



City of Petaluma, California

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*Planning Commission Notes
October 12, 2004 – 7:00 PM*

ROLL CALL: Asselmeier, Barrett, McAllister, Rose, von Raesfeld, Dargie

Absent: Councilmember Harris

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Geoff Cartwright, Petaluma – He didn't think the Commission had time to deliberate about the "product" that was being developed during the process to prepare the new General Plan, he hoped they could give direction.

PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED:

GENERAL PLAN 2025 - CONTINUATION OF SUB-AREA DISCUSSION:

Chairman Dargie suggested completing the discussion on the sub-areas and beginning discussion on the questions submitted by the General Plan staff. Also suggested the Planning Commission begin deliberation of the Discussion Points.

Payran/McKinley

Commissioner Asselmeier addressed the Swim Center and the need for an appropriate relocation if it is not part of the redevelopment of the site and supported a strong position on the importance of not leaving the issue vague.

Commissioner Barrett stated, again, that the replacement site should be on the west side.

Commissioner Rose stated he saw an opportunity to develop parks in the Payran-McKinley area on vacant land, this area has none. He wanted a statement of the

Commission's intentions regarding park designations that clearly set a definitive policy for the development of new parks (i.e. ballfields, tot lots, etc.) to serve this area.

Commissioner Barrett asked **Director Tuft**, under the McKinley area policies, regarding developing medium density residential on the vacant land along the Petaluma River north of Jess Avenue/Graylawn Avenue, how this area relates to the flood plain?

Director Tuft explained that in the Graylawn area (Lands of Johnson), defined floodplain and floodway using map exhibits, approximately 312 apartments were proposed to be developed.

Commissioner Barrett continued, stating she agreed with Commissioner Rose about the lack of parks of adequate size to meet the underserved needs of the community, especially with the loss of the fields at the Kenilworth site (Carter Fields), again they should be on the west side of town.

Commissioner Rose said he saw significant shelves of land that would lend themselves and could be used for parks. He suggested areas adjacent to Lynch Creek could allow more connectivity. He felt the existing bicycle path suggested a location that could be examined.

Commissioner Asselmeier added that she wanted to look at acceptable uses in the floodplain and to examine this area for acceptable uses. She felt if flooding occurred of open space lands, there would not be economic damage, it would create less environmental damage and would be more consistent with identified needs.

North McDowell

Director Tuft defined the boundary of the North McDowell study area.

Commissioner Barrett mentioned the Friedman/Gray property (site of future Rainier extension) as a 100% commercial project instead of mixed use as indicated in the Draft Preferred Land Use Plan. She referred to the 2025 build-out projection information and wanted an explanation of the apparent discrepancy between the draft land use map and the huge commercial project being proposed. Comparing the projection numbers with what is currently proposed or under construction, appears that a substantial slowdown is inevitable.

Director Tuft – at some point in time, the General Plan needed to identify a specific land use on every parcel. The General Plan team felt that with the inventory of commercially designated lands available within the City, that this significant site was suitable and appropriate for a mixed use development, as was proposed at one point in the GP preparation process. The recently completed Fiscal Study for recovery of sales tax dollars, indicated a potential of commercial on this site; however, it was not the most important of those identified; it still offers an opportunity for Mixed Use. Dependent upon the definition of Mixed Use, a great deal of flexibility could be offered for this site.

At some point in time during the adoption of the General Plan, designations will be rechecked to ensure compliance with approved projects. We are working with Community Development to stay informed of pending projects. Regarding the buildout projection numbers, the community had a dearth of commercial development for a number of years, the commercial boom now underway is making up for those lean years. At some point in time, the development of commercial will reach a point of meeting the community needs and the development rate of commercial will slow down and redevelopment of older, dated commercial centers will occur. She summarized those development proposals now underway.

Rajeev Bhatia, Consultant for the General Plan pointed to the table to explain the build-out and explained the assumptions made from counting the housing units per acre from the classifications. For the mixed-use line this indicated an average of 15 units per acre. He explained how this classification was described as follows: “. . . accommodates a variety of uses.” He stated that no minimums had been specified for the Mixed Use definitions, only a maximum, and did not state that it must have a mix of users. He stated that if there were greater commercial use, then the residential numbers would decrease depending on how these sites were developed. Consistency is the key, with cognizance that if greater commercial acreage is developed, there will be a proportional reduction in residential development.

Commissioner Barrett again stated that a specific definition of mixed-use needed to be developed and integrated into the different areas. They may be a need for a “minimum” in certain areas. East Washington Street needs a specific Mixed Use definition. The term needs to be clearly defined to allow it to be used in any reasonable way by the various Commissions and Committees, no fuzzy borders.

Rajeev Bhatia – The Planning Commission stated, at the last meeting, that an additional Mixed Use definition is needed to address the corridor areas.

Commissioner Dargie assured the Commission that a full discussion of mixed-use would be addressed later.

Commissioner Rose agreed with staff’s proposal for the area. He mentioned the east side of McDowell and the transition immediately to a residential zone. He viewed this as an opportunity to use mixed-use as a transitional element and would make a nicer transition from total residential on the east to totally commercial on the west. This site is the nexus where residential, the northern industrial areas join with the commercial at the Washington/McDowell intersection. This site is perfectly suited for a Mixed Use development. He strongly advocated keeping the mixed-use designation and to not revert to commercial zoning.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Janice Cader-Thompson, Petaluma – Thanked everyone for their efforts on the General Plan. She read a statement from the Scoping Session of the Downey Savings & Loan

(DSL) site: “. . . the scoping session for the DSL site, in my opinion, is really fatally flawed. The applicant, David Casty of DSL Service Company, Inc. of Newport Beach, California, apparently failed to give the City of Petaluma a list of interested residents who attended the neighborhood meeting of February 20, 2002 (held at her house), and there was well over 50 people that attended that meeting; and the meeting was called by the DSL group because they wanted to work with our neighborhood. So, these residents were promised by the DSL group a follow-up meeting and prior notification of future meetings, which has never happened.” She asked that the Commission look at the site and ask for site designs because this was a transitional site for the eastside and she didn’t support a 340,000 square foot strip mall. She stated originally it was described as having apartments, residential homes for sale, and retail, and now the pro-growth City Council changed the design for the area; she wanted a transitional design as was originally shown. She said people supported the ballot measure for Rainier without knowing they were going to get huge big boxes on this site, they have supported a Mixed Use. She also mentioned the interchange near the Kohls site would offer a great Mixed Use site with additional retail uses (the interchange is already there).

PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED

Commissioner McAllister concurred with Commissioner Rose’s comments. She addressed Ms. Cader-Thompson’s question and the number of proposals being brought forward on these various properties stating they are not always consistent with the draft preferred land use plan. She had a question of how these development plans are processed as the General Plan goes forward and how they are integrated.

Director Tuft explained that if an applicant has filed a formal application, or asked for a General Plan amendment, they are subject to the 1987 plan. She clarified this did not mean that in analyzing the application, the Commissioners or City Council couldn’t take into account the discussions that were held during the deliberations for the new General Plan.

Rajeev Bhatia added that it depended on how aggressive and how critical the Commission thought a site was. He suggested identifying certain key sites as interim study areas and to require a conditional use permit. He said this would mean the application would come to the Commission first and wouldn’t establish a moratorium.

Director Tuft encouraged the Commission to identify any key sites and request more research and analysis on these specific areas and forward your concerns to the Council.

Commissioner Rose offered a procedural question on how to achieve that? He mentioned the Kenilworth site using civic space in concert with the Fairgrounds and creating an integrated plan of mixed-use with public open space. He thought this was particularly timely because of the development has already been planned and wanted to know how quickly identification of key sites should be done?

Director Tuft explained that both sites discussed by the Commission (Kenilworth and DSL) require a General Plan amendment and an EIR to move forward. She stated the Community Development Department is aware of the Commissions discussions regarding the new General Plan.

Commissioner Asselmeier brought up the importance of retail and how quickly it is established and asked if the Commission should point out where priority sites should be located. She mentioned Kenilworth, civic space, and the interface with Washington to make a nice transition. She also thought the Commission might identify criteria that would go along with what would make a priority retail site such as where retail is desired, traffic impacts, adequate interchanges, the McDowell corridor, and the rail transit site. She also wanted the Commission to consider strongly stating in the planning document where retail should be placed and set criteria for certain projects that would address protection of habitat and prevent further degradation of wetlands, stronger civic space, etc.

Commissioner von Raesfeld grouped this for discussion of what mixed-use really is. He stated North McDowell is a logical boundary with the older style business parks. He felt the next 25 years would bring changes to these business parks and would create a zoning ordinance issue to define this use. He saw a frontier of opportunity and wanted the General Plan to accommodate the highest and best use for these old-style business parks.

Commissioner Barrett asked if mixed-use zoning might be extended or overlaid for the older business park areas?

Commissioner von Raesfeld explained his idea of mixed-use. He suggested that if an owner of the older business park wanted to look at another use it would be a logical mix and transition and the General Plan should include this option or idea. Business parks built in the 1960's do not meet any of the current goals and policies.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Geoff Cartwright, Petaluma – commented that the industrial park on McDowell was built as such because it was in the flood plain. He suggested the Commission keep this in mind if they were considering residential building in the area.

Commissioner McAllister asked if the General Plan team had investigated an earlier statement concerning few cities get two rail stops. She asked if it was realistic to indicate the number of transit stops on the map because of the land use implications around these transit nodes. Discussion the issue of density on the Brody property (Corona Road and Sonoma Mountain Parkway).

Director Tuft answered that in working with SMART they had identified two light rail stations for Petaluma with preliminary designs for the Corona Road rail station (the second is the existing downtown station). She said this did not mean that any or the entire site had to be a rail station but that it could serve other transit options in this

corridor; but this site did allow a high-density designation. The in-house executive team felt that the Brody piece lent itself perfectly for a High Density development, with or without the rail station. There are very few sites left that could afford a mix of rental and for-sale units in a higher density that currently exists in that area.

Rosalyn Payne, Petaluma, stated she is a property owner and has been involved with the Brody property in relation to the Turnbridge/Traditions development. She also serves on the Air Space Advisory Committee for the California Transportation Commission and it was she who said it was unrealistic to expect two rail stops in Petaluma. She stated she has spoken to people in the neighborhood and while they appreciate the plan, the Brody family and the neighbors supported the current GP designation and related density of Urban High.

Commissioner von Raesfeld commented that the parcel's location, considering the adjacency to the railroad tracks, could have multiple designations within the parcel.

Director Tuft explained that the Commission could look at a buffering of land uses and that there are various parcels that have split designations.

Commissioner Barrett stated during the lifetime of the General Plan, this area would be in transition as was the CPSP area for the current General Plan. She supported discussion of development along North McDowell similar to East Washington, which has very little "curb appeal," and it would be desirable to improve this. She would like the Commission to state a policy for development on lots in the area to orient toward North McDowell instead of the freeway to decrease the drive-by retail appearance.

Northeast Petaluma

Director Tuft indicated that there are very few opportunities in this area other than edge development on Corona Road that has not been annexed.

Southeast Petaluma

Director Tuft pointed to locations along Baywood, surplus property at Casa Grande High School, Maria Drive, and other property on the south side of Casa Grande Road near the round-a-bout that offered redevelopment potential, new development, and intensification. She mentioned a proposal for a new neighborhood park (an undeveloped lot) to be applied to a portion of the Casa Grande surplus property.

Commissioner Barrett asked what this area's use would be when it was developed by the developer now purchasing the site.

Director Tuft explained that in a letter received from the Petaluma Union High School District requested the City amend the Public and Institutional designation for this site to residential development. She said the Parks and Recreation Department reviewed this

request and determined that the area was lacking in parks and indicated that with additional development a neighborhood park would be warranted.

Commissioner Asselmeier commented that this would be a potential community asset but she had hesitations about the school disposing of the property. She recognized the school had its own rules regarding property but she would like the Planning Commission to examine other ideas and uses for this property. She stated she wasn't sure about the policy to allow medium density housing and wanted to see this proposal.

Commissioner Barrett defined the project that was presented to SPARC stating that in addition to single family homes and townhomes, the project would include workforce housing coordinated through the City's Housing Division. She noted at this preliminary level she saw access problems for the design.

Commissioner Asselmeier stated that the workforce housing was important; and she felt the design would serve to meet the needs of the community and supported this. She wanted to possibly designate this as a special study area.

West Petaluma

Commissioner Barrett wanted a policy for this area based on defining historical buildings and areas. She stated that if a building is not on a state or federal historical register it may still have local historical significance and its loss may contribute to a significant impact in its area. She mentioned the removal of the warehouses on the River and for consideration of this and additional buildings slated for removal and that will be replaced with buildings that will remind us of what was torn down. She addressed the whole west side out to the Urban Growth Boundary and that a distinction must be made to designate what is important to the community and the need for specific definitions to make these policies implementable.

Commissioner Rose saw a number of sites with significant cultural resources that needed to be addressed in an overlay fashion to recognize special historical issues. He didn't see a boundary situation but a need for a clear definition to protect structures that may be threatened by neglect as well. He wanted to maintain neighborhood vitality by designating these sites so that when issues of historical integrity are raised, there is a planning mechanism to support a decision to protect the historical significance.

Commissioner McAllister agreed with the statements and that issues come before the Commission or SPARC and there was no defensible criteria regarding particular structures.

Geoff Cartwright, Petaluma wanted to focus on the old industrial area and noted the Steamer Gold Landing as a landmark. He said that as the old warehouses are torn down, they are replaced with four story businesses and that the re-use as illustrated at Foundry Wharf works. He wanted to identify what should be a four story building and what shouldn't be in the context of the neighborhoods.

Commissioner von Raesfeld saw an opportunity to wrap this idea within the mixed use discussion as it applied to each neighborhood since this implementation could be either a disaster or a success.

Commissioner Barrett referred to the property at South McDowell and Casa Grande marked as high density that was currently occupied by the Sartori house and she considered this as a significant historical landmark. She wanted to revisit how this and the Brody property were developed. She agreed that historical issues were not only a west side issue and the City's history should be acknowledged throughout. She supported the idea of an overlay as a planning tool as sites are developed.

Commissioner von Raesfeld suggested adding "H" to the maps as well. He referred to the Petersen historical survey from 1977 to be used as a baseline document.

Recessed 8:35, reconvened 8:47 p.m.

Director Tuft presented four questions to the Planning Commission for their consideration, comments, and direction.

Question #1 – Retain Public/Semi-Public Land-Use Designation or Change It.

Commissioner McAllister recommended keeping it. She felt this would support the underlying zoning for schools and would protect it from conversion without a public process. She felt removing this designation would make it even more difficult for schools or churches to find new locations if this use wasn't applied.

Commissioner von Raesfeld said the blue (Public/Semi Public) designation could be divided into churches, schools, and City properties. Because of their differences, he saw special consideration should be given to not allow this designation to be easily converted to other uses.

Commissioner Rose agreed, stating this gets into zoning issues and implementation policy in terms of how compatible uses are described. He wanted to maintain the definitions to provide for what Commissioner von Raesfeld described. He didn't see an advantage to not having this land use classification.

Commissioner von Raesfeld added for fellow Commissioners, considering the possibility of the Casa Grande school site and other quasi-public institutions transferring from a blue designation, a provision should be in place that stated when the City is notified, a requirement for a specific analysis must be done causing the property to default to a special study designation.

Commissioner Barrett agreed with this idea. She asked what control does the City have in this situation? She supported the idea of special study by default.

Commissioner Asselmeier concurred that a process is needed to have a planning tool in place for this situation. She was concerned about the selling of the surplus Casa Grande school property because the City cannot weigh in on this decision for special use sites.

Question #2 – Concerning Subdivisions in the Southeast Vicinity at East Washington/Highway 101 Interchange; if the Designation as Detached, Single Family Units Should be Reconsidered.

Commissioner von Raesfeld said this was similar to the discussion about antiquated business parks. He suggested if certain areas become so antiquated and under-utilized there should be a provision within the proposed General Plan, including a statement that when this plan was formatted, this possibility of re-use was foreseen and to lay out the ground rules. He identified these areas as the City's older business parks and the postwar subdivisions.

Commissioner Rose added that market forces would overtake what the Commission could foresee unless a process could assure a compatible way to proceed if parcels are purchased by a developer and allowed to deteriorate. He wanted protection from blight and to support a neighborhood's concerted effort by property owners involved to redevelop the area as a large parcel or a sub-district. This plan could be presented to the developer to allow for more cohesive redevelopment of the larger parcel.. He wanted to know if the General Plan addressed this possibility and how the City would handle this situation?

Community Development Director Moore explained how this type of development problem would be dealt with, stating the City relies on the General Plan and zoning. He said the developer would apply for a General Plan amendment and the merits of the proposal would be reviewed.

Commissioner von Raesfeld felt that the definition of mixed use would help in preventing the above situation and the City could advise the developer that the only option would be mixed use if a reasonable criteria was met. He felt the current General Plan Amendment process was arduous enough to flush out applications that would not be considered in the first place.

Commissioner Barrett suggested this question be revisited when the layering definition of mixed use is discussed to see if it is adequately covered.

QUESTION #3 – Whether to Allow Very Low Residential Densities Along Bodega Avenue and to Allow Existing Homes as Conforming.

Commissioner von Raesfeld asked what the current densities were.

Director Tuft explained this area fell in the low density residential designation. She stated zoning would not allow an increase in development potential to avoid higher density of 8 units per acre.

Commissioner von Raesfeld felt this was logical. He supported the 2.1 units per acre capping it with no less than 8 to create a special low density designation and provide conformity.

Director Tuft said that this could be achieved by working with the Community Development Department through development standards that would address feathering of development for the hillside lots.

Commissioner Barrett asked what the downside of legal but non-conforming would be. She said she shared Commissioner von Raesfeld's density concerns.

Director Tuft explained that the problem lies in updating these parcels through substantial rehabilitation to meet the needs of the owner. She said that any expansion of a legal/non-conforming parcels runs into process issues.

Commissioner von Raesfeld pointed to the Paula Lane and Sunset Drive areas that would allow potential applicants to say look at Sunset Drive and ask why more of this type of development could not be done. He suggested fixing the zoning and to not use non-conformity as a basis for a proposal.

Commissioner Barrett answered that making it conforming would point to the density at Sunset and the developer could propose to do something less dense than that. She thought that if the area is already non-conforming because it is denser than what is currently legal, then why would expansion of current homes be allowed creating "McMansion" type of development.

Director Tuft pointed to a map with existing designations and for development proposed along Bodega that included several larger lots that did not fit the current zoning definition; she asked if the Commission felt the same about this arterial. She said west of Benjamin Lane, lots had been developed in the County with more intense development than the City's General Plan would allow. She stated that if this designation were to be retained in the rural residential 2 acres/unit it would remove any development potential and also require non-conforming designations on these properties.

Commissioner Barrett said she supported not increasing the density because all development needed to be linked to the appropriate infrastructure. She said that some of these properties may be annexed to the City and the impact on the neighborhoods would be substantial, but because they were in the County, the City could not say anything.

Director Tuft answered that in this area she would assume that if development would be allowed, it would be at a very low density of half-acre lots in some sections entailing improvements and annexation of the roads at the same time. She also mentioned that in the public workshops regarding the Western Hills designation of 1/2 unit per acre in relationship to the topography, property owners supported 1/2 acre lots transitioning to 2 acre lots could be a possibility. She stated the County allows more density with a well

and septic arrangement than the City would allow with city water and sewer provided. She explained that according to the colors of the map there would be no development potential in the area and the owners could go to the County. Discussion continued regarding the Bodega Avenue and how the zoning designation of R-1/10,000 and R-2/20,000 would address compatibility with existing neighborhoods in the Paula Lane, Bantam Way gateway to Petaluma. She suggested discussing lots that have been developed, which could be designated low density with companion zoning to make them consistent.

Commissioner McAllister requested baseline definitions of mixed use and examples of how it was accomplished in other communities. She referred to a letter from a citizen that alluded to a precedent that might be helpful.

Director Tuft explained the Executive Team would provide these.

Commissioner Asselmeier referred to “Green Building” and the LEED rating system and wanted a discussion on this. She also hoped that discussions on solar energy requirements from the state of California would be proposing something definitive and to be proactive.

Director Tuft indicated that there was information on LEED and she had been working with Community Development Department on what had been implemented so far.

Commissioner Dargie suggested that in the discussion of mixed use, if density and infill projects could be addressed in the General Plan.

Commissioner Asselmeier wanted discussion relating to having residential growth allotted over time to avoid having it used up in the first years of the planning period and putting pressure on other lands.

Commissioner Barrett updated the Commission on SPARC.

Commissioner McAllister added a request to add to the agenda a parks discussion and was advised of the process with the Recreation, Music and Parks Commission and that Director Tuft would meet with them in November. She suggested revisiting the Parks Inventory portion of the work to date.

Adjourn 10:05 PM