

REPORT TO GENERAL PLAN 2040 STEERING COMMITTEE

Subject: Historic Preservation Policies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff has prepared Draft Historic Preservation policies for the 2040 General Plan. The policies incorporate feedback from the General Plan Steering Committee and the Downtown Precise Plan Preservation Consultant, as well as an “audit” of the policies in the prior (2020) General Plan. A more robust set of Historic Preservation policies has been proposed, consistent with best practices in preservation planning and the input from members of the preservation community during the General Plan Update.

The proposed 2040 policies are included in this staff report. Attachment A compares the 2040 policies with the 2020 policies in two side-by-side columns, with a third column provided for Steering Committee comments.

REPORT

Background

Historic Preservation policies currently appear in the Culture and Arts Element of the 2020 General Plan, and to a lesser extent in the Community Design Element. Staff had originally proposed to move all the preservation policies to the Community Design Element and retitle this chapter “Community Design and Preservation.” However, that element is already rather long and is focused on principles of good design and the design of public space. Staff now proposes to keep the preservation policies with arts and culture, and retitle this chapter as the “Arts, Culture, and Preservation Element.” The preservation policies have been somewhat expanded, and new programs have been added.

Overview

As in the existing General Plan, a specific goal related to historic preservation will be included in General Plan 2040. The Goal is:

Protect and maintain San Rafael’s historic and archaeological resources as living reminders of the city’s cultural heritage.

Fourteen policies and 27 programs have been identified to implement the goal. A summary of the policies and programs is provided below.

Policies

- Policy 1.1 carries forward a broad policy from General Plan 2020 that addresses the importance of historic preservation.
- Policy 1.2 is a new policy that encourages the City to maintain and periodically update inventories of local historic resources. This is currently identified as an action program in the existing plan.
- Policy 1.3 supports the formation of historic districts in areas where historic resources are concentrated (there are three currently designated).
- Policy 1.4 is a new policy that calls for incentives that encourage historic preservation.
- Policy 1.5 carries forward Policy CA-14 from General Plan 2020 and encourages adaptive reuse of historic buildings
 - business attraction. It calls for a City economic development strategy.
- Policy 1.4 encourages a business-supportive environment in the city.
- Policy 1.5 is a new policy covering San Rafael's marketing and branding.
- Policy 1.6 encourages alterations to historic structures to be visually compatible with the building
- Policy 1.7 encourages maintenance of historic structures and avoiding "demolition by neglect"
- Policy 1.8 supports preservation advocacy
- Policy 1.9 support preservation education and greater awareness of San Rafael's history
- Policy 1.10 addresses the economic benefits of historic preservation
- Policy 1.11 recognizes historic preservation as a sustainability tool
- Policy 1.12 calls for an inclusive and multi-cultural approach to preservation
- Policy 1.13 carries forward an existing policy on the preservation of archaeological resources
- Policy 1.14 responds to State requirements relating to Native American consultation during excavation projects in archaeologically sensitive areas

Programs

Among the programs identified in the Plan are:

- Consider creating a Preservation Subcommittee of the Planning Commission/ DRB, or appointing a preservation expert to the Planning Commission
- Identify additional structures to be landmarked, or nominated to State and National registers
- Consider designation of a new historic district along 4th/ A St. / B St. in Downtown
- Consider the use of conservation districts (historic district "lite")
- Explore the feasibility of a local Mills Act program (reduced taxes in exchange for an agreement to maintain the historic features of the structure)
- Pursue grants and loans for preservation
- Encourage walking tours, plaques/markers, and heritage trails
- Document places of historic importance to the Latino community
- Follow standard operating procedures for protection of tribal resources

SAN RAFAEL GENERAL PLAN 2040

DRAFT HISTORIC PRESERVATION POLICIES

GOAL 1: Protect and maintain San Rafael’s historic and archaeological resources as living reminders of the city’s cultural heritage. As a mission city established over 200 years ago, San Rafael values its history and the people and buildings that have shaped it. Preservation provides a strong sense of place and civic identity, helps grow the City’s economy, and supports the City’s sustainability goals. goal CA-2, Pol CD-4

POLICY 1.1 HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND AREAS

Preserve buildings and areas with special and recognized historic, architectural or aesthetic value, including but not limited to those on the San Rafael Historical/ Architectural Survey. New development and redevelopment should respect architecturally and historically significant buildings and areas. Policy CA-13

***Program 1.1A: Preservation Ordinance.** Continue to implement the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Ordinance should be periodically reviewed to ensure that its criteria, classifications, and procedures provide the most effective measures to review proposed changes to historic properties. Program CA-13b*

***Program 1.1B: Oversight Responsibilities.** Consider re-establishing a City Commission responsible for historic preservation activities, or creating a standing subcommittee comprised of members of the Planning Commission and Design Review Board with the responsibility for these activities. If this is infeasible, a commissioner with professional historic preservation experience could be appointed to the Planning Commission. Replaces CA13-c*

POLICY 1.2 INVENTORYING HISTORIC RESOURCES

Maintain and periodically update inventories of local historic resources, using methods and criteria that are consistent with state and federal guidelines. These guidelines recognize that historic resources may include sites associated with important historic events or people, archaeological resources, and landscape elements, as well as older buildings. They also recognize that not everything that is old must be considered “historic.”

***Program 1.2A: Inventory Update.** Continue to update the City’s Historic/ Architecture Survey, which is an inventory of buildings of architectural value, historic buildings and/or districts and historic elements such as signs, monuments, and gates. A priority should be placed on neighborhoods with large concentrations of older structures, as well as important “mid-century” buildings, which were not considered during previous surveys. Program CA-13a*

***Program 1.2B: Criteria for Designation.** Review and adjust the criteria for designation of historic resources so they align with those of state and federal preservation agencies.*

***Program 1.2C: Additional Landmarking.** Based on updated historic preservation data, identify additional structures or sites for potential nomination to State and National registers of historic places.*

POLICY 1.3: DISTRICTS

Encourage the formation of historic or architectural conservation districts in areas where important historic resources are concentrated and where there is property owner and community support for such designations. Such districts should provide for preservation, restoration, and greater awareness of the resources they contain, while minimizing costs and administrative burdens for property owners.

***Program 1.3A: Downtown Districts.** Consider the designation of additional historic districts in Downtown San Rafael based on recent historic resource data. There are presently two small Downtown districts (901-911 Irwin and 1623-27 Fifth). Additional districts could be considered on segments of Fourth Street and perpendicular blocks of A and B Streets.*

***Program 1.3B: Conservation Districts.** Consider the use of Conservation Districts as an alternative to historic districts or the designation of individual landmarks. Conservation Districts generally cover larger areas than historic districts but have less intensive overview. Properties would be identified as contributing or non-contributing, depending on the characteristics and context of the area. Contributing properties would be subject to additional consideration when alterations, additions, or demolition is proposed.*

***Program 1.3C: Eichler Neighborhoods.** Recognize the Eichler subdivisions of North San Rafael as a defining part of San Rafael's architectural heritage and continue to take steps to preserve the characteristic features of Eichler homes and neighborhoods.*

POLICY 1.4: PRESERVATION INCENTIVES

Create incentives that encourage stewardship of San Rafael's historic resources.

***Program 1.4A: Zoning and Development Incentives.** Investigate the use of transfer of development rights and preservation easements to encourage preservation of historic buildings.*

Program CA-14c

***Program 1.4B: Local Financial Incentives.** Pursue development of a local Mills Act program to allow the City to enter into contracts with historic property owners. The contracts allow for reduced property taxes in exchange for an agreement to maintain the historic integrity of the structure. In addition, reductions to local permitting fees could be considered for qualifying historic preservation projects.*

Program 1.4C: Non-Local Financial Incentives

Consider financial assistance to support preservation through state and federal grants and loans, National Trust Preservation funds, the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, and similar programs.

POLICY 1.5: ADAPTIVE REUSE

Encourage the adaptation and reuse of historic and older buildings as a way to preserve San Rafael's heritage. Policy CA-14, CD-4b

Program 1.5A: Historic Building Code. Use the State historic building code to encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings. Program CA-14a

Program 1.5B: Zoning. Investigate possible zoning exceptions for historic structures, such as reduced on-site parking and setback requirements. Program CA-14b

POLICY 1.6: PROTECTING RESOURCE INTEGRITY

Ensure that modifications to designated historic properties, including additions, alterations, and new structures, are visually compatible with the property's contributing features, as defined by the San Rafael Municipal Code.

Program 1.6A: Certificates of Appropriateness. Continue existing requirements for "Certificates of Appropriateness" (COA) for alterations to designated historic resources. Consider changes to ensure that structures that contribute to the historic context of San Rafael and its neighborhoods are adequately protected.

Program 1.6B: Design Guidelines. Address historic preservation in the City's design guidelines, including successful examples of (a) adaptive reuse, alterations, and other changes; and (b) new infill development in the context of a historic neighborhood. Guidelines and standards for construction in historic areas should accommodate innovative and contemporary design solutions, as well as those which replicate historic features. Program CD-4d

POLICY 1.7: MAINTENANCE OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Strongly support the maintenance of historic properties and avoid their deterioration to the point where rehabilitation is no longer feasible (e.g., "demolition by neglect").

POLICY 1.8: PRESERVATION ADVOCACY

Encourage local preservation advocacy efforts by community organizations. Provide technical support to such groups and encourage their participation in City-sponsored preservation activities.

Program 1.8A: Public Recognition. Support programs such as the San Rafael Heritage Preservation/ Cityscape Awards to publicly recognize property owners who have done an exceptional job preserving an historic property Program CA-13g

Program 1.8B: Volunteers. Engage volunteers in historic surveys and similar activities to the greatest extent feasible, with professional assistance as needed.

Program 1.8C: Public Events and Social Media. Encourage organizations such as the Marin History Museum to produce events, publications, social media, and exhibits about the historic resources that exist in San Rafael. Program CA-13f

POLICY 1.9: PRESERVATION EDUCATION

Encourage historic preservation activities and programs that heighten awareness of historic resources and the ways that architecture and landscape define the city's character. Program CA-13d, CD-4a

Program 1.9A: Preservation Reference Materials. Support the efforts of local organizations to maintain and expand collections of historic photographs, artifacts, books, media, oral histories, and other resources, and to make these materials available through on-line archives. Program CA-13e

Program 1.9B: Plaques and Markers. Support efforts to install plaques and markers recognizing historic locations and the locations of important historic events in San Rafael. (was part of 13d, also CD-4c)

Program 1.9C: School Programs. Encourage local schools to incorporate San Rafael history lessons and field trips into their curriculum and programs. (was part of 13d)

POLICY 1.10: ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PRESERVATION

Leverage San Rafael's historic resources to create jobs, attract visitors, and generate local revenue.

Program 1.10A: Walking Tours, Trails, and Historic Festivals. Encourage walking tours, historic trails, mobile apps, and history fairs and programs that attract visitors.

Program 1.10B: Marin County Civic Center. Work with the County of Marin to encourage and support preservation of the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Civic Center complex as a nationally important historic site and major destination for regional, national, and international visitors.

Program 1.10C: Mission San Rafael. Promote San Rafael's role as a "mission" city, and Mission San Rafael Arcangel as a destination of historic interest.

POLICY 1.11: SUSTAINABILITY

Recognize the sustainability benefits of historic preservation, including reduced resource consumption, reduced landfilled waste, reduced energy use, and the need for fewer raw materials.

POLICY 1.12: INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO PRESERVATION

Ensure that preservation efforts are culturally inclusive and recognize the contributions of all racial and ethnic communities to the City's history and development. Sites and structures that are culturally important to communities of color should be a key part of local preservation efforts.

Program 1.12A: Latino Community Heritage Programming. Engage representatives of the local Latino community, as well as preservation organizations and San Rafael schools, to document the history of the Latino community in San Rafael, including sites and structures of historic importance.

POLICY 1.13: PROTECTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES.

Protect significant archaeological resources by:

- Providing information and direction to property owners to make them aware of these resources and the procedures to be followed if they are discovered on-site.
- Identifying, when possible, archaeological resources and potential impacts on such resources.
- Implementing measures to preserve and protect archaeological resources. Policy CA-15

Program 1.13A: Archeological Resources Ordinance. Continue to implement the existing Archeological Resources Ordinance and the City's Archeological Resources data base. Program

CA-15a

POLICY 1.14: TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

Coordinate with representatives of the Native American community to protect historic Native American resources and raise awareness of San Rafael's pre-European heritage.

Program 1.14A: AB 52 Compliance. Implement the requirements of Assembly Bill 52 by providing opportunities for meaningful input from Native American representatives in the development review process.

Program 1.14B: Protection of Tribal Resources. Incorporate standard approval conditions in future development projects that ensure that Native American resources are protected during construction. In the event tribal resources are discovered, earth-disturbing work must be temporarily suspended pending evaluation by a qualified archaeologist and an appropriate Native American representative. Where appropriate, a mitigation plan shall be developed in accordance with state guidelines and tribal input.