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DATE: June 13, 2024

TO: Climate Action Commission

FROM: Brian Oh, Community Development Director  
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SUBJECT: Receive a Staff Presentation and Discuss the Draft Flood Resilience and Safety Policy Frameworks as Part of the Foundational Work on the General Plan Update.

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Climate Action Commission receive a presentation from staff on the draft Safety and Flood Resilience and Policy Frameworks and provide feedback to inform revisions to the Frameworks as part of foundational work on the General Plan Update. Requested feedback has been framed by the following questions for the Commission to consider:

- What do you see as the most important policies in these frameworks?
- What concerns do you have about the policies in these frameworks? For example, are they unclear? Should they be softened or strengthened? Do you disagree with the policy direction?
- In the Safety Element, were there any agencies, groups, or resources that should be utilized by the City that were not reflected?

No action is being requested at the meeting, rather this meeting is an opportunity for Commissioners to provide feedback on the draft Policy Frameworks to inform additional refinement.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **General Plan Update**

The City is currently operating under the City of Petaluma: General Plan 2025, which was written in 2006-2007, adopted in 2008. The City is preparing a General Plan Update that is anticipated to be before the City Council for adoption in late 2025. The General Plan is a guiding

document, providing 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 pursuant to California State Law, including Land Use, Open Space, Conservation, Housing, Circulation, Noise, Safety, and Environmental Justice. Unlike other elements, the Housing Element is required by State regulations to be updated every eight years. Petaluma’s Housing Element was adopted by City Council and certified by the State of California 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 consultant teams to assist the City in developing its General Plan, and in April 2021, the City entered into a contract with Raimi + Associates. The Raimi team includes a suite of subconsultants with expertise in a variety of areas to support the development of a robust and comprehensive General Plan for the City.

In early 2021, the City also 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. The GPAC works 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>.

### **Existing Conditions: Climate Hazards**

Following an initial period of data gathering in 2021, the consultant team completed numerous Existing Conditions Reports, which establish baseline conditions for key policy areas. Key findings and opportunities from the 2022 Existing Conditions Report on Climate Hazards included the following key insights excerpted below:

- Prolonged drought, variable precipitation patterns, increasing temperature, and extreme “high and low” weather climate patterns will greatly enhance wildfire risks across the region and further impact the City of Petaluma’s air quality presenting a significant public health threat.
- Atmospheric river events present the greatest climate hazard threat from flooding for the City. These events can bring up to 50% of all the San Francisco Bay Area’s annual rainfall over the course of a few days, and bring devastating flooding events with them.

Succeeding heavy precipitation events in the area will limit economic recovery in such events.

- Extreme heat days will continue to become more frequent and are the most probable effect of climate change to impact the City of Petaluma.

### **Existing Conditions: Natural Hazards**

Key findings and opportunities from the 2022 Existing Conditions Report on Natural Hazards included the following key insights excerpted below:

- The City of Petaluma is situated in a highly active seismic area and, given recent quake activity and the proclivity of the region for seismic activity, earthquake hazards will continue to be a factor for the city. Additional information on seismic hazards in the city is included in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Petaluma surface hydrology, consisting of steep, dry terrain, with canyons and creeks convening downstream at the Bay, poses flood risks for low-lying areas in times of heavy precipitation.
- Specific areas of concern are those located along the back side of Industrial Avenue which have been flooded repeatedly over the years. The flood history and associated damage demonstrate a need for flood protection, control, and community education to be addressed in the General Plan Update.
- Petaluma does not have any state designated high fire hazard zones within the city limits; however, there are high fire hazard areas near to the city and extensive development in densely vegetated wildlands has increased the risk of wildfire property damage and loss of life. Risk of wildfires in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) are projected to increase due to the effects of climate change.

### **Vision Pillars, and Guiding Principles**

Simultaneously to the existing conditions effort, 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 with 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 (<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 ([planpetaluma.org](http://planpetaluma.org)).

### *Vision and Pillars*

The following Vision, Pillars, and Guiding Principles were identified as being specifically applicable to the Safety and Flood Resilience Frameworks and may be helpful to the Commission's discussion:

- We invest in each other. We are a community where children and youth thrive, families in all forms are supported, and our elders flourish as they age in place. We provide plentiful and varied housing choices, convenient access to healthy local food, and an educational system that builds leaders. We support all residents with accessible city services.
- We are forward-thinking leaders. By achieving carbon neutrality in 2030, we demonstrate that equitable, carbon-neutral, regenerative communities and economies are possible through action and collaboration with other cities, communities, and our region. We have adapted to climate change with a community-driven, whole systems, and nature-based approach to development.
- Climate Action, Resilience, and Sustainability. Petaluma is committed to bold action to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and to building resilience to climate change impacts, including sea level rise, increasing temperatures, drought, and wildfire intensity. The General Plan must build climate-ready communities using science, technology, and bold ways of thinking to advance change in our relationship with the natural environment and to plan for current and future impacts.
- Equity, Justice, and Demographic Changes. Current demographic trends indicate that Petaluma will have an older, more diverse population well into the future. Petaluma commits to advancing social and economic justice to create an inclusive and equitable city in which all can thrive. The General Plan must prioritize supporting those who have been most affected by injustice and inequity and advances bold action in terms of housing, transportation, public spaces, and intergenerational and multi-cultural programs to take advantage of opportunities and meet challenges as they arise.

### *Guiding Principles*

There are a total of sixteen Guiding Principles, each with multiple Supporting Concepts. The following Guiding Principles informed these policy frameworks:

- Achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and equitably foster a sustainable and resilient community in which today's needs do not compromise the ability of the community to meet its future needs.
- Ensure the health and wellness of all residents.
- Physically and psychologically integrate and connect the East and West sides of town.
- Ensure infrastructure supports infill development and addresses the impacts of climate change.
- Advance a forward-looking economic development strategy that focuses on diversity, opportunity, innovation, and resilience.
- Protect and restore the natural function of the Petaluma River and its tributaries while expanding complementary recreational, entertainment, and civic opportunities.
- Ensure infrastructure supports infill development and addresses the impacts of climate change.
- Be a leader in advancing these guiding principles within the region and beyond.

Each of the Guiding Principles include supporting concepts that can be found in the Vision, Pillars, and Guiding Principles are on the PlanPetaluma website ([planpetaluma.org](http://planpetaluma.org)).

## **Policy Frameworks**

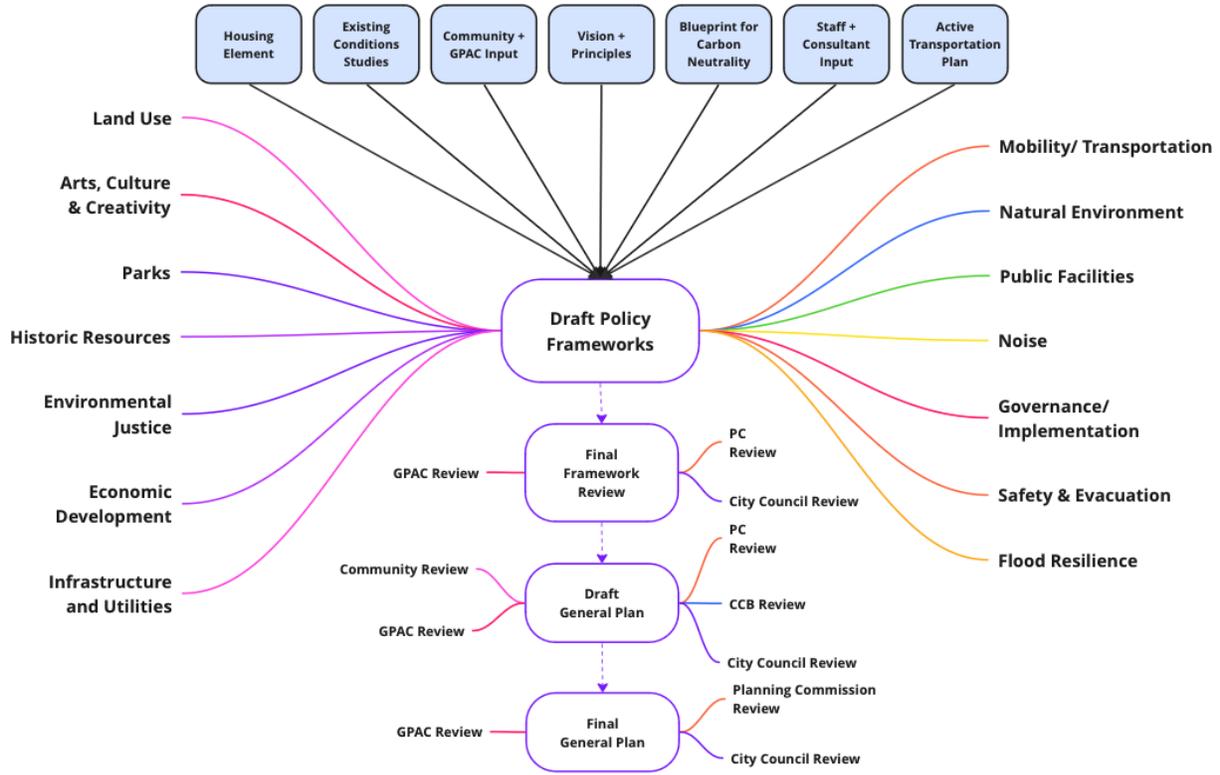
### *Context and Foundation*

The General Plan is made up of both the Land Use Map, which displays General Plan Land Uses, and policies that relate to a wide range of topics. At present, the draft General Plan policies are contained in Policy Frameworks, which will ultimately inform the development of Elements in the Draft General Plan. These Frameworks were developed based on a series of inputs, including much of the work that has been done to date as part of the General Plan Update, such as the Existing Conditions Report, Vision and Guiding Principles, the Blueprint and Carbon Neutrality, and the Housing Element. Additionally, the Policy Frameworks were shaped through the input from the General Plan Advisory Committee, expertise from the consultant team, operational expertise from city staff, and input from the community.

Twelve of the 14 Policy Frameworks were published for public review on March 21, 2024 (<https://www.planpetaluma.org/policy-frameworks>). The Flood Resiliency Framework was released for public review on April 23, 2024. The Land Use Framework will be released later this year alongside the Land Use Alternatives.

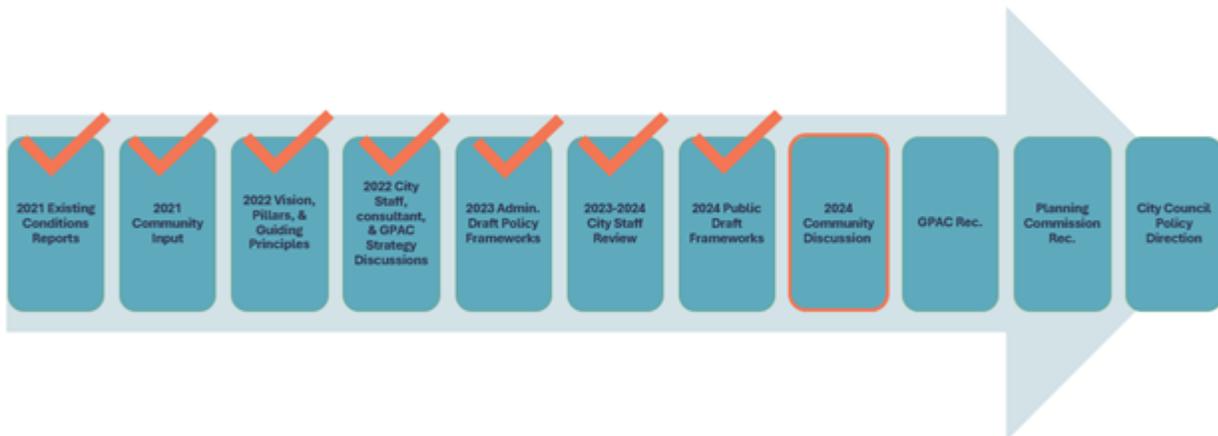
Figure 1 diagrams the process that resulted in the Draft Policy Frameworks, and the subsequent review process and development of the General Plan.

Figure 1: Context of the Draft Policy Frameworks



The draft Policy Frameworks were developed through an extensive process that included a wide range of inputs. Figure 2 diagrams the process to arrive at and review the Policy Frameworks.

Figure 2: Policy Framework Development and Review Process



**DISCUSSION**

## **Safety Policy Framework**

The draft Safety Policy Framework has 10 goals:

- Goal SAF-1: Emergency Guidance and Tools
- Goal SAF-2: High-Quality Emergency Services
- Goal SAF-3: Responsive Public Safety Services
- Goal SAF-4: Evacuation
- Goal SAF-5: Critical Facilities Resiliency
- Goal SAF-6: Climate Resilience
- Goal SAF-7: Drought
- Goal SAF-8: Wildfire Risk Management
- Goal SAF-9: Earthquake Resiliency
- Goal SAF-10: Hazardous Materials Management

These goals are supported by 41 policies as well as supporting programs. The goals, policies, and programs are listed in the draft Safety Policy Framework which is available on [planpetaluma.org](http://planpetaluma.org).

## **Flood Resilience Policy Framework**

The draft Flood Resilience Policy Framework has 7 goals:

- Goal FR-1: Safe from the Current Flood
- Goal FR-2: Understand the Future Flood
- Goal FR-3: Flood Adaptation Master Plan
- Goal FR-4: Prepared for Flood Recovery
- Goal FR-5: Future Looking Plans and Regulations
- Goal FR-6: Safe Against Rising Floods
- Goal FR-7: Empowered Stakeholders

These goals are supported by 16 policies as well as supporting programs. The goals, policies, and programs are listed in the draft Flood Resilience Policy Framework which is available on [planpetaluma.org](http://planpetaluma.org).

## **Requested Feedback**

The General Plan consultant team and staff have launched a robust public engagement process to gather feedback on the draft General Plan Policy Frameworks. This includes requesting that the City's Committees, Commissions, and Boards provide feedback on the Frameworks within their purview.

The General Plan Update team is requesting that the Climate Action Commission provide feedback on the Flood Resilience and Safety Policy Frameworks by answering the following questions:

- What do you see as the most important policies in these frameworks?
- What concerns do you have about the policies in these frameworks? For example, are they unclear? Should they be softened or strengthened? Do you disagree with the policy direction?
- In the Safety Element, were there any agencies, groups, or resources that should be utilized by the City that were not reflected?

**Other Review Activity**

Members of the Commission who attend this meeting are asked to provide feedback on the Flood Resilience and Safety Frameworks from their point of view as commissioners, who are responsible for the charge of their commission. As there is a great deal of content in the Policy Frameworks as a whole, there is insufficient time to conduct an in-depth review of all the Frameworks. Other City Committees, Commissions, and Boards (CCBs) are reviewing Frameworks related to each CCBs’ charge. Members are encouraged to provide feedback on policies not related to the charge of their Commission as individual members of the community. There are ample opportunities to participate in the Policy Framework review process as members of the public, including:

1. Submitting comments draft Policy Frameworks through the online portal.
2. Attending a CCB meeting and making comments as a member of the public:

CCB	Meeting Date	Frameworks to Review
Pedestrian & Bicycle Committee joint meeting with Transit Advisory Committee	May 1, 2024 Recording	Transportation
Airport Commission	May 2, 2024 Recording	Mobility and Transportation
Historic and Cultural Preservation Committee	May 7, 2024 Recording	Historic Resources
Senior Advisory Committee	May 9, 2024 (No recording)	Health, Equity, and Environmental Justice
Climate Action Commission	May 9, 2024 Recording	Natural Environment Mobility and Transportation
	June 13, 2024	Flood Resilience

Recreation Music and Parks Commission joint meeting with the Tree Advisory Committee	May 15, 2024 Recording	Parks Natural Environment Public Facilities
Public Art Committee	May 30, 2024 Recording	Arts, Culture, and Creativity
Planning Commission	May 28, 2024 Recording June 11, 2024 June 18, 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 Land Use
General Plan Advisory Committee	Ongoing, with final review June 20, 2024	Working Group Recommendations on all Frameworks

Recordings for the above meetings will be available on the City’s website and on the Planpetaluma.org website.

**General Plan Next Steps**

Following the outreach effort on the draft Policy Frameworks, the input will be brought before the Planning Commission for review and recommendation followed by City Council consideration and acceptance.

Later this year, the general plan team will begin a public engagement process around the Land Use Alternatives. The General Plan team anticipates a Briefing Book for the Land Use Alternatives will be available for review in August 2024. The subsequent outreach strategies and meeting dates are currently being refined by the City. After public review and discussion, the Planning Commission will review and consider a preferred land use alternative for recommendation to the City Council. The item will be brought before the City Council for approval of the preferred land use alternative.

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.

## **CASE STUDIES**

No case studies are associated with this meeting item or staff report.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

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. When the General Plan is brought forward to the Planning Commission for a recommendation and to City council for adoption in late 2025 it will include a programmatic EIR for certification.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A. Powerpoint Presentation

Attachment B. Flood Resilience Policy Framework: <https://tinyurl.com/2pfbe367>

Attachment C. Safety Policy Framework: <https://tinyurl.com/bdht4ct5>