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**Summary of San Rafael General Plan 2040 Steering Committee Meeting**  
**Meeting #23 April 15-April 23, 2020**

**Arts and Culture (April 15)**  
**Historic Preservation (April 16)**  
**Community Services (April 22)**  
**Equity and Inclusion (April 23)**

**(1) ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING (Convened on Zoom)**

*Attendees: Don Blayney, Margaret Johnston, Jeff Jones, Bonnie Marmor, Stephanie Plante, Jeff Rhoads, Jackie Schmidt, Cecilia Zamora*

*Staff: Susan Andrade-Wax, Paul Jensen, Barry Miller, Renee Nickenig*

Chair Plante called the meeting to order at 12 Noon and described meeting format. Project Manager (PM) Miller took roll call. He reported that a meeting with a dozen arts and culture stakeholders had taken place on March 6 and comments from that meeting would be incorporated in the next draft. Miller noted that only 15% of California's cities have a dedicated Arts and Culture Element in their General Plans—having this element makes a statement about the importance of the arts to the community. He provided a summary of the policies and programs.

PM Miller asked Director Andrade-Wax and Committee Member Rhoads to report out on the March 6 stakeholder meeting, since they were in attendance. Director Andrade-Wax noted that the stakeholders wanted to see more affordable space in San Rafael for artists to display and connect, an emphasis on inclusion/ diversity, and completion of an Arts Master Plan. CM member Rhoads agreed that the emphasis on diversity and need for an Arts Master Plan were key takeaways from the meeting. He also noted that a suggestion was made to consider a 1% for the arts program for new projects (especially Downtown) but observed that impacts on businesses would need to be carefully considered first.

The Committee had a discussion of the “new reality” of COVID-19 and how it may affect San Rafael’s future. Was this a temporary situation or a new normal that would require rethinking of policies? A committee member noted that, with respect to the arts, the pandemic has brought out an innovative spirit. Another member expressed that this was a 20-year plan and what was happening in the next year would not necessarily change where we are in 2040. Another member observed that the GP is a policy document and doesn’t include specific commitments on timing. We should expect, however, that COVID will have fiscal impacts that will delay our ability to implement policies. The General Plan should include an overarching statement that recognizes the situation we are in now and the need to revisit this in the future.

There was further discussion about how we were defining the “arts” in this context, eg., performance? visual? Arts is more than paintings on a wall. Make sure the text is inclusive/ expansive.

The following questions and comments were made (staff responses are in italics):

- Be less specific about events (see Action 1.7A) since some of these events may no longer be happening in 2040. Mentioning specific events is too narrow.

- Artworks secured long-term space with assistance from MCF, so there's already a precedent for doing some of the things we're calling for in this plan.
- The General Plan (GP) calls for an Arts and Culture (AC) Master Plan. The AC Master Plan is where you would list specific events and place names (not the GP). In other words, you wouldn't list Marin Shakespeare in the General Plan but you might reference it in an Arts and Culture Master Plan.
- The big theme of this element is to use the arts to unify and connect people and bridge cultural divides (rather than listing facilities and detailed events).
- What is the relationship between these policies and those that would be in an Arts and Culture Master Plan? *The AC Master Plan would address GP policies in a more granular way. The GP policies simply provide a framework for the AC Master Plan. This is similar to how we've framed the Parks and Rec Master Plan. The General Plan needs to stay on a high level.*
- Be clearer that this covers the performing arts and other cultural activities.
- Include the disabled community (in a future arts and culture master plan).
- Ensure that there's clear selection criteria for public art (in a future AC master plan).
- Note that the introductory section of this element should explain what arts and culture is in the context of San Rafael and note what it includes. Performance art, public art, visual art, etc.
- Need to acknowledge North San Rafael arts community and needs. The current text is very focused on Downtown. Note the County Civic Center, potential for cultural events at the Mall, etc.
- Funding / use of transient occupancy tax for art—thoughts? How do we decide its for arts and not for other things. Could explore this in an Arts Master Plan.
- Need diversity in arts programming. How can we be more inclusive? However, don't necessarily single out one group as needing inclusion, or you'll end up excluding other folks.
- Look at AC-1.4. There's been a lot of discussion about how to increase engagement among underserved communities. Just because something is in Spanish doesn't mean Spanish-speaking residents will attend. It must be culturally relevant as well.
- Think about economic assistance to artists post COVID-19; they have been impacted heavily.
- AC-1.6B: "Amending zoning codes"—can we come up with a new code that makes it easier to use empty ground level space for the arts (without having to go to the Planning Commission). Temporary use permits, etc. that can be issued by staff. Maybe make the language more general so we don't have to change an ordinance. Make policy statements instead of changing the code.
- Should the City create an Arts Commission? If we do, there should be a rep from DRB and a rep from the Parks and Rec Commission appointed. *The City had one, but it was disbanded. There has been some discussion about expanding the role of the Library Commission or the Parks Commission to include arts. But this would likely come out of the master plan process rather than through the General Plan. We are having a similar conversation on historic preservation. We used to have a Cultural Affairs Commission as well—the Planning Commission handles that now.*
- Do we really need a Commission? Historic Pres and Arts/Culture are two different skill sets—this wouldn't be the same Commission. Perhaps its an ad hoc committee rather than a new commission.
- We need to think about pandemics the way we think about earthquakes and fires. We should use our plan to be flexible and resilient. Be forward thinking, innovative, and think about how our world might be changed by COVID.
- Integrate technology into the policies; anticipate virtual arts events in the future.
- The Cultural District is a 5-year designation that has to be renewed every 3 years. We need to include a program to renew it.

There were no public speakers or Alternates present. The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 PM.

## (2) HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE (Convened on Zoom)

*Attendees: Don Blayney, Jenny Broering, Maribeth Bushey, Bill Carney, Jeff Jones, Stephanie Plante, Kate Powers, Jeff Rhoads, Jackie Schmidt, Roger Smith, Leslie Simons*

*Staff: Raffi Bologan, Ali Guidice, Barry Miller, Renee Nickenig*

*Consultants: Mike Garavaglia, Garavaglia Architects*

Chair Plante called the meeting to order at 1 PM and described the meeting format. Project Manager (PM) Miller took roll call. He introduced the topic and walked through the proposed policies. He noted that many of the policies are being carried forward from General Plan 2020; however, the *programs* are mostly new. He described the issues that have been raised in the comments received to date.

PM Miller introduced Mike Garavaglia, who is working with Opticos Design on the Downtown Precise Plan. Mike described his firm's recent work in San Rafael, which includes inventories of existing resources in the Precise Plan area, and making recommendations for Downtown based on best practices. He noted that some of these recommendations could be transferable to the whole city. Garavaglia surveyed 600 properties in the Downtown Area, and through that process identified 65 properties that are potentially historic, as well as two potential historic districts.

The following questions and comments were made (*staff and consultant responses are in italics*):

- What are the criteria that were used to evaluate properties? Where is the list of the 65 properties? How did you pick them? Without that information, it is hard to have a discussion. *Mike replied that the methodology used criteria considered to be standard within the industry. He noted that the two proposed districts would be around 4th and B, plus along 4th between Court and Lincoln. Mike noted that Garavaglia had also identified potential conservation districts—these are areas where it would be desirable to maintain the existing character, though they are not historic per se.*
- A committee member pointed out that the inventory does not actually designate buildings as landmarks. That would require Council action. But if a building is on the City's inventory, this requires follow-up CEQA analysis if demolition or alterations are proposed.
- *Staff noted that one of the objectives of the General Plan/ Downtown Precise Plan EIR was to “clear” certain properties from the need to do further historic resource analysis because it’s been pre-determined that they are not historically significant. Mike added that any potential historic resource is subject to CEQA—this means that for any building that’s older than 50 years, the project sponsor has to figure out if it’s historic. The benefit of the inventory is that it the City has already done this for the property owner, thus streamlining the approval process. Keep in mind that the 50-year window moves along as time goes on (e.g., in 2040, the lookback will be to 1990)*
- This approach worked in Redwood City—it clarifies the City's expectations when a project is proposed. It has not been onerous for developers.
- My earlier concern still stands---there is still a “black box” quality to what is historic and what is not. *It is not an arbitrary process, and it is not based on public input—it is based on federal criteria.*
- If the criteria are standardized, we should be able to hear what they are. Or at least see the list of the 65 properties. *The list will be available next week—Many of the buildings have been on the list for the last 40 years. We agree that the list should be publicly understandable and transparent.*
- There are unintended consequences to something being labeled “historic”—our downtown has been dealing with obsolescent space for many years. This is one more constraint (for the listed buildings). Change is vital because retail is dying, and the pandemic is accelerating that. Impacts on the property owners need to be considered—we must be careful about making it more difficult or expensive to change buildings in a time when change is necessary.

- There are economic benefits to preservation—it makes San Rafael unique and authentic. We need to make sure adaptive reuse is viable. The key is to combine marketing and branding while also providing sufficient flexibility for landowners to achieve desired financial results for their projects. Define what's valuable—what's the best of what we've got—and how to preserve it in a way that makes sense.
- It's not just regulatory—it's also about incentives and creating economic value
- How much are we talking about the interior of buildings vs the exterior? A lot of the obsolescence issues are related to the interiors. *CEQA does not cover private building interiors (only public building interiors). A community can, if it chooses, designate an interior as historic—but this is rare.*
- I'd like to see preservation used as a way of understanding the City's history—not just individual buildings, but a way to tell the story of the City's history and how each site relates to the story. Collectively, the buildings shape the way we perceive the city. I'd like to see this be part of the Community Design Element (rather than Arts and Culture). There are connections to climate change also—adaptive reuse can provide carbon credits and make the building healthier. We also want to prevent displacement—think about the impacts of sea level rise on historic properties.
- There are different opinions on the question of whether or not we should have a separate preservation commission. What do people think about that?
  - In my experience (in another city), they set up a Historic Resource Advisory Committee whose role was to advise the Planning Commission and City Council. Their role was very limited—the authority still rests with the Council. The HRAC serves in an advisory role only. At the appropriate time, we should do something similar.
  - I agree with the prior speaker. The HRAC should include a member of the DRB and a member of the PC.
  - I agree with the concept as well—but prefer the language in GP 2020 on this topic. I don't think we need to have a Planning Commissioner that has this expertise. But the HRAC should not just be preservation advocates—it needs to be a balanced group that understands economic issues (developer, contractor, etc.). The Committee can't operate in a vacuum.
  - *When a project is in front of a commission and is being looked at through a CEQA lens, the review approach is standardized. This is one of the reasons the commissioners need to be educated and trained in historic resource evaluation and federal standards. It is not meant to be a subjective process.*
  - A Committee of trained preservation professionals would concern me. *This does not preclude developers, realtors, contractors, etc. from being involved as well.*
  - There are a lot of embedded land use issues this group would be involved in. *Those responsibilities would continue to reside with the Planning Commission.*
  - Could convene quarterly meetings, as we do with the Climate Action Plan, bringing in expertise for specific topics.
- What about allowing modern buildings in a historic context? Most of the Committee members seem to support this, but others feel the language that's been proposed creates a loophole.
  - I support modern buildings in a historic context. There are some excellent examples in the Bay Area. The new building should be the best expression of what can be built today while being cognizant of what is around them and what came before.
  - I agree as well. Design can be modern and can still speak to its place in the streetscape. We don't want to be stuck in the trap of making everything look old. The new Fire Safety building ties into the brick façade of City Hall, for instance. The Community Design Element is pretty clear that buildings need to respect their context and surroundings. And we need flexibility—that's why we have a DRB.

- The Department of Interior standards encourage modern architecture rather than faux historic buildings. Moreover, 4th Street is eclectic and reflects many decades and styles—it is not one specific style. The context suggests that modernism is appropriate.
- “Compatible yet differentiated” is the key. The important quality is sensitivity to context. A new building shouldn’t look “plopped down” but it doesn’t have to look historic either.
- There are plenty of examples on 4th Street (from the ‘50s and ‘60s) of what NOT to do—it would be great to see higher quality architecture.
- Explain how a conservation district works. *As we’re using the term, it’s an area that has a positive, identifiable appearance that everyone likes. We want to preserve the basic architectural styles, setbacks, height limits, etc. in the area and avoid someone putting a “box” on a vacant site. We do this through zoning and design standards that express the desired characteristics.*
- The inventory covered 600 buildings downtown, but what about the rest of the City? Is there anything in this Plan about surveying the rest of the City? We want to make sure this doesn’t get eliminated during budget cuts. *There’s an action in the Plan to do that, with a priority on the older neighborhoods. Funding is still an issue. Grants for survey work will be harder to get outside of Downtown, and the other areas that might re-develop (Northgate, SE San Rafael) have fewer resources.*
- *A historic context statement is needed for the rest of the City, even if we can’t do an inventory. It’s a good tool that can help inform the inventory and can be a placeholder if we can’t fund the full survey.*
- Include text boxes, etc. that explain what a conservation district is, what the criteria are, etc.
- The decision to preserve Whistlestop was done based on non-objective criteria, and it concerns me that these types of decisions may occur again.

### **Comments from Alternates**

Leslie Simons, Alternate, provided comments. She disagreed with the earlier speaker and felt that the evaluation report previously done for the Whistlestop was not objective either. She further observed that vacancies Downtown are due to high rents rather than functional obsolescence. Also, she noted that interiors should be preserved for buildings if they sought National Register landmark status. She further expressed support for a separate Preservation Commission that included preservation professionals. She noted that funding for a historic survey could come through a mitigation fee on development (or as mitigation for impacts to existing historic resources).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 PM.

### **(3) COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE (Convened on Zoom)**

*Participants: DJ Allison, Maribeth Bushey, Eric Holm, Eleanor Huang, Margaret Johnston, Robert Miller, Drew Norton, Stephanie Plante, Roger Smith, Sparkie Spaeth, Karen Strolia  
 Staff: Raffi Boloyan, Barry Miller*

Chair Stephanie Plante called the meeting to Order at 3 PM. Project Manager (PM) Miller provided an overview of the meeting format and an introduction to the Community Services policies. The following comments were made during the discussion:

- Pandemic has shown how essential it is to have a reliable electrical grid, mobile communication, and internet. *That issue cuts across all sections of the Plan. It is also addressed in this Element. Disaster preparedness is an essential part of community services.*
- How will we address the pandemic (and other unforeseen events) in the Plan?
- Add something specific to strengthen infrastructure against damage (hardening)

- Prepare for blackouts, high winds, weather events, fire-related hazards
- Build in flexibility in times of crisis to meet needs as systems change and shift
- New library should provide internet access (in addition to the goals listed) and other emergency services
- Cell tower reliability was an issue during PSPS

### **Education policies**

- Why was the language in the educational goal cut off—it was helpful. Restore it.
- The addition of a program for Dominican is good.
- Dominican can help San Rafael support its educational goal—Dominican is an example, but we shouldn't specifically limit it to them
- Development Review program 1.5B (under schools) is a little confusing—what is the intent? *PM Miller gave some examples of how this would work.*
- Make Program 1.5B a little more affirming, we want to help, etc. Make it positive. Don't make it sound like “we're gonna get you”. Use words like encourage, collaborate... Also, include something about working with the schools on their long-term plans. The Fire Station reconstruction is an example of where more coordinated planning would have helped.
- Perhaps recalibrate school district planning every few years to align with city's planning, road plans, etc. *Barry noted that demographic forecasts were a critical part of student projections.*  
*Demographic changes and out of district transfers have had a greater impact on enrollment than development.*
- Policy 1.5: Need to be more specific here—schools present a significant traffic issue in the community. We need to get the schools to stagger hours (start time/ end time) to avoid peak hours and adverse traffic impacts. Bring the issue to the District's attention on a regular basis. They should be a partner and work with the City to resolve traffic issues.
- Agreed- and private schools as well, especially on Freitas Parkway
- Partnerships are good, but not always mandatory. For instance, the City does not need the School District's consent to require residential permit parking near SRHS.
- Re: the policy about engaging the business community (1.3 and Program 1.3-A), this is an untapped reservoir. There's a lot of ways that businesses would like to interface with the schools and help coordinate education.

### **Library policies**

There were no specific comments on the goal, policies, or programs

### **Police and Fire policies**

- The original shorter goal language was better.
- Why did you delete the language under Policy 3.1 on cost effectiveness? It's critical on this subject—please restore. It should always be a major consideration, like it is with other departments. We need to spend sensibly.
- Police services are good, and we are safe city, but the police seem to operate very independently of the rest of the city. Can they be better integrated with other City departments? Examples: their webpage is separate, etc. They could use more public input.
- Many business owners are unaware of all the services the police offer (registering your security cameras, etc.). Need more ongoing dialogue about things like homelessness, petty crime, etc.
- People should be able to express their frustration, even if there's no easy solution.
- Perhaps this goes with 3.2A? Here's what property owners can do, and add a new program to improve police interface with the business community. *The GP 2040 may not be the best vehicle to do that. It's not typically resolved in this way. It's usually in a Strategic Plan.*

- Maybe add an action program to do a Police Strategic Plan to address these issues
- Don't bury the action---raise the issue with the City Manager and discuss it in public. Also, include a program in the GP to do a strategic plan.
- Program 3.4A is great, but don't limit it to Downtown. Potentially expand it to other parts of the city. Expand to East San Rafael and Terra Linda. Perhaps don't limit this to Footbeat. Keep it general.
- 3.4A is pretty much the same as 3.4 but it's more specific. Need to make sure they are sufficiently different so it's not redundant.
- Downtown safety is an important issue for older adults – a lot of it is perception, but that doesn't make it less important to have a program. Need to address the perception that downtown is not safe for older adults.

#### **Funding policies**

- We need a policy to apply more rigorous cost-benefit analysis to anything that costs money
- There was a lot in GP 2020 to build on. Establish cost-benefit and fiscal constraints as a fundamental premise of the plan. Note that public private partnership policy has been added.
- Public Private partnership should leverage private developers resources to overcome hurdles. Create net economic benefit for both parties, and incentives for investment.
- Cite some examples of when public and private partners come together to do something that benefits everyone. For example, the Pt San Pedro Road Mello Roos, recent Albert Park improvements, Beach Park. Don't have to advertise that we are offering incentives.

There were no Alternates or Public Speakers present. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 PM

#### **(4) EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE (Convened on Zoom)**

*Attendees: DJ Allison, Maribeth Bushey, Bill Carney, Omar Carrera, Berenice Davidson, Eleanor Huang, Linda Jackson, Bonnie Marmor, Kate Powers, Karen Strolia, Cecilia Zamora*

*Staff: Paul Jensen, Barry Miller*

*Consultants: Heather Imboden, Ricardo Huerta Nino*

Vice Chair Carrera called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM and welcomed the participants. Project Manager (PM) Miller took roll call and described the meeting format. He introduced Ricardo and Heather from Communities in Collaboration, a consulting firm retained by the City to facilitate engagement of the Spanish-speaking community in General Plan 2040. Barry asked Ricardo to describe the Spanish language survey the firm had administered in collaboration with Canal Alliance.

Ricardo noted that the issues that came up in the survey are significant and need to be addressed through a process that is bigger than the General Plan. The experience in 2018-19 was that traditional General Plan outreach methods (workshops, etc.) were not reaching the Latino community. A Spanish language stakeholder group met for several months to discuss how planning works and shapes the city. Social media also has also been a critical part of this outreach—a Spanish Facebook Live talk on the General Plan had 1,500 views. There is a sustained need for culturally responsive approaches to urban planning (to build awareness and increase civic engagement) as well as stronger partnerships between residents, community organizations and City staff. One of the most important recommendations that came from the survey was identifying the need for a future specific plan that addresses local issues such as cleanliness, street lighting, parking, and housing.

The following questions were raised (*staff and consultant comments are in italics*):

- Who were the survey respondents and how did you find them? *It was primarily person to person contact at schools, markets, streets, churches, etc. There was still a need for some coaching for those unfamiliar with surveys like these.*
- I'm surprised so many survey respondents felt that bi-lingual services were readily available. *Most school material is prepared in two languages, people may be reacting to that.*
- Satisfaction with City services seems pretty low in many of the categories.
- How transferable are these survey results to other lower income parts of San Rafael? *We were limited in resources and really focused on the Canal. We don't know how transferable the results are—the focus on the Canal was in part to set the stage for a Specific Plan in the future.*
- The issues are different in other parts of the City; Canal is mostly immigrant and first generation, other parts of the City may be second or third generation.
- We did a similar survey in the 1990s in Spanish—many of the same issues were raised. The issue around street cleanliness led to the parking program (to allow street cleaners to come through)—this was recently changed, however. *Is there a way to do street cleaning in a more equitable way?*
- The pandemic has changed the circumstances in the Canal. Canal residents are at the base of the local economy and are among the most vulnerable. Financial stability is a big challenge—taking care of people in essential service jobs is a key part of saving and revitalizing our economy. Residents are well aware of additional threats (earthquake, fire, sea level), but may not have the capacity to be prepared. We need to take action to avoid displacement, make sure that housing remains available, and get people back into their jobs.
- Partnerships with City, County, and local leaders are key. Be careful of “relief” programs where the money is just passed through to well off people.
- Is the General Plan 2040 team rethinking the Plan based on the new reality of Covid 19? *We are acknowledging our current circumstances and challenges.*
- We need to create a safe environment for people in low paying jobs (landscapers, retail workers, day laborers, etc) as they go back to work—but these folks are not at the table as decisions are made.
- It is very challenging for families living in small quarters—housing security is a big issue.
- Isn't the non-profit community doing a lot to address the things that Ricardo is talking about now?
- Vice Chair Carrera noted that Covid-19 has highlighted issues that were a problem before the pandemic, such as the lack of internet access. People need to work to survive but are being told they must stay home. The steps that are being taken by non-profits are just a drop in the bucket. The various moratoria that have been adopted are not enough. Corporations who own the apartment buildings are getting money to cover their payments, but the tenants are not getting relief. Right now, we are still focused on the public health crisis. The priority is to not get sick. But an economic crisis looms—we need to prepare. We need more money to support people rather than corporations.
- Advocacy is one aspect, but we also need a staff member or leadership group that connects the silos (transportation, housing, etc.) Need to engage service providers like Marin Transit, look for ways to keep small business alive, etc.—think about how our zoning policies can be part of the solution. We should address equity as a land use issue, a transportation issue, etc.

The conversation shifted to the draft policies. PM Miller pointed out that addressing environmental justice was now mandatory in the General Plan.

- It's great to have an Element like this in the Plan. It does sound like we're committing ourselves to a lot of new stuff, which will be challenging given the budget circumstance we find ourselves in.
- Recognize the need to include older adults and address aging not just in Goal 6 but also in the earlier policies. It's good to involve young people but don't leave out older people.
- In the policy where racism is referenced, should also acknowledge ageism (age is an equity issue too).

- Goal 4—add “people of color” along with immigrants and lower income.
- Under transportation, given air quality concerns, we should advocate for electric charging stations. We should also address I-580 AM westbound traffic issues—improving access is an equity issue.
- On 1.4, City could consider filling representatives on boards and commissions from Council districts (could be a way to improve diversity on boards)
- On 1.5, add a program for boards and commissions to hold workshops and clearly identify issues and actions. Notify the public well in advance so they can participate. Make it clear who is responsible for what (to make public input more effective). Who do you talk to about housing, equity issues, etc.
- Was there an opportunity to put the survey out in a gender-focused way? It would be interesting to see the results broken down by gender. *No, it was not designed with a gender lens, although we do have the gender of the respondents. There are additional language and cultural issues involved in doing a survey designed to address gender. It would be great to address this in future surveys.*
- Address access in the policy piece. Inclusion is very intentional, but you need to make sure people have access as well.
- Is there a possibility to do an expanded survey since so many people are at home? Could do a telephone survey.
- Air quality is an environmental justice issue in the City. There's a lot of particulate matter around SR High and San Pedro School.
- The 2019 survey was an extension of an earlier and more expansive effort in 2013. Many of the issues and priorities were the same.
- Policy on effective and equitable communication---having a translator is not enough. It's also cultural competency, and explaining why we do planning, how it connects with one's life, etc, Context is important to get meaningful feedback. Also, use technology (text messages, etc) and recognize that not everyone has 3 hours to spend at a council meeting. Think about what technology tools we have to bring more voices to the table.

Director Jensen noted that the City intended to prepare a specific plan for the Canal neighborhood. The survey will be helpful in framing the issues and positioning the City for funding. Covid will present a challenge to funding the programs in the Plan.

There were no Alternates or members of the public present. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 PM