

REPORT TO GENERAL PLAN 2040 STEERING COMMITTEE

Subject: Principles of Good Design

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2017, the City created a working group of local architects to develop “criteria for good design” in Downtown San Rafael. The group delivered their recommendations in a PowerPoint presentation to the City Council in February 2018. Their presentation provides an excellent starting point for a discussion of basic design principles in San Rafael. A member of that working group will deliver the presentation to the Steering Committee.

REPORT

Two years ago---on August 14, 2017---an Ad Hoc City Council Sub-Committee convened to discuss community design in San Rafael, with a focus on Downtown development. The Sub-Committee included Mayor Phillips, Council Member Andrew McCullough, two members of the Design Review Board (Eric Spielman and Stewart Summers) and Planning Commissioner Larry Paul. The initial purpose of the meeting was to determine if there were adequate tools and resources to achieve good architectural design in San Rafael. The Sub-Committee was provided with an inventory of current resources, including:

- ✓ Downtown San Rafael Vision – 1993
- ✓ General Plan 2020 Policies & Programs – 2004
- ✓ San Rafael Design Guidelines (Interim) – 2004
- ✓ Zoning Regulations for Downtown – 2004
- ✓ Downtown San Rafael Station Area Plan – 2012

Mayor Phillips requested that Planning Commissioner Paul form a working group of local design professionals to review these documents in order to develop a more concise and consolidated list of key criteria. The goal was to develop an informational handout (“City of San Rafael Expectations for Good Design”) that could be provided to developers/applicants.

The working group members were local Bruce Bagnoli, Bill Carney, Max Crome, Lisa Max, Larry Paul, and Jeff Rhoads. An initial presentation was delivered to the City Council on November 6, 2017. That presentation provided a refresher on the many plans, development policies and design guidelines that apply to Downtown. The discussion was timely in that the City was reviewing a number of proposed Downtown developments---some of which continue to be under review today.

Members of the Working Group delivered their final recommendations at the regular meeting of the City Council on February 5, 2018. The presentation used photos and narrative to summarize criteria that could be used to evaluate future projects.

Shortly after the February 2018 Council meeting, the City received the grant to prepare a Downtown Precise Plan, which will include design guidelines. The 2018 presentation provides a good foundation for these guidelines—and potentially for guidelines that apply to other commercial and mixed use areas of San Rafael. Many of the principles for building mass, design details, compatibility with nearby uses, etc. are universal and transferable to other parts of the city.

Staff has invited a member of the working group to deliver the 2018 presentation to the Steering Committee and participate in a discussion of “good design” with the Committee. In addition, two of the six members of the working group are General Plan 2040 Steering Committee members, providing a good resource for the Committee as well as a link to this earlier process.