Item 9A

Following are requests for changes in information, based on a review of the presentation:

Parks

Excellent park access for **some** residents

Diversity of parks throughout the city

New parks needed.

Parks Master Plan needed.

Natural Environment

Petaluma River is the “spine” of the city **and** needs further **preservation and enhancement.**

Strong legacy of preserving open space, watersheds and habitat

- This is a false statement. The City does not have any legacy of preserving open space, watersheds and habitat. The City has had no policy or procedures for identifying and proceeding with procuring and preserving open space and certainly not habitat. This is particularly relevant when other cities and their open space and habitat conservation practices are reviewed, compared to Petaluma. This existing condition could be reworded to:

[Ongoing need to establish policy and practices to preserve open space and habitat within the Petaluma River watershed.](#)

Urban Growth Boundary preserves **the urban-rural interface.**

Region home to many important plants and animal species

Tension between accommodating new development and preservation of natural areas

Critical Planning Issues (82)

Add:

Indigenous Lands, Open and Green Spaces – The City needs to identify and specify areas of indigenous lands, and honor, and support preservation and, where appropriate, restoration. The City needs to evaluate and plan for open and green spaces throughout the City, including neighborhood access to natural areas, habitat protection and enhancement, and wildlife corridor preservation and enhancement. This planning is important in relation to disadvantaged populations, transportation, housing and utilities.

Issues and Opportunities (84)

Modify wording:

Nature-Based Opportunities: There are opportunities to preserve and enhance green spaces to create areas of adaptability, flood management, **habitat protection and wildlife corridor preservation, for a changing future**

Existing Parks (107)

Modify:

The county owns Helen Putnam Regional Park and Tolay Lake Regional Park, and the state owns Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park.

Biological Resources (113)

This description is seriously inadequate and incomplete. Appears the prior reference to two special status species has been removed and generalized.

Petaluma is a steward of the environment and has numerous biological resources which are subject to federal and state regulations and that shape planning decisions.

The City contains numerous wetlands and waterways subject to the rules and regulations of the Federal Clean Water Act.

Wetlands in the area provide critical habitat for species and **fulfill** a significant role in reducing flood risk from severe weather and sea-level rise while supporting biodiversity.

Wildlife corridors and crossings in and through Petaluma provide access for movement to areas east, north, south and west, as well as extend to the Sonoma County coast and to Marin County. Some corridors connect to the regional mapping project, Critical Linkages, Bay Area and Beyond.

Note: The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor relates to the Sonoma Valley area. Petaluma has our own distinct wildlife movement areas important to protect and important to identify as in relationship to the Critical Linkages regional mapping. Wildlife movement between Petaluma and the Sonoma Valley occurs primarily from southeast Petaluma in the unincorporated area to and from Sonoma Valley when movement does occur. Related to Petaluma as well is wildlife movement to and from East Petaluma to Sonoma Mountain. It's unusual and inaccurate to see a Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor identified as being part of the Petaluma General Plan Update existing conditions.

A copy of my Wildlife Corridors and Crossings mapping, part 1 of a 3-part series, is attached for information. This should be included in our Petaluma General Plan Update. The work is based on specific wildlife movement documentation in and through Petaluma over the past 21 years.

Natural Resource Areas (114)

This description is incomplete and inaccurate. Please modify.

The city has numerous natural resources through a network of open and natural spaces with conservation easements overseen by the Sonoma County Ag and Open Space District, regional and state parks, and Sonoma Land Trust.

Several conservation easements protect Petaluma's open spaces and natural areas, often providing public access, visual aesthetic enhancement, and habitat protection.

Petaluma's wetlands, including Shollenberger Park, Alman Marsh, and Ellis Creek, are designated as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance (2018), part of the San Francisco Bay Estuary designation.

Opportunities exist to expand protections for new open and green spaces with conservation easements.

Special Status Species (115) : This existing condition would benefit from modification and expansion.

Petaluma is home to several special-status plant and animal species.

Petaluma's wetlands and marshes include numerous species, such as Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*), Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse (*Reithrodontomys raviventris*), and Western Pond Turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*). California Red-legged Frog (*Rana draytonii*), and California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) have designated critical habitat within the City's boundary. American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*), a keystone species, has two natal territories in Petaluma.

The presence of multiple and diverse sensitive species provides opportunities for protection as well as habitat restoration and enhancement and open space preservation.

Issues and Opportunities (118)

This would benefit from modification per the changes requested above. The requested changes accurately reflect and expand information for these sections.

- **Greenbelts, Open and Green Spaces, Wildlife Corridors:** A greenbelt, open and green space strategy will support cooperation with the Sonoma County At and Open Space District, Sonoma Land Trust and other local and regional conservation organizations to protect natural resources through acquisition of open and green spaces and additions of conservation easements in Petaluma.

Wildlife Corridors and Crossings Preservation: The City of Petaluma has an opportunity to consider all land use and planning decisions in the context of existing wildlife corridors and crossings, which will in turn facilitate safe wildlife movement and support biodiversity. Support for corridor connections to Marin County, the Sonoma County coast, and areas east and north of Petaluma will facilitate a regional approach to wildlife movement and support for biodiversity.

Trail Access and Connectivity: The SCWA **lands, along with identifying land use opportunities throughout the City of Petaluma** will provide opportunities to increase connectivity and access to green spaces in the city.

Water Demand: Future water demand increases for the city combined with climate change exacerbated droughts will challenge water resources providers to meet the future water needs for the city

Historic Resources (119)

I would like to see identified Indigenous Areas and Resources with issues and opportunities to honor Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo and other Indigenous populations to identify and uplift historic and cultural presence in our Petaluma community. Are there not existing conditions because this information was not included in the current General Plan or there is not a combined section for Historic and Cultural Resources?