

From: Steve Thomson [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2020 3:30 PM
To: Barry Miller <Barry.Miller@cityofsanrafael.org>; Alicia Giudice <Alicia.Giudice@cityofsanrafael.org>; Lindsay Lara <Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Planning Commission input on Redwood Trees

Planning Commission officials,

I have been a proud homeowner in the West End neighborhood for the past 29 years, and made this my permanent home in large part because of the natural wonders here at the end of Fremont Rd. Yes, the magnificent Redwood Trees are a sight to behold! In fact, I'm very fortunate to have 4 giant Redwoods on my own property, and just love everything about them. It's reassuring to know the City of San Rafael and the State of Calif Legislature have supported the preservation and protection of Redwood trees over 12" in diameter since 1937. I would surely expect this trend to continue, as it affords numerous benefits --

- 1) Absorbing carbon from the air to combat climate change
- 2) Broad root systems that absorb rain runoff, and prevent erosion of the hill side.
- 3) Cools the air and adds a wonderful scent
- 4) Wildlife and bird habitat that thrive in the canopy above -- including Red Tail Hawks, falcons, wood peckers, and owls.
- 5) Beautification overall, and the serenity of nature abound.

I'm well aware that the City of San Rafael Planning Commission plans to hold a hearing tomorrow to review the draft General Plan 2040. And part of that should include a continuing resolution and provision for **Chapter 5:** Community Design and Preservation -- and **Chapter 6:** Conservation and Climate Change.

The adoption of strong, undebatable language to protect the environmental assets that San Rafael is blessed with must be reinforced, as financially motivated investors, lawyers, and developers will look for ways to evade laws for personal gain. We must not let this happen on our watch!

Case in point, the ongoing proposed development at 54 and 52 Fremont Rd (adjacent to my house), which is currently under review by the Planning Commission. The proposal includes removal of at least 9 very large (well over 12" diameter) Redwoods. The City held a public hearing about this just over 1 year ago, as many nearby residents who attended expressed their deep concerns for tree removal of this magnitude. The meeting ended with the developer being notified to revise planned tree removal, and propose a solution for addressing the more pressing matter of reconstruction, or demolition/rebuild on the dilapidated, hazardous property at 54 Fremont Rd. We have yet to hear the details of what that plan actually is, and certainly would be outraged with a mere "window dressing" solution. Many of the board

members concurred with the conditional changes to 52 Fremont based on a comprehensive upgrade to 54 Fremont first.

It's my understanding that Alicia Giudice is managing this project, and appears motivated to circumvent San Rafael's Hillside Guidelines to the developer's favor. I believe more scrutiny is needed from other city officials -- including fair/ open comments and practical ideas from surrounding neighbors, before the proposed project at 52 Fremont, that includes an exception for a Lot Line Adjustment, is allowed to move forward. To re-emphasize, virtually all neighbors are far more concerned with the rebuilding of 54 Fremont than squeezing in one more house on a steep challenging lot that shakes up the ambiance of the neighborhood -- and yes, the destruction of our prize grove of giant Redwoods.

I would appreciate if my comments are entered into the public record as I will be tuning into the meeting tomorrow evening at 7:00pm.

Thank you for keeping San Rafael such a special place to call home!

Steve Thomson

From: Maren Degraf [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2020 1:22 PM
To: Barry Miller <Barry.Miller@cityofsanrafael.org>; Alicia Giudice <Alicia.Giudice@cityofsanrafael.org>;
Lindsay Lara <Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: San Rafael Planning Commission - Save our Redwood Trees

Dear San Rafael Planning Commission,

1) Suggest adding the following wording to Chapter 5 Community Design and Preservation and Chapter 6 Conservation and Climate Change of the draft General Plan 2040:

Protect and preserve Redwood trees over 12 inches in diameter. San Rafael is a tree city and the Redwood tree is the California State Tree, designated by the State Legislature in 1937. Redwood trees absorb water run-off, combat climate change by absorbing carbon and provide shade in the summer months. Redwood trees beautify our neighborhoods. Prohibit the removal of California Redwood Trees over 12" diameter.

Thank you,

Maren DeGraff

Maren DeGraff
[REDACTED]

October 26, 2020

San Rafael Planning Commission

1400 Fifth Avenue

San Rafael, CA 94901

Via email: barry.miller@cityofsanrafael.org; alicia.giudice@cityofsanrafael.org and lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org

PLEASE INCLUDE THIS 4-PAGE LETTER IN PUBLIC COMMENTS for the first public hearing on October 27, 2020, for the draft General Plan 2040, Chapters 1 - 9

Dear Planning Commissioners:

I have the following comments on the draft General Plan 2040:

Chapter 3. Land Use Element

APN 12-041-13 is a vacant lot at the end of Fremont Road that is the site of landslides and mudslides over the years with one resulting in a lawsuit when a landslide from this property damaged 54 Fremont, a developed property downhill and across the street from this lot. During the rainy season this site produces a substantial amount of water runoff, producing an impressive waterfall, frequently overflowing the culvert at the bottom of the site. The culvert is maintained by the City who regularly removes accumulated debris. Frequently, during the winter months, water, mud, and debris flowing from this site can clog the culvert and street drains causing flooding in the street with the water cascading down to 54 Fremont again and down the public stairs next to #54. Even when the water isn't flowing, you can visibly see the land subsidence and deep scars left from a well-worn path where the land has fallen away. This lot is unbuildable and should be zoned as "conservation." It has been owned together with the contiguous uphill lot, APN 12-041-26, for many years.

Chapter 4. Neighborhoods Element

1) West End Village, pg 4-15. ADD:

The West End Village marks the western entrance to downtown San Rafael and includes attractive signage and landscaping to welcome vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians.

2) West End, pg 4-18 and 4-19, changes/additions:

a) The following phrase in the third paragraph on pg 4-18 is not a complete sentence:
"The scale of future projects along Fourth Street constrained by heavy and fast-moving traffic and limited ingress and egress to Fourth Street."

b) Other suggested changes/additions, pg 4-18 and 4-19:

Policy NH-2.2: ~~Miracle Mile~~ West End Circulation

Improve circulation, provisions for cross-traffic and “U-turn” movements, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and traffic controls along ~~Fourth Street~~ Second Street and the Miracle Mile, especially at intersections ~~with side streets~~.

~~**Program NH 2.2A: Ross Valley Intersection.** Consider reconfiguring the traffic signal at Ross Valley Drive and Fourth Street to incorporate Santa Margarita Drive, thereby improving safety.~~

Program NH-2.2A: Neighborhood Circulation Concepts. Pursue the following circulation improvements in the West End Neighborhood.

a) Reconfigure the traffic signal at Fourth Street and Ross Valley Drive intersection to incorporate Santa Margarita Drive, thereby improving safety.

b) Implement plan to improve safety at the complicated and dangerous pedestrian/bicycle crossing at Marquard/West End/2nd Street/Third Street/Fourth Street crosswalk.

c) Improve pedestrian/bicycle safety at 2nd Street/East Street intersection crosswalk.

d) Widen sidewalk along south side of Second Street from East Street to Miramar Avenue to improve safety for pedestrians walking next to fast moving traffic.

e) Install a concrete sidewalk to replace the dirt path along one block of Second Street from Hayes Street to Shaver Street.

f) Complete Grove Hill Estates public pedestrian path along the easement created in 1983 to connect Tamal Vista Drive to the Sun Valley neighborhood.

Program NH-2.4A. Emergency response time. Require emergency, fire or EMS services that meets NFPA Standard 1710 response time criteria for all new development.

Program NH-2.4B. Fire Apparatus Access. Require CFC turning radius provisions to accommodate the turning around of fire apparatus, as required by CFC Appendix D, for all new development.

Chapter 5. Community Design and Preservation Element.

1) Suggested changes/additions are underlined, pg 5-19:

Policy CDP-3.6: Tree Preservation, Removal and Replacement

Program CDP-3.6C: Tree Preservation. Protect and preserve Redwood trees over 12 inches in diameter. San Rafael is a tree city and the Redwood tree is the California State Tree, designated by the State Legislature in 1937. Redwood trees absorb water run-off, combat climate change by absorbing carbon and providing shade in the summer months. Redwood trees beautify our neighborhoods.

Program CDP-4.2A: Improving Design Review Efficiency. Continue to improve the design review process by: (pg 5-21)

- Engaging stakeholders and the developer early so that issues can be worked out before initial submittal
- Clarifying requirements for initial submittals to improve their quality
- Continue to require all necessary reports, including geotechnical, grading, and survey, prior to review of hillside development
- Adjusting notification procedures to encourage earlier and broader participation
- Changing the project review sequence so that Planning Commission feedback is solicited before the Design Review Board for specific projects.
- Continue to involve the community with their written comments and public participation in the design review process.
- Periodically evaluating and updating the guidelines, including thresholds for design review.

Chapter 6. Conservation and Climate Change

Program C-1.16C: Tree Preservation. pg 6-19: Add the following:

Prohibit removal of a California Redwood Tree over 12” diameter.

Chapter 7. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

PROS-3.8: Trails, pg 7-26 – add the following:

Program PROS-3.8C: New Neighborhood Trails.

As part of the development process, consider including public pedestrian easements to create new trails connecting residential areas and providing alternative walkable routes.

Program PROS-3.8D: Complete trails previously acquired.

For trails that have already acquired an easement, such as the Grove Hills Estate public pedestrian easement that connects the West End neighborhood to Sun Valley, appropriate funding necessary to complete or construct the trail.

Chapter 8. Safety and Resilience Element.

1) Recommend the following sentences be modified (additions are underlined, deletions are ~~crossed out~~):

Policy S-1.2: Location of Future Development, pg 8-4, modify 2nd sentence, to agree with Program S-1.2B:

Land uses and densities should take environmental hazards such as slope stability, earthquakes, flooding, sea level rise, and wildfires into consideration.

Program S-1.2B: Use of Hazard Maps in Development Review, pg 8-4, modify 2nd sentence to agree with wording in Policy S-1.2:

Require appropriate studies and actions to ensure that hazards are identified and adequately mitigated.

Goal S-2: Resilience to Geologic Hazards, pg 8-5

Modify 1st sentence in box:

Minimize potential risks associated with geologic hazards, including earthquake-induced ground shaking and liquefaction, landslides, mudslides, erosion, sedimentation, and settlement.

Modify 1st paragraph under box:

The potential for hazards ~~can~~ may be reduced through engineering and special construction methods.

2) Last paragraph on page 8-6, the following sentence needs to be corrected – which is it, “may be required” or “are required”:

“As noted in the text box on the facing page, site-specific geotechnical investigations may be are required by the City to determine the potential for landslides at any given site”.

3) The photo of a partially collapsed home on page 8-9 is from a landslide/mudslide in the Dominican area, not from an earthquake and so would be more appropriately placed with the preceding discussion on landslides, not immediately above the section for Earthquakes, Policy S-2-3.

4) In order to adequately review the geotechnical portion of the Safety Element, it would be helpful to have Appendix F included with Chapter 8 for review.

5) **Program S-2.1B: Geotechnical Review**. *Pg 8-7*, Suggested modifications underlined and ~~crossed-out~~:

Continue to require geotechnical studies and peer review for proposed development as set forth in the City’s Geotechnical Review Matrix (See Appendix F and text box at right). Such studies shall be considered in conjunction with development review and should determine the extent of geotechnical hazards, optimum design for structures, ~~and~~ the feasibility and suitability of a proposed development for its location, the need for special structural requirements, and measures to mitigate any identified hazards.

Sincerely,

Victoria DeWitt


San Rafael, CA