

**Summary of San Rafael General Plan 2040 Steering Committee Meeting
Meeting #22 February 12, 2020
6:00 – 9:00 PM at 750 Lindero St.**

Attendance

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| Members Present: | <i>Don Blayney, Jenny Broering, Bill Carney, Omar Carrera, Richard Hall, Eric Holm, Eleanor Huang, Linda Jackson, Jeff Jones, Bonnie Marmor, Robert Miller, Drew Norton, Stephanie Plante, Kate Powers, Jeff Rhoads, Jackie Schmidt, Roger Smith, Sparkie Spaeth, Cecilia Zamora</i> |
| Alternates Seated: | <i>Kate Colin, Paula Doubleday, Jim Geraghty, Jeff Schoppert</i> |
| Members Excused: | <i>DJ Allison, Maribeth Bushey, Berenice Davidson, Margaret Johnston, Karen Strolia</i> |
| Staff Present: | <i>Anne Derrick, Allison Giffin, Paul Jensen, Barry Miller, Danielle O'Leary</i> |
| Consultants: | <i>Mitali Ganguly (Opticos)</i> |
| Sign-Ins: | <i>Shirl Buss, Shirley Fischer, Chris Hart, Maika Llorens Gulati</i> |

(1/2) CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 PM.

(3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of January 8, 2020 were approved (Motion: Hall, second: Schmidt), with an amendment noted by Jeff Rhoades to correct the ramp reference for the 580/101 interchange. Committee members who were not present at that meeting abstained from the vote.

(4) PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments on items not on the agenda.

(5) PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Economic Vitality Policies – Presentation and Discussion:

Project Manager (PM) Miller presented the Economic Vitality Policies and asked the Committee for their comments. The following comments were made (*staff comments made at the meeting are in italics*):

- The draft policies should be reviewed by the CAC and the Chamber. *PM Miller indicated that he would attend the March 5 meeting of the CAC.* Chamber representative(s) indicated they would meet and provide comments.
- Consider the connection between economic vitality and the Land Use, Infrastructure and Mobility Elements. Take a systems approach and see how the resources flow. If we have growth without infrastructure or transportation improvements, we are not really generating wealth. Also the forecasts indicate we should plan for a lot of growth now, but we may not need this in 20 years. Need to retain flexibility to adapt to future change.

- References to the Chamber should include references to other organizations, like the Latino Chamber. The Hispanic business community also is growing and forming partnerships with businesses and local institutions like Dominican University to promote entrepreneurship for Hispanic business owners.
- Look at the Marin County Community Health Improvement Plan—it addresses economic security and housing. There is a community effort to address those priorities which may be helpful to the process. Economic security is also related to health.
- The new policies and programs are good. A few suggested additions—think about the impacts of our aging population (demographic changes) on the economy and needed services and employment. Also, acknowledge Dominican University as a major part of our economy. Also, as City moves to District elections, need to track economic data by district so it can be used by Council members to inform decisions.
- The Element has a lot of “feel good” language but is missing explicit measurable objectives and metrics such as how much sales tax will be generated and what percentage of the workforce will use transit, bikes, etc. How will crime be addressed?
- Workforce housing is a very politicized term. Subsidized housing would be more accurate. Since so much of what is being built is luxury housing, we should set a higher target for subsidized housing (like 30-35%).
- What is the relationship of San Quentin Prison to our economy? It is the largest single employer in Marin County, and its proximity to the city must have an impact. Can we quantify this?
- I appreciated the changes made to this element, particularly the emphasis on investing in our workforce through job training, and the emphasis on increasing affordable housing and work training. The City may need to play a bigger role in workforce development in the future.
- Job training could be viewed as a community benefit associated with growth (e.g., training for those in the construction sector to provide local jobs). There should be partnerships with nonprofits, etc. I concurred with the recommendation to develop an Economic Development Strategy—that could provide more guidance on this.
- What is the cost of an ED Strategy and what do they cover? *PM Miller indicated that he has a few examples. The data and metrics that were discussed earlier would more likely be part of an ED Strategy than a General Plan Element.*
- There are some things the City can do to support businesses and there are some things out of the City’s control. The City’s primary role is to create an environment that is conducive to business, and to reduce obstacles and regulatory hurdles. If the City reached out to more businesses it would have a better sense of the obstacles.
- Metrics are good but if you go too far, you can have “analysis paralysis.” Metrics need to be meaningful, like our rate of housing production, for example. Perhaps the Chamber can provide a few.
- Dominican University has a business school and should be viewed as a potential economic development partner. Other partners could be Workforce Alliance of the North Bay, Cana Alliance, Marin Office of Education, College of Marin, etc. Jobs are a priority for all of these Agencies.
- The Climate Action Plan also addresses our economy—waste management, recycling, and other sustainability programs provide job opportunities. In addition, note the issue of homelessness and the work of the Downtown Streets Team providing workforce training. There are similar potential partnerships to create jobs doing vegetation management in the hills through the Conservation Corps. There are many opportunities for innovation.
- A major economic issue is to improve access to East San Rafael. Better access would increase revenue.

There was a brief discussion of links between elements, and how overlapping topics would be cross-referenced. The specific topic was how these policies related to those in the Environmental Justice section, since there seemed to be overlap. *PM Miller said this will also be addressed in the narrative part of this Element.*

- This element should focus on the measures that provide the greatest return on investment. What can the City do to support a healthier economy?

- The Introduction to this Element should describe the relationship of the economy to the other topics covered by the General Plan. For example, the constraints presented by the housing shortage, homelessness, and traffic should be described.
- Reference reports by the Marin Economic Forum; these reports provide data on these factors.
- Canal Alliance has a construction program and works in partnership with Marin Builders Alliance and College of Marin. Reference these types of programs.
- The policies need more focus on the decline of retail, as retail tax revenue is important for the City and represents a large percentage of our jobs and space inventory.
- Keep in mind that the General Plan is a ‘guiding’ document and works at the macro level. It is not going to solve every problem, but rather provide a road map for how to deal with the issues facing the city. The recommendation for an Economic Development Strategy is good, because it points to our next step in tackling this issue. The discussion about impediments and metrics can happen, but it should be part of that process and not necessarily part of the General Plan.
- Refer back to our “guiding principles” done two years ago—economic opportunity was one of our pillars.
- Please clarify the type of “meta” level thinking that should be in an Economic Vitality Element if the detailed “how to” language gets deferred to a subsequent plan. *For example, the General Plan could say “grow the hospitality industry” and then the ED Strategy would address the number of hotel rooms we should aim to build, and the transit occupancy tax benefits.*

Economic Development Director O’Leary thanked their group for their input and noted that the key to this element is how the City should navigate change.

The Committee took a 10-minute break after this item.

B. Community Design Element: Presentation and Discussion

PM Miller presented the Community Design Element for discussion. He noted that the City has retained Opticos Design to provide illustrations, graphic, photos, etc. as part of this element and help weave the policies and programs into a cohesive “story” that communicates the design vision for 2040. He asked for feedback on the policies from the Committee.

The following comments were provided:

- Please clarify if Form Based Codes (FBC) will be used outside of Downtown? *PM Miller clarified that the Plan only calls for FBC in Downtown.*
- The State of California is precluding the authority of cities to implement many of these kinds of policies on the grounds that they pose constraints to housing development. Under SB 35, the State is requiring “by right” approval of projects that meet objective standards. The City has developed draft standards. How does the language in this Element relate to and align with that effort? Our traditional approach to design review can’t really prevail anymore. *PM Miller noted Program 2.6A on page 9 which acknowledges that in addition to the General Plan policies, the City is adopting objective standards that comply with the new state law. Community Development Director Jensen indicate staff would modify the proposed language as needed to distinguish the discretionary policies and programs in the General Plan from the mandatory design standards required by state law.*
- The SB 35 issue is very important. The state legislation is not as threatening as it might be because it only applies to projects that pay union wages and would include a high percentage of affordable units. Few projects qualify. However, this could change in the future. The State continues to push legislation to erode these conditions and overrule local authority.
- The Element should acknowledge the uncertain future of SMART and the need for a “Plan B” if we don’t need to relocate the transit center after all.
- A few policies and programs need to be clarified.

- Program 1.6B regarding landscape and signage at neighborhood entries. This has been controversial in my area, as there were funds for improvements but the cost turned out to be much higher than what was anticipated. We should address these expenses and unknowns in the text. *Staff indicated it should not be assumed that these are all public improvements—some may be paid for by HOAs or private parties.*
- Policy 1.9—the requirement for alterations and new buildings to complement neighborhood character is open to interpretation. Do we need to describe and articulate a design vision for each area so we know what this means? If we do, how do we accommodate creative architecture at the same time? There is a conflict between policies calling for design consistency/cohesion and policies calling for creativity.
- Program CD-1.9A: What is the City’s intent in calling for ADU design prototypes? *Staff explained this was intended to help applicants interested in adding accessory dwellings.*
- Add environmental/ fire safety considerations to Program 2.1A. *Staff agreed.*
- I have comments on several policies and programs.
 - Program CD-2.2A: Reinforcing Design Content, the last sentence sounds like it is in conflict with the rest. Keep the last sentence of the existing 2020 Plan policy instead.
 - Program CD-2.2D: Signature Buildings – be careful what you ask for. Maybe for civic buildings, but not all buildings.
 - Landscaping policies should address the need for shade for transit users and pedestrians
 - Program CD-3.2B- can we get an art in public places ordinance?
 - Policy 3.3 What is the trigger for “larger scale”?
 - Balance the lighting policies so it is clear we need good lighting for public safety but also want to maintain “dark skies” (cross-reference the dark sky program)
 - Do you still need design guidelines if you have a form based code?
 - The policy on “quality materials” may be overreach—don’t pile too much on or nothing will get built
- It’s unclear how this element will align with the Form Based Code for Downtown and the SB 35 process now underway. Can we see some examples of objective design standards? Perhaps the introduction to this element can describe the tension between continuity, creativity and context.
- Don’t require landscaping in industrial areas. That’s silly.
- Engage students in design. Encourage partnerships with schools, arts organizations, etc.
- I agree that we need to be more prescriptive in this element to protect us from Sacramento coming in and overriding our policies because they are not objective enough
- The intent of this element is still a little unclear—what is its value and what is it trying to achieve? Rather than just calling for street trees, perhaps explain the benefits (mental health, climate change, etc.). How does this support the other elements? What is the benefit of having nice public spaces? We don’t appear to be connecting the dots.
- The benefit and value (per the question above) is community health.
- At what point do we address the connection between design, historic preservation, and the arts? *PM Miller replied that this was the core of the March agenda.*
- Regarding the distinction between design standards and design guidelines, “Standards” are prescriptive and require that you follow specific rules. This can be helpful when going through a design process as it provides a clear path to approval (if you follow the rules, you get approved. When you deviate from the rules, you have a more uncertain outcome). Having additional guidelines is fine, as they simply help guide you through the process.
- Policy CD-1.5 on views is potentially problematic. If you were to literally apply what it says, it could become an impediment. Be clear with the intent—which views are we trying to preserve? *PM Miller noted that this policy had been carried forward verbatim from the prior Plan and asked if it had been a problem before. CD Director Jensen noted that yes, it had. There was an issue in Loch Lomond. Also Policy CD-1.9 has created issues, as it is subjective.*
- Program CD-2.6A calls for objective design standards—they must be clear. This action is urgent and we must avoid fuzzy guidelines that the state will overrule. It can’t all be driven by low cost. *Director Jensen noted that the City has taken the Design Guidelines prepared by a subcommittee a few years ago*

and developed prescriptive and objective standards for review and discussion by the DRB. The DRB suggested that the recommendations be simplified and illustrated with graphics. This would not be part of the General Plan but could be cross-referenced in the Plan.

- To what extent are State mandates driving what is being written here? *PM Miller indicated that there were a few actions acknowledging the State requirements, but this element is primarily aspirational and intended to describe what we want the city to look like in 20 years. It is not driven by State requirements. Director Jensen noted that the State requirements related to housing design were mostly covered in the Housing Element.*
- Program CD-1.10A addresses trees. Don't delete the tree inventory; we need the City to take stock of its trees as many are not well maintained. The benefits of trees for aesthetics and public health are important.
- The Design Review Board (DRB) needs more objective tools as everyone has a different opinion. Architects are like artists—what you like is subjective. I thought the Marriott proposal was too big, but others disagreed. Our job would have been easier if we had more tools to guide us. Moving forward we will need these tools, otherwise we won't be able to approve larger projects as there will be opposition.
- Don't remove the program to do a street tree plan from the General Plan. Also, don't delete the last sentence of the View policy. Views can be enhanced when they are framed. When a new building goes up, it could actually enhance a view rather than taking it away.
- Please look through the Neighborhoods Element as there are several things in that Element that could fit in with Community Design and they should be looked at together. Look at the proposed connection between Northgate and the Civic Center. Also, on Policy 3.1, what is the function of our corridors?
- In Peacock Gap, everyone is cutting down trees. We need a street tree plan that includes a palette so we plant the right trees in the right places. Also, the City should be clear with residents about who is responsible for tree maintenance.
- Public Works is in the process of developing a tree management plan. It may be rolled out without much public comment, so keep an eye out for it.
- It's OK that there is tension between some of the policies—that's the nature of the General Plan. However, we should make sure the DRB has the tools it needs to do its job. Remove the policy about "craftsmanship" as that is vague.
- The Wildlife Prevention Plan should be mentioned in the Policy about landscaping.
- The inherent conflicts between policies on consistency and flexibility should be acknowledged. Please clarify how Policy 1.5 (Views) presented a problem for Loch Lomond. *Director Jensen noted that a lot of people were concerned about view loss from their homes and interpreted the policy to mean "you must retain my view," which was not its intent.*
- I would be concerned with any change that weakened the view policy. Don't delete it—perhaps add another sentence that clarifies it. Requiring raised building elevations to address sea level rise also could have impacts on people's views.
- Please delete the policy requiring durable, quality materials. It is too subjective. *A Committee member noted that this language has been in the General Plan since 1988.*
- Perhaps instead of deleting that policy, we should clarify more specifically when it is appropriate, or what the specific objective is. Maybe the intent is to enhance the streetscape on Downtown corners, etc?

C. Introduction to 2040 Land Use Map

PM Miller provided a presentation on the proposed General Plan Land Use Map. He asked the Committee for questions and comments. The following comments were made:

- Most of the Planning Commission's discussion addressed the request from Jacksons Hardware to be redesignated with a classification that allows housing. There are clear policies in the Plan to protect industry and retain industrial zoning, despite the need for housing. Since there is housing across the street, we could consider this change at a future date, as the economy changes—but not now.

- Since we added a sea level rise overlay, will we also look at the wildland urban interface overlay? Are we considering reductions in development potential in fire prone areas? With respect to Jackson's, should we allow more housing in a flood prone area?
- Does the Jackson's applications include other tenants on the parcel? *Yes, the entire 2.6 acres is included in the request.* The problem with Jackson's is the building itself is obsolete and doesn't lend itself to a lot of modern activities.
- I favor keeping our current Industrial area intact, due to the lack of comparable sites in San Rafael.
- Does the City expect its RHNA to rise dramatically, to the point where sites like this will be needed for housing? Director Jensen responded that the RHNA is currently about 1,000 units the City but could double in the next cycle. We don't anticipate making changes to the Land Use Map to accommodate the higher number, as we will likely still have a sufficient number of sites.
- I would be OK with housing at Jacksons – it's walking distance from SMART, close to Laurel Dell and Davidson schools, and in a walkable area.
- Our actual housing need is much higher than the RHNA number. The need for low income housing units alone is 10,000 units in Marin County. We have entire families living in 1 bedroom apartments. Even if 10% of our single family homes added an accessory dwelling, we'd create 1,200 new units.
- On the Land Use Map, consider rounding the density numbers up to the nearest whole number.
- We have a lot of older adults living alone with high housing needs. Can we encourage them to live together? If we do that, can we count it as a new household for RHNA purposes?
- UCSF workers can't afford to live in San Francisco. It is difficult to recruit talent in the Bay Area due to the housing shortage. People eventually relocate.
- If we build more housing in San Rafael, it will be gobbled up by tech workers from San Francisco, where the housing shortage is originating.

(6) COMMITTEE ALTERNATE COMMENTS

There were no Alternates in the audience.

(7) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Shirley Fischer noted that the the Economic Vitality Element should address the role of Northgate as an economic engine. The Community Design Element seems too focused on Central San Rafael and needs to acknowledge San Rafael's Agricultural Heritage and landscape features like Big Rock Ridge. CD -3 needs to include the community plaza from the North San Rafael Vision study. Also, need to recognize the cultural aspects of the Civic Center area. Also, please restore the deleted policy about living in balance with your infrastructure.

(8) GENERAL BUSINESS ITEMS

Chair Plante announced that the next meeting would be March 11, 2020.

PM Miller noted upcoming Council and Commission meetings and reviewed the agenda for the March 11 Steering Committee meeting. He also noted that Judy Schreiber wanted everyone to know that there is a workshop on Green Stormwater Infrastructure on March 12 in Mountain View and he will forward the flyer by email to the Committee.

(9) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.