

## Stakeholder Statements

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## Ingrid Alverde, City of Petaluma

Representing: City of Petaluma

The Petaluma Fairgrounds is a 55-acre, multi-use property located in the heart of town. Through the years, this site has provided a place for fun, learning, special occasions, respite, and refuge during crises, as well as many lasting memories for Petalumans, County residents, and visitors. We understand the importance of this property to our community, and we also understand the importance of the annual 5-day Sonoma Marin Fair event and all that it brings forth to enrich our community.

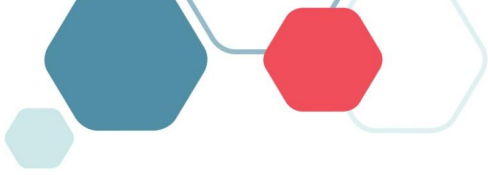
The City of Petaluma has leased the fairgrounds to the 4th District Agricultural Association (4th DAA) for the past 50 years. The 4th DAA determines the Fairgrounds property uses, which include the 4-day Sonoma-Marin Fair in June and other organizations the 4th DAA subleases to such as a preschool, elementary school, racetrack, and event spaces. The current lease will expire December 31, 2023.

This timeline provides us the opportunity to listen to our community, understand what this special place means to them, and determine how we might use the city's fairgrounds property to create the experience, activities, resources, and place that our community needs and desires now and for the foreseeable future?

## Kimberly Arntz, Petaluma High School Agriculture Dept. / Petaluma FFA

Representing: Agricultural Groups

The Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds is an invaluable asset for education year round. It is a space where students can showcase their project based, experiential learning based on industry standards. While most people are familiar with traditional agriculture education activities like livestock projects, agriculture education organizations like 4-H and FFA also include STEAM components. Thousands of students residing within the boundaries of the Fourth District Agricultural Association have benefitted from activities promoted by the Sonoma-Marin Fair. Through the exhibition of their projects and interacting with the public, the youth in our community are learning and exhibiting career readiness skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, oral and written communication and work ethic.



## Stakeholder Statements

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Agriculture is a vital component of our community and remains an avenue for the economic viability of Petaluma. According to the latest statistics from the Sonoma County Economic Development Board, agriculture contributed \$1.1 billion in production value in 2018. This represents a 24% increase from 2017. Ag sectors such as viticulture and agritourism offer a wide range of employment opportunities to students interested in finance, hospitality and manufacturing. By maintaining a space that showcases education and agriculture, the Fourth District Agricultural Association offers an avenue to bridge education and career.

### **Ana Cordova Belik, Petaluma Family Resource Center at McDowell**

Representing: Healthcare / Housing / Human Service Non-profits

The City of Petaluma is fortunate to have many organizations in the public, private, health, nonprofit, and human services fields that make it a magnet city for residents and visitors alike. Although these agencies and entities have a variety of perspectives and objectives, all hold in common the desire to understand and address the needs of our diverse community with a view to equity.

The City of Petaluma is in the process of creating the General Plan for the next 20 - 30 years. Voices from across the city have expressed the desire to have more access to open spaces and to prioritize pedestrian mobility. The redesign and future policies of the Fairground space give an excellent opportunity to address those needs through the lens of equity and diversity. The impact will be important for the next generation to come, making attention to diversity and inclusion even more remarkable.

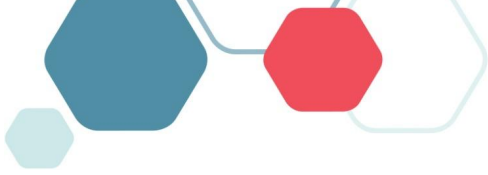
### **Hector Coello, Play Dog Play**

Representing: Current Tenants / Property Users

Hello I am representing the Fair Grounds stakeholders. I believe the fair grounds is a beautiful piece of property. And should be more available to our community. We should continue to add more activities and use what we have.

As I was raised here I remember the fairgrounds had an arcade and slot cars. As my wife and I raised our children here they got to experience the Fair, the races, the circus, carnivals and car shows. My wife has worked at Children's Corner and currently my wife and I work at Play Dog Play. The fairgrounds is the heart of our town.

Chris Fox from Live Oak Charter school says they have been a tenant on the fairgrounds campus since 2004. They are an Independent Charter School, serving public education



## Stakeholder Statements

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students in grades K-8. Live Oak has established itself as a high performing school, historically out-performing other local schools in the academic areas.

Live Oak provides a "place based" curriculum that is highly aligned with the mission of the Sonoma Marin Fair, with curriculum focused on raising animals, growing food, and provides students with field experiences rooted in the local community. The school is deeply rooted in its location in central Petaluma.

This is just a couple examples of many that rely on this property to exist for entertainment, education and their livelihoods.

### **Ann Edminster, Climate Action Petaluma**

Representing: Environmental / Climate Action Groups

To ensure a livable climate in the future, Petaluma and every other community MUST do everything possible to reduce carbon emissions. The single most powerful strategy is reducing our reliance on private automobiles. The Fairgrounds offers an unparalleled opportunity to do this by providing more services and affordable housing in a central, accessible location, and to design the entire area to facilitate safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle access both within the site and connecting throughout the city.

With innovative planning, the Fairgrounds can integrate the uses the community now values and ALSO become a resource hub that provides so much more. A creative and skillfully developed plan will:

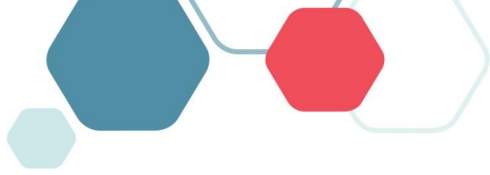
1. Accommodate both existing and new recreational uses;
2. Showcase healthy and ecological agriculture & food systems;
3. Include a new civic center with services for all residents;
4. Provide affordable housing for our children, grandchildren, and the service workers we all rely on – close to transit, shopping, and other essential services.

A Fairgrounds plan designed around our needs for a climate-safe future will catalyze a cascade of positive changes, both within and beyond the Fairgrounds boundaries.

### **Katherine Lundy, Liberty School District**

Representing Schools & Education

Much like schools, our Fairgrounds represents a gathering place for our communities. This space brings people together from all backgrounds to share in activities that strengthen the



## Stakeholder Statements

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common bonds that are essential to build and grow community. In a time when it feels like our shared sense of what it is to be one people, from many backgrounds, spaces like the Fairgrounds are an indispensable place for communal gatherings. Already, we see the coming together of people through two active schools, the hosting of events, like: Ag Days, concerts, 4-H and FFA events and judging days, the 5 day fair, cultural celebrations and festivals, and family & community gathering spots, as well as having a location for the greater community to gather in times of need. The Fairgrounds is helping to show students and adults the importance of community partnerships and helping and learning from others.

In the future, hopefully we can see the expansion of cultural events that represent and promote our diverse backgrounds, build student leadership, and enhance our sense of being a community all within the use of the Fairgrounds and its central location and accessibility to all. Our schools' benefit when the adults understand that it takes the entire village to raise an engaged and successful next generation. But the village needs a communal gathering space to interact with and engage those students.

### **Onita Pellegrini, Petaluma Area Chamber of Commerce**

Representing: Business Groups

Petaluma purchased the fairgrounds site in 1910 when voters approved a \$20,000 bond to purchase 65.74 acres to be "used as a public park."

Kenilworth Park, featuring a horse racetrack, operated as a City park for 25 years. The Sonoma Marin Fair moved onto the property in 1936 and has been there ever since.

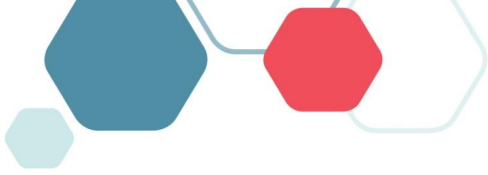
The fair is a cherished tradition. But the property has never lived up to its potential as a "public park."

We can retain the fair, while also adding more park amenities, by using a "hybrid" governance model.

That would mean not renewing the current lease, but having the City and Fair enter a long-term contract for the Fair to continue to operate its annual fair, while continuing to be supported by lease revenues of the tenants there.

The hybrid model would allow the City to utilize its funding sources to build new park amenities there.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



## Stakeholder Statements

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### **Diana Spaulding, Petaluma Regional Library**

Representing: Property Neighbors

As the immediate fairgrounds neighbors, the Old East Side (aka mid-town) bears the brunt of the impacts of fair activities, and we are concerned about future uses of the land. The neighborhood stakeholder representative and two neighborhood leaders solicited neighbors' input and received nearly twenty replies. In this small sample of neighbors, a top priority for the property is the inclusion of an accessible public park. A majority of responses mentioned maintaining emergency shelter functions and wanted event spaces on the property, including continuing a fair, perhaps with a smaller footprint. Creating bike- and pedestrian-friendly connections and avoiding strip mall development have support, too. Some neighbors envision affordable housing, alternative recreation options, or small business development, and some neighbors are satisfied with current uses.

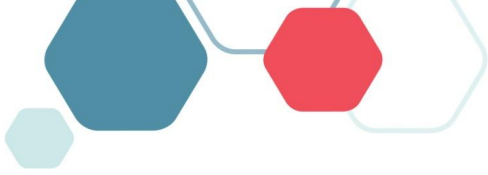
Regardless of eventual changes, the people of mid-town want respectful neighbors who are responsive and mindful of parking impacts, and especially, noise levels that many neighbors find intolerable already. From March to November, every weekend, often both Saturday and Sunday, residents endure amplified events by Fairgrounds' users. These events often continue all day into the nighttime with noise levels above the decibel limits, and interfere with the ability of residents to peaceful enjoyment of their homes and yards.

### **Marion Walker, 100 Black Men of Sonoma County, Inc.**

Representing: BIPOC & LGBTQIA2S+ Groups

Any discussion of land use in Petaluma should include affordable housing. With inflation and the cost of commuting rising, Petaluma needs to be able to house its own workforce. The citizens should be able to raise and educate their children here. One fear of affordable housing is an increase in crime. The Petaluma Police Department should be able to provide data to shed light on the facts regarding this notion.

The current fairground occupants need to be heard. Their livelihoods will be impacted by any decisions made. In particular, the speedway business community should present its case. The auto community has contributed to the uniqueness that is Petaluma. For example, the American Graffiti car show attracts international participation and brings revenue to the city. The agricultural and 4H community should continue to have a place in the fairgrounds. Without them, it would not exist. I am aware that there has been an uptick in violence at fairs around the country. We would be remiss to think that it could not happen here. Therefore, the police should discuss measures to ensure the fair remains safe for all to attend.



## Stakeholder Statements

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### **Jerry Wilkinson, Petaluma Wheelmen Cycling Club**

Representing: Active Transportation Groups

The task at hand is to determine the best use of the 55-acre site, which is in the geographical center of our city.

Throughout this process, you will hear people who represent various perspectives, and you will listen to proponents give their reasons for keeping the site much as it is. You will listen to others that see a game-changing opportunity to make real progress toward many community goals.

This site presents an opportunity for cutting-edge improvements to the city's infrastructure, community, and future.

Consider such possibilities as required housing needs, an event center, a community center, a preschool- like the current one on-site, other educational facilities, perhaps a new park space, relocating city services like city hall and the police department, and reaching our climate goals, vision zero goals, safe streets, and active transportation goals plus more.

These are just some ideas, and there are no doubt others, but the bigger picture is to take this opportunity to use this 55-acre site, which is mainly unused and closed off much of the year, and put it to the best use that best serves and benefits the entire community.