

OUR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Preamble

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1993 to 1995

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1995 to 2000

This is a Vision worthy of San Rafael. It honors and respects our "hometown feel" and historic past and guides us into a prosperous, environmentally friendly future -- a fitting legacy to our children, grandchildren, other citizens and neighbors who will all live in our community.

Our Vision is a new way of approaching the future and will require new ways of thinking and doing business Downtown. Our Implementation Strategy will start those new actions, insure they continue, and make our Vision reality.

The realities of development and government are rapidly changing. Local California governments, including the City of San Rafael, do not and will not have the monetary resources in the 1990's and 2000's that were available in the 1960's and 1970's. We are all becoming aware of the limits of what government can do. As we move from an age of entitlements to an age of personal responsibility, private sector efforts and development dollars will become increasingly key to our Downtown's success over the long term.

Neither the City, the private sector or the general community can bring this Vision to life alone; success will require actions from all three. Relationships between these sectors will have to be less adversarial and much more collaborative to achieve our community dream.

Results to Date

Our Vision is already being accomplished. The Downtown described in our Vision is so compelling and in line with community desires that implementation began before we were finished. Many new ideas consistent with the Vision have been proposed and accepted. The accomplishments listed below are examples of the kinds of things we will be see more of in the future:

- Active City involvement in reopening the Rafael Theater,
- New sidewalk benches and flower boxes along Fourth Street,
- Zoning regulations on restaurant limitations amended,
- Applications to open a coffee house, a billiard facility, a jazz club, and a brew pub processed in record time,
- Car wash facility upgraded,
- Auto painting shop remodeled and converted to office use,

- Macy's relocated to a remodeled building,
- Parking garages painted and made safer,
- Process to underground utilities on Second and Third Streets initiated,
- New parking lot opened at Second and Lindaro Streets,
- Downtown police foot patrol started.

Implementation Philosophy

Our Implementation Strategy is action oriented, collaborative, looks for private sector investments and leverages results. Our Strategy focuses on near term actions by specific actors that will create momentum and stimulate other actions. Implementation will be a collaborative effort of the private sector, the City, and the general public because we all have a stake in what happens Downtown. Collaboration will include proceeding at times in supportive but independent actions, and at other times in direct partnership and will bring a new positive spirit that emphasizes benefits to Downtown. In the new era of reduced governmental funding and investment, most development projects and ideas will flow from the private sector. Therefore, our Strategy is to attract private development money and energy, leverage and support those actions with the City's efforts, and maximize results for the benefit of Downtown.

Role of Our Vision

Our Vision relates to all aspects of the community and includes our desires for our social, cultural, economic, civic and urban design future. In our implementation strategy, we also take a multi-dimensional approach. While revisions and changes to city regulations are essential, they are not all that is necessary. It is also important that our implementation actions are market responsive and sensitive to both business and community needs, and that our decision making environment is broadened to encourage new arenas of businesses and ideas.

Our Vision establishes an environment where everyone's brainpower is encouraged to focus on creative solutions that enhance and enliven our Downtown within the context of the Vision. Minimum critical specifications are set in the Vision so as to allow and encourage our partners (developers, architects, merchants, property owners, residents) to bring their maximum creativity to our Downtown. With only 10 to 15 percent of the Vision referring to regulation, rules or ordinances, maximum flexibility and creativity is maintained.

Our Vision provides information for property owners, developers, architects, and merchants explaining what we as a community want to create. These important players are invited to join us in creating the future, and to shape their plans in accordance with our Vision.

With this Vision we have established a more open ended approach to Downtown, with life, energy and flexibility. It is essential to realize that our Vision is not totally open ended; it does state what we do not want and will not accept in certain instances. Nor will it cover all future issues. There will always be disagreements and conflicts, but being people of good will, we will be able to work them out within the context of our Vision framework.

Implementation Process

For projects in line with our Vision, we will have a development review process that it is informal, collaborative and open with a commitment to a quick cycle time. Determination of consistency with the Vision will involve intuitive evaluation and a wide ranging discussion. Informality and openness, coupled with the clarity of the Vision on what is desired, will help projects move rapidly through the review process or quietly go away where they are not appropriate for our Downtown. This will minimize wasted effort and subsequent time loss.

Our Implementation Strategy has one major new approach, that of advocacy and support for projects that achieve the spirit of our Vision. As a community, we will be able to actively look for ways to speak out, act and endorse projects which further our exciting Vision for Downtown.

We want to see this Vision come true in 17 years or less. This is not a long time in terms of the overall life of San Rafael to implement such a dynamic Vision. We are establishing a process and program where the improvements already achieved are preserved, where additional improvements will occur in the short term, and where our list of long term strategic actions are continually refreshed and assigned to responsible implementors. Our process will also have advocacy, monitoring and conflict resolution mechanisms built in.

Our Implementation Strategy is a coherent organized set of actions that will ultimately result in our achieving the Downtown described in our Vision. Our strategy assumes public, private and individual involvement in actions which cover short and long term time frames, the assigning of specific responsibilities, and periodic review and updating.

Our Implementation Strategy includes three elements:

- **Implementors** - These are the individuals, private interests, organizations and governmental agencies that will take action to make the Vision happen.
- **Short Term Actions** - Over the next twenty four months, these actions will be taken by Implementors to show progress and to start us down the road to substantial change and renewal Downtown.
- **Long Term Actions** - This list of intentions and possible projects are the basis for actions to be taken in a longer time frame.

Implementors

The open, flexible, informal, responsive and responsible feeling and spirit generated by the Vision process was a major accomplishment for San Rafael. We want the community based collaborative process to continue and to guard, champion, enable and monitor the progress of our implementation projects and activities. This process must be respected by all those who will be involved in implementing our Vision.

Achieving our Vision over the next 10 - 17 years will require the input and actions of many implementors. Generally, we classify implementors as Project Initiators, the City of San Rafael, Vision Champions and Downtown Promoters.

Project Initiators

Project initiators are anyone and any organization with a project, idea or action that is aligned with our Vision. Most of the Vision implementation actions will be generated by this group. Developers of new buildings, realtors locating a new building tenant, property owners doing building improvements, residents with ideas to improve the area, merchants starting special services, civic groups and non-profit organizations performing community projects, schools with special projects, all are project initiators and are invited to participate in making our Vision come to life.

Project Initiators will:

- Be the primary drivers and source of Implementation activities,
- Adjust projects to be consistent with the Vision.

City of San Rafael

The City of San Rafael, through staff activities in all departments and the actions of boards and commissions, will be an active partner in the implementation of our Vision.

The City of San Rafael will:

- Accept and respect the Vision,
- Use the Vision, Value Constitution and Principles as decision making tools for Downtown,
- Collaborate with Project Initiators,
- Leverage and support actions consistent with the Vision.

Vision Champions

We need a champion to keep the spirit of the Vision alive, to continue to involve the entire community in Downtown and to oversee Vision implementation. A group modeled after the Downtown Community Plan Committee, with representation of all of the community and following the Vision process will be this champion.

Vision Champions Will:

- **Communicate the Vision through:**
 - ✦ Continuing dialogue with the community,
 - ✦ Fostering communication between stakeholders,
 - ✦ Reporting on the progress of the Vision.
- **Promote the Vision through:**
 - ✦ Demonstrating a “can do” spirit, and be a proactive broker,
 - ✦ Igniting and sparking strategies,
 - ✦ Directing ideas and implementation actions to appropriate stakeholder groups and Initiators,
 - ✦ Advocating the Vision Values and Principles,
 - ✦ Initiating timely and appropriate projects for itself.
- **Align projects with the Vision,**
 - ✦ Functioning as an early, and informal tester of consistency with Vision,
 - ✦ Reviewing changes to the city’s development regulations for conformance with the Vision
- **Strongly champion and advocate projects consistent with the Vision through whatever means are appropriate.**
- **Measure, monitor and adjust the progress made in Implementation in an annual reassessment.** In the spirit of flexibility and proactive action, the group will keep the implementation process on track while optimizing our possibilities for a greater Downtown.

Downtown Promoters

Downtown already has several organizations involved with marketing and promotion; the most active are the Business Improvement District, the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce and local real estate businesses. Coordination of these efforts has been discussed in the past and with the Vision completed, these efforts can now go forward. A Downtown Promoter Organization, aligned with the Vision and including the current major players, the city and the community could address marketing and promotional issues.

The Downtown Promoters Will:

- Implement the Vision and work for the good of all Downtown,
- Initiate programs including:
 - ✦ Workshops to build capability of Downtown businesses,
 - ✦ Marketing/advertising efforts,
 - ✦ Promotion of Downtown's image through professional channels and existing businesses,
 - ✦ Events management, with signature events,
 - ✦ Retention and recruitment efforts that fit with and catalyze existing efforts, especially those of realtors and other professionals,
 - ✦ Coordinate Downtown management so that all of Downtown works together.
- Develop a clear organizational structure detailing the coordination and communication between the participating organizations.
- Have a clear budget and be self-supporting.
- Include all segments of the Downtown community, including merchants, property owners, professionals, service businesses and residents.

Short Term Actions 1993 to 1995

The next twenty four months will be a period of exploration and challenge for our Downtown community. There will be the exploration of a new process, a new method of collaboration and a new spirit along with the challenge to make it all work and to achieve immediate progress. Implementation of the Vision over a 17 year period cannot wait until year 15 to have results. Substantial progress must be made the first year and continue throughout the whole term.

Strategies and actions do not all have the same importance, urgency or magnitude of results. Our Short Term Implementation Strategy contains three types of actions, those which have:

- **Major Impact Actions** - These actions leverage other actions, provide substantial improvements in Downtown's image, increase the number of people using Downtown, generate major tax revenues or are an important time sensitive opportunity.
- **Facilitating Actions** - These actions remove barriers to achieving the Vision, serve as catalysts for other actions, have a good results and are manageable in scope.
- **Quick Results Actions** - These actions are easy to accomplish with minimum effort and cost and which produce visible results.

The following list of actions and responsible parties were identified in the Vision process as those items which the community and the Vision stakeholders saw as areas that should be addressed in the short term. This list will be monitored and evaluated by the Vision Champions, and will be adjusted and upgraded as needed. In keeping with the flexibility and action orientation of our Vision and Implementation Strategy, we will take advantage of opportunities and actions which are currently unforeseen and therefore not on this list but which substantially further the Vision.

MAJOR IMPACT ACTIONS	Initiators	Champions	Promoters	City
<p>1. City leaders, Departments, Boards and Commissions use the Vision Values and Principles. Using the Vision to guide Downtown decision making will demonstrate the city's solid commitment to making the Vision a reality.</p>				✓
<p>2. Institute a Vision Champion Organization We need a champion to keep the spirit of the Vision alive, to continue to involving the entire community in Downtown and to oversee Vision implementation.</p>		✓		✓
<p>3. Assist Rafael Theater reopening project. Reopening the theater will have major positive spinoffs and ramifications for the rest of Downtown. This project will be a model to show how the community welcomes projects consistent with the Vision and the benefits which will accrue for all.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>4. Expand the boundaries and use of the Downtown Parking District. Many building improvement projects are impeded by the constraints of the Parking District boundaries and use limitations. By adjusting these items, we can quickly provide more public parking for more people.</p>		✓		✓
<p>5. Initiate a Downtown Promoters Organization. A Downtown Promoter Organization, aligned with the Vision and including the current major players, the city and the community could address marketing and promotional issues for all of Downtown.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓

FACILITATING ACTIONS	Initiators	Champions	Promoters	City
<p>6. Make the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance and other city ordinances consistent with the Vision. Making our city rules consistent with the Vision is one way that projects can be aligned with the Vision. City policies can also offer rewards and incentives to encourage Vision consistency.</p>		✓		✓
<p>7. Streamline the city's development processes. Development review can be a barrier to improvements Downtown. We want a process that is informal, collaborative and open with a commitment to a quick cycle time. Determination of consistency with the Vision will involve intuitive evaluation and a wide ranging discussion.</p>		✓		✓
<p>8. Develop a comprehensive parking strategy. Parking is a major player in most development projects. The provision of adequate parking involves many different elements, including ordinance requirements, location, pricing, timing and enforcement which all need to be coordinated.</p>		✓		✓
<p>9. Initiate stronger retail cooperation, management and promotion. The retail community will benefit by building on the Business Improvement District's efforts to improve Downtown shopping, with a program offering workshops (window displays, business image), merchant information services (maps, brochures), and effective promotion.</p>	✓	✓	✓	
<p>10. Market and promote Downtown. Marketing and promoting all of Downtown as a business, financial and retail center will improve the image of the whole area.</p>	✓		✓	
<p>11. Explore Unreinforced Masonry financing. Creative financing such as using the credit of the City to leverage private sector loans could result in physical improvements to Downtown buildings which need to be upgraded for earthquake safety.</p>	✓	✓		✓

QUICK RESULTS ACTIONS	Initiators	Champions	Promoters	City
<p>12. Change B, C, and D Streets to two way traffic flow. Reinstating two way traffic flow will be make it easier to move around Downtown, make the streets more accessible and improve their pedestrian friendly character.</p>		✓		✓
<p>13. Build a demonstration block project. With facade renovations, sign changes and other improvements, property and business owners can see the type of changes and amenities that are possible. This block will make a major visible change and demonstrate the new character of Downtown.</p>	✓	✓		✓
<p>14. Build a prototype outdoor seating area. We want to encourage outdoor eating opportunities by demonstrating how this can be done quickly and in a quality way.</p>	✓	✓		✓
<p>15. Allow pedestrian oriented signs. Making it possible to have signs oriented to pedestrians will have an immediate change in Downtown's appearance and will add to the pedestrian friendly character of the streets.</p>		✓		✓
<p>16. Make the street patrols more visible. Increasing the visibility of the existing street patrols will add to the feeling of Downtown as a safe, welcoming place.</p>	✓		✓	
<p>17. Initiate high profile, signature events. The event program is very successful in bringing people Downtown. Developing one or two high profile signature events will round out the program and specifically promote Downtown San Rafael.</p>	✓		✓	
<p>18. Encourage planting trees. Additional trees will add to the pleasant walking character of Downtown and are small projects that can be done by many groups and individuals.</p>	✓	✓		✓
<p>19. Relocate/upgrade newsracks. Improving the appearance of our newsracks and locating them in the right places will be a substantial visual improvement on many of our Downtown street corners.</p>		✓		✓
<p>20. Underground utilities on Second and Third. Putting the overhead wires under ground will make a major improvement in the Second/Third Street Corridor.</p>	✓	✓		✓

Long Term Actions 1995 to 2000

Implementation actions will continue for many years and will not stop after the short term actions are achieved. The momentum of achievements will be continued and even excellerated. We have no crystal ball of the future, so that actions which are responsive to the contemporary situation and consistent with the Vision must be continually developed.

The community has suggested many implementation actions ideas which we can take; a short list is included here. In the list are actions requiring a lot of work over several years by a large number of people and organizations working together. There are activities we would like to do as funding becomes available or as initiators come forward. Other of the projects are dependent on the completion of one or more of the short term projects before they can be done

We will be reviewing, amending and adding to this list periodically as projects are completed, as activities change and as new ideas come forward. Opportunities which are not apparent this year could become high priority items next year, and questions about the effectiveness of an action could cause its removal from consideration. However, the question which will always be asked is whether the action is consistent with the Vision.

Possible Long Term Major Impact Projects are:

- Develop a permanent Public Market
- Develop a major children's entertainment and educational facility
- Establish a business retention and recruitment program
 - ✦ Assist with retail improvements to develop a better retail mix
 - ✦ Recruit for all of Downtown
 - ✦ Encourage evening activities, restaurants and entertainment
- Make the Fourth Street Hetherton Gateway improvements
- Encourage quality office development
- Keep the City library Downtown
- Have entertainment for children, youth and families
- Expand the area around Courthouse Square with a plaza design to expand the gathering place concept
- Start a program to allow for flexible use of sidewalks

- Develop the Lindero District
- Build more housing
 - ✦ Provide development incentives
 - ✦ Expedite processing of housing projects
 - ✦ Revise residential parking and other development standards to reflect Downtown's urban character
- Have more public events including:
 - ✦ Promotional events
 - ✦ Expand the sponsorship of events
 - ✦ Locate events throughout the Downtown area
- Develop new funding sources
 - ✦ Grants from governmental and nonprofit agencies
 - ✦ Leverage City money with private money
- Encourage the expansion of activities at Downtown cultural facilities

Possible Long Term Facilitating Actions are:

- Continue to make the City's permit processes work better
- Improve sidewalks and cross walks to the Transportation Center and the neighborhoods
- Develop an Urban Design Plan
- Start a banner program to announce community events
- Build major office projects in the Hetherton Gateway
- Develop more parking in the Hetherton Gateway and the West End
- Increase the visibility and use of public parking
- Diagonal parking for more spaces, to slow traffic, be pedestrian friendly on selected cross streets and in important retail shopping areas
- Expand the membership and area of the Business Improvement District to include non retail businesses
- Start a facade improvement program
- Have an effective advertising campaign for Downtown