

**Summary of San Rafael General Plan 2040 Steering Committee Meeting
Meeting #9 November 14, 2018
6:00-9:00 PM at 750 Lindaro Avenue**

Attendance

- **Members Present:** *Jenny Broering, Maribeth Bushey, Bill Carney, Omar Carrera, Eric Holm, Linda Jackson, Jeff Jones, Bonnie Marmor, Robert Miller, Drew Norton, Stephanie Plante, Kate Powers, Jeff Rhoads, Jackie Schmidt, Roger Smith, Sparkie Spaeth, Eric Spielman, Karen Strolia*
- **Alternates Participating:** *Jim Geraghty (for DJ Allison), Brad Honsberger (for Richard Hall), Jack McGinn (for Bella Bromberg), Jeff Schoppert (for Berenice Davidson), Samantha Sargent (for Cecilia Zamora)*
- **Excused Absences:** *DJ Allison, Bella Bromberg, Berenice Davidson, Richard Hall, Margaret Johnston, Cecilia Zamora*
- **Alternates Present in Audience:** *None*
- **Guests:** *Cory Bytof, Danielle O'Leary*
- **Staff Present:** *Raffi Boloyan, Anne Derrick, Allison Giffin, Paul Jensen, Barry Miller*
- **Public:** *Elizabeth Armstrong, Jerry Belletto, Bob Brown, Chris Hart, Jessica Cantry, others (not signed in)*

Welcome/ Roll Call

Vice Chair Carrera called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM. He announced that Chair Plante would be joining the meeting in progress shortly. Project Manager (PM) Miller took roll call and reviewed the agenda.

Acceptance of Meeting Summaries

A Motion and Second (Geraghty, Jones) were made to approve the Minutes from October 10, 2018. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

None

5. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Recap of Round 1 Community Meetings

Project Manager (PM) Miller provided a brief follow-up report on the three General Plan 2040 Community workshops convened during October.

Comments/Questions from the Steering Committee:

- Was having a separate room for the Spanish speakers advantageous? (directed to Vice Chair). *Vice Chair Carrera responded Yes. The topic is complex to many people, so having the presentation in Spanish made it easier to express ideas and provide feedback.*
- How do the demographics of those who attended the workshops compare to the city as a whole? Also, did the people who attended each workshop live in the vicinity of the workshop or were they from another area of San Rafael? How many of the attendees were Steering Committee members?
PM Miller responded that the attendance skewed toward older residents and homeowners, and noted that staff was working to solicit input from younger residents and renters through other means. Relative to place of residence, most people attended the meeting closest to their homes, but not always. Miller noted that 17 of the attendees at the meetings were either Steering Committee members or alternates (about 17% of all attendees).
- A committee member commented that because the number of people who attended the workshops was small, the polling responses were not necessarily representative of the full community.
PM Miller responded that the polling exercise was really intended to jumpstart the conversation on key issues, rather than to be a statistically valid sample,
- Several committee members suggested that the poll be put on line so it could be accessed by the public, with a larger number of participants. Members asked what the next steps were in the engagement process.
PM Miller indicated that pop-up meetings would take place in early 2019, and that these provided opportunities for short, casual conversations with the public about key concerns.
- The polling responses regarding parks in San Rafael were troubling and don't seem to represent the views of the public at large. We may not have been hearing from park users.
- Has the General Plan Team approached parent groups in the school districts and supporting groups like Dixie soccer or Terra Linda sports groups?
We will be doing more outreach through the schools in 2019.
- Consider doing a monthly show that can go on websites (Facebook Live, etc.), and get more coverage in the Marin I.J.
- To generate interest, you need to make the subject matter relevant to people's lives.

B. Climate Action Plan

Chair Plante joined the meeting. Cory Bytof provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Administrative Draft 2030 Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP). Following the presentation, the following discussion points were raised:

- Will the City ever consider its own programs for solar?
- Are the percentage reduction goals based on gross emissions, which will go up as the city adds more homes and jobs, or are they per capita? If the city is growing, it will be much harder to reduce emissions by 40% overall.
Cory indicated that they were based on gross emissions (e.g., citywide), meaning that per capita would have to be reduced even more. The CCAP assumes growth levels consistent with Plan Bay Area.
- How does the emissions model account for growing congestion (and emissions) on the freeways, which the City doesn't control?
The model doesn't count pass through trips on the freeways. It only counts trips that start or end in San Rafael.

- The lack of reliable metrics and measurements for emissions is troubling, and so much of this is based on assumptions. How do we know if our strategies are working when the emissions are coming from so many sources and jurisdictions? Also, implementing these measures seems to penalize new construction, without really seeing direct benefits.
Cory responded that while it may be difficult to zero in on exact numbers, there are clear ways to measure things like shifts to renewable energy, electric cars, etc.
- We need to make the city more friendly for electric bikes. Need better electric bike parking.
- The onus of being “green” falls too heavily on new projects, which overlooks all the “old” buildings where we could make much greater gains in reducing our carbon footprint.
- The Green Building Codes recommend doing some rather easy and simple changes, like using a white roof instead of a black roof, which is cheap and easy and affordable. However, doing things like replacing lighting fixtures can be expensive and the cost benefit is questionable. If the cost to renovate older buildings is too high, it will be a disincentive to economic development in places like Downtown.

Bob Miller indicated that he was the Climate Action Plan Committee appointee to the Steering Committee. He stated that the discussions at their Committee meetings were good and produced a solid Plan. He noted that most of the 40% reduction would come from State programs and market-driven activities, such as increasing purchase of electric cars. He emphasized that the report avoids harsh and expensive mandates, and focuses on incentives.

Additional discussion followed.

- We have a benign climate, and energy efficiency measures will only get us so far. As we increase our requirements, we’ll see diminishing returns in terms of reductions—while we increase costs to consumers. Don’t go past the tipping point—instead focus on where we can get the most bang for the buck.
- Need to consider impacts of requirements on seniors, particularly those on fixed incomes.
- In terms of emissions, cars idling at traffic lights are a problem—perhaps roundabouts (suggested by others) would help reduce idling and related emissions.
- 69,000 people drive to San Rafael every day---while many residents drive from San Rafael to jobs in SF and beyond. We should encourage electric vehicle use, and put charging infrastructure in place to make it feasible. How do you account for long distance commutes in these calculations?
Cory responded that Christine O’Rourke, the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) consultant, was well versed in the technical aspects of the GHG model and how these variables were measured.
- How do you measure the GHG emissions reduced through bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure? Can you quantify the benefits of building a multiuse path when you don’t know how many people use it, or will use it in the future? Also, consider things like reduction benefits from plastic bags—there is a reduction of GHG that can be traced to the source (manufacturing of the plastics, etc). Our community should learn to consume less, and repair what we have rather than buying new—this can reduce GHG also. And we should aim to reduce workplace driving. Some of this can be achieved through the General Plan.
Bytof responded that there are periodic inventories of the City’s GHG emissions which show how we’re doing. We are always monitoring and trying to improve the accuracy of our data. On the single use plastic issue, we need to be aware of the unintended consequences of

- switching to other forms of bags, like paper, which could in fact, produce more GHGs. This is why we charge for paper bags—the real goal is to get people to use reusable bags.*
- How is the City is monitoring the use of Electric Vehicles? What is being done to help ensure the availability of charging stations in the City and other places?
Bytof remarked that in the Climate Action survey, 60% of San Rafael citizens remarked that their next vehicle might be an electric one. Also, data is being collected from the DMV to track where electric vehicles are in use so that charging stations can be appropriately located. He noted the importance of having charging stations at the workplace during the day, where solar energy also could be used.

PM Miller noted that the Climate Change Action Plan relies on the General Plan to address a number of related issues, including resilience and adaptation to climate change. It also relies on the General Plan to create a land use pattern and transportation network that reduces greenhouse gases (and related emissions). With this in mind, he introduced Danielle O’Leary to discuss the way that economic development conditions and goals can shape decisions about our future.

C. Economic Development Highlights

Economic Development Director O’Leary gave a PowerPoint presentation on Economic Development. Among the key points were:

- Economic diversification is an important aspect of resilience
- San Rafael has a reputation in Marin County as the “place you go to get things done”
- San Rafael’s commercial and industrial districts are essential to the City’s fiscal health, the local economy (jobs), and local services; it is imperative that these areas be carefully managed as we plan for San Rafael’s future. Our employment base provides an intersection between “biotech and bohemia”—an eclectic mix that fosters innovation.
- Businesses want to locate where the creativity is—part of that mix includes an active Downtown that includes housing and retail a walkable scale, good transit, and a strong business presence. Good placemaking is key and attracts talent, fosters a sense of civic pride, and connects us to each other.
- The City is a cultural hub and has been recognized as a cultural arts district.

A Committee member noted that we were in a “disruptive” era and asked if the City could do a sensitivity analysis of our economic sectors to determine where we should be growing and investing. For example, the City appears to have strong service and construction-related sectors—can we be strategic about growing these sectors? Danielle’s response included the following additional points:

- The major sectors of San Rafael’s economy will need to adapt to “disruptive” change—a critical factor to their success is if the supply chain exists locally to keep them profitable. The City can help support this.
- We can do more to build an ecosystem for life sciences/ biotech—right now we don’t have the “cluster” that South San Francisco has, but some of the elements are there (Biomarin, etc.)
- We are a hub for auto dealers—some are adapting to changes in the industry and some are not.
- We are a hub for building and construction—they are big sales tax generators.
- Our entertainment industry has the capacity for growth.

- Clustering is an important part of an economic development strategy, especially if we want to be a magnet for certain activities.
- There is very little room in San Rafael for industry to expand—when they succeed, they move elsewhere.
- The decline of brick and mortar retail is real—we can do more to make people aware of the need to support the local economy and shop in San Rafael. We can still grow our retail sector, but we need to be strategic. The loss of Toys R Us, OSH, and changes at Northgate adversely affect our tax base.
- Downtown is on the cusp but it’s not there yet. Perhaps build on the idea of different “districts” as the 4th Street corridor is quite long right now.
- 4th Street provides opportunities for clustering and experience-based retail. We need destination restaurants, a mix of local and formula retail, etc. The formula retail doesn’t have to be huge global chains, it can be mid-size regional chains with 7-10 locations in the Bay Area.

The Committee continued their discussion:

- The Gas Lamp district in San Diego is a good example of “clustering”; people can spend hours there. Other examples are Burlingame and Pleasanton; they have good “clustering” of businesses that attract people.
- Relocation of the transit center Downtown is creating some uncertainty.
EDD O’Leary responded that the availability of transit is an important catalyst to activate downtown. The transit center siting should be strategic to leverage private investment. There is interest in San Rafael, but businesses need to feel the momentum
- What do we do with our 50 to 60 year old commercial areas where no change is happening? For example, the Medway area in the Canal neighborhood? Or Northgate?
EDD O’Leary responded that at Northgate she would love to see a gathering spot for the community, so a mix of entertainment with refreshed retail and possible housing. The housing, if included, should be incremental—the focus should continue to be on commercial/revenue. In the Medway area, the area may look tired but many of the stores are very popular and well patronized. We should hear what the community wants.
- What kinds of businesses are bringing in the tax revenue?
O’Leary responded that the East San Rafael area represents 66% of the tax base and is where people get things done, like auto sales, auto shops, service businesses, and large retailers. In this area, we may want to prioritize making this a more attractive workplace through streetscape and public space improvements.
- Can we see data that spells all this out?
Some of this data is available.
- Do we have information on how much sales tax leakage is occurring—e.g., are there sales dollars we should be capturing going to other cities?
EDD O’Leary responded she has data that indicates that we are losing potential sales in some of the service based sectors.
- The nomenclature for some of the data is troubling. What do you mean when you say East San Rafael? Does this include the Point San Pedro Road area?
- How much money is San Rafael losing to other jurisdictions in the sale of Marijuana?
This is a very new arena. We are moving into a comprehensive heavily regulated market and not everyone can make it work. Some cities are not permitting it—but the market projections are very strong. San Rafael’s tax rates are competitive and conditions are good for regulated

cannabis. There are 4 licensed types of sales allowed in San Rafael (out of 20 potential). Due to the high monetary yield of these activities, we need to be careful that they don't displace existing industry.

- What's the right mix of independent businesses and franchises we should be aiming for on Fourth Street?

We need to look at what's there now; what clusters exist and what's missing? We need to build on what we have, and market to new businesses.

- How about the demand for “flex spaces” and incubators; co-working spaces, etc.? For example, there may be opportunities in the food industry, but new businesses can't afford to do the tenant improvements and can't find space to make and sell their products.

EDD O'Leary mentioned that a Venture Pad (co-working) space had opened on B Street and that the business owner is just starting to break even. She agrees that flex space is important for both office workers and for retailers and wholesalers. These enterprises look for environments with certain amenities like coffee houses, urban density housing, etc.

Break

The Committee took a 10-minute break before continuing

D. Land Use Policy Discussion

PM Miller introduced the Land Use Policy Discussion. He noted that a matrix had been emailed to the Committee listing policies in the existing Land Use Element (and part of the Neighborhoods Element), including a column in which each policy and program was evaluated. He indicated it would not be practical for the Committee to discuss each item at this meeting, but that several policies would be highlighted for discussion. He directed the group's attention to Policies LU-8 and LU-9, which list the factors to be considered when determining the appropriate density or intensity of development on a given site. Did the Committee think the factors listed were still appropriate?

A question was asked about the recent Northgate Walk development. It was noted that the General Plan designation would have allowed 300 units—but only 136 were being requested now. Could the applicant ask for more units later on? Planning Manager Boloyan responded that yes, the applicant could potentially come back later and ask for more units. The number of proposed units was reduced in response to public input, as well as environmental constraints, existing uses on the site, etc.

A Committee member asked if the existing density of an area determines the number of units allowed. Boloyan responded that the allowable density is theoretically the land area of a site multiplied by the maximum density allowed by the General Plan, but other factors come into play. He noted that there were a few zoning districts where housing was not allowed, like Light Industrial and Industrial. In other non-residential districts, housing is allowed. The density ranges are in the General Plan.

A Committee member suggested moving away from density as the metric for figuring out what can be built on a multi-family or mixed use site. The City should use a “form based” approach; this is something that many other cities are using. Focus on the envelope of the building and what it looks like, rather than the number of units inside the “box.”

Community Development Director (CDD) Jensen mentioned that Downtown is a good place to consider using form-based standards (rather than density), since it is already a high-density area. A committee member agreed the City should use floor area ratio rather than density downtown—this would create the

flexibility to get smaller units, which would be more affordable. The issue of density is made more complex by State density bonus requirements and the City's own inclusionary density bonus requirements. Another committee member suggested this apply to Northgate as well.

The following comments were made:

- If we regulate housing using floor area ratio rather than density, how will we quantify the number of units that can be built and measure the impacts of growth on schools, parking, traffic, infrastructure, etc.?
PM Miller indicated this would need to be addressed in the General Plan EIR, which will include assumptions about the number of units likely to be built by 2040 based on the General Plan designations and policies.
- Simplifying our Downtown development standards makes a lot of sense. The recent Seagate project taught us that densities and allowable FARs don't line up, meaning that developers must request very large density bonuses to build what they want.
- We should investigate how other cities using form-based codes are dealing with this question.
- Will a form based code allow multiple structures on single family lots? In other words, can a new dwelling be added to a single family property?
Probably not, unless it's an accessory dwelling unit. Single family zones are likely to stay single family. The exception might be for single family homes on the edge of Downtown, where they could be rezoned for multi-unit structures.
- Is there a hybrid approach?
Yes, there are many ways to do this.
- Staff should sort this out rather than asking the Committee to do so.
PM Miller clarified that the intent of asking the Committee for their feedback related specifically to the list of factors in Policies LU-8 and LU-9, and if this was still reflective of what the City should consider when determining the number of units (or square feet) that could be built on a parcel. For example, should sea level rise be added to the list?
- Regardless of how the City resolves this issue, it should be clear about height standards. Otherwise the public will feel misled. For example, don't say the height limit is 5 stories and then allow an 8 story building (because the developer is using the state density bonus or a local height bonus). Thus, to the earlier comment, single family zoning should mean single family homes. Period.
- Can staff clarify how density bonuses work, and how developers can legitimately ask for a 220% increase in density above what the General Plan allows?
Planning Manager Boloyan responded that local rules must be balanced with State laws. He noted that State law allowed the developer to ask for more density, but it has to be proven that the additional density is needed to make the project financially feasible. The City allows certain concessions like height bonuses if it makes a project financially feasible.

PM Miller moved on to the next policy for discussion. He described Exhibit 10, which is linked to Policy LU-13. Exhibit 10 lists the height bonuses that are given for different amenities, including affordable housing. He asked if the Committee had any comments or suggestions about the bonuses and the benefits (listed in the table) that entitled a developer to get additional height. Chair Plante added that the list of locations where bonuses are allowed (in Exhibit 10) was 15 years old ago and this Committee could provide ideas as to new where opportunities for growth may exist.

- Some context is important to inform this discussion. General Plan 2000 provided for a one-story height bonus for affordable housing. General Plan 2020 nuanced this based on the

direction provided in the 1993 Downtown Vision. We should simplify the table so as not to give 6' bonuses.

CDD Jensen remarked that 6' bonuses were actually used in the West End to facilitate mixed use development (residential above retail with taller ceiling heights)

- We should create opportunities for new owners to purchase existing market-rate apartments and convert them to affordable units. To make this financially feasible, the new owners should be able to add height and density, per this policy.

Planning Manager Boloyan responded that such improvements would still be subject to height limits, setback requirements, lot coverage, etc.

- Do we have to call out new locations on Exhibit 10 now or we can add those over the next 20 years as opportunities arise?

CDD Jensen responded that this could happen in the future. PM Miller responded that the list in Exhibit 10 is likely to change as a result of the Downtown Precise Plan. He stated that one goal of the Precise Plan is to make sure the bonuses make economic sense.

- What about areas outside of Downtown?

PM Miller responded that part of this process is to identify such areas, and also to identify the kinds of amenities that warrant a bonus, above and beyond affordable housing (e.g., public parking? Overhead crosswalks? Etc.) CDD Jensen remarked that staff will take a shot of developing ideas and will bring this forward to the Committee for consideration.

- Staff should develop proposals for modifying this list and then the Committee can review and respond.

- The list of areas eligible for bonuses should include Northgate and the Civic Center Station area.

It was noted that Exhibit 10 did, in fact, already allow for a 24 foot bonus for affordable housing at the North San Rafael Town Center. CDD Jensen noted that in the Station Area Plan there were some other sites that were looked at for possible height bonuses including Northgate Three.

The Committee asked for clarification as to what kind of feedback staff was seeking. PM Miller remarked that the purpose of this agenda item was to get feedback on highlighted issues (especially density and height) before staff takes a shot at rewriting the policies and adjusting the development standards. Given the late hour, he suggested that Committee members write down their thoughts on the policies and programs in the matrix and send them to staff by December 1. He also asked that Committee members let staff know if they'd like to see new policies added.

A question was asked about how Climate Change and Sea Level Rise will be addressed in the General Plan—will it be in all of the Elements or treated as a separate topic? PM Miller replied that there will be Resilience Element in the Plan that focuses specifically on this issue; however, all elements of the Plan need to reflect the realities of climate change and respond accordingly. CDD Jensen encouraged Committee members to send their ideas to staff.

Committee Alternate Comments

There were no comments.

General Business Items

A. Next meeting – the next meeting is December 12 at Bio Marin (current location).

B. Staff Announcements - PM Miller noted that the initiative with Laurel Dell School was continuing. Paul Jensen provided an update on the Transit Center Relocation project.

C. Member Announcements – Councilmember Bushey announced that Chair Stephanie Plante was being honored with a 2018 Women of Industry award from the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9.05 PM.