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DATE: May 9, 2024

TO: Climate Action Commission

FROM: Brian Oh, Community Development Director  
Heather Hines, Special Projects Manager  
Christina Paul, Principal Policy Planner

SUBJECT: Receive a presentation and provide feedback related to the Draft Transportation Policy Framework and the Draft Natural Environment Policy Framework as part of 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 and the consultant team on the draft Transportation Policy Framework and the draft Natural Environment Policy Framework 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 Committee 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 presented in these frameworks?
- Does the Transportation Framework establish a clear path to transforming the City's transportation system, reducing VMT, and removing barriers to safe walking, biking, and transit use?
- The Transportation Framework establishes a modal hierarchy (Policy 1.1), includes actions related to developing complete and green streets (Actions 1.1.2 and 1.2.1), and includes a draft street typology framework in Appendix A. Does this approach appropriately reflect the community's transportation priorities?
- Currently policies specific to tree preservation are primarily located in the Parks Framework with some additional related policies around streetscape and community character being grounded in the Transportation and Land Use Frameworks. Is there specific feedback regarding organization of all tree related policies in a single element or

with an organizational crosswalk to track all tree related policies through multiple elements of the General Plan?

No action is being requested at the meeting, rather this meeting is an opportunity for committee members 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 Condition Reports**

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 related to Transportation, Natural Resources, Biological Resources, and Water were particularly relevant to the drafting of the Transportation and Natural Resource Frameworks and key findings and opportunities from those 2022 Existing Condition Reports are excerpted below.

## Existing Conditions: Transportation

- SB 743 directed changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines for assessing transportation impacts, shifting the metric from vehicle delay to vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which encourages infill development and travel by more sustainable modes like walking, biking, and public transit. The City's SB 743 Implementation Program has recently set ambitious VMT thresholds so that future growth supports the City's climate and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals.
- Petaluma's downtown and historic districts are enjoyable places for people to walk and the City benefits from having its own transit service, Petaluma Transit.
- Most trips in Petaluma are made by private vehicle, reflecting the suburban nature of the city and the distance between Petaluma and major job centers. Approximately 73 percent of Petaluma residents drive to work alone compared to 77 percent in Sonoma County and 64 percent for the entire Bay Area.
- Within Petaluma, physical barriers such as the Petaluma River, the SMART right-of-way, and U.S. 101 constrain crosstown travel for all modes, and result in higher levels of vehicle congestion on key roadways that provide access to and through downtown such as East Washington Street, Lakeville Street, and East D Street. These barriers are particularly acute for people walking and biking and the existing gaps in bike and pedestrian networks in Petaluma inhibit the use of multimodal transportation, particularly for less experienced cyclists.
- The U.S. 101 through Petaluma is currently being widened from four to six lanes [complete], travel through Petaluma has historically been constrained by the narrowing of U.S. 101 from six to four lanes through Petaluma, with extensive congestion during peak commute hours and on weekends. However, several opportunities exist to encourage greater use of sustainable modes like walking, biking, and public transit in Petaluma to help achieve the City's climate goals.
- Petaluma is currently served by the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) commuter rail service at the Downtown Petaluma station and will be served in the future at the planned Petaluma North/Corona Station. Petaluma is also served by Sonoma County Transit and Golden Gate Transit, which provide inter-city and regional connectivity, with a hub at the Copeland Street Transit Mall adjacent to the Downtown Petaluma station.
- The Marin-Sonoma Bikeshare Pilot Program will provide shared electric bikes around the Downtown Petaluma station and in Downtown Petaluma to support last-mile connectivity. Focusing future growth around the regional transit hubs and improving connections for people walking and biking to transit, schools, and key destinations like Downtown Petaluma and shopping centers could encourage use of sustainable modes for existing and future residents and reduce VMT.
- The General Plan Update will leverage the findings of several ongoing efforts to improve walking and biking in Petaluma, such as Sonoma County's Vision Zero effort and Petaluma's Local Roadway Safety Plan and Active Transportation Plan update.
- The City of Petaluma will also need to consider and adapt to emerging transportation technologies (e.g., bikeshare, micromobility, electric vehicles, ride hailing, autonomous vehicles) and potential transportation network disruptions, including the increased

frequency and severity of hazardous events like wildfires and flooding associated with climate change.

### **Existing Conditions: Natural Resources**

- The City has parks managed by other agencies such as Sonoma County Regional Parks and the California State Parks Department. The California State Parks Department manages the Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park and Sonoma County Regional Parks manages the 256-acre Helen Putnam Regional Park.
- The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District has acquired land in the form of conservation easements to protect agricultural areas and natural resources to establish a greenbelt primarily north of Adobe Road and east of the city limits.
- The City of Petaluma has 953 acres of City-owned and privately owned open space designed for natural resource preservation and recreation. Thirty percent of this open space is privately owned land, such as golf courses, while a significant amount of the remaining land is river and stream corridors and other natural resource areas.
- The City has designated 157 acres (254 proposed) of land as part of an Urban Separator classification, insulating agricultural lands from urban areas with an open space buffer.

### **Existing Conditions: Biological Resources**

- There are 14 special-status plant and animal species that have been historically located within the Petaluma Planning Area.
- There are two areas of critical habitat located within the Petaluma Planning Area one critical habitat area belongs to the California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) and the other belongs to the California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*).
- The City of Petaluma has 27,074 acres of wetland ecosystems within a 10-mile radius to the south and west of the city. The wetland ecosystems provide habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants and have commercial and recreational value in the form of groundwater recharge, flooding prevention, and providing clean drinking water. These wetlands also play an important role at mitigating sea level rise as they provide a buffer between the San Francisco Bay and the City of Petaluma.
- The Sonoma Land Trust initiated the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor Project, and the City of Petaluma lies to the west of the wildlife corridor location. This corridor exists near Glen Ellen and stretches between the Mayacamas Mountains in the east to Sonoma Mountain near Petaluma. This corridor serves as a critical movement connection between habitat patches for a variety of species, which supports biodiversity health for the region. The areas to the north and east of the city have been identified as a greenbelt by the Sonoma Land Trust and the goals of the organization and the city align to protect these areas with conservation easements as a strategy for preserving the integrity of the corridor and surrounding habitat.

### **Existing Conditions: Water**

- Petaluma relies primarily on regional surface water purchased from Sonoma Water to meet its potable water demands for the city.

- As of 2020, less than 1 percent of the City’s annual water supply was from groundwater. The City intends to phase out all reliance on its water supply wells in the near future.
- The entire 24.27 miles of the Petaluma River main stem is listed by the EPA as an impaired waterbody. The impairment designation is due to elevated fecal indicator bacteria (FIB) levels and excessive algae growth from high nutrient levels.
- The greatest source of surface water pollution comes from agricultural and urban run-off that drains directly into the Petaluma River and then flows into San Pablo Bay.

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

Simultaneously to the existing conditions effort, the consultant team and staff engaged in a [robust public engagement process](https://www.planpetaluma.org/documents#gpuvision) 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](https://www.planpetaluma.org) website (planpetaluma.org).

The Following Vision, Pillars, and Guiding Principles were identified as being specifically applicable to the Transportation and Natural Resources Policy Frameworks and may be helpful to the Committee discussion:

#### ***Vision***

- We are prosperous. Our city infrastructure and facilities are sustainably financed, resilient, and well-maintained.
- We relish our spirited, distinctive neighborhoods where we live, work, and play. Our friendly, beautiful, and nature-filled streets, parks, urban forest, and accessible river, bike lanes and trails, and walking paths connect people and help keep residents healthy. It is safe, easy, and enjoyable to travel across and around town and to neighboring communities with human, electric, and hybrid transport.
- 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.

- Petaluma is a vibrant river town rooted in the relationship between our people and the land.
- We acknowledge that Petaluma is the traditional territory and unceded lands of the Coast Miwok peoples. We appreciate that our name springs from those tribes who first called this land home. Our identity also evolves from our deep agricultural roots, historic downtown, living river, and preserved open spaces.
- We honor this legacy to celebrate, protect, and restore our natural landscapes and habitats both within and outside our community. Together, we sustain a resilient ecosystem for humans, wildlife, and the earth.
- We relish our spirited, distinctive neighborhoods where we live, work, and play. We enjoy active, animated communities throughout our city along with an energetic historic downtown. Our friendly, beautiful, and nature-filled streets, parks, urban forest, and accessible river, bike lanes and trails, and walking paths connect people and help keep residents healthy.
- It is safe, easy, and enjoyable to travel across and around town and to neighboring communities with human, electric, and hybrid transport.
- 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. Geographic context and sense of place.

### ***Pillars***

- **Climate Action, Resilience, and Sustainability.** Petaluma is committed to bold action to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. 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.** Petaluma has committed 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 advance bold action in terms of housing, transportation, public spaces, and intergenerational and multicultural programs in order to take advantage of opportunities and meet challenges as they arise.
- Petaluma is distinguished by its topography, watersheds, coastal climate, surrounding greenbelt, and intact oak and riparian habitats.

- Petaluma’s community character stems from its agricultural heritage, history as a river town, historic neighborhoods, legacy of growth management, sense of community, and engaged and forward-thinking population.
- The General Plan must preserve Petaluma’s distinctive sense of place.

### ***Guiding Principles***

- 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.
- Promote social and economic justice to address structural social and economic inequities and racism.
- Physically and psychologically integrate and connect the East and West sides of town.
- Create a welcoming, affordable, accessible, and age- and family-friendly city.
- Enhance Petaluma’s historic downtown by preserving its historic character, expanding pedestrian and bicycle access and safety, providing public gathering spaces, and promoting a diverse mix of uses.
- Prioritize cycling, walking, transit, and other transportation alternatives over automobiles.
- 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.
- Preserve and enhance Petaluma’s natural environment and surrounding open spaces.
- Protect and restore the natural function of the Petaluma River and its tributaries while expanding complementary recreational, entertainment, and civic opportunities.
- Prioritize infill development in appropriate locations throughout the city.
- Honor, celebrate, and preserve Petaluma’s heritage and historic character and its place in the modern city.
- Be a leader in advancing these guiding principles within the region and beyond.

## **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. The Transportation Framework was also informed by the development of the City’s Active Transportation Plan. 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.

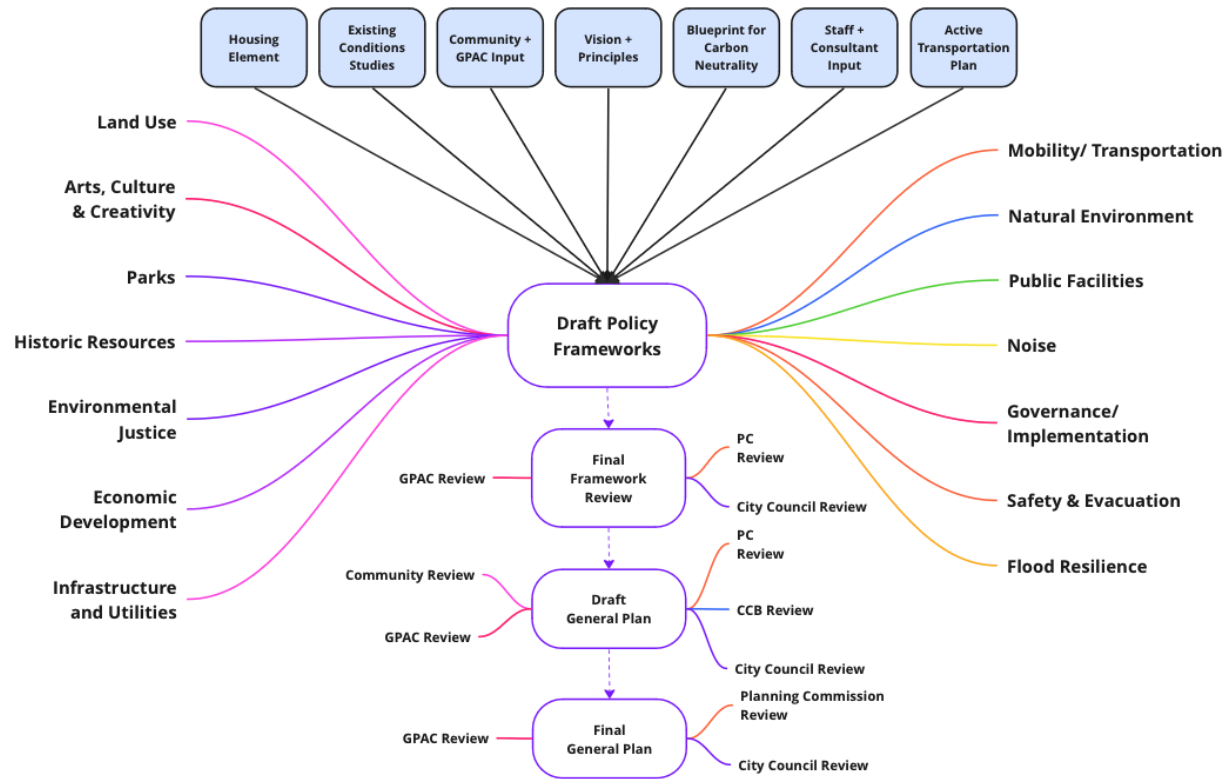
Twelve of the 14 policy frameworks were published for public review on March 21, 2024 (<https://www.planpetaluma.org/policy-frameworks>). The Flood Resiliency Framework was

released for public review on April 23, 2024. The Land Use Framework will be released later this summer 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.

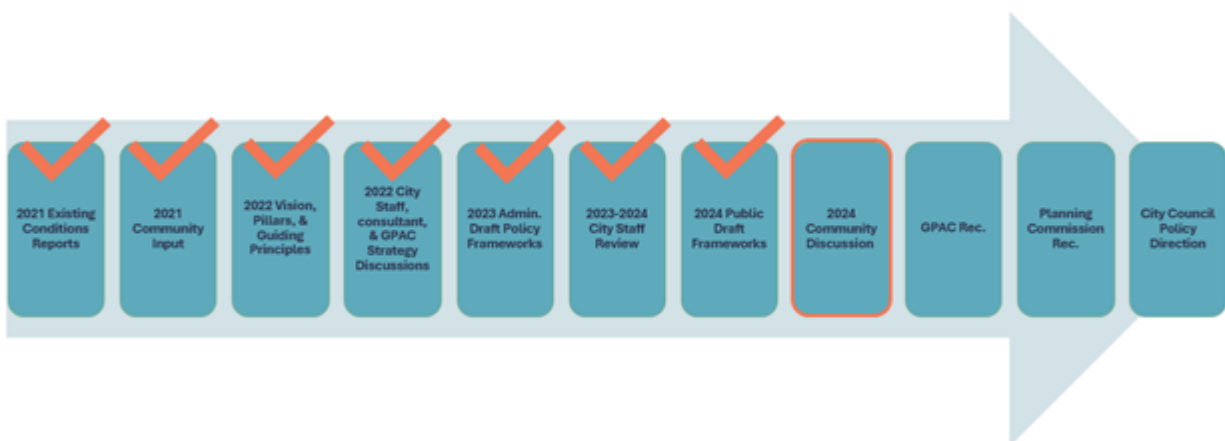


Figure 1: Context of the Draft Policy Frameworks



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

## **Transportation Policy Framework**

The Transportation Draft Policy Framework addresses the required elements that are needed for compliance with state and federal regulations, including:

- shift to Vehicle Miles Traveled to assess environmental impacts
- adoption of complete streets standards
- integrate climate adaptation and resilience strategies, including evacuation routes for identified fire and geologic hazards (currently under development)
- incorporate Safe Systems Approach and Vision Zero policies to improve traffic safety
- ensure a zero-emission transit fleet by 2040

The Draft Transportation Policy Framework has six goals:

- Goal TP-1: Petaluma's Transportation Network Reimagined
- Goal TP-2: Climate Emergency Resolution
- Goal TP-3: Equitable Access for All
- Goal TP-4: Safe and Healthy Mobility
- Goal TP-5: Integrated Land Use and Transportation Planning
- Goal TP-6: Timely and Efficient Implementation

These goals are supported by 26 policies as well as actions/programs that support the goals. It is worth noting that the Transportation Policy Framework does not address land use needs that might be associated with the Petaluma Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality, as that would be addressed in the development of the Land Use Alternatives which are discussed below under General Plan Next Steps.

The goals, policies, and actions/programs are listed in the [Draft Transportation Policy Framework](#) which is available on [planpetaluma.org](http://planpetaluma.org).

## **Natural Environment Policy Framework**

The Draft Natural Environment Policy Framework has five goals:

- Goal ENV-1: Community Integrated with Nature
- Goal ENV-2: Healthy, Protected, and Productive Natural Lands
- Goal ENV-3: Water Resource Management
- Goal ENV-4: Green Infrastructure
- Goal ENV-5: Native American Heritage

These goals are supported by 12 policies and a number of programs. It is worth noting that the Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality is a shorter term plan that is focused on actions that the City will take in the immediate future to work towards carbon neutrality. The General Plan is a long range plan that works in tandem with the Blueprint and provides a broader and longer term view.

The goals, policies, and actions/programs are listed in the [Draft Natural Environment 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 frameworks within their purview.

The General Plan team is requesting that the Climate Action Commission provide feedback on the Transportation Framework and the Natural Environment Framework by answering the following questions:

- What do you see as the most important policies in this framework?
- What concerns do you have about the policies in this framework? For example, are they unclear? Should they be softened or strengthened? Do you disagree with the policy direction?
- Does the Transportation framework establish a clear path to transforming the City's transportation system, reducing VMT, and removing barriers to safe walking, biking, and transit use?
- The Transportation Framework establishes a modal hierarchy (Policy 1.1), includes actions related to developing complete and green streets (Actions 1.1.2 and 1.2.1), and includes a draft street typology framework in Appendix A. Does this approach appropriately reflect the community's transportation priorities?
- Currently policies specific to tree preservation are primarily located in the Parks Framework with some additional related policies around streetscape and community character being grounded in the Transportation and Land Use Frameworks. Is there specific feedback regarding organization of all tree related policies in a single element or with an organizational crosswalk to track all tree related policies through multiple elements of the General Plan?

### **Other Opportunities to Participate**

Members of the Commission who attend this meeting are asked to provide feedback on the Transportation Framework and the Natural Environment Framework from their point of view as commissioners, who are responsible for the charge of their commission. The Flood Resiliency Framework will be presented to the Commission at their June meeting for similar feedback.

Commissioners may wish to make comments on other frameworks. As there is a great deal of content in the Policy Frameworks as a whole and it is not possible to review all of that content with each Committee or Commission, 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 the [May 11<sup>th</sup> General Plan Festival](#) open house, at which there will be free food, activities for kids, prizes, and an opportunity to talk with the City and consultant team one on one at interactive stations for each of the 13 available frameworks.
3. Attending a CCB meeting and making comments as a member of the public:

<b>CCB</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Frameworks to Review</b>
<b>Historic and Cultural Preservation Committee</b>	May 7, 2024	Historic Resources
<b>Senior Advisory Committee</b>	May 9, 2024	Health, Equity, and Environmental Justice
<b>Climate Action Commission</b>	May 9, 2024 June 13, 2024	Natural Environment Mobility and Transportation Flood Resilience
<b>Recreation Music and Parks Commission</b> joint meeting with the <b>Tree Advisory Committee</b>	May 15, 2024	Parks Natural Environment Public Facilities
<b>Public Art Committee</b>	TBD	Arts, Culture, and Creativity
<b>Planning Commission</b>	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 Land Use
<b>General Plan Advisory Committee</b>	Ongoing, with Final review June 20, 2024	Working Group Recommendations on all Frameworks

### **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 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.

### **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.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The General Plan Update process is documented via the City of Petaluma General Plan website: <https://www.planpetaluma.org/>. 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.

The consultant team has launched a significant public engagement effort that will invite the public to provide feedback on the policy frameworks and the Land Use Alternatives. The public will have the option to attend the city's Committee, Commissions and Board meetings, utilize the online portal for feedback, and/or participate in the public outreach event, [General Plan Festival](#) on Saturday, May 11, 2024 from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm. Attendees will have the chance to learn about the frameworks, engage in informal discussion about the policies in the frameworks, and provide feedback.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A. Powerpoint Presentation

Attachment B. Draft Transportation Policy Framework link: <https://tinyurl.com/yc4d4ymc>

Attachment C. Draft Natural Environment Policy Framework link: <https://tinyurl.com/yzd9yzfd>