

PETALUMA WATER WAYS

A Blueprint for Action

Imagine renting a kayak for the afternoon and paddling away your woes? Or, on your lunch hour, hopping aboard a watertaxi at one of the downtown landings to go for a nature walk at Shollenberger Park? Wouldn't it be wonderful to bring your out of town guests for a stroll along the historic boardwalk along the beautiful Petaluma River? These are not far-fetched ideas, but ones that are within reach, right now.

Based on the approved 1996 River Access and Enhancement Plan that guides development of the river as a focus of close-to-home recreation, river-dependent commerce, nature education, heritage appreciation and environmental stewardship, new efforts have been started to revive community engagement and interest in this plan, as well as focus on how improvements can be funded, built and maintained. Starting in 2008, a collaborative working group, the Petaluma River Access Partnership, or P-RAP, has been working together, along with volunteer landscape architect Woody Dike, to develop graphic renderings and ideas to inspire involvement and ownership of the Petaluma River efforts. Currently comprised of river interests and



city staff, with facilitation, design assistance and guidance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, P-RAP is hopeful to broaden its base and expand the possibilities of implementing some exciting ideas.

P-RAP's first step was to chart improvements already planned and/or built between North Water Street and Shollenberger Park. This "framework map" can be viewed at www.petalumawaterways.org, and it is intriguing to see how much has been accomplished so far: Cavanagh Landing Park, Steamer Landing Park and the River Heritage Center, Water Street improvements, the Marina and marshlands downstream, and fragments of waterfront trail constructed during redevelopment efforts.

The next step involved a two day design effort that resulted in concepts showcasing new possibilities based on the original ideas. Two concept maps were developed: The Petaluma Water Ways: the Big Reach; and The Petaluma Water Ways: the Core. The Big Reach document reflects projects outlined in the River Access Plan, and suggests a continuous land- and water-based trail along the Petaluma River that is linked to regional bicycle and pedestrian connectors; identifies more than 30 specific projects that provide small-boat launching spots, picnicking, fishing or birdwatching areas; bicycle and pedestrian trails; pocket parks that provide areas for increased recreation and river access; public art opportunities, a public small craft center, and more. Business ideas were also suggested, such as a public water taxi shuttling people up and down the River. The Core document illustrates more details and ideas, focusing on the area North of Water Street to Foundry Wharf.

Currently, P-RAP is developing an implementation and funding strategy for Petaluma Water Ways, and is seeking support from individuals, clubs, businesses and private foundations, as well as federal, state, regional, and local public agencies. They are also showcasing the Voice of The River anthology of the public's creative expressions about the river means to our community.