Governance

Introduction

The City of San Rafael's government embraces its role of serving residents, preserving traditions, and fostering innovation through steady, focused leadership. Elected officials understand and value the trust and confidence of residents, built through ongoing dialogue. A motivated professional city staff is dedicated to continuous improvement in the quality of services. Elected officials and staff rely on citizen participation to assist in establishing reasonable and effective programs.

Community-based local government engages residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in maintaining a network of diverse and distinct neighborhoods. Public engagement allows people to share information and concerns, and to address and pursue common interests. Good government requires active and effective leaders to make wise decisions in the resolution of local and regional issues, and to make government an energizer of civic action in the furtherance of social and economic common good.

Serving a complex and diverse city, San Rafael government:
- Strives for wide public policy participation;
- Uses local commissions, boards and other groups to provide informed recommendations for balanced decision-making; and
- Explains the reasons for decisions as they are reached.

Community-Based Governance

Community-based local government acts as a catalyst in mobilizing neighborhoods, shifting
- From bureaucracy, authority and power to community self-determination, mutual responsibility and accountability;
- From treating residents as clients to treating residents as active citizens;
- From top down to bottom up;
- From outside in to inside out;
- From service collaboration to community collaboration;
- From betterment to empowerment;
- From imposing to growing.

A community-based San Rafael government engages residents and other stakeholders in the direction, changes, decisions, priorities, planning, organizing, implementation and evaluation of the collaborative development of a sustainable network of diverse, distinct neighborhoods.

GOAL 20: DIVERSITY

It is the goal of San Rafael to have a community of people diverse in age, ethnicity, culture, and income levels. *San Rafael welcomes a wide variety of people and ideas. This is one of San Rafael's strengths, which is important to sustain.*

The City of San Rafael is committed to successfully working within its diverse community. Through an economy providing jobs with a mix of incomes, and a variety of neighborhoods offering a range of housing types, San Rafael enjoys a community rich in people from different backgrounds and cultures. The City works to the greatest extent possible so that every resident can have a positive experience within San Rafael's community and benefit from an enhanced quality of life.

G-1. Jobs and Diversity.
Encourage the creation and retention of a wide variety of job opportunities at a mix of economic levels.

> See EV-8a (Industrial Zoning).

G-2. Variety of Housing.
Encourage the creation and retention of a wide variety of housing types serving people of all economic levels.

> See H-7e (Retention of Mobilehomes and Preservation of Mobilehome Sites), H-10c (Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Units, H-10d (Zoning for Live/Work Opportunities), H-14c (Continue to Implement Zoning Provisions to Encourage Mixed Use), H-16a (New Second Units), H-18a (Inclusionary Housing Nexus Study), and LU-23a (Zoning Ordinance Amendments).

G-3. Housing Agencies.
Support agencies and organizations that provide shelter, housing, and related services to very low-, low-, and moderate-income households.

San Rafael City Hall was built in 1966.

> See H-4a (Inter-Jurisdictional Housing Activities and Resources), H-11a (Homesharing and Tenant Matching Opportunities), H-12a (Countywide Efforts to Address Homeless Needs).

G-4. Diversity at City Hall.
Make efforts to reflect on Boards and Commissions, and among City employees the characteristics of San Rafael's population.

G-4a. Outreach. Monitor the diversity of membership on City Boards and Commissions. Solicit applications from all segments of the community when making appointments.
> Responsibility: City Clerk
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

G-4b. City Employment. Promote City employment opportunities throughout the community.
> Responsibility: Human Resources
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

GOAL 21: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

It is the goal of San Rafael to have enthusiastic participation in civic life by residents and neighborhood organizations representing all ages and segments of the community. *Active, broad-based public participation in developing community policy is needed and encouraged. We need successful partnerships among the City and neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and social and cultural service organizations so that there is a strong community-wide commitment to improvements.*

Public participation is at the core of successful city government. San Rafael's participatory program of education, input, dialogue and consensus-building is one of the key strategies for enhancing our entire community, creating a greater sense of community, and developing a commitment to the greater good. The recently approved Community Engagement Action Plan, approved in 2013, lays out a number of actions to improve public communication, outreach, transparency, and open government. In addition, the City has worked in the improvement of technology to expand public access to information, including online availability of public meeting agendas and video archive of meetings as well as the launcing of "e-permits" to allow the public to track active permits. San Rafael continues to evaluate the effectiveness and responsiveness of its engagement with the community, making strides to encourage participation as addressed in policies G-5 to G-8 below.

San Rafael benefits from broad community involvement in local planning matters. Through partnerships with local organizations and involvement with the community, the City has been able to take collaborative approaches towards providing services to the public and finding cost-effective solutions for services. Examples of partnerships include the renovation of Beach Park with Terrapin Crossroads and management of Canal Community Garden provided by Canal Alliance. Citizen interest and participation in the public forum has been and continues to be an integral part of the policy and plan development process.San Rafael's experience has been that such involvement is beneficial for effective land use decision-making and neighborhood design as well as housing availability, quality, and affordability.

G-5. Leadership.
Provide responsive and effective leadership to achieve the City's vision, consistent with the Community Engagement Action Plan.

> **G-5a. Staff Leadership Skills.** Recruit, train and retain highly competent employees. Continue providing regular orientations and leadership training to City employees.
> Responsibility: Human Resources
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

> **G-5b. Board and Commission Training.** Develop an annual orientation to City government for members of San Rafael City Council, boards, commissions, and advisory groups. Provide information about the roles and responsibilities of effective civic leadership.
> Responsibility: City Clerk, City Attorney
> Timeframe: Long Term
> Resources: Staff Time

G-5c. Leadership Training. Encourage efforts to provide leadership training by community groups such as Canal Ministry, Marin Interfaith Youth Outreach, local schools, neighborhood associations and the Chamber of Commerce. Encourage City staff and board and commission members to participate in leadership training programs.
> Responsibility: City Manager, Community Development, Community Services
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

G-5d. City Hall Academy. Consider creation of a City Hall Academy to provide training in City governance and public involvement. Prepare and distribute information about effective involvement in government activities.
> Responsibility: City Manager
> Timeframe: Long Term
> Resources: Staff Time

G-5e. Advocacy at Regional and State Level. Seek appointment to regional and State committees and boards and continue to advocate for State legislation which can affect City services and further City objectives.
> Responsibility: City Manager, City Council
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff and Council member's time

G-6. Broad-Based Involvement.

Establish methods to encourage broad-based, meaningful community involvement. Encourage residents who historically have not been involved in political processes to become engaged in government, consistent with the Community Engagement Action Plan.

G-6a. Community Stakeholders. Actively seek community-wide representation and public involvement opportunities on City issues through vigorous outreach programs to engage residents who are not typically involved, such as young people and residents not fluent in English.
> Responsibility: City Manager, City Clerk, Community Development, Community Services
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

See G-8c (San Rafael Website) and G-5d (City Hall Academy).

G-7. Community Participation.

Encourage and support public participation in the formulation and review of policies, especially neighborhood level planning. Work with community groups and other organizations to develop, implement and evaluate strategies that enhance San Rafael's neighborhoods, consistent with the Community Engagement Action Plan.

G-7a. Review of Facilities Proposed by Other Public Agencies. Encourage other public agencies such as Marin County and the school districts, to participate in the City's design review process.
> Responsibility: Community Development
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

See CD-15a (Notification and Information about Development Projects), I-5a (Design Review), H-3a (Neighborhood Meetings) and G-18a (Collaboration with Local Agencies).

G-8. City and Community Communication.

Emphasize effective communication between City Hall and the community-at-large. Involve stakeholders in City projects as early as possible, consistent with the Community Engagement Action Plan.

G-8a. Information about Community Issues. Make information about community issues available to increase understanding and insight into the complexity of challenges that affect the community. Where possible, information about City services and programs should be made available in languages other than English, e.g., Spanish or Vietnamese. Use the City newsletter, community meetings, electronic means, and media that reaches the varied population groups in San Rafael.

> Responsibility: City Manager, Community Development, City Clerk
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

G-8b. Contact Database. Maintain a database of stakeholders who attend community meetings and want to be involved. Centralize or consolidate community-wide mailing lists that include representation from homeowners associations, neighborhood and service groups, the faith community, the school districts, the business community and other interest groups.

> Responsibility: Community Development, City Clerk, City Manager
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

G-8c. San Rafael Website. Use the City's website to invite people to participate in City government and to provide access to City information and documents and links to community organizations. Create new methods to distribute cost-effective electronic notification about City activities, meetings, and programs, and to interact with the community.

> Responsibility: Information Services, City Manager
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

See CD-15a (Notification and Information about Development Projects).

Volunteerism in San Rafael

The City of San Rafael Volunteer Program was created in 1996. The purpose of the program is to develop volunteers within City government and to partner with neighborhood and community groups to build a better San Rafael. Volunteers are recruited for a variety of tasks, jobs, and projects, including the annual Daffodil Planting Days, the Spring and Fall Clean Up Days, the City Hall Concierge Desk and all the departments within City Hall.

Over 1,000 individuals volunteer each year. Together, these stalwart citizens contribute over one million dollars of service to the City annually! This is a tremendous donation of time and energy deserving of special recognition which is a hallmark of this program.

G-9. Advisory Committees.

Use appointed boards, task forces, commissions, and other advisory and ad hoc committees to assist City staff and the City Council in decision-making processes.

G-9a. City Boards and Commissions. On a periodic basis, review the purpose of City boards and commissions. In addition, assess appointment procedures and member representation to ensure public involvement, new ideas and adequate advice and recommendation to Council. Consider the benefits and disadvantages of establishing term limits for members of City Boards and Commissions to encourage more public involvement and new ideas.

> Responsibility: City Manager, Departments with advisory boards and commissions
> Timeframe: Long Term
> Resources: Staff Time

G-9b. Recognition and Feedback. Recognize departing commission members for their contributions. Interview board and commission members about their experiences when they complete their service. Consider involving retired commission members in training new commissioners.

> Responsibility: Departments with advisory boards and commissions
> Timeframe: Short Term
> Resources: Staff Time

See CD-15a (Notification and Information about Development Projects) and I-5a (Design Review).

G-10. Volunteerism in Government.

Encourage and support people of all ages and backgrounds to volunteer with the City, and develop volunteerism at all levels of City government.

G-10a. Volunteer Program. Create meaningful volunteer opportunities within City departments and foster worthwhile community projects through partnerships with neighborhoods and service groups. Recruit new volunteers from various sources including schools, seniors, neighborhoods and local business. Recognize volunteers for their service to the City.

> Responsibility: Human Resources, City Manager
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

G-11. Empower Residents to Take Responsibility.

Provide opportunities to increase residents' skills and knowledge to promote community involvement.

G-11a. City Training Programs. Continue, and improve where possible, City-sponsored programs such as:

- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
- Citizens Police Academy
- CPR training and first aid
- Neighborhood Crime Watch
- Neighborhood Clean-up Days
  > Responsibility: Fire Department, Police Department, Human Resources (Volunteer Program)
  > Timeframe: Ongoing
  > Resources: Staff Time

See G-5d (City Hall Academy), G-10a (Volunteer Program), S-26a (Public Safety Training), S-33a (Disaster Preparedness Plan) and S-40b (Enrollment in Training Programs).

G-12. Local Elections.

Encourage participation in local elections.

G-12a. Voter Information. Support voter registration drives, and participate in voter education programs. Educate students, new residents and new U.S. citizens about how to participate in local elections. Continue to provide voter registration information at City Hall, community centers, and libraries.

Responsibility: Community Services, Library, City Clerk
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: Staff Time

G-12b. Voter Participation. Work with the County to publicize the number of people voting in elections.
    Responsibility: City Clerk, Management Services
    Timeframe: Short Term
    Resources: Staff Time

GOAL 22: EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

It is the goal of San Rafael to have excellent schools and enhanced lifelong education. *The City will support the school districts' efforts to ensure access to quality education for everyone. The City of San Rafael offers and supports a wide range of programs to fulfill the needs of the community including adult education classes, literacy tutoring, career development and technology courses, childcare, and after school programs.*

The City of San Rafael recognizes the value of schools and education to the community. The City is committed to taking a leadership role in collaborating with school districts in San Rafael to ensure that exceptional education is provided to a wide spectrum of students. San Rafael is also committed to offering classes and programs that provide lifelong educational opportunities.

There are three public school districts in the San Rafael planning area (Dixie Elementary, San Rafael Elementary, and the San Rafael High School District). In addition to the sixteen public schools in the San Rafael planning area, there are seventeen private schools, which are all elementary schools except Marin Academy. San Rafael is also home to Dominican University with over 2,200 students.

In addition, a number of classes and programs are offered by the City of San Rafael, including pre-kindergarten programs and adult education classes at community centers, cultural and arts classes at Falkirk Cultural Center, and the Marin Literacy Program at the San Rafael Public Library.

G-13. Education.
Collaborate with schools, from preschools to the university level, in fostering educational programs to benefit the community.

Over 2,200 undergraduate and graduate students attend Dominican University.

    G-13a. Partnerships with Schools. Participate in school projects and career days to educate young people about local issues and City government and financing.
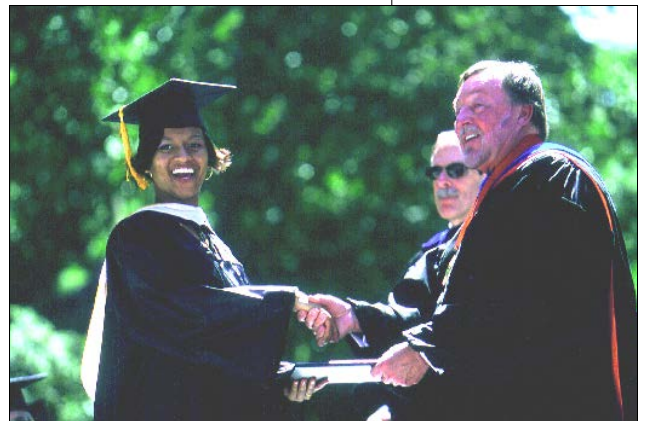   Responsibility: City departments
        Timeframe: Ongoing
        Resources: Staff Time

G-14. Relationship with School Districts.
Maintain a close, collaborative relationship with the school districts to maximize public benefit.

G-14a. Communication with the School Districts. Maintain regular communications with the School Districts to foster community collaborations. Continue periodic joint City Council and School Board meetings on topics of mutual interest.
    Responsibility: City Manager
    Timeframe: Ongoing
    Resources: Staff Time

G-15. School Facilities as Gathering Places.

Collaborate with schools to provide greater access to school facilities for neighborhood and community activities.

G-15a. Joint Use of Educational Facilities. Develop and adopt Memorandum of Understanding agreements with Dixie and San Rafael School Districts, Marin Academy, and Dominican University governing the development, maintenance, and community use of facilities for recreation, childcare and/or community events.
    Responsibility: City Manager, Community Services
    Timeframe: Ongoing
    Resources: Staff Time

See PR-20 (City-School Cooperation).

The community celebrated the opening of the new Coleman Elementary School campus.

G-16. Business and School Relationships.

Strengthen the positive working relationship between the business community and the schools to enhance the quality of education.

G-16a. Internships. Provide governmental internships with local high schools and college within the various city departments. Encourage local businesses to provide internships and mentoring programs. Assist with publicity about internship opportunities.
    Responsibility: All Departments
    Timeframe: Ongoing
    Resources: Staff Time

G-17. City Programs and Classes.

Offer programs and classes to address the needs and interests of the whole community.

G-17a. City Programs and Classes. Continue to offer a variety of leisure, recreation, educational and personal enhancement courses and programs for all age groups at the Community Centers, Falkirk Cultural Center, Library and other public and private facilities. Regularly assess participants and the public at large to determine interests and support.
    Responsibility: Community Services, Library
    Timeframe: Ongoing
    Funding: Fees, Volunteers

GOAL 23: SUPPORT FOR CARE PROVIDERS

It is the goal of San Rafael to have collaborative efforts to support those who are in need. *There are many public, private and non-profit providers in San Rafael, which help seniors, people with disabilities, homeless people, families who are disadvantaged, and others. The City supports these providers as appropriate to maintain San Rafael as a compassionate city.*

As a compassionate city, San Rafael collaborates with agencies that provide services to those who are in need. Coordination among government and private organizations helps stretch resources. Over 70 private and public organizations within San Rafael offer a broad range of aid and services such as meals, housing, health care and counseling to individuals and families. Organizations provide rehabilitation and adaptive technologies to people living with disabilities. In addition, there are many group homes for the elderly and people with disabilities. San Rafael is distinguished by being the center and headquarters for national and local innovative and creative organizations.

G-18. Support for Special Needs Groups.

Encourage government and business support for non-profit and other organizations that provide services to the elderly, people with disabilities, homeless people, and others in need. Support efforts of Marin County to encourage the availability of social services throughout the County.

> **G-18a. Collaboration with Local Agencies.** Work with non-profits and other organizations on priorities, services and facilities. Assist in establishing avenues of communication between non-profits and neighbors. Current examples include supporting efforts to provide emergency shelter and transitional housing to homeless individuals, families and victims of domestic violence, and working with local organizations on sidewalk accessibility.
> Responsibility: City Manager, Community Development, Economic Development, Public Works
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time, CDBG Funds

> **G-18b. County and Other Cities' Programs.** Collaborate with Marin County and other Marin cities to support efforts to provide effective and efficient social services in the region.
> Responsibility: City Manager
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time, Grants

> **G-18c. Zoning Allowance**. Provide zoning allowance for group homes, transitional housing and treatment facilities, but preclude over-concentration of such facilities in residential neighborhoods as allowed by state law. Per the requirements of SB2, Zoning Ordinance amendments have been drafted to incorporate new definitions for "transitional housing" and "supportive housing"
> Responsibility: Community Development
> Timeframe: Short Term
> Resources: Staff Time

G-19. Interdepartmental Approach.

Continue innovative interdepartmental efforts that enable residents to access needed health care and social services.

G-19a. Interdepartmental Collaboration. Encourage and support interdepartmental efforts to address local health care and social service needs. Examples include community policing, community fire servicing, and the Health and Safety Committee.
Responsibility: City Manager, All Departments
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: Staff Time, Grants

GOAL 24: FUNDING FOR CITY SERVICES

It is the goal of San Rafael to have sufficient funding for city services. *San Rafael provides a broad range of services to meet diverse residential and business community needs. The City continues to explore new avenues of funding to maintain and improve city services and the quality of life.*

Maintaining and enhancing San Rafael's revenue base is necessary for the City to provide essential and prioritized, desired services. The City must maintain sound financial practices that meet applicable standards and direct San Rafael's financial resources to achieve its short- and long-term goals.

G-20. Public Involvement in the Budget Process.
Maintain an open dialogue with the public to evaluate and prioritize needed services.

G-20a. Public Involvement. Continue to involve residents and businesses in the budget process to the extent feasible, through community meetings, telephone surveys, focus groups, and other outreach methods.
Responsibility: City Manager
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: Staff Time

G-21. Financial Planning.
Plan for both short- and long-term financial needs.

G-21a. Financial Management Policy Updates. Review and update the Financial Management Policies as changes in community needs or other considerations warrant such policy review.
Responsibility: Management Services
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: Staff Time

G-22. Program Assessments.
Evaluate the performance of city programs and services in achieving their stated goals as part of the City's budget process. Retain, adjust or eliminate programs or services as appropriate.

G-22a. Program Assessment. Continue to provide the City Council semi-annual reports on progress made toward achieving goals and objectives and meeting performance indicators. Look at ways to effectively and objectively measure performance, and consider establishing benchmarks to determine progress in the implementation of City policies.
Responsibility: Management Services, Community Development
Timeframe: Ongoing; (for benchmark study: long term)
Resources: Staff Time

G-22b. Residents' Feedback. Use appropriate methods to regularly survey residents on the satisfaction levels regarding various City services and programs.
Responsibility: Management Services, Community Development
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: Staff Time

G-23. Government Financing.

As an alternative to increased taxation, pursue methods to diversify funding sources to adequately finance government functions, including:

- Seeking grant funding.
- Using economic development to leverage opportunities to provide needed public services.
- Determining the full cost of services and charging fees, as appropriate, to recover those costs. Fees may be adjusted based on the priorities and needs of the community.
- Seeking ways to streamline services and reduce fees and charges.

> **G-23a. Revenue Monitoring.** Continue to maintain a revenue monitoring system to assist in trend analysis and revenue forecasting.
> Responsibility: Management Services
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

> **G-23b. Grants.** Actively seek grant opportunities, and encourage interdepartmental cooperation and coordination in preparing grant applications.
> Responsibility: Management Services
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

> **G-23c. Cost of Services.** Periodically evaluate the cost of providing services and adjust fees accordingly.
> Responsibility: Management Services
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

> See also G-10 (Volunteerism in Government), I-2b (Diversified Funding), LU-17a (Retail and Services Uses in Industrial and Office Areas), and EV-8a (Industrial Zoning).

G-24. Local Government Partnerships.

Partner with other local governments and organizations to provide community services and cost-effectively resolve shared problems.

> **G-24a. Funding Strategies for Infrastructure and Services.** Develop, in cooperation with other jurisdictions, funding strategies for governmental infrastructure and services that take into account local and regional economic development goals and consider the costs to, and benefits for, the jurisdictions and the region. An example is a Joint Power Agreement for shared services, such as the Marin County Congestion Management Agency and Marin Emergency Radio Authority.
> Responsibility: Management Services, Public Works
> Timeframe: Ongoing
> Resources: Staff Time

> **G-24b. New Revenue Sources for City Services and Infrastructure.** Consider establishing new revenue sources to adequately fund services and infrastructure. Such funding would require voter approval and a broad-based community campaign.
> Responsibility: City Manager
> Timeframe: Short Term
> Resources: Staff Time