

REPORT TO GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Subject: Status Report on Outreach and Engagement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Steering Committee will be briefed on on-going community engagement initiatives, including the October Town Hall meetings, the Neighborland site, and the Youth-in-Arts/ Y-Plan initiative.

REPORT

The City is in the midst of several community engagement initiatives related to General Plan 2040. Continued assistance from the Steering Committee is requested to “get the word out” and encourage participation.

Three ongoing initiatives are summarized below:

Town Hall Meetings, Round One

The City convened the first of three “Town Hall” meetings at the San Rafael Community Center at B Street on October 3, 2018. This was the first major community meeting specifically dedicated to the General Plan since the project was launched earlier this year. Two additional meetings are planned during “Round One”—one at the Terra Linda Community Center (Wednesday October 17, 2018, 7-9 PM) and another at the Al Boro Community Center in Pickleweed Park (Saturday, October 27, 2018, 10 AM-Noon).

The format of each meeting is the same and includes:

- Welcome and introductions
- A 15-minute presentation explaining the purpose of the General Plan, the Plan Update process, and questions for audience members to consider
- A 90-minute polling and discussion exercise related to city planning issues in San Rafael and thoughts about San Rafael’s future
- Concluding remarks, including door prizes

The format also includes a short break midway through the meeting and a “mad libs” exercise in which participants create a “vision” for San Rafael in 2040.

The polling and discussion exercise provides a fun, innovative way for audience members to weigh in on various policy questions. Audience members are furnished with 10-button digital “clickers” for real-time electronic polling. A question appears on the screen (i.e., How would you rate the quality of life in San Rafael?), with multiple choice options appearing below (A. Excellent; B. Good; C. Fair; D. Poor; E. Other). At the close of the polling period for each question (15 seconds or so), the outcome of each vote appears on a large screen. Audience members are then given a chance to verbally express why they voted the way they did, and elaborate on relevant issues that can inform future policy decisions.

The polling questions also include demographic statistics about the audience (i.e., How long have you lived in San Rafael? etc.) and “trivia” questions about San Rafael history and demographics. The electronic polling adds a fun element to the meeting, and allows for more dialogue and interaction than “adhesive colored dot” preference exercises.

About 35 people attended the meeting on October 3. The meeting had been promoted on Nextdoor, the City’s website and the Neighborland website, the City’s social media pages, and was mentioned in the Marin Independent Journal calendar. Staff also distributed postcards about the meeting at the Farmers Market and the Community Centers, and placed posters advertising the meeting in several public buildings.

Staff is hoping for higher attendance at the October 17 and October 27 meeting, and encourages Steering Committee members to spread the word through their social networks, community based organizations, neighborhood organizations, and local media outlets. The October 27 meeting will be in Spanish and English, and we are doing focused outreach to encourage Spanish-speaking residents to attend.

Neighborland

As noted at prior meetings, the City has contracted with Neighborland, an on-line engagement vendor specializing in long-range planning projects. The City has been promoting the website (<https://neighborland.com/sanrafael2040>) as a way for residents to participate in the General Plan Update in an easy, convenient way that recognizes busy schedules and the challenges of attending a public meeting. Neighborland provides the option for subscribers to share their views on different planning issues, and to note their agreement (or disagreement) with the perspectives expressed by others.

As of October 3, the site had been visited by 560 unique IP addresses. There are only 47 registered subscribers, however. Staff is continuing to drive web traffic to the site, and encourages General Plan Steering Committee members to do the same, and to encourage active registration on the site. New content will be added following completion of the initial round of community meetings in October.

Youth in Arts/ Y-Plan

As noted at the last Steering Committee meeting, staff is moving ahead with an initiative to engage elementary school students in a “visioning” exercise about San Rafael’s future. The initiative is being spearheaded by San Rafael Youth in Arts and Y-Plan, and follows a successful collaboration by these organizations to engage San Rafael youth in planning for sea level rise. This initiative will continue through Fall 2018—Steering Committee volunteers may be enlisted to assist!