

GPAC Meeting Summary

January 18, 2024, 6:30-9:00 PM

Introduction

Meeting Access

All GPAC Meetings are public, and this meeting was held in person at the Petaluma Community Center. Meeting information, 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
- Land Use Alternatives and Related Policy
- Public Comment & GPAC Discussion
- General GPAC Member Comment
- General Public Comment

Attendance

There were 13 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
2. Phil Boyle
3. Mary Dooley
4. Ali Gaylord
5. Yensi Jacobo
6. Sharon Kirk
7. Roger Leventhal
8. Iliana Inzunza Madrigal
9. Roberto Rosila Mares
10. Brent Newell
11. Kris Rebillot
12. Bill Rinehart
13. Bill Wolpert

The following GPAC members were absent:

1. Stephanie Blake
2. Joshua Riley Simmons
3. Lizzie Wallack

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, *M-Group Consulting Planner serving the City of Petaluma*

Consultant Team:

Ron Whitmore – *Raimi + Associates*

Troy Reinhalter - *Raimi + Associates*

Michelle Hernandez - *Raimi + Associates*

Meeting Summary

The focus of the 28th GPAC meeting was to refine the GPAC direction on alternatives for land uses and intensities and related policy questions in preparation for public input on potential changes in the General Plan land use designations and policy.

Opening

Brian Oh started the meeting by taking roll call attendance for GPAC members.

Project and Staff Updates

Brian Oh presented project and staff updates on the following topics:

- The Public Review Draft of the Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality was released for community review in October 2023. The Climate Action Commission, the Planning Commission, and other City boards are reviewing the draft and providing feedback that will be incorporated into the final draft.
- City staff are finalizing their review of the Administrative Draft Policy Frameworks before releasing Public Review Draft Policy Frameworks. The GPAC Working Groups and community members will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Frameworks.

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

GPAC members provided the following comments after the project and staff updates.

- What is the timing on the sea level rise plan that Sherwood Engineers are working on? Would like to see it before making decisions on land use.
 - A: Sherwood Engineers have taken the feedback heard from the community, GPAC, and City Council on the updated sea level rise modeling and the adaptation strategies to prepare a resiliency framework and flood adaptation master plan. These work products may not be on the same timeline, yet they will be consistent with each other.
- The flood mapping that was presented to GPAC in September and two weeks ago to City Council used State guidance from 2018, when will we see the newest 2023 guidance implemented?
 - A: The updated modeling used the 2018 guidance but anticipated future State data updates and provided buffers, so any further updates to the data would be

straightforward and would likely not change projections so drastically. The team is waiting for updated adaptation guidance from the State and will determine how that fits into the SLR mapping and adaptation framework.

Land Use Alternatives and Related Policy

The goal of this meeting was to determine the types of land use options that should be explored on key opportunity sites. Ron Whitmore presented the context and background leading to the discussion. Troy Reinhalter presented a recap of the points of consensus in the areas of discussion from the previous GPAC meeting and then walked the group through the proposed general plan land use designations and the ArcGIS Online Map.

Please see the presentation slides for more information about what was presented.

GPAC Clarifying Questions & Comments

- Will the general plan move away from the transect planning and SMART code that applies to different areas, like the downtown?
 - A: The general plan will not preclude the city from using a form based code to implement the land use vision that is developed with the general plan; it is still an open question that could be defined later on.
- Are we envisioning multiple MU designations?
 - A: Yes, State law requires consistency between the general plan and zoning, so having more MU designations provides greater flexibility for implementing land use through zoning and remaining consistent.
- Considering that development is essentially infeasible and there is a proposed designation of T6, wouldn't want to overprescribe the land use?
 - A: The land use vision and designations do not require development to occur in the short term; it is setting a vision for the next 20 years, and we do not want to set limitations on future market conditions.

Public Comment on Agenda

The following public comments were presented after the presentation.

- Are these maps available to the public? The GPAC meetings are not on the City calendar; they should be added to the first page.
- Why are there density assumptions next to T6? What are these assumptions?
- What is the process for public engagement? Conducting public engagement through the GPAC is a good format.
- It is great to see the Corona station being implemented and to see the thinking on the uses around it.
- Is the GPAC considering the River Parkway conceptual plan in the land use map discussion?
- Are you considering the fact that we are going to have the new Caulfield bridge and that related development when discussing the land use of that area?
- Is there a new study that has been developed around the wall along Highway 101 and the terraced drainage there; we need that area adjacent to it to be reclassified as not being part of a flood zone.

- Concentrating development in high rises in downtown area isn't complimentary to the residential areas farther away; should allow for more commercial uses in mainly residential areas rather than concentrating in a few specific areas.
- The planning needs to be complimentary and should bring in the blue zones committee and the bicycle committee to this conversation.
- There needs to be more signage and advertisements around the general plan.

GPAC Discussion

After the presentation and public comments, Troy introduced land use options for different priority areas of the city to determine the types of questions that should be explored. The areas presented for this discussion will not be the only areas discussed with the community. This section summarizes key points made during the GPAC discussion.

Area #2.1 Historic Downtown

- The different types of mixed use aren't as relevant, but it's more important to get housing options downtown.
- It's more important to add in policy and standards to get the development we want for downtown than the mixed use designation
 - 2nd agreement: The policies are broader and incorporate questions about parking, etc.
- These 3 are important, maybe there is some other option between 2 and 3. There are underutilized areas that don't make sense with how our downtown functions, such as some sites that aren't marked on option 2 but are on option 3.
- Lean more towards option 3 if the historic resources are protected so that mixed use is allowed districtwide; not keen on idea of picking specific parcels for particular land use designations.
- Option 3 doesn't say that it doesn't protect the historic sites.
- Option 1 and 2 are okay for overlay zones, but if we're applying specific designations, better to think about it district wide.
- Should add an option 4 to protect the historic core – not along Kentucky Street for example
 - Planning Team: Option 1 leaves Kentucky as is, can describe this option as working towards that goal.
- Should include the surrounding zoning/uses in the maps to give more context when we're only talking about or asking about particular parcels.
- The details for each alternative are missing; need to have an intent matched to each to better explain why these designations are being proposed.
- The messaging has to be clear that retaining the historic buildings is not determined/precluded by the land use designations
 - When we meet with the public, need to lead with the goals for each area and how that relates to what is being presented now.

Area 2.3 Historic Agricultural District

- Do you know if these uses are planning on going away? If you change the zoning on those properties does that affect their values and discourage them from being historic agricultural use? Would hate to trigger something that makes industrial uses go away.

- Planning Team: We could change the land use to allow the current operation and more. There isn't a project submittal for either site; bringing this up because the GPAC had a question about exploring this area in a previous meeting.
- If we left it as is, and an owner wanted to change it, they would have to do a GPA.
- It should be opened to the public because younger generations want to live here, and if there is an opportunity to build more housing close to downtown, we should be talking about it.
- Do think we should be asking about these areas
 - 2nd, 3rd agreement because changing these structures or designating these structures as historic would require the developers to go through a historic application process.
- These structures are very close to downtown and are 8 stories tall; we don't need to decide what happens, but having them part of the planning process and conversation is important considering we need more housing, and the only housing that pencils right now are tall apartment buildings.
- Respect the point being made but don't think we should be asking the community about these areas.
- If you allow it, you incentivize it. There is a worry that historic agriculture uses will be replaced but understand the tradeoffs.
- Don't think we should present these sites unless we're presenting all of the historic agricultural areas in the city.
- These are character defining features and to make them existing non-confirming, it's the catalyst for enabling change.
- What other land use questions/options can we ask about it?

Area 2.5 Petaluma Blvd South

- Why would you only have 3 stories on the boulevard and then step back to 4 stories?
 - Planning Team: The original intent with the SMART code was to not create a canyon of 4-5 stories in order to make it a friendlier avenue, but not sure why the western side wasn't included.
 - We could ask a policy question about having the same step back standards for both sides of the boulevard.
- Both sides of the boulevard should be symmetrical – should ask this question to the community.
 - 2nd, 3rd agreement
- Why the downzone option?
 - Planning Team: To reflect the development pattern on the west/south side (4 stories are allowed, but no one has built to that height).
- We need the density for the future, shouldn't ask about downzoning but should keep 3 stories allowed.
- Should ask about both options (downzoning and upzoning)

Area 2.6 Bowling Alley & Veterans Center

- Can we add the parcels on the other side of McNear (its R4, medium density) to the potential change areas because a change could be complimentary to the new transit stop and existing housing around it.
- The orange medium density areas should be discussed.

- The areas of discussion are fully functioning businesses adjacent to underused parcels we aren't talking about, and those have great opportunity for change -- why? Such as the orange parcels right next to the veteran's center.
- Do we need conventional commercial zones? Can we convert all commercial zones to mixed use?
 - Planning Team: A conventional commercial zone may not be appropriate everywhere that mixed use would be appropriate since it may have different development standards and requirements. Doing a straightforward substitution could have many implications for future development and perceived land value.

Area 2.7 Western and Baker (Creamery)

- General agreement that these options should be presented to the public

Area 3: Petaluma Blvd North, upper segment

- Why on the left side of boulevard are there no proposed changes?
 - Planning Team: They are already zoned mixed use, but we could still ask about both sides.
- Like the idea of keeping the boulevard consistent from one end to another, whether it's a 4 story height limit or a limit to 3 stories with a step back to 4 stories.

Area 1.2: Outlets

- Yes, we should ask the public about this area.
- What about the community commercial parcels on the other sides of the outlets?
 - Planning Team: We discussed those areas last time, but we will ask the public about land use options for them.
- What would the difference be between the commercial and flex maker?
 - Planning Team: The parcels could have more uses aside from housing (office, civics, etc.). Mixed use is flex + housing but not industrial; flex/maker is more uses without housing. The commercial designation in the existing general plan is oriented for regional commercial uses; not all commercial uses in the city may have this intention.
- Could ask about another option for allowing live/work uses in order to encourage maker spaces and residential.
- The other option could be more akin to the warehouse district, adding live/work to the flex/maker designation.
- Are we considering flex/maker to North McDowell?
 - Planning Team: That is a possibility.
- These parcels are in the floodplain and that brings up the question and discussion about not having future housing in the floodplain -- are we keeping that value in mind?
 - Planning Team: That is a fundamental question and something we would ask the community about, whether we leave the site as is to contain the development, or do we do something different? Note that the entire site isn't in the floodway; the parking lot is.
- This is a parcel we should talk about with the community because there is a developer that is interested in making changes in this area.

Area 6.1 Corona UGB expansion

- Should take option 1 off the table because it does not match with the specific plan grant minimum densities (25 du/ac) and its too similar to sprawl.
- Option 2 and 3 should go out to the public.
- Planning Team: We can't place a land use designation on properties outside of the UGB, so presenting this area to the community may have to be more of a policy question.

Area 4.1 East Washington St

- This is the center of town and should add town center designation here near the fairgrounds (not a land use designation) so that we can connect the east and west sides of town.
- The character of the street really needs to change in order to make it into a more walkable corridor, since it's already wide enough to do more in it.
- Could we look at the southeast corner of the freeway exit/entrance where the Target is?
- The library is right on Washington St, and it supports the idea of having a town center here and making the corridor a more walkable and vibrant place, as there are already people visiting and using this area.
- Would want to see more enhancement near/around the library
- Should ask the public about this area.

Area 5.1 Former Scannell Site/New Owner Concept

- Should ask the public about this site.
- Should remove Option 1 because we don't want low density there
- Greatest flexibility for future uses seems to be T5

General GPAC Member Comment

A GPAC member provided the following comments at the end of the meeting:

- The Lakehorn area should be presented to the public to determine if land use changes are desired there.

General Public Comment

The following public comment was made at the meeting.

- When the consultant team discusses the southern portion of Petaluma Boulevard, they should refer to it as Petaluma Blvd east. The community sees it as an east/west direction instead of north/south.
- Thank you for a robust discussion, but the GPAC and team should be careful as to not structure decisions too rigidly so we can allow more flexibility in the options for the public (don't eliminate options on the far side of the spectrum, for example).
- There should be a deep dive into mixed use and the future of mixed use, as we can see people wanting to be flexible with our definitions of mixed use and then the design community wanting to see a variety of mixed use on the ground floor of buildings.

- As it arises, the team could try to play up the design and social characteristics that are core to Petaluma.
- Are we sacrificing any of our historic agricultural sites by proposing areas that aren't that big a priority towards meeting our goals?
- The team could consider having a sort of guardrail for historic agricultural sites that aren't currently designated as historic but might one day.
- When questions about height are asked to the public, there should be a caveat about lot size, that the amount of height allowed is dependent on the lot size.
- We should be building taller buildings in outlying areas and have more density outwards rather than inwards.
- The team should analyze the 9 acres across from Corona, on the other side where there was a proposal to build housing and the developer was required to add commercial and streetscaping.
- Concerned that city "vibrancy" equates to 6 story buildings instead of 4 story buildings. Why are you continuing to use that idea when it is distressing to a lot of the public? The current buildings downtown are 2-3 stories.
- Potential 6 story buildings that tower over 3 story buildings would affect the viewsheds of historic buildings.
- I disagree with a GPAC member -- the point is not just to build housing. I suggest that the City buy the historic agricultural buildings to protect them and add in civic or arts uses.
- The houses on the west side of Petaluma Blvd are historic, so if new developments are built in the historic neighborhoods, we should relocate older structures even if they are dilapidated.
- The former Scannel site is likely to become marshes.
- The areas between the railroad and the river are consistently flooded and if they are going to be developed ecologically, we cannot allow housing to be built there.
- Did not hear any discussion about the north stretch of the river.
- There has been much talk of adding density to the center of the city but there has been no talk of infrastructure -- how are we going to provide services for a huge increase in population? If we are going to have an increase, distribute it across the city to the further limits of the city.
- What does the mixed use discussed look like?
- The discussion did not include anything about an integrated approach.
- A 16 person GPAC board is not big enough.
- Not comfortable with some of the visions in these areas, such as the idea of not considering downzoning as an option. This is something we should talk about if we want to keep Petaluma's small town character.
- All of the City's commissions and boards have been ignored and have not been brought into the process.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:40 PM.