

**Summary of San Rafael General Plan 2040 Steering Committee Meeting
Meeting #3 March 14, 2018
7:00-9:00 PM at 1111 Las Gallinas Avenue**

Attendance

- **Members Present:** *DJ Allison, Jenny Broering, Bella Bromberg, Maribeth Bushey, Bill Carney, Omar Carrera, Berenice Davidson, Richard Hall, Eric Holm, Linda Jackson, Margaret Johnston, Bonnie Marmor, Stephanie Plante, Kate Powers, Pam Reaves, Jeff Rhoads, Jackie Schmidt, Roger Smith, Sparkie Spaeth, Eric Spielman, Karen Strolia,*
- **Members Absent:** *Maribeth Bushey (excused), Drew Norton (excused), Cecilia Zamora (excused)*
- **Alternates Participating:** *Samantha Sargent, Jed Greene*
- **Alternates Present in Audience:** *Alan Schaevitz, Amy Likover, Jeff Jones*
- **Staff Present:** *Raffi Boloyan, Anne Derrick, Paul Jensen, Barry Miller*
- **Note: Members of the public were also present at this meeting**

Welcome/ Roll Call

Chair Plante called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Project manager Miller took roll call and reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

A member of the Public (Bill Martino) spoke to the Committee about youth advocacy, the importance of infusing conscience and soul into each Element of the General Plan, and the need to address infrastructure and operational efficiency in the General Plan.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

General Plan 2040 Work Program

Miller provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the major tasks in the General Plan Work Program. Chair Plante asked for comments from the Steering Committee. The following Comments were made (with staff comments noted in italicized text below).

- Are we discussing the “Vision” prematurely? Perhaps we should give the group a chance to coalesce first.
Response: This is intended as a preliminary discussion to flesh out ideas and revisit the 2004 Vision—we are not drafting a new vision at this meeting.
- Perhaps the Committee should identify Guiding Principles before coming up with a “Vision.” How was this handled in the last General Plan?
Response: The prior plan addressed “themes” as well a Vision—we can look at guiding principles.

- The Work Program is extensive and thorough, but the climate change focus needs to shift from mitigation to adaptation. Sea level rise, planning for the shoreline, and wildland management (fire prevention) will be more critical in the future. With respect to transportation, we should not just look at current conditions and travel modes, but also the future of mobility with autonomous and electric vehicles. These new modes may change how people own and operate vehicles, which may impact sales tax revenue, air quality, etc. Also, think about unanticipated consequences—for example, the reduction of vehicle noise is positive, but there may be safety issues if pedestrians and bicyclists can't hear electric vehicles as they approach.

PM Miller mentioned that minor changes can be made to the Work Program in response to Committee input. If there are questions we want a consultant to address, we can include them as we develop RFPs.

- References to “clean energy” should be changed to “low greenhouse gas or renewable” energy because “clean energy” is a misnomer and could include natural gas (which isn't that clean).
- The Climate Action Plan Update is focusing on mitigation, and that Plan's Steering Committee is assuming that the General Plan will handle issues relating to adaptation. An adaptation plan should be embedded in the General Plan; the General Plan also should include “post” disaster recovery plans (to improve eligibility for federal post-disaster funds).
- The Community Design Element scope should include landscaping.
- Will the General Plan “Vision” address the public education system?
Response: Because the General Plan is a long-range physical plan, topics such as educational quality and curriculum are not typically covered. However, the Plan may reference ways to improve the education system as an equity and economic development strategy. It also covers physical plant and school facilities.
- The Work Program and the makeup of the Committee itself appear to be geared toward Central San Rafael and do not reflect the unique issues of North San Rafael, which in some ways is like a separate city. When we consider new amenities, we must also consider fiscal impacts and make fiscally responsible decisions to ensure that our property taxes are reasonable. It is also essential to have “data” to back up assertions and not have policies driven by speculation or theory alone.
- Outlines should be provided in Spanish as well as English. With respect to the earlier question about educational quality, the School District has an Annual Report with test scores that addresses these issues that can be shared.
- Will Work Program Task 7.3 (Options for Potential Change Areas) include notification to large property owners regarding opportunities for potential General Plan changes? Also, with respect to the Health Element, there are unique issues related to youth such as school hunger and mental health (including issues related to elevated expectations of students).
- The 2020 Plan included a Neighborhoods Element, but the current work program doesn't reference updating it. Is the Plan to eliminate that Element?
Response: Not necessarily. We may move it to the Land Use Element, retain it as is, or create a separate section of the plan for Sub-areas. The content will be retained regardless.
- The Rock Quarry is a large area with the potential for change. We should include policy direction in the new General Plan.
- Kids with special needs (disabilities) and issues relating to depression, suicide, etc. should be acknowledged as we talk about public health.

There was a discussion of the earlier suggestion that large landowners be apprised of the General Plan Update and invited to suggest potential changes to their land designation. A committee member expressed concern that this could negatively impact residents, and urged Committee members to avoid

embedding project approvals in the General Plan. Another Committee member pointed out that appraising a property owner that a Plan update was underway was not a guarantee of a changed land use designation. CDD Director Jensen mentioned that the process of considering planning applications is fully transparent, and the City seeks to maximize visibility of the Plan Update and public engagement—including landowners. Further, applications for subsequent development referenced in the General Plan still go through a very extensive public review process afterwards, with additional opportunities for input.

The discussion of work program issues continued:

- The 2020 Census will be taken after the General Plan is completed—is this a problem?
Response: Demographic data is available annually through the American Community Survey. The Housing Element is the part of the General Plan most influenced by the Census and it will be amended in 2022 with data from the new Census.
- By 2030, 1 in 5 residents will be 65 or older. The General Plan should address the needs of an aging population.
- There needs to be collaboration among all age groups.
- Freitas Parkway should be sampled in the Noise Evaluation. General Plan Maps should be improved, with overlays used to show creeks and waterways.
- The Community Services and Facilities scope should include discussion/ evaluation of “green” purchasing policies and green maintenance and integrated pest management programs.
- Marijuana dispensaries should be discussed in the General Plan; they may affect our quality of life
- Can the Committee members play a role in which technical consultants are selected?
Response: We will consider inviting a Committee member to sit on the interview panel for the selection of specific consultants.

PM Miller remarked that if any Committee Member has a question/comment about the detailed Work Program including the Community Engagement information presented this evening they should email him by April 2.

B. Committee Feedback on “Eight Questions”

PM Miller provided a short briefing on responses to the “Homework Assignment” from the February meeting including recurring themes and goals from the Committee’s responses.

C. Revisiting the General Plan Vision

PM Miller asked the Committee to break into four groups. Each group was given a poster-sized copy of the General Plan 2020 Vision. Each group also was given the Committee’s responses to two of the eight questions discussed at the last meeting. Each group was tasked with reviewing the vision, considering the responses to the questions and their own thoughts about its continued relevance. What is missing, what is still on point, and what still resonates today and in the future?

A Committee member reiterated an earlier request that the Committee develop Guiding Principles in lieu of a Vision, since the Vision reads more like a wish list. Another Committee member expressed that we do both a “Vision” and “Guiding Principles,” as the Vision speaks to the “heart”, while Guiding Principles are more an expression of values. The two complement each other. Other Committee members generally agreed. PM Miller indicated that a decision should be made by the next meeting as to whether guiding principles would be included.

After a 20-minute breakout discussion, each group was asked to report out on their evaluation. The summary of comments is as follows:

- Group 1 (Questions 1 and 2)
 - ✓ Question 1 - What is precious here that we don't want to lose?
 - ✓ Question 2 – What is almost good that we need to make better?
 - ❖ Speaker from Group 1 reported that the “old” Vision did not talk in depth about Sustainability or Climate Change—those items should be added to the “new” Vision. Also, do we still want to call ourselves a “Mission City” given the history of the Missionaries in California (re indigenous populations). The group felt the framework of the 2020 Vision (referencing economy, nature, mobility, neighborhoods, etc.) still had merit.

- Group 2 (Questions 3 and 4)
 - ✓ Question 3 – What is terrible and needs to change?
 - ✓ Question 4 – What is missing?
 - ❖ Speaker from Group 2 reported that “Climate Change” was left out of the “old” Vision. Also, potentially delete “cause for celebration” from the verbiage since it is not reflective of the experience of the entire population. In addition, the group stated creeks and shoreline access were left out and should be included. The Vision does not acknowledge that the retail sector is threatened by the Internet. Also, the housing aspect of the vision needs work; although the vision speaks to being an arts-supportive community, artists can't afford to live here and there is a serious homeless problem that is not discussed here. In addition, the Infrastructure references need work. Traffic Congestion remains a huge issue. There should be more emphasis on encouraging all types of transit.

- Group 3 (Questions 5 and 6)
 - ✓ Question 5 – What is happening nearby that we should take advantage of?
 - ✓ Question 6 – What is happening nearby that we should be worried about?
 - ❖ Speaker from Group 3 indicated their group had looked at the Vision through various lenses. One lens is Equity—this is represented in various issues such as exposure to hazards and economic opportunity. Another lens is Innovation; the City should learn from elsewhere and employ best practices to respond to threats and challenges. This could mean ADUs and tiny homes, and not necessarily solutions that involve big changes. We also should be innovative in our approach to transportation, and be seen as pioneers. Another lens is disaster preparedness, including fire, flooding and earthquakes.

- Group 4 (Question 7 and 8)
 - ✓ Question 7 – What do we aspire to be?
 - ✓ Question 8 – How do we get started?
 - ❖ Speaker from Group 4 referred to “significant gaps” in the GP 2020 Vision relative to diversity, equity, climate change, and technology. These factors will impact the city's economy and fiscal health. The vision has to strike a balance between the rapid changes shaping our future and innate human qualities such as our passion for authenticity and pride in history. The group discussion had focused on equity and equal access to opportunity,

including concerns about access to quality education. The group felt the 2020 Vision statement was nostalgic in its tone, rather than forward looking and reflective of future challenges. It reads like a time capsule. Issues like artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles mean that we'll need to focus more on retaining our humanity to balance the effects of new technology.

A Committee member commented that it is difficult to prepare a vision for 2040 given our limited ability to predict the future and the rapid pace of change, and that what we really should be doing is expressing how we as a city will react and respond to change.

Comments from Alternates

PM Milled called on the alternates in the audience for their comments.

Alternate Alan Schaevitz asked:

- that a mechanism be found for Alternates to participate in the meetings so that they can be better prepared when asked to participate as members
- That the website be organized to highlight or pinpoint areas of significance that the public would be interested in. The public needs to understand why the General Plan matters.
- That General Plan 2040 address areas that are not in the City jurisdiction, but affect the Planning of the City. He mentioned the Rock Quarry specifically.

Jeff Jones mentioned that San Rafael is a designated Tree City and that should be considered when developing GP 2040.

Comments from Public

Paul Minault indicated he was pleased to see open space listed as a high priority by Steering Committee members, and wished to see sustained interest in protecting open space in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.