

**Summary of San Rafael General Plan 2040 Steering Committee Meeting  
Meeting #13 April 10, 2019  
6:00 – 9:00 PM at 750 Lindero Avenue**

**Attendance**

Members Present:	<i>Laura Bertolli (for Plante), Jenny Broering, Bill Carney, Omar Carrera, Kate Colin (for Bushey), Jim Geraghty (for Allison), Richard Hall, Eric Holm, Linda Jackson, Margaret Johnston, Jeff Jones, Bonnie Marmor, Robert Miller, Drew Norton, Kate Powers, Jeff Rhoads, Samantha Sargent (for Zamora), Jackie Schmidt, Roger Smith, Sparkie Spaeth, Eric Spielman, Karen Strolia</i>
Members Excused:	<i>DJ Allison, Bella Bromberg, Maribeth Bushey, Stephanie Plante, Cecilia Zamora</i>
Absences:	<i>Berenice Davidson</i>
Alternates present:	<i>Amy Likover, Judy Schriebman, Leslie Simons</i>
Staff Present:	<i>Raffi Boloyan, Allison Giffin, Barry Miller</i>
Consultants:	<i>Stefan Pellegrini, Mitali Ganguly, Xenia Alygizou, Caroline Swinehart (Opticos Design), Torina Wilson, Bob Grandy</i>
Public:	<i>Chris Hart, Shirl Buss</i>

**Welcome/Roll Call**

Vice Chair Carrera called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. Project Manager (PM) Miller took roll call and reviewed the agenda.

**Acceptance and Meeting Summary**

A motion and second were made to approve the Minutes from the March 13, 2019 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment on Items not on Agenda**

No comments were received.

**Downtown Charrette Workshop Part 2**

Barry Miller indicated that the first half of the Committee meeting would be dedicated to the Downtown Precise Plan. He introduced Mitali Ganguly and Stefan Pellegrini from Opticos Design.

Mitali led the Committee through a prioritization exercise using the Turning Point electronic polling devices. She noted that at the prior meeting, Committee members were asked to describe Downtown's greatest assets, constraints and opportunities on post-it notes. The Committee's responses were subsequently grouped into broad categories for each question.

Mitali presented the response categories for each of the questions in a series of PowerPoint slides. She asked Committee members to select their top three choices on each slide using their polling devices. The results are presented below:

What is Downtown’s Greatest Asset?

<i>Human scale/ size</i>	18%
<i>Ambience/ streetscape</i>	16%
<i>Diversity (people/ businesses)</i>	16%
<i>Accessibility</i>	13%
<i>Historic and cultural resources</i>	12%
<i>Arts and events</i>	11%
<i>Hillside views</i>	8%

What is Downtown’s Greatest Constraint?

<i>Not pedestrian-bike friendly</i>	18%
<i>Lack of housing</i>	17%
<i>Homelessness</i>	15%
<i>Lack of attractive destinations</i>	13%
<i>Traffic</i>	11%
<i>Lack of public/ civic space</i>	11%
<i>Density may worsen traffic</i>	9%
<i>Parking – expensive/difficult</i>	6%

What are Downtown’s Greatest Opportunities?

<i>New infill housing</i>	21%
<i>Repurposing obsolete areas</i>	15%
<i>Reuse of Bettini Transit Center</i>	15%
<i>Development east of 101</i>	12%
<i>Improved traffic flow</i>	9%
<i>East-west bike-ped connection</i>	9%

The following Committee comments were received:

- The polling categories as presented are awkward –where are restaurants and local businesses in the list of assets?
- I am concerned that our decisions about Downtown streets don’t reflect the regional function of 2nd and 3rd—what would San Anselmo and Ross say about slowing down traffic on these roads? (a discussion followed about the merits/liabilities of transit-oriented development)
- A group conversation about the voting results would be beneficial

Stefan Pellegrini delivered a PowerPoint presentation including a demographic profile of Downtown, an economic profile, preliminary information on transportation and traffic, hazard and flooding maps, and an overview urban form and visual qualities. He emphasized that this presentation was a work in progress (in advance of the charrette) and focused on objective information about Downtown. He noted that much of the content of the presentation was driven by the requirements of the OBAG grant that funded the Downtown Precise Plan. Stefan paused for comments and questions throughout the presentation.

The following Committee comments were received during the presentation:

- Slide showing the east end of Downtown erroneously labels this area “Canal District”. It should be Montecito.

- Canal is a neighborhood, not a district. Don't use the term "District" when describing subareas.
- Why does the map not show building heights east of 101?
- Clarify that map shows building heights allowed by zoning and not actual heights
- Can the Lindero District be merged with the 2nd and 3rd District?
- Lindero is more or less Biomarin/Corporate Center—it is a distinct place—nodal and not linear like 2nd/3rd
- The map of subareas is a legacy of the 1993 Plan—5th and Mission was a quiet area, 2nd and 3rd had heavy regional traffic and required different approach. Hetherington had tall height limits to incentivize development in that area.
- Too many districts?
- Is the consultant presenting demographic data because we are suggesting that the Precise Plan will influence racial composition? If housing gets built, it will likely be high-end (*staff explained that the presentation was simply to document existing conditions using factual data*)
- Please clarify the age distribution of people in Downtown San Rafael relative to the city
- What is the definition of family in the data presented on family households? (*Staff: A family is two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together. It includes married households without children present.*)
- In the 1990s, hundreds of affordable units were built downtown. This has benefited the area and provided an important housing resource for the city and local workforce/ seniors. We should emphasize how many low and very low income households we've been able to house Downtown.
- Note that Downtown's demographics are very different from the City as a whole (more renters, lower income, etc.)
- There are a lot of historic resources Downtown but very few are formally designated landmarks. The historic resources are an important part of our character but are not officially listed.
- What data do we have on commute modes to Downtown? How do people get to work Downtown? It appears that most drive. Also, how many people who live Downtown also work there? The theory behind TOD is that people live where they work—does the data support that? (*Staff responded that 70% of all Downtown residents drive alone to work and 13% walk or bike*)
- There is limited data on Downtown sales prices because of the limited supply of for-sale housing there. It's mostly rental.
- Average rent data for Downtown looks suspiciously low---perhaps it includes the affordable (rent-restricted) housing, which is substantial. Newer buildings rent at much higher than older buildings.
- Does rent data reflect asking rents, or what tenants are currently paying? If the latter, that could explain why the numbers look so low.
- Does zoning allow co-living/ co-housing Downtown? It should—this would be a good way to attract young workers.
- Is the commercial rent data based on existing rents or the asking rent for vacant space?
- Surprised that Downtown has one-third of all the retail space in San Rafael, given how much retail there is in the City as a whole
- Is the high pedestrian collision rate shown on the map due to high pedestrian density in those areas or dangerous conditions in those areas? (*Staff noted that San Rafael is at the high end for pedestrian and bike collisions, even when pedestrian density is factored out*)
- Is the parking occupancy data in the presentation from the recent parking study?
- Can you show bike parking locations?
- Presentation should identify LOS at Downtown intersections
- The flood map for Downtown shows a substantial area is flood-prone or will be flood prone due to sea level rise. Why are we encouraging development in an area subject to these hazards? It is irresponsible and I do not endorse that.
- City already requires development to elevated above the flood elevation

- The flood scenarios assume no mitigation and that the City does nothing. This is not an option, given the effects it would have on the City’s economy and population. The City will construct improvements over time that mitigate this hazard—we don’t know what the solutions are yet.
- The sea level rise forecast on the maps in the PowerPoint should model the worst case scenario, which is greater than 52 inches
- What happens if the defense systems don’t get put in place? Can we make upzoning contingent on a commitment to flood control or having the defenses in place?
- City is actively engaged in discussions about how to address sea level rise. Mitigating these hazards is not merely “wishful thinking.”

Stefan reviewed the schedule for the Downtown Precise Plan Design charette. Barry announced that there would be a pop-up workshop at Artworks on Friday April 12. Committee members asked what outreach was being done for the charrette and urged that Spanish-language outreach be done for the various events. The Committee also discussed the walking tour, and the “drop in” studio that would be operating on Thursday May 9 and Friday May 10. Stefan reviewed the next steps that would follow the charrette.

The Committee asked that the PowerPoint from this evening’s presentation be put on line.

The Committee took a 10-minute break.

### **Parks and Recreation Policy Audit**

PM Miller facilitated the next item, which was a review and discussion of existing parks and recreation programs and ideas for the 2040 Plan. He introduced San Rafael Community Services Director Susan Andrade-Wax. Miller provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting summarizing the Parks and Recreation Element and presenting policy questions for the Committee to consider. Committee members were asked to use their polling devices to weigh in on the existing (2020) Plan goal for parks and recreation. Five felt the goal was fine as is, 10 thought it was generally OK but needed editing, two felt it should be totally rewritten, and five were not sure. Miller asked the group if they were comfortable with the idea of keeping the Parks and Recreation Element very broad and deferring to a Parks Master Plan for detailed guidance. 19 of 22 present agreed with this approach.

A discussion of the Element took place, with the following comments:

- Revised Parks/Rec Element should be more specific, not less specific
- I disagree—leave the specifics for the Parks Master Plan and keep the General Plan general
- The 3 acre per 1000 standard seems arbitrary; why do we need this standard? (*Background information was provided on the basis for the standard. Staff noted that the standard is low*)
- If we collect in-lieu fees, the money can go to rehabilitation of existing facilities in the nexus area of new development—it doesn’t have to be for land acquisition or new parks—it must (theoretically) serve the residents of the homes paying the fee
- When developers provide parks on site, they are often giving throw-away pieces they can’t build on. This doesn’t really help the city or provide usable parkland.
- The previous General Plan was more than just a “wish list” of improvements based on public input—it also considered what facilities existed and where gaps were located
- The City should increase its parks standard to 5 acres per 1,000 (*Staff noted that the requirement could be met by dedicating land and not merely paying a fee*)
- The per capita acreage standard is only one type of standard--City can also set target for each home being within a certain distance of a neighborhood park or specific facility type, etc.
- Be careful when raising the park fee—it will make it even harder to build affordable housing. Also, we are paying for park improvements through voter-approved bond measures.

- True, but the dense housing we are trying to attract will have higher open space needs than single family development since the residents don't have backyards.
- Need to make sure that active parks are provided when we build affordable housing and multi-family. Passive open space doesn't meet the need for recreational facilities for apartment dwellers.
- We are not going to see a lot of new development---the incremental impact of new housing units on parks will be pretty small. Also, it's hard to mitigate impact of a single small development.
- We definitely need a Parks Master Plan—the first step should be a detailed needs assessment
- Parks must also be useable—the new one at Loch Lomond is prone to flooding. We need criteria for park design (their size and qualities). *(Staff noted that the General Plan should focus on broad strokes, and leave the detailed criteria for the Parks Master Plan)*
- What is the cost of a Parks Master Plan (staff replied that this would likely be around \$100K)
- How can the General Plan inform a future Parks Master Plan? (or is it the other way around?) Need to know where the opportunities are.
- Can the Parks and Rec Commission (or former commissioners) work on this?
- Make sure Parks Master Plan identifies where the opportunities for various recreational activities are—not just City facilities, but also open space networks, County facilities, private facilities. Make it scientific and based on technical data. Include funding sources.
- Existing Parks and Rec actions are outdated. We've finished most of these things. The Parks Commission has already set priorities as part of Measure A—did a very hands on evaluation of priorities.
- Parks Master Plan is also about park classification, park maintenance, leisure preferences, programming, etc. More than what is in the General Plan.
- Community Services has adopted new software that helps us evaluate the services and programs we deliver, and make modifications based on performance—take a data-driven approach
- Parks and Rec Element should provide clear direction on a future Parks Master Plan. What it should achieve, etc. Utilize the GP Steering Committee to develop the Table of Contents for the future Parks Master Plan.
- Can we see other examples of Parks Master Plans to better understanding what we're talking about?

### **Environmental Hazards Draft Policies**

Barry Miller delivered a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the proposed new Environmental Hazards Element policies. He noted that more than any other element, this Element was influenced by recent legislation regarding General Plans—specifically, a requirement that the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan be integrated into the General Plan. He recapped the process through which the policies were developed, explained the format of the current draft, and explained how the flow of the Element had been reorganized. Miller asked the Steering Committee to provide any comments in writing by May 15, 2019.

The Committee had a discussion of the Draft policies, summarized below:

- The Wildfire Action Plan sparked some controversy, yet you say you integrated it into the new General Plan policies. How are you avoiding carrying that controversy forward? *(Staff noted that the General Plan was much more general than the Wildfire Plan and did not include the types of specific actions that caused controversy)*
- I don't see anything in the Element that avoids the Paradise scenario where traffic calming bulbouts caused chokepoints on designated evacuation routes. *(Staff noted that there were draft policies that avoided this outcome)*
- How does this reflect the City's ongoing work on adaptation and sea level rise?
- Where do we consider fiscal impacts of sea level rise solutions? Impact on City bonding capacity, etc. Where does that get addressed in this document? Also, has anyone calculated the cost of "doing nothing"?

and losing revenues from repeated flooding, loss of business, decline in property value, etc. That should be part of our analysis. *[Staff: General Plan will identify things to study in the future—but sea level rise solutions, costs/benefits, etc. will be done after Plan is adopted.]*

- Are the hazmat policies based on state requirements (e.g., distance from schools) or local discretion? Can we modify the state policies to add new uses that shouldn't be near hazmat sources—like parks? *[Staff: Yes, as long as it is not in conflict with state standards]*
- Subject matter is overwhelming---very dense and technical—difficult for the Committee to weigh in on this because there's so much to absorb. Can staff identify the key decisions so Committee can be more focused? *[Staff—tell us whether we got the goals right?]*
- My organization would like to comment on safety issues related to the General Plan EIR Notice of Preparation (scoping questions) – e.g., discourage dumping fire-fighting hazmats on sensitive open space lands. But how do we get a handle on the totality of issues we might comment on, especially since the General Plan “project” is not yet defined. What is a “No Project alternative” in the context of a General Plan? Is the scoping done by Plan element?
- Who received General Plan NOP notices?
- Will the EIR cover the Downtown Precise Plan? Will future projects Downtown be covered by the EIR? *(yes, tiering will occur to some extent, for projects that are consistent with the Downtown Plan)*

### **Committee Alternate Comments**

Judy Schriebman thanked the Committee for their discussion.

### **General Business Items**

Barry Miller announced that the next meeting was May 8, 2019 and would be different than the traditional Committee meetings. The public would be participating alongside Steering Committee members and the format would be a community workshop. This would be the kick-off for the four-day charrette. A walking tour also is included on Wednesday May 8.

He also announced that the Planning Commission would hold a scoping session on the EIR on April 23. Raffi explained the mechanics of the Scoping Session and comment period.

Jim Geraghty announced that Bike to Work Day was May 9.

**Adjournment** – the meeting was adjourned at 9.00 PM