

General Plan 2004-2025 Public Forum Workshop

COMMENTS

Wednesday, March 24, 2004– 7:00 PM-10:00 PM
Community Center
320 North McDowell Boulevard
Petaluma, CA 94952

Note: [] denotes staff additions for clarity.

MOBILITY

1. **Petaluma currently has a Level of Service standard of “C” for all intersections. This standard is not met at certain intersections under existing conditions. Are you willing to accept congestion at certain major intersections during peak hours, recognizing that to try and build our way out of congestion may impact community character? If so, where? Suggested possible “congestion zones” have been identified on the map.**

Comments:

- ▶ No. Traffic is approaching urban no-crawl speeds. We must change to be mobile.
- ▶ Changes are necessary.
- ▶ Magnolia Avenue is/will be a major collector. St. Vincent [High School] [and Parent-Sorensen] Funeral Home intersection at Keokuk needs traffic circle or four-way stop (light?), now or definitely in the near future.

2. **Regional transportation improvements will not maintain pace with regional travel demand. Mitigating local congestion may adversely impact quality of life and walkability of some streets. To avoid significantly widening specific streets, is increased congestion during peak hours acceptable?**

Comments:

- ▶ Widening streets to relieve traffic congestion is not acceptable. Life is not about the car. Our walkable downtown and residential neighborhoods are what make Petaluma so great.
- ▶ Changes are necessary.
- ▶ “Community Character” is what makes Petaluma a place worth living in—let’s do what we can to preserve that.
- ▶ Congested intersections impact character negatively.

- ▶ Is building roads to accept peak hour loads feasible? I would accept rush hour conditions for more “free space” within my community.

3. **In an effort to increase cross-town mobility opportunities and options, list your highest priority for enhancing cross-town movements (roadways, transit, pedestrian and bicycle links, etc.)**

Comments:

- ▶ Spreading out traffic flow. One or two cross-town connectors are unavoidably necessary.
- ▶ Build the cross-town connector.
- ▶ Corona Road is currently the only safe way to cross from the west to the east side of town on bike. Any additional path would help tremendously. Please do not turn Petaluma into Santa Rosa. Maintain ability to get to services that are somewhat dispersed.
- ▶ Start to measure success or failure by developing “indicators:” 1) vehicle miles traveled, 2) walkability, 3) bicycle use, 4) travel time across town and publish a yearly report on these.
- ▶ Cross-town connection should first be roadways followed by the more pleasing transportation modes.
- ▶ Equal attention to: mass transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and auto.
- ▶ Bike and pedestrian.
- ▶ Strongly support extensive environmental impact to reviews for cross-town connector. Least impact will be the best decision.
- ▶ Strongly support bicycle routes and development.

4. **The traffic analysis for the new General Plan indicates that buildout of plan holding capacity (that is, all development permitted by the plan Alternatives) would greatly increase traffic. At the same time, the fiscal analysis indicates that assuming buildout of the residential capacity and reasonably foreseeable economic conditions, Petaluma would need to develop at least 80% of the nonresidential potential to generate sufficient ongoing revenues; i.e., taxes and fees, to remain solvent. With that amount of development and the travel patterns assumed in the traffic analysis, heavy traffic congestion could result in the downtown area and possibly in other locations.**

If you had 10 “importance” points to allocate between (1) limiting development in order to limit traffic congestion and (2) balancing the City’s budget, how many points would you give to each?

Comments:

- ▶ (1) 5 points
- ▶ (2) 5 points
- ▶ (1) 5 points

- (2) 5 points – good question.
- ▶ Assumed higher densities of Rural Residential (RR) 2-4 on the west side would increase traffic congestion. Prefer rural County designations of AR-2 to balance impossible situation of road widening on County roads; thereby, balancing congestion. The increase in RR 2-4 density is completely inappropriate for the west side properties near the UGB.
- ▶ (1) 3 points
- ▶ (2) 7 points
- ▶ How do we get the cross over on Highway 101 exchanges, if it is going to require funding that the vocal minority has opposed? The Plan is great but the excuse not to build due to financing is still going to be a factor of mobility.
- ▶ I do not understand why you would want to build more houses which, as your expert stated, will significantly add to more traffic that can not be mitigated and will sufficiently negatively impact quality of life. That is insane and short sighted.
- ▶ Encourage ability of RR to use bike/pedestrian pathways into the City and vice versa for City residents to walk into this country.

URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY (UGB)

1. **During early discussions on identifying a vision for Petaluma, some suggestions were made to adjust the UGB either inward or outward. Please comment (see map).**

Comments:

- ▶ Change to east side of Petaluma Boulevard North.
- ▶ UGB should include all western lands to the east side of Petaluma Boulevard North.
- ▶ Suggest merging property that is split and/or not on a road.
- ▶ Keep the same.
- ▶ Urban Separator (US) – Paula Lane from Bodega northward.
- ▶ Strongly support increasing density within existing City limits. Preserve open spaces surrounding City.
- ▶ Keep UGB and encourage density. Encourage adaptive re-use of existing buildings. Recycle rather than demolish and fill land fills.
- ▶ Yes! Support consistent UGB contraction to the road. Paula Lane from Bodega to Schuman, keep lands west rural. Preserve ecosystem. Longstanding and sensitive.
- ▶ We support moving UGB to Paula Lane (the road) from Bodega Avenue to Schuman.
- ▶ I agree with the UGB contraction idea above. Keep lands west of Paula Lane rural.
- ▶ Yes. Move the UGB in along Paula Lane (the road). The rural landscape is a treasure—please keep it that way for the generations to come.
- ▶ I would rather see ingrowth rather than expansion.

- ▶ Yes to UGB contraction to Paula Lane.
- ▶ Avoid UGB expansion. High density results in low auto use.
- ▶ UGB needs “defensible borders”--topography/roads etc. that logically define an area. Maintain west side rural character.
- ▶ Yes to US [Urban Separator]. Official designation for what already exists. At least 200 feet – west Paula Lane going from Bodega Avenue northward. Please!!

FACT: The existing General Plan, including the recently adopted Central Petaluma Specific Plan and actively pending projects, reflect a population projection of approximately 70,300. The Alternatives offer projection ranges from 73,300 to 78,300 for 2025 and beyond through varying ranges of density increases for vacant and underutilized parcels. These Alternatives allow residential growth, spread over 21 years, at averages of 274 to 365 residential units per year. These numbers are below the current Residential Development Growth Management System, which regulates growth to no more than 500 units per year.

Among the guiding principles identified in the early workshops we are “maintaining a close-knit, neighborly feeling to the community” and “preserving and enhancing historical character and the natural environment.” These principles often implicitly incorporate the notion that growth should be limited.

2. Opinion: No increase in density potential on vacant land could increase pressure to move the UGB outward.

Comments:

- ▶ The need to move the UGB is just a matter of time. We should use this time to preserve our history and town values.
- ▶ Carefully identify historic areas. Case in point – Paula Lane neighborhood is a jewel of Sonoma County and Petaluma rural agricultural heritage. Preserve this important historic asset. Located off Bodega Avenue, it ties into Petaluma’s central historic components as well.
- ▶ Let’s have high rise apartments.
- ▶ Densification is necessary to support regional transit. This will help keep Petaluma’s feel as well as giving people a way to share in living in this great town.
- ▶ I prefer ingrowth to outgrowth.

3. Recognizing no increase in density, with current development rates, residential lands could be built out in a little over eight years.

Comments:

- ▶ “No growth” is appropriate for many of the rural outlying areas, rather than “slow growth,” in order to preserve quality of these rural neighborhoods.
- ▶ Not with the way projects are currently approved.

- ▶ Neighborly feelings are defined by your type of neighbors. Too much density is urban, not suburban. Petaluma is a great suburban town because of its low density (explosive, but great).

BALLFIELDS

1. **Funding of park maintenance is a critical issue, given the heavy use of public and school ballfields by youth and adult activities. Please offer ideas for sharing or managing the burden of maintenance costs.**

Comments:

- ▶ Help teams/leagues maintain their own fields.
- ▶ Use General Fund.
- ▶ The most tragic thing is that we have these meetings, public and committee/commission, neighborhoods speak up, we give our input and no one listens, Magnolia/Elm development being a good example. We feel disenfranchised.
- ▶ Jim Carr and his staff do an excellent job with resources and multiple programs.

2. **Early workshop comments identified the need for more ballfields on the west side of the City as a priority. How would you propose to address this need? Where should new ballfields be created (specific area by street proximity)?**

Comments:

- ▶ Petaluma Boulevard North/Jessie Lane proposed project should include a ballfield park. Have the developer pay and maintain it. They make enough profit to give back to the community.
- ▶ Given the limited space on the west side, do we really want our valuable space used for this purpose? Expand current east side facilities.
- ▶ Call on neighborhood group participation to help find or generate more revenue; i.e., proposed by Paula Lane neighborhood group to interface with City and Open Space District, using Open Space land for open classroom studies by Petaluma students, generating revenue for possible Parks and Recreation programs or other relevant City programs.

WATER RESOURCES

- 1. Recent analysis of the floodplain, subsequent to the construction of the flood reduction project in the Payran area, indicates that the floodplain will, in the future, be reduced in area.**

Comments:

- ▶ Why is the designated land even? Because the land along the old floodplain is obviously still near the River. It seems best to allocate this land for recreation, scenic corridor and other River-orientated uses.
 - ▶ I think it should be used for sports fields. The added benefit would be less cross-town traffic as people living on west side would not have to travel to fields on the opposite side of town.
 - ▶ Agree with the previous comment. Be preserved for insurance against miscalculation.
 - ▶ Please be aware of disappearing land – less groundwater recharge, especially in western areas of Petaluma. Very important to preserve land designated as groundwater recharge area.
 - ▶ If floodplain area is decreased, favor low impact use, not paving over, not “unrestricted” development.
 - ▶ Open it to achieve density. Increase creek setbacks.
 - ▶ Hydrological issues – severe drainage problems on the west side.
 - ▶ Make sure site on Jessie Lane is checked for landfill.
 - ▶ Jessie Lane Creek must be preserved. Serves as a holding pond for heavy rain/high tides backflow from Petaluma River.
- 2. Should the area that may be removed from floodplain designation be considered open for unrestricted development or should it be preserved or restricted in some fashion?**

Comments:

- ▶ Be sensitive to wildlife corridor areas and foraging areas for wildlife.
 - ▶ The floodplain should not be considered for commercial development. It is a major asset and should not be lost to development.
 - ▶ Why isn't Jessie Creek on the map?
 - ▶ Maintain creeks within their current alignment. No relocation.
- 3. Given a fixed supply of water from the Sonoma County Water Agency, the City is pursuing a recycled water program, conservation programs and groundwater opportunities to address its needs. What implications or concerns do you have with any of the above strategies?**

Comments:

- ▶ Continue to increase the production and use of recycled water. Mandate low flow fixture retrofit throughout the City. Encourage zeroscape and minimize green grass. We have serious water pressure problems in the Paula Lane, west side and Sunset neighborhoods—we want this to be taken seriously when development is considered. We cannot wash dishes and flush toilets at the same time and forget taking a shower if the washing machine is on.
- ▶ Has significant hydrology concerns in west Petaluma and near the UGB; i.e., low water pressure in Paula Lane neighborhood. Open land designated as moderate groundwater recharge area--preserve. Also any area with wetlands characteristics such as on Paula Lane can be preserved and enhanced. Support conservation programs.
- ▶ Rural residents are totally dependent on groundwater. If the City drills major wells, they will probably duplicate this resource. How will they deal with people whose wells run dry due to increased usage?
- ▶ Require all new developments to demonstrate a certain water source for 20 years. State law currently requires this for 500 or more units. Petaluma should adopt this for 25 unit projects.
- ▶ Can we give industrial parks/retail separate recycled water lines?

PROJECTED GROWTH

1. **The three Alternatives offer a variety of land uses and densities on vacant and underutilized parcels. Please provide comments on specific neighborhoods, land uses or areas.**

Comments:

- ▶ Who proposed Hillside/Rural Residential 2-4 land use/acre? Certainly not residents on the affected west side. Such density is completely inconsistent with west side rural character. NO to this proposed designation.
- ▶ Why was rural (only) in current General Plan dropped?
- ▶ Reflect accurate density designations on County zoned lands; i.e., Paula Lane – AR-2 with one house per two acres.
- ▶ Keep Rural Residential designations on County parcels. This will limit population traffic.
- ▶ UGB should be upheld in 2018 to prevent sprawl into our open space. Trade off is to except _____ higher density.
- ▶ Do not go from one extreme density (one house per two acre) to another (high density plan). Keep urban growth in perspective of our neighborhoods.

2. **Projected growth: City population grew by 55% between 1980-2000. Alternatives project modest residential growth of 29-38% growth (including**

approved projects/CPSP) between 2004-2025 with the UGB. Natural increase (births minus deaths) will comprise 6,100 people (or 35-49% of Alternatives growth). Are the growth rates suggested in the Alternative within an acceptable range?

Comments:

- ▶ It is unacceptable to have a 2-4 house/acre ratio in the Paula/Sunset corridor. It is also unacceptable to have 7 units/acre on Jessie Lane.
- ▶ Maximum density should not be allowed at the edges of the UGB.
- ▶ Must we build on every vacant lot in the City? If I wanted to live in a town like Rohnert Park I would have moved there.
- ▶ Kentucky Avenue between west and Cherry is an existing density higher than the designation in any of the alternatives. The units are duplexes and fourplexes with a 20-3- unit building on Cherry. The hill on the west side creates an opportunity for very pleasing multi-story redevelopment. Please designate this street as high density. It is also unacceptable to build an apartment complex on Petaluma Boulevard North/Jessie Lane.
- ▶ Encourage adaptive re-use and creativity of design for infill development.

PARK LAND

The fiscal analysis indicates that if the assumptions used are a reasonable anticipation of future conditions, the City's financial condition should be sound assuming that City services are maintained at their current levels. But Petaluma has insufficient park lands to meet its own adopted standards for parks, and there are other facilities such as river access that people want too. Is it more important to increase revenues so that the City can acquire and improve more park land and other wanted facilities or is it more important to keep fiscal burdens about where they are now? If you had 10 "importance" points to allocate between 1) more parks and better river access, which would require more revenues, and 2) not increasing the fiscal burden (that is, taxes or assessments) even if that means no more parks and no better access, how many points would you give to each? Why?

Comments:

- ▶ River Access Plans should be created as part of development in those areas.
 - (1) 10 points – Parks and open space define a City, especially Petaluma.
- ▶ Open space, open space, open space.
 - (1) 10 points – Parks and open space define a City, especially Petaluma.
- ▶ Must it be either/or? Is there a way to increase revenues and increase available park land and preserve open space – happy medium?
- ▶ Combined County and City projects to pay for more park land and open space.

- ▶ I apologize, but I do not understand the question? I would like to say open space preservation is a high priority.
- ▶ Preserving open space should be a high priority. How can you put a price tag on something that is priceless?
 - (1) 10 points
 - (2) 0 points
- ▶ Encourage retail development that adds green space to their projects (trees especially). Maintain or increase access/views to the River.

LAND USE

Miscellaneous Comments:

- ▶ Petaluma Boulevard North/Jessie Lane proposed project by Cobblestone should wait for the process of the revision of the General Plan not ask for an amendment to current General Plan and conform to the neighborhood which currently exists.
- ▶ Do NOT develop the rural neighborhood of Paul Lane/Sunset—neighbors (70 households strong) do not want it. Keep it rural agricultural with one house/acre.
- ▶ Maintain lower density at edges of UGB and encourage pedestrian/bicycle access to and from rural areas bordering the City.
- ▶ As the Regional Commercial Centers develop, we need to be very careful to write and defend the policies that protect and preserve downtown and not grant exceptions for unspecific proposals like the Factory Outlet expansion.

ECONOMICS

- 1. Public comments and recently completed studies indicate the need to expand the retail tax base by recovering sales taxes that currently go to nearby communities. What are your highest priorities for expanded retail services in Petaluma?**

Comments:

- ▶ Men's clothing and shoes, bulk items, lumber yard (a real lumber yard) and lighting and home fixtures.
- ▶ Encourage neighborhoods and community groups to devise plans to contribute to revenues and benefit Petaluma; i.e., Paula Lane Action Network's Plan for preservation of open space at west UGB and creation of open classroom for ecology and environmental studies for Petaluma School District. Projected revenues for City programs; i.e., parks and recreation, up to \$9,000 annually.
- ▶ Ecotourism – Wetlands on east side and bird watching combined with bird watching and farm visits on west side.
- ▶ Retail services that maintain the current "feel" of Petaluma; i.e., farmers market, local artist shops and wine tourism. Bring some "River Ridge" services to town.

- ▶ “Big box” stores make Petaluma look like every other town in California. Petaluma used to have so much charm.
- ▶ Encourage non-chain retail development, along with attracting major retailers (not discount chains). Tourist economy could prosper here. We are the Hamptons-in-waiting, but basic needs for residents must come first. Encourage small local based business. Discourage Big Box as they ruin local independent business. Have strict guidelines regarding conserving the architectural flavor of Petaluma, especially downtown. We do not need to be like every name brand strip mall town across America.
- ▶ Limit number of big box retailers to existing shopping centers to existing shopping centers such as Staples, if we have to have them at all. If we are going to develop Kenilworth site, why do we need outlet expansion? Find a drugstore that will occupy Tuttles – we need that service in our downtown. Video store in Michi building.