

GPAC Meeting Summary

May 18, 2023, 6:30-9:00 PM



CITY OF PETALUMA
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Introduction

Meeting Access

All GPAC Meetings are public and are accessible via Zoom and television (PCA channel). Meeting information, meeting recordings, presentation slides, and other materials are posted on the City's Meetings site: www.cityofpetaluma.org/meetings/.

Agenda

- Welcome
- General Public Comment
- Project and Staff Updates
- Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) Presentation
- Discussion & Public Comment
- Final GPAC Comments

Attendance

There were 12 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:

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|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Dave Alden | 7. Roberto Rosila Mares |
| 2. Mary Dooley | 8. Brent Newell |
| 3. Jessie Feller | 9. Kris Rebillot |
| 4. Ali Gaylord | 10. Bill Rinehart |
| 5. Kevin Kelly | 11. Joshua Riley Simmons |
| 6. Iliana Inzunza Madrigal | 12. Bill Wolpert |

The following GPAC members were absent:

1. Stephanie Blake
2. Phil Boyle
3. Erin Chmielewski
4. Yensi Jacobo
5. Sharon Kirk
6. Roger Leventhal
7. Elda Vazquez-Izaguirre
8. Lizzie Wallack

The following City and consultant staff were present at the meeting:

City of Petaluma:

Christina Paul – Principal Planner, *City of Petaluma*

Daniel Harrison – Planner, *City of Petaluma*

Maria Galvez and Monica Aparicio – *Spanish Interpreters*

Consultant Team:

Ron Whitmore - *Raimi + Associates*

Michelle Hernandez - *Raimi + Associates*

SDAT Presenters:

Pete Gang

Veronica Olsen

Meeting Summary

The focus of the 23rd GPAC meeting was to discuss recommendations from the Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT). In August 2022, the City of Petaluma hosted a group of leading design professionals specializing in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, sustainability, and equity from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT). This team of experts prepared a report summarizing its recommendations for Petaluma based on research on existing conditions, tours of the city, discussions with stakeholders, and a community meeting. During the meeting, members of the local SDAT team presented the key recommendations.

Opening

The Spanish interpreter, Monica Aparicio, explained how to use the simultaneous interpretation tool on Zoom for attendees who wanted to listen in Spanish. Christina Paul followed by taking roll call attendance for GPAC members.

General Public Comment

The following public comments were made at the beginning of the meeting.

- There is concern about the community review timeline of the remaining work products of the General Plan and providing enough time for community members to sufficiently review it.
- When design standards are developed, they should be distinct and customized for each neighborhood.
- Susan Kirks noted that she is still available to serve on the GPAC if the City plans to fill the seat recently vacated.

Project and Staff Updates

Christina Paul presented project and staff updates:

- On March 14th, the Housing Element was recommended to City Council for adoption by the Planning Commission and was adopted by the City Council on March 20th. The State Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department has since certified the Housing Element.

- City staff are working with the Raimi team to release the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Public Draft for community review.
- Additionally, staff are continuing to work with West Consulting and Sherwood Engineers on draft flood and sea level rise modeling and hope to discuss the updated mapping results with the GPAC and community soon.

Please see the presentation slides, the project website (<https://www.planpetaluma.org/>), and the meeting recording for more information about the project and staff updates.

GPAC Clarifying Questions & Comments

- A committee member shared the same sentiment as one of the members of the public about having enough time to review the details of the General Plan and work products and having time to develop solutions that are tailored to Petaluma.
 - A: City staff are working on objective design standards for Petaluma and on wrapping up feedback on the General Plan policy frameworks for the consultant team. Once that is finalized, we can start the land use, climate adaptation, and alternatives conversation with the GPAC and the community.

SDAT Presentation

Pete Gang and Veronica Olsen presented a summary of the SDAT report recommendations.

The Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) focused on the 15-minute city model and on identifying nodes in Petaluma that could contribute to establishing this development pattern in the city. Revising the City's zoning code to allow limited commercial uses in historically residential areas is one such strategy that would reintroduce liveliness into communities and shorten the distance between homes and the daily services residents use.

The SDAT additionally heard concerns about the mobility issues in Petaluma, particularly around the fragmented bikeway network, limited crosstown connectivity, speeding motorists, narrow and unmaintained sidewalks, and transit service. The SDAT identified the following steps the City can take to improve the mobility infrastructure that is needed in 15-minute cities: making street arterials safer for pedestrians and bicyclists with protected paths; linking the improved arterials to riverfront trails, schools, and other community uses; and updating and expanding street design standards to include a neighborhood traffic calming program.

To be fully implemented, the 15-minute regenerative city needs policy support and should be incorporated into all of the City's guiding documents.

Please see the SDAT's final report for more information

(<https://www.bergmeyer.com/trending/reimagining-petalumas-community-as-a-15-minute-city>).

GPAC Clarifying Questions & Comments

- What is the radius used to determine a 15-minute city?
 - A: 3/4-mile radius is how the AIA interpreted it, but there are different definitions for a 15-minute city distance.
- If we create 10-11 ft paths for bikes and peds, is that sufficient to separate fast cyclists and pedestrians?

- A: 10 ft may not be the best dimensions for all mobility modes, and it might not be possible to separate all lanes. We have to recognize that all different modes will be near each other.

Public Comment on Agenda

Public comments were presented after the SDAT presentation.

- The SDAT vision is beautiful! For its implementation, we will have to figure out how to navigate private property when dealing with street maintenance. Private property owners would have to care for these green corridors, or the City would need to work with them to do maintenance. How can we work with public works to navigate these interactions? It may also mean employee and budget changes to have people who can actually maintain these green corridors. GP land use and zoning discussion is yet to happen, would appreciate it if any staff have updates on that discussion or decisions so we don't have to rush through those huge topics.
- How did the existing node in the northeast corner of town that has mixed uses within walking distance come to be? That investigation can be used to decide how to create it in other areas of the city. For land use, any areas that are zoned as markets should stay as markets.
- As a country, we subsidize car use, and this culture can inhibit the work this committee is doing. The SMART station seems to want people to drive across East Washington to park and take transit, how can we work with agencies to get them to understand the work we are trying to do here?
- Thank you for the committee members who volunteered to do this work and get this vision for the city. What are we going to do to close the gap between vision and implementation with zoning, and what language/terms will be used in the General Plan?
- We don't want to see the plan at the end and only have a month to review it, we want to discuss it across committees and take time to review it and give solid feedback so that the vision can actually be implemented. We want 9-10 months to review the draft to make sure it has everything the community envisions.
- The tree committee has been following how to implement a huge urban forestry grant, likely with a survey of public lands and hiring an urban forestry professional to lay out principles around a successful urban forest. Included with that are discussions around getting more City staff support in implementing the greening of streets and rivers. The SDAT is a powerful platform for showing the vision and to get these ideas moving forward.

GPAC Discussion

After the presentation, GPAC members provided the following comments and questions for the SDAT presenter and team.

- The neighborhood nodes need to have housing for the workers of those nodes' commercial uses, in addition to making integrated changes, such as making transit more frequent. We just don't know what is going to happen in the future, if we get too detailed about zoning, we're just going to get it wrong. We should be getting ourselves out of the way so that the future can be what we need it to be. For having the different modes of transportation on the same street, speed limits are needed for everyone, cars, and bikes.
- Thinking about the epidemic of loneliness and how the urban design improvements in Petaluma can help with that. Some new data shows how the remote job trend may be past its prime, which relates to trying to remain adaptable because we don't know what is going to happen in the future, how other social and working trends impact cities.

- On the 15 min radii, it makes more sense around the perimeters. Looking at East Washington for example, if the City makes the lanes smaller, not sure what repercussions would happen with traffic increasing/reducing. If we are a hybrid town, think about those commuting patterns. It's not a good assumption our main roads should be narrowed, it would cause more problems in the near term with the hopes of being successful in the long term.
- Really appreciative of the work and the vision it communicates, brings together various threads, and is especially taken by the boldness of improving East Washington. Hadn't considered what planning would look like without zoning, planning for a way for possible futures. On the remote working aspect, we really don't know what will happen, but we do know that remote work can be climate friendly. We are designing for a possible future and are trying to select one over others.
- East Washington could be more of a connector and a node itself. If every new proposal has something to contribute to making the neighborhood into a node, it will feel more like a main street, in addition to moving traffic.
- For sidewalks and street maintenance, is there a way to make the city responsible so there is consistency with the maintenance of the trees.?
 - A: Many cities have taken on urban forestry as a public works/infrastructure responsibility; could be something the City looks into.
- Petaluma still depends on property owners to maintain sidewalks, but there are cities that make sidewalks part of the City's purview.
- We haven't really been specific about the architecture and design of street improvements, need to understand more about the physical impacts of these ideas we have been talking about.
- We are getting a new train station, but it is a semi-blank canvas on the parcels surrounding it. That area could be a pilot for creating something new in that part of town.
 - A: The City established a Priority Development Area around the new train station; the City submitted for grant funding from ABAG to do a specific plan for that area.
- Need to make sure certain communities are not left behind as nodes evolve, don't want more affluent nodes to develop faster than lower-income nodes.
- How do we accomplish and codify creating 15-minute neighborhoods/nodes? The streets are the public realm and that is the first step in implementing this idea. The team should look at our circulation plan, redefine the hierarchy of all streets, and make new street standards. The Smart code is a great place to look for answers and where we can allow flexibility, having more transect planning and zoning that allows for mobility variety and flexibility in building types - it defines density and where it is allowed. If we looked at the smart code and identified what the problems are and try to solve them, then the city is going in the direction that the 15 min concept wants to achieve. Reimagining our corridors with the street standards in the general plan can really implement these changes.
- Does the consultant team understand this vision and is incorporating these ideas into the GP?
 - A: Yes, the various team members have incorporated the SDAT report ideas and concepts into the policy frameworks where appropriate.
- The 15-minute neighborhood concept does encourage remote work and localizing our work. Creating localized work opportunities so people don't have to commute long distances. Currently, the numbers of people coming into the city and out of the city for work is off the charts.
- To what extent will the GPAC and GP talk about street standards?
 - A: The General Plan will address the form and function of a street, but it will allow for flexibility and adaptability.
- The downtown is a 15-minute neighborhood in a way, and it's popular and beloved. The messaging around how Downtown is a 15-minute neighborhood that contributes to creating a 15-

minute city is important, so people can understand how they interact with it. There can be more reframing around the idea that 15-minute nodes make reaching resources easier. There is an opportunity with the GP timeline being extended so that people can see the ideas being discussed and have an impact with their feedback. There is some concern around how the city can pay for these improvements and deciding where to begin implementing these ideas, prioritization.

- In terms of piloting ideas, making these ideas physical, even if it's some simple street stripping to make people realize that this is the plan for the city streets. The idea of showing street improvements in 3D can be very helpful. East Washington is a problem because it's the only connector onto the freeway, unsure how to fix this problem, and it's going to be a hard sell in improvements and in restricting the road. It may be better to start on the nodes than go straight into fixing Washington.
- East Washington is on our high-injury network, many fatalities and automobile-related collisions along that road create a strong reason to fix it. If we had one lane in each direction, the signals would be candidates for roundabouts; they move traffic much more steadily and smoothly than intersections.
- 15-minute cities need to pay attention to the quality of sidewalks; if they aren't safe or maintained, it's not easy to take advantage of your 15-minute neighborhood amenities.
- We can't get bogged down in how to implement everything; the GP is a visioning document. It is up to our zoning code to implement these things. Our job is to create the vision for where we want to go in the future, so don't get discouraged by what feels overwhelming, we are creating the vision that the community wants to be implemented over time.

Final GPAC Thoughts

At the end of the meeting, a GPAC member provided the following comment:

- Having a map with overlays of the different design implementations, housing sites, mobility improvements, and plans over the current layout of Petaluma would be very helpful.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:50 PM.