

Date: October 2, 2023
To: Petaluma Mayor Kevin McDonnell; Vice Mayor Janice Cader Thompson; Council Members Barnacle, Healy, Nau, Pocekay, Shribbs
CC: Peggy Flynn, City Manager; Christopher Bolt, Director of Public Works and Utilities
Subject: Public Comment on Council Presentation: "Update on the Trestle Assessment Study"
From: Katherine and Bill Rinehart

Dear Petaluma Leaders,

Thank you for prioritizing the rehabilitation of the Petaluma Trestle as a top-ten Petaluma priority and for the recent work outlined in tonight's presentation. As you all know, this has been a city goal of one sort or another as far back as 1996 when it was called out in the Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan as a key to the revitalization of the riverfront. Similar statements appear in the Central Petaluma Specific Plan (2003), General Plan 2025 (2008), and current General Plan Update.

While we are excited about ongoing work we'd like to suggest a few important points that aren't clear in the presentation:

1. Regarding ownership, the fact that SMART owns the structure is not an impediment or complication. Our understanding is that SMART has offered to practically give this away, but the city was not prepared to accept. Please direct staff to work with SMART and develop an M.O.U. for transfer of ownership ASAP. This should be the easiest and first box to check off.
2. Most Grant opportunities will require matching funds. The presentation makes no mention of the city's funding commitment. Please identify the source of matching funds to demonstrate the City's commitment. (Measure U, C.I.P., etc.). Taking ownership will also demonstrate commitment.
3. Potential grant funding opportunities (in addition to those listed) include heritage tourism, park and public open space revitalization, waterways...
4. This is a significant, character defining feature of our historic downtown, with the potential to be a regional tourist attraction, an economic catalyst, and a source of great pride for all of Petaluma. It needs to be regarded as such. It is not simply an engineered bridge replacement. The project design team must include urban design professionals with experience in historic resource design and compatibility. Decisions about materials, construction strategies, etc., need to consider more than just initial cost or durability.
5. Take advantage of the fully developed plans, specifications, and interpretive program included in the 2013 GHD Trestle Rehabilitation Design Project to promote the project, engage funders, seek grants, etc. We don't need to redo all of this before we can move forward.
6. Acknowledge that the vision for this project was developed through an extensive public engagement process from 2011-13. The vision is to create a unique public open space that takes full advantage of an existing resource, which has been identified in numerous city-funded studies as historically significant, appearing eligible for the local, state, and national landmark listing.

7. Recognize that the trestle project is a rehabilitation, not a reconstruction project. Rehabilitation is defined as “the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural or architectural values.” Source: National Park Service
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-rehabilitation.htm>
8. While the overall presentation is positive and encouraging, it still reads like a list of complications and excuses, and generally sets the bar too low. Also, it does not appear there is a dedicated project manager. If the Director of all Public Works and Utilities is also personally managing this complicated project, it can’t move forward at the necessary pace. Please direct staff to take a more aggressive approach, appoint a full-time project manager and show that this is truly a top-ten priority.

This could be your legacy.

Thank you!

Katherine and Bill Rinehart