

REPORT TO GENERAL PLAN 2040 STEERING COMMITTEE

Subject: Revised Guiding Principles

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the May 2018 meeting, the General Plan Steering Committee discussed Draft Guiding Principles for General Plan 2040. The Principles have been substantially revised based on Committee input. The revised principles are formatted as a graphic and are attached to this report for discussion on July 11.

REPORT

In March 2018, the General Plan 2040 Steering Committee discussed the “Vision” statement in the previous General Plan, which was drafted more than 15 years ago. The Committee expressed an interest in either replacing or supplementing the vision with a set of “Guiding Principles.” The use of Guiding Principles in long-range planning documents is fairly common. Guiding Principles are a useful way to express local values, priorities, and aspirations for the future. In effect, the principles can serve as a “preamble” to the General Plan. They provide a useful benchmark for evaluating changes to existing policies, new policies, and land use and transportation choices.

A set of 16 Guiding Principles was drafted in April and presented to the Steering Committee at its May 9 meeting. The Principles were developed based on the Committee’s prior feedback (from February and March) on San Rafael’s strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. The Principles also considered the “themes” expressed in General Plan 2020.

A diversity of opinions was expressed at the May meeting. Some felt that the principles were generally on target, but needed minor edits. Others felt more substantive edits were needed. A summary of some of the comments made at the May meeting are listed below (these comments do not necessarily represent the opinions of the entire group):

- There are too many principles (16)
- They are too long—each principle should be a sentence rather than a paragraph
- They are too specific
- They need to be more consistent in tense
- They are too negative and not aspirational enough
- Some of the language could be misinterpreted

Additional comments from the Committee were solicited in writing after the meeting. Nine committee members provided suggestions, ranging from “wordsmithing” to a major rewrite.

Staff initiated a rewrite of the Guiding Principles based on this feedback. One of the objectives was to make the document shorter and more aspirational. Another was to more consistently frame each principle as a basic rule or concept, rather than as a policy statement (e.g., avoiding statements like “The City should...”).

A subcommittee of Steering Committee members, comprised of the City Council representative, the Chair, and the Vice Chair, as well as the Community Development Director and the General Plan Project Manager, was convened on June 27. The Committee felt that the principles could be best expressed in a diagram rather than through narrative, and should be organized around the following basic premise:

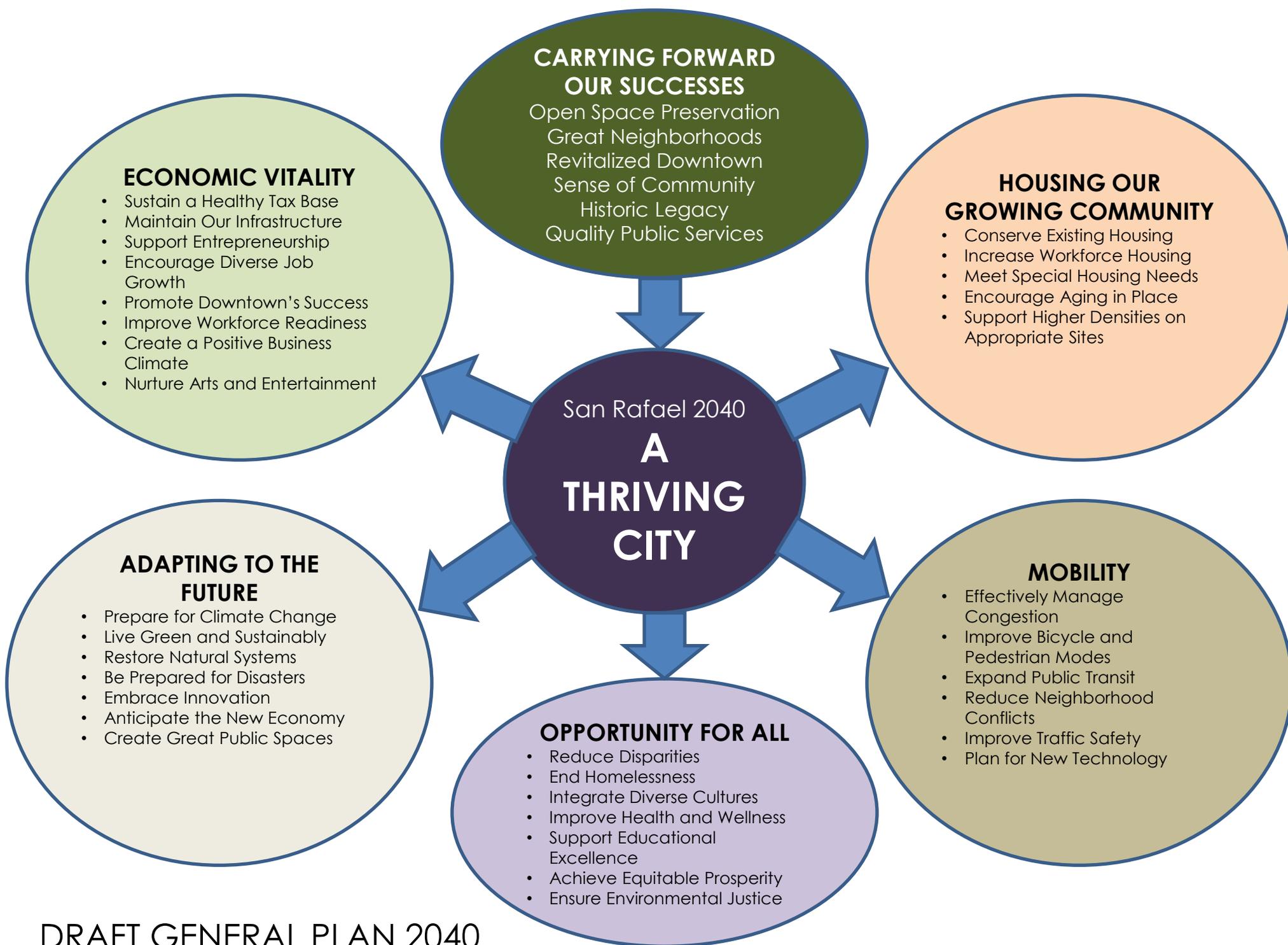
In 2040, San Rafael will be a thriving city.

To achieve this outcome, San Rafael will sustain the successful outcomes of its past plans. These outcomes include a legacy of protected open space, great neighborhoods, a revitalized downtown, a strong sense of community, historic buildings, and high-quality public services. These qualities will be maintained and enhanced moving forward.

The Principles Diagram identifies five key aspirations for the future:

- Economic Vitality
- Housing our Growing Community
- Adapting to the Future
- Opportunity for All
- Mobility

These five aspirations create a framework for the topics addressed in the prior version of the Guiding Principles. However, the phrasing is more direct and the use of a diagram communicates the message more clearly. The intent is to create a positive and forward-thinking vision to guide the General Plan Update.



**DRAFT GENERAL PLAN 2040
GUIDING PRINCIPLES**