



DATE: April 9, 2024

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Heather Hines, Special Projects Manager
Ron Whitmore, Principal, Raimi + Associates

SUBJECT: Recommendation to the Planning Commission to Receive a General Plan Update Presentation, including (1) an Overview of Requests to the Planning Commission to Review Draft Policy Frameworks and Land Use Alternatives and (2) a Review of the Guiding Principles, Assumptions, and General Plan Advisory Committee's Input that Inform Development of Draft Land Use Alternatives, and Provide Staff with Input and Recommendations for both

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission receive a General Plan Update presentation, including (1) an overview of requests to the Planning Commission to review draft Policy Frameworks and Land Use Alternatives and (2) a review of the guiding principles, assumptions, and General Plan Advisory Committee's input that inform development of draft Land Use Alternatives, and provide staff with input and recommendations for both.

BACKGROUND

Project Summary

The City is currently operating under the City of Petaluma: General Plan 2025, which was written in 2006-2007, adopted in 2008, and minorly updated in 2012. The City is preparing a General Plan Update to be adopted in 2025. The General Plan is a guiding document, provides policies and implementation programs to achieve the City's goals, and generally has a planning horizon of around 20 years. The General Plan also serves as the City's foundation for regulating Land Use. Eight mandatory topical areas, or Elements, must be included in a General Plan, including Land Use, Open Space, Conservation, Housing, Circulation, Noise, Safety, and Environmental Justice. Unlike the other elements, the Housing Element is required by State regulations to be updated every eight years. Petaluma's Housing Element was adopted in March 2023.

The General Plan update process kicked off in 2020 with an extensive public engagement process designed to identify community and decision-maker priorities for the General Plan. This effort resulted in a Request for Proposals for urban planning consultants to assist the City in developing its General Plan, and in April 2021, the City entered into a contract with Raimi + Associates.

In early 2021, the City assembled a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) to provide insight and recommendations throughout the General Plan Update process. The committee comprises a diverse group of residents, business owners, educators, and other members of the Petaluma community who serve as advisors and project ambassadors. They work collaboratively with the consultant team, led by Raimi + Associates, and City staff, to provide input on General Plan issues and offer feedback on draft materials. Further information on the GPAC, including meeting materials, can be found here: <https://www.planpetaluma.org/gpac-page>.

Following an initial period of data gathering, the consultant team completed numerous Existing Conditions Reports, which establish baseline conditions for:

- Arts and Culture
- Biological Resources
- Climate Hazards
- Green House Gas Inventory
- Health and Environmental Justice
- Historic Resources
- Land Use
- Manmade Hazards
- Market Analysis
- Natural Hazards
- Natural Resources
- Noise
- Parks, Recreation & Public Facilities
- Retail
- Sea Level Rise
- Socioeconomic Profile
- Transportation
- Utility Infrastructure
- Waste

These reports can be reviewed here: <https://www.planpetaluma.org/documents#ecr-final>

Simultaneously, the consultant team and staff engaged in a [robust public engagement process](#) that included public surveys, listening sessions, geographical area meetings, pop-up workshops, focus groups, and engagement of the General Plan Advisory Committee. This work informed the Existing Conditions Reports as well as a Vision Statement, Pillars, Guiding Principles, and Supporting Concepts document that was developed and unanimously recommended by GPAC to the City Council on February 17, 2022. The document was accepted by the City Council on March 21, 2022 (see <https://www.planpetaluma.org/documents#gpuvision>).

The Vision Statement describes the desired future conditions and characteristics of the city. The Pillars are the core community values. The Guiding Principles and Supporting Concepts provide broad direction and pathways to achieve the vision and honor community values, focusing on the community's specific challenges and opportunities. The complete Vision, Pillars, and Guiding Principles are on the [PlanPetaluma](#) website.

Together, the existing conditions research, the Sea Level Rise Flood Mapping Updates presented to the Planning Commission on March 12, 2024 (and available here: <https://www.planpetaluma.org/sea-level-rise-flood-map>), and the Vision Statement, Pillars, Guiding Principles, and Supporting Concepts provide the foundation for developing Land Use Alternatives and Policy Frameworks.

Land Use Alternatives

Land Use Alternatives are fundamentally a way of presenting map-based land use choices (or “alternatives” or “scenarios”) to a City, community, and decision-makers as part of a General Plan Update. This step allows the city to thoroughly consider several options before selecting the “Preferred Alternative” that will ultimately become the Land Use Map in the updated General Plan. This is a way of planning for and then managing the projected growth of a city. Land Use Alternatives show options for General Plan Land Uses and include location by parcel, use type, and density/intensity. This map then gets translated into the City’s Zoning Code. Petaluma’s Zoning Code will also be updated, and the process to do this will begin following the identification of a Preferred Land Use Alternative.

The process of developing Land Use Alternatives as part of a General Plan update can be customized to the needs of each City. In some cases, there are three distinct citywide Land Use Alternatives. This is common for cities considering accommodating growth in concentrated areas, like an old airport or adjacent farmland, for example, and there is a question of where the growth should go. In Petaluma’s case, the city and community are focused on opportunities for infill development throughout the city. This is reflected in the Land Use Alternatives, which focus on specific neighborhoods or “Areas of Change,” with three alternatives for each area.

The Land Use Alternatives outline options for the City to revise the current land use designations in the General Plan. This includes potential changes to specific geographic areas where either the land use and/or intensity of use may change. Feedback on the Alternatives will lead to the development of a Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative will be included in the Draft General Plan, eventually evolving to become the General Plan Land Use Map. The identification of the Preferred Alternative is a major milestone in the General Plan Update and will result in the initiation of the environmental review process.

The General Plan Advisory Committee has provided ongoing feedback throughout the development of the Land Use Alternatives. GPAC met on September 21, 2023, and October 19, 2023, to receive a presentation on the Sea Level Rise and Flood Mapping updates and to discuss flood adaptation strategies that help inform the development of land use alternatives. In November 2023 and January and February 2024, the GPAC met to discuss and provide feedback on the alternatives for land uses, intensities of uses, and related policy questions. This process resulted in the development of area-specific Land Use Alternatives.

The purpose of this meeting is to familiarize the Planning Commission with the process that has been used to develop the Land Use Alternatives and to ensure that the Planning Commission has the opportunity to provide initial feedback on the process and overarching considerations that are being used to frame the land use alternatives. Staff will invite the Planning Commission to answer the following questions:

Does the Planning Commission support the general resilience approach articulated above? Does the Planning Commission support the broad citywide concept of de-intensifying certain river-adjacent areas while intensifying some combination of the core, corridors, and/or centers? Are these the right areas to bring to the public to consider

potential land use regulation changes? Are any missing? Have we identified the right 15-Minute Activity Centers?

Planning Commission will have the opportunity to review the Land Use Alternatives in further detail following the larger public review process, when the Planning Commission will also be invited to provide a recommendation on the Alternatives to City Council.

Land Use Alternative Development Process

The Land Use Alternatives have been developed through an extensive process driven by the:

- [Existing Conditions Reports](#)
- [Final Visioning Products](#) (Vision, Pillars, and Guiding Principles)
- [Sustainable Design Assistance Team’s 2022 Report: Reimagining Petaluma](#)
- [Updated Sea Level Rise and Flood Maps](#)
- [City of Petaluma 2023-2031 Housing Element](#)
- [General Plan Advisory Committee](#)

Staff also considered physical and biological constraints to development such as wildlife habitat, farmland, and high and moderate fire hazard severity zones. These considerations are described in the Existing Conditions Reports.

Below is a summary of major data points that informed the development of the Land Use Alternatives:

Housing Element: Housing Opportunity Sites, Demand, and Regional Housing Needs Assessment (2050) – The 2023-2031 Housing Element identifies sites where future housing is anticipated. These sites were part of the areas of discussion for the Land Use Alternatives. An important factor in developing the Housing Element and the Land Use Alternatives is the City’s responsibility and commitment to fulfilling the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). The RHNA is the City of Petaluma’s need for additional housing units to accommodate population growth as determined by the State of California Housing and Community Development Department. RHNA projections can be extrapolated to approximately 225 units per year.

Association of Bay Area Governments Population Projections (Plan Bay Area 2040, Plan Bay Area 2050) – The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) prepares population projections for the Bay Area region and sub-regions. Plan Bay Area 2050 can be found here (<https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/long-range-planning/plan-bay-area-2050>). This plan projects slightly fewer than 225 per year, while Plan Bay Area 2040 (<http://2040.planbayarea.org/>) projects approximately 200 units per year.

General Plan Housing Unit Capacity (Projected Build Out) – Given RHNA trends and ABAG population projections, the Land Use Alternatives are calibrated to accommodate the development of approximately 5,000 housing units across the General Plan planning horizon, assumed to be approximately 20 years. This equates to 250 units per year. Petaluma currently has approximately

2,000 housing units in the development pipeline; therefore, the Alternatives could identify development opportunities for 3,000 additional units. The total capacity will depend on the selections for each area of change. This consideration will be further analyzed as part of the process to identify a Preferred Alternative.

Flood Resilience – On March 12, 2024, the Planning Commission received a presentation on the updated Flood and Sea Level Rise Maps that were created as part of the General Plan Update Process. (See [March 12, 2024 Staff Report](#) for details.) In addition to identifying areas of the City that would be subject to flooding now and in the future, as a result of sea level rise, several concepts were applied:

- Retain Existing Hazard-prone Open Space and Undeveloped Areas:
 - Keep parcels as Parks/Open Space where already designated
 - Rezone entire or portions of undeveloped parcels along upstream River to Parks or Open Space
- Protect Neighborhoods/Mobile Homes:
 - Leave existing residential uses in place
- Protect Downtown:
 - Consider upzoning infill sites in Downtown, require building adaptation, consider paying for district flood improvements (levees, road raising, pumps, etc.)
 - Invest in Downtown/Warehouse infrastructure
- Adopt Resilient Building Standards:
 - Major construction/renovations must follow new adaptation requirements for building-scale resilience (mostly raising BFE)
- Consider a regulatory approach for existing Non-Residential uses
 - Do not allow mixed-use residential or intensification in severely flood-impacted areas with existing low-value commercial/industrial uses
- Leave low-intensity river-adjacent industrial as is; consider land use policy realignment

Economic, Market, and Fiscal Context -The economic and market considerations for the Land Use alternatives leverage Petaluma’s strengths and opportunities with the market demand for housing, retail, industrial, office, and hotel space as shown in Table 1. Changes to land use types have fiscal impacts because business and development activity increase tax revenues that support City services. Fiscal impacts were considered in identifying land use alternatives.

Table 1: Market Demand by Land Use Type

Type	Demand Projection for 2050	
	Low Estimate	High Estimate
Housing*	5,570 Units	6,460 units
Industrial	537,000 square feet	654,000 square feet
Office	299,000 square feet	349,000 square feet

Type	Demand Projection for 2050	
	Low Estimate	High Estimate
Hotel	244 room	383 rooms
Retail	84,512 square feet	108,522 square feet

Source: Economic & Market Analysis prepared by Strategic Economics, November 3, 2021

* Note: While the Market Analysis has identified demand for over 5,000 new housing units, the Alternatives target approximately 5,000 new housing units.

Transportation, VMT, and Carbon Neutrality Context - Petaluma residents drive more than the 9-County Bay Area average and must reduce transportation emissions to reach climate goals. The City adopted a menu of VMT reduction strategies with a high, medium, or low effect of reducing VMT within the context of Petaluma. Two of the highest value strategies are land use measures that can be incorporated through the General Plan land use alternatives, including increasing the diversity and density of land uses.

Active Transportation/Accessibility Analysis – An analysis of the current accessibility of Petaluma’s transportation network to active transportation was conducted. The analysis shows areas with the best access for bicycles and pedestrians (e.g. around downtown) and the areas with the worst access (e.g. around North McDowell and Old Redwood Highway). The analysis looks at changes that would be driven by land use policies.

Proposed Areas of Change

Based on the above considerations, input from the community and decision-makers during the visioning process, and input from the GPAC, the consultant team identified potential areas of change across the city. These areas of change include:

Upstream and Downstream River-Adjacent – The land use alternatives explore the possible de-intensification of uses adjacent to the Petaluma River. Specifically, the alternatives consider de-intensifying Denman Flats to the Livestock Auction Yard (upstream) and South of East Lakeville Highway to west of Casa Grande Road (downstream).

Downtown/Core/Transit Oriented Development – The land use alternatives explore the possible intensification and diversification of the historic Downtown, areas around the Downtown SMART Station, historic agricultural industrial areas, and River Park/former Scannell site.

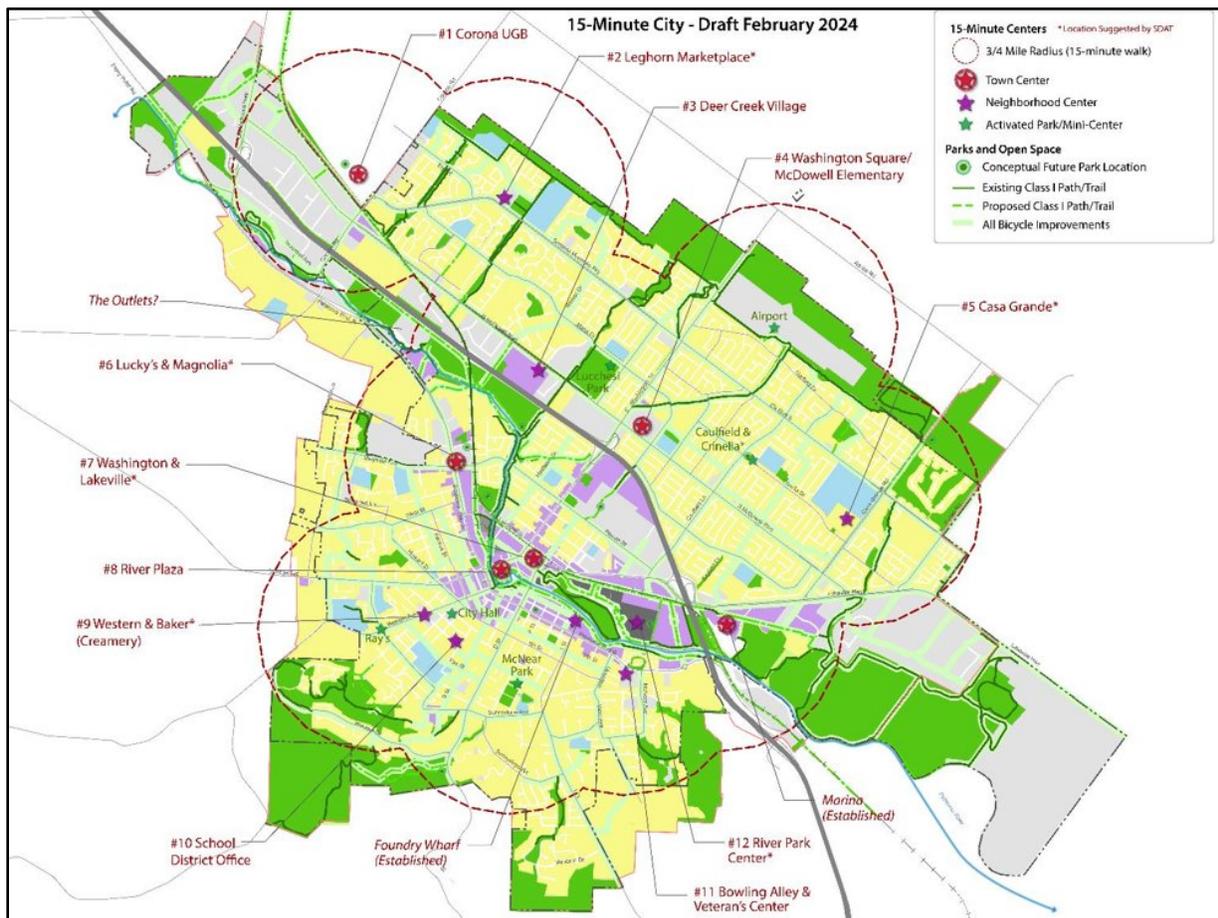
Corridors – The land use alternatives explore intensification of uses along Petaluma Blvd North and Petaluma Blvd South as well as East Washington. This may include infill development on underutilized sites as well as enhancing character, safety, and activity along the corridors.

Potential Corona Station Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) Expansion – In November 2024, Petaluma voters will decide whether or not to extend the tenure of the UGB, which is otherwise set to expire in 2025. The UGB has historically permitted the City Council to consider an expansion of the UGB adjacent to the Corona Road/Petaluma North SMART Station to accommodate Transit Oriented Development. Based on the outcome of this vote, the General Plan will provide guidance on potential uses and densities in this area.

15-Minute Neighborhood and Town Centers - A 15-Minute City is a city of walkable neighborhoods in which residents can meet most of their essential needs – including accessing groceries, daily services, recreation, social gathering places, health care, and transit – within a 15-minute walk of their home. The areas of change would include identifying and designating 15-minute centers, areas throughout the city that residents could easily walk to, and where providing goods and services would be economically feasible, in the categories as shown in Figure 1 below:

- **Town Center:** - Includes housing, office/employment, and services/amenities for the surrounding community (¾ mile+ catchment area) and is defined by the following features:
 - Horizontal mixed-use and moderate- to high-scale mixed-use
 - Major destination, near highest frequency transit
 - Larger scale: ~3-6 stories
- **Neighborhood Center:** Includes a gathering place, local services/amenities, and housing in limited quantities or as live/work to serve the immediate neighborhood (¾ mile catchment area) and is defined by the following features:
 - Live/work or flex employment strongly encouraged
 - Smaller scale: ~2-3 stories
- **Activated Park/Mini-Center:** add concessions and/or programming to activate key existing gathering places, civic spaces, and parks

Figure 1: 15-Minute Cities Map



Evolution of Single-Family Neighborhoods

As identified in the 2023-2031 Housing Element, Goal #1 is to provide a range of middle-density housing options in existing low density residential neighborhoods. In addition to considering land use changes in Areas of Change through the city, the General Plan update process will also consider the evolution of single-family neighborhoods. This work will be presented as part of the Land Use Policy Framework, rather than as a Land Use Alternative. Proposed policies will include considering promoting Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) construction, and other infill opportunities for these neighborhoods. State Law SB-9 already requires cities to allow property owners to split lots and construct up to four units on the majority of existing single-family lots with ministerial approval only. Proposed policies will consider allowing additional design flexibility in response to SB-9 and Petaluma's goals for the future. Additionally, proposed policies will look at allowing non-residential uses that relate to daily life in residential neighborhoods to allow neighborhood-scale commercial and civic uses, home occupations, and potentially redefining live/work and work/live units.

General Plan Advisory Committee Input

The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) discussed Land Use Alternatives at their January 18, 2024 and February 15, 2024 meetings. The GPAC agreed that the City should invite specific public feedback on:

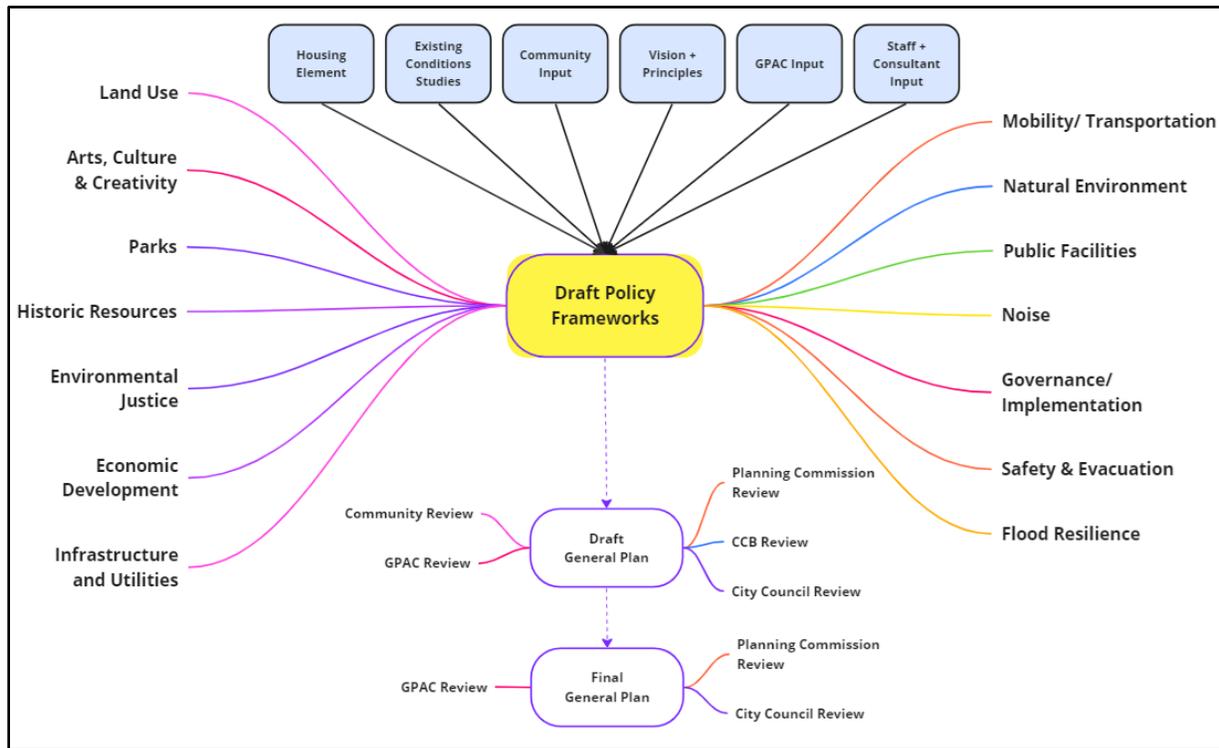
- Intensifying the Lucky's site and the low-intensity mixed use areas
- The future of East Washington St. Corridor and Washington Square
- Changing the General Plan Land Use Designation of River Park/former Scannell properties.

General Plan Policy Frameworks

The General Plan is made up of both the Land Use Map, which displays General Plan Land Uses, as policies that relates to a wide range of topics. At present, the draft General Plan policies are contained in Policy Frameworks, which will ultimately be combined into Elements in the Draft General Plan. These Frameworks were published for public review on March 21, 2024 (<https://www.planpetaluma.org/policy-frameworks>).

Figure 2 diagrams the process that resulted in the Draft Policy Frameworks, and the subsequent review process and development of the General Plan. The March 21, 2024 email to Planning Commissioners informing them of the initiation of this process is available as Attachment B.

Figure 2: Draft Policy Frameworks Development and Review



Public Outreach

The General Plan Update process is documented via the City of Petaluma General Plan website: <https://www.planpetaluma.org/>, which the City maintains. It contains all information available on the General Plan Update process, including any documents that have been complete and many meeting recordings. General Plan Advisory Committee meetings are publicized, and the public is invited to attend and provide feedback via public comment at these and other public meetings.

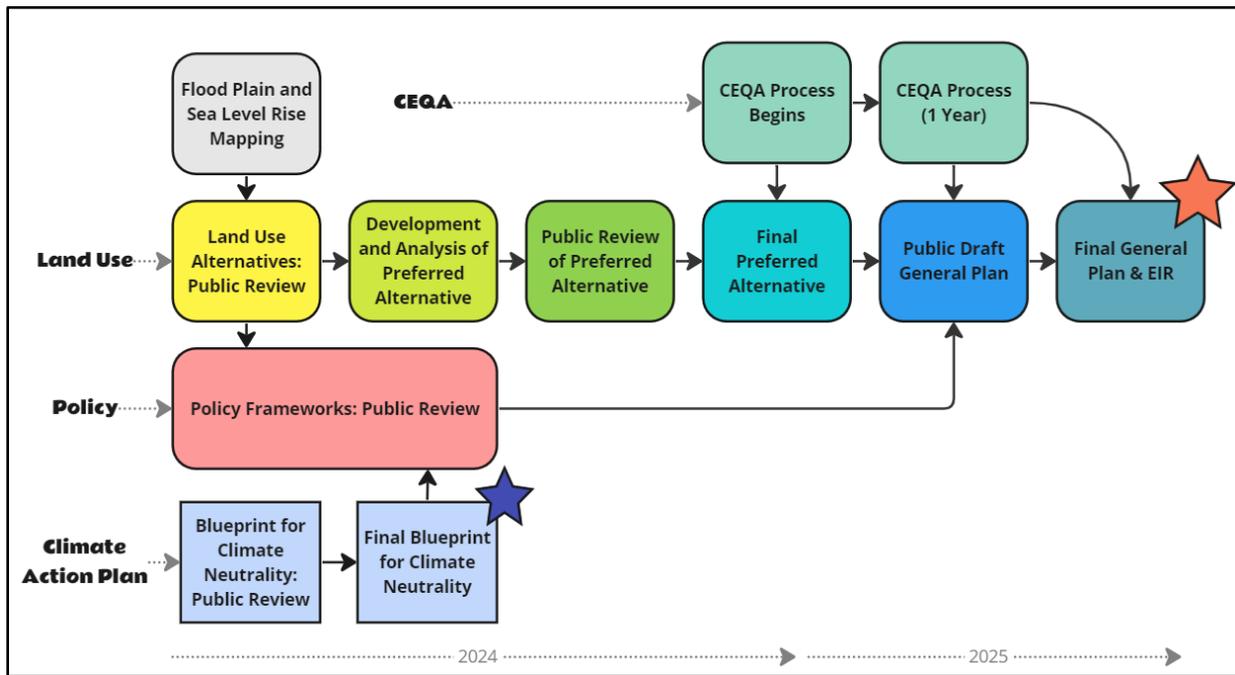
A presentation on the development of the Land Use Alternatives will be given to the City Council at a special meeting on April 29, 2024. Based upon the City Council’s policy direction, the consultant team, will develop the preferred land use alternative and the other land use alternatives to be analyzed.

The consultant team is preparing to launch a significant public engagement effort that will invite the public to provide feedback on the 14 policy frameworks and the Land Use Alternatives. The public will have the option to attend one of the public CCB meetings, utilize the online portal for feedback, and/or participate in the public event on Saturday, May 11, 2024.

DISCUSSION

Updating the General Plan includes updating the General Plan Elements and the Land Use Map. Figure 3 shows how this work will be completed in 2024-2025, which is described in more detail below.

Figure 3: General Plan Process 2024-2025



Policy Frameworks

The Policy Frameworks are draft policy documents that reflect the topics covered in the General Plan. Policy areas may be combined in the final Elements of the General Plan. Twelve Frameworks are now available for early public review (excluding Land Use and Flood Resilience) and are available on planpetaluma.org. The official public comment period will begin in May. The City's Commissions, Committees, and Boards (CCBs) will be reviewing the frameworks and providing feedback at meetings in May and June, and there will be a family-friendly in-person public event at the Fairgrounds on May 11th from 9:00am-2:00pm. The public will be invited to give feedback at public meetings and via an online portal. Table 1 (subject to change) lists each CCB that will be reviewing policy frameworks, when they will review them, and which frameworks they will be asked to focus on, given the charge of their body.

Table 2: City of Petaluma Committees, Commissions, and Board Review Schedule

Body	Meeting Date	Framework(s) to be Reviewed
Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee joint meeting with Transit Advisory Committee	May 1, 2024	Mobility and Transportation
Airport Commission	May 2, 2024	Mobility and Transportation
Historic & Cultural Preservation Committee	May 7, 2024	Historic Resources
Senior Advisory Committee	May 9, 2024	Health, Equity, and Environmental Justice
Climate Action Commission	May 9, 2024	Natural Environment Mobility and Transportation Flood Resilience ¹
Recreation, Music, & Parks Commission joint meeting with Tree Advisory Committee	May 15, 2024	Parks Natural Environment Public Facilities
Public Art Committee	May 23, 2024	Arts, Culture, and Creativity
Planning Commission	May 28, 2024 June 25, 2024 July 23, 2024	Natural Environment Infrastructure and Utilities Economic Development Noise Parks Mobility and Transportation Health, Equity, and Environmental Justice Flood Resilience ¹ Land Use ¹
General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)	Ongoing, final review by June 20, 2024	Working Group Recommendations on all Frameworks

¹ Framework not yet available. Please [join our mailing list](#) for updates on availability of these frameworks.

The members of the GPAC have divided up into working groups made up of anywhere from 2-4 members. These working groups are currently doing an in-depth review of each of the frameworks. Each working group will share their recommendations with the GPAC, who will make their recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Ad hoc Committee Formation

The General Plan Policy Frameworks contain a total of 98 goals and over 300 policies. While the Planning Commission will be asked to make a recommendation to City Council on the Frameworks prior to City Council review, other CCBs whose focus it is to provide input on particular topics will be involved in the review of policies within their purviews and will provide recommendations to Planning Commission. In order to facilitate this process, staff recommend that the Planning Commission establish two (2) ad hoc committees to support the Commission's review of assigned draft frameworks. The ad hocs would be charged with providing consolidated comments on the above noted Frameworks within the context of the approved General Plan Vision, Goals, and Principles.

The Planning Commission Ad Hoc Committees would review the following frameworks within the following structure:

- **Ad Hoc Committee 1:** Economic Development, Mobility/Transportation, and Parks Frameworks
- **Ad Hoc Committee 2:** Infrastructure and Utilities, Noise, Flood Resilience

The Commission will review draft Environmental Justice and Natural Environment policy frameworks collectively at a future study session. This will also apply to the draft Land Use Framework when it becomes available.

The Land Use Alternatives Review Process

In this meeting, the Planning Commission will receive a presentation on the development of the Land Use Alternatives and is welcome to ask questions and confirm its readiness to begin the process of reviewing this material with the community. This material will also be presented to City Council on April 29. Following these April 2024 meetings, the General Plan team will perform a quantitative analysis of the Land Use Alternatives, including development capacity, transportation impacts, and economic impacts. This analysis will be presented in a Briefing Book, which will facilitate data-based decision-making on the Alternatives. The Alternatives and the briefing book will then be shared for public review and discussion, culminating in a discussion on the topic by the Planning Commission, recommendation to the City Council, and eventual identification of the Preferred Alternative, which will be carried forward into the Draft General Plan. Once the preferred land use alternative is identified, the consultant team will release the official Notice of Preparation for the General Plan Environmental Impact Report. This will initiate the environmental process. Once completed, the Planning Commission will review and recommend the draft General Plan Update, Land Use Map, and Environmental Impact Report to the City Council for review and adoption.

The General Plan team anticipates that the Briefing Book will be available for review in approximately August 2024. The subsequent outreach strategies and meeting dates are currently being refined by the City. Figure 4 diagrams a high-level view of the process to arrive at the Preferred Alternative.

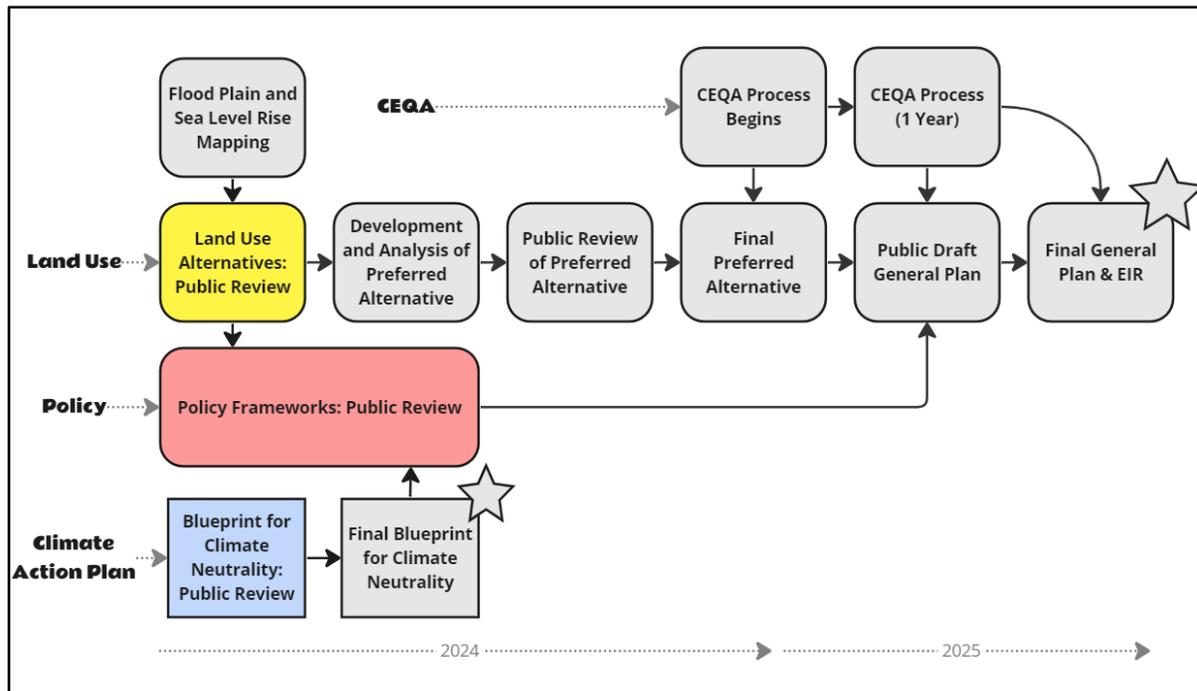
Figure 4: Development of the Preferred Land Use Alternative (High Level)



Next Steps

The next steps for the General Plan process are, broadly, to facilitate the review of the Policy Frameworks, to prepare the Land Use Alternatives and associated Briefing Book for discussion and review, and to work towards a final draft Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality. The Public Draft Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality will be reviewed by City Council on April 29, 2024, alongside the Land Use materials being presented to Planning Commission in this meeting. The Planning Team will then produce a Final Draft for review, which will include review by the Planning Commission.

Figure 5: Current Phase of the General Plan (Highlighted)



CASE STUDIES

No case studies are provided as part of this staff report.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

No action is being taken on this meeting item; therefore, a CEQA determination is not required. Following review of the draft policy frameworks and development of the draft Land Use Framework, the General Plan Update project will begin preparation of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project.

CITYWIDE GOALS & PRIORITIES

The General Plan Update will address several of the Council's priority goals including:

- A City that Works for Everyone
- An Economy that Prospers
- Our Environmental Legacy
- A Safe Community that Thrives
- Spaces and Places that Inspire

FURTHER RECOMMENDATION

There are no further recommendations.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 Presentation to Planning Commission, April 9, 2024

Attachment 2 Email to Planning Commission re: Draft Policy Frameworks, March 21, 2024

(Note: All other documents referenced in this report and those prepared for the General Plan Update can be found at <https://www.planpetaluma.org/> on the Plan Documents page.)