



SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

Department: San Rafael Fire Department

**Prepared by: Darin White, Fire Chief
Quinn Gardner, Emergency Manager**

City Manager Approval: _____

TOPIC: REGULATION OF ON-STREET PARKING ON NARROW STREETS

SUBJECT: INTRODUCTION OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SAN RAFAEL MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 5.40.080 REGULATING PARKING ON NARROW, HILLY CITY STREETS

RECOMMENDATION: Pass to print an ordinance amending San Rafael Municipal Code Section 5.40.080 to include parking restrictions on narrow, hilly streets throughout the City.

BACKGROUND:

Due to the geography and terrain of the local landscape, numerous narrow, winding and hilly streets exist in City neighborhoods. These types of roadways can create high risk travel situations for residents, first responders, and other large vehicles. Presently, parking is permitted on both sides of these narrow streets, resulting in vehicles constricting available space and creating a significant challenge for emergency response and evacuation efforts, as well as putting first responders' and citizens' lives and safety at risk.

The City's Municipal Code (section 5.40.080) states, in part: "Parking of vehicles upon any city street is prohibited unless an unobstructed distance of not less than six feet (6') is maintained to the centerline or to the center of the improved or main traveled portion of the street". On some hilly, narrow City streets, this presents an issue when vehicles are parked on roadsides and emergency apparatus don't have enough room to pass safely. Vehicles parked along narrow roadways also present a challenge to evacuation efforts by acting as choke points, which can cause unnecessary backups and delays.

Staff have concluded that to minimize these challenges, additional parking restrictions are needed on select streets. These changes will assure all City streets can accommodate safe emergency vehicle travel and resident evacuation. Staff propose roadside parking should be identified and marked accordingly with signage and painted boxes on select roadways (see example images below). Vehicles parked in violation of signs or markings may be cited and if necessary immediately removed to ensure that roadways remain clear for emergency access and egress at all times.

FOR CITY CLERK ONLY

File No.: _____

Council Meeting: _____

Disposition: _____

ANALYSIS:

During a wildfire or other emergent event, the narrow streets present in some of the City's hillside neighborhoods have the potential to exacerbate fire, due to their potential to funnel winds and debris, threaten lives, hamper evacuation efforts, and choke out responding emergency vehicles. These dangers are heightened in these high-risk areas by civilian vehicles being allowed to freely park along the narrow roadways, which further restricts access by rendering them impassable to larger fire apparatus and creating single lane access for residents. These narrow, hilly, limited access streets in San Rafael exist in areas such as the West End, Lincoln Hill, Gerstle Park, San Rafael Open Space and neighborhoods on the borders of Santa Venetia and China Camp State Park.

In order to keep residents and visitors safe and to facilitate emergency vehicle access and efficient evacuations, parking should be restricted to marked areas only and vehicles in violation should be ticketed and removed as quickly as possible. To accomplish this, high risk neighborhoods will be reviewed for accessibility to ensure emergency vehicles have space to enter roads and assist where needed. The dimensions and turning radius of a fire engine will determine how much road must be devoted to emergency vehicle access and remaining space will be marked to delineate where civilian vehicles can park without obstructing access or egress. Staff will walk each high-risk roadway accompanied by an engine and physically measure the distance between the roadside and the engine to determine where roadways may be marked to accommodate both parking and safe engine passage. These easy to understand markings will help make both adherence and enforcement easier. Similar parking box regulations exist in Marin in areas such as Larkspur and Corte Madera.

Prior to parking box installation, roadside and overhanging vegetation will be cleared to increase potential parking areas and improve evacuation routes. In addition, reasonable efforts will be made to maintain as much safe parking as possible. Staff will work with residents and neighborhood groups to review and accommodate unique individual needs, while maintaining a focus on the overarching goal of public safety. Signage will be posted along each high-risk roadway to delineate areas in which street parking will be limited to within designated spaces only.

Installation of parking boxes along select roadways will be prioritized based on roadway conditions, properties impacted, and fire risk in the nearby area. In addition, feedback from fire suppression staff regarding access and egress challenges has been collected and considered as part of implementation prioritization. Staff anticipate the initial areas of implementation may take four-eight months. This will allow for adequate and ongoing community outreach, meeting notification requirements, vegetation removal, and finally the marking and painting of the parking boxes. The efforts to fully implement parking boxes on all selected roadways will span multiple years.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

This proposed change to the City's municipal code was incorporated into the Wildfire Prevention and Protection Plan outreach, part of the [Wildfire Action Plan](#) which was adopted by City Council in August of 2020. Feedback was received and will continue to be welcomed and considered throughout the adoption process and implementation.

After presenting the draft Plan on [January 22, 2019](#), staff gathered public feedback and additional input from many community partners. These efforts included but were not limited to a community meeting at City Hall on February 11th, and meetings with the Marin County Fire Chiefs, Marin Association of Realtors, Marin County Fire Prevention Officers, San Rafael Fire Commission, San Rafael

Neighborhoods Association, and Friends of China Camp. Presentations, including time for questions and feedback, were made to the Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association, Lincoln-San Rafael Hill Neighborhood Association, Rotary Club of San Rafael, San Pedro Road Coalition, Villa Real HOA, the Citizens' Oversight Advisory Committee and Marinwood Community Services District. In addition, the Plan was presented, and feedback received at meetings with San Rafael CERT, attendees of the 1 Hour 2 Get Ready classes, and the County Public Disaster Education and Preparedness Committee (PDEP).

Additional outreach was conducted using various online tools, including social media and the City of San Rafael website. The City website was updated shortly after the January 22, 2019 meeting to include a copy of the draft Plan, supporting documentation, and an online feedback form. Short videos describing aspects of the Plan and encouraging feedback were added to the website. As of March 8, 2020, the dedicated webpage and feedback form had 3,736 views and 84 submissions, many with multiple comments. Two Nextdoor poll questions had over 325 total responses. Staff will continue to host community workshops, meetings and continue social media outreach and digital updates to engage and inform the public.

Prior to and during implementation of the parking ordinance, staff will conduct social media outreach via Nextdoor and the City website, distribute mailed letters and flyers to affected residents, and use other social media updates to continue to engage and inform the public while mitigating the risks associated with COVID-19.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The costs of implementation of the program, including the vegetation clearance, roadway paintings, and updated parking signs will be covered by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority with funds raised through Measure C. Any revenue from ticketed violations is intended to be used to support costs associated with paint and sign maintenance after the expiration of Measure C.

OPTIONS:

Staff suggest the following options be considered on this matter:

1. Pass to print the ordinance making amendments to SRMC Section 5.40.080
2. Pass the ordinance to print with modifications.
3. Direct staff to return with more information.
4. Take no action.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the Council pass to print the attached proposed ordinance amending SRMC Section 5.40.080.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance amending San Rafael Municipal Code Section 5.40.080 regulating parking on narrow city streets
2. Public Notice of Ordinance for parking on narrow city streets
3. Visual Examples

ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN RAFAEL AMENDING SAN RAFAEL MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 5.40.080 REGULATING PARKING ON NARROW, HILLY CITY STREETS

WHEREAS, the City Council wishes to preserve the safety and attractiveness of the City's streets and the functionality for residents and businesses using those streets; and

WHEREAS, areas in the City of San Rafael with narrow and hilly roads or in territory where access is otherwise difficult are particularly vulnerable to wildfire; and

WHEREAS, the regular parking of vehicles on streets with narrow widths or in territory difficult to access often creates hazards to vehicular and pedestrian travel; and

WHEREAS, the width of said roads cannot always safely accommodate the passage of City fire or emergency medical apparatus when vehicles are parked on roadsides; and

WHEREAS, San Rafael Municipal Code Section 5.48.010 authorizes the City Traffic Engineer to regulate, restrict, or prohibit parking upon specified streets and during specified hours; and

WHEREAS, the amendments to the San Rafael Municipal Code adopted herein will allow the City Traffic Engineer to place signs or markings to designate limited areas where parking on narrow streets may be allowed without obstructing safe passage of vehicles and pedestrians, and will facilitate the City's ability to effectively enforce its parking restrictions on narrow hilly roadways, thus facilitating emergency access and evacuation, and protecting the public health, safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that adoption of this ordinance would provide limitations on the use of public streets for parking, and is therefore categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") Guidelines Section 15301 concerning the operation or minor alteration of existing public facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN RAFAEL DOES HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

DIVISION 1: AMENDMENT.

Section 5.40.080 of the San Rafael Municipal Code, entitled "Parking prohibited on narrow streets" is hereby amended to read in its entirety as follows:

- (a) The city traffic engineer is authorized to place signs or markings indicating no parking upon any street when the width of the roadway does not exceed twenty feet (20'), or upon one side of a street as indicated by such signs or markings when the width of the roadway does not exceed thirty feet (30');
- (b) When official signs or markings prohibiting parking are erected upon narrow streets as authorized herein, no person shall park a vehicle upon any such street in violation of any such sign or marking;
- (c) Parking of vehicles upon any city street is prohibited unless an unobstructed distance of not less than six feet (6') is maintained to the centerline or to the center of the improved or main traveled portion of the street;
- (d) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Code, when the stopping or parking of vehicles on a narrow hilly street constitutes a hazard to traffic, life or property, or an obstruction to the adequate access by fire, police, health, sanitation and public utility vehicles, the traffic engineer may install signs or markings, including parking boxes, upon the street or portions thereof giving notice that no person shall stop or park or leave standing any vehicle, except as designated by such signs or markings, and that vehicles parked in violation of such signs or markings may be cited and immediately removed.

DIVISION 2: SEVERABILITY.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance. The Council hereby declares that it would have adopted the Ordinance and each section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, or phrases be declared invalid.

DIVISION 3: PUBLICATION; EFFECTIVE DATE.

A summary of this Ordinance shall be published and a certified copy of the full text of this Ordinance shall be posted in the office of the City Clerk at least five (5) days prior to the Council meeting at which it is adopted.

This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect thirty (30) days after its final passage, and the summary of this Ordinance shall be published within fifteen (15) days after the adoption, together with the names of the Councilmembers voting for or against same, in the Marin Independent Journal, a newspaper of general circulation published and circulated in the City of San Rafael, County of Marin, State of California.

Within fifteen (15) days after adoption, the City Clerk shall also post in the office of the City Clerk, a certified copy of the full text of this Ordinance along with the names of those Councilmembers voting for and against the Ordinance.

KATE COLIN, Mayor

ATTEST:

LINDSAY LARA, City Clerk

The foregoing Ordinance No. _____ was introduced at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of San Rafael on _____, and ordered passed to print by the following vote, to wit:

AYES: Councilmembers:

NOES: Councilmembers:

ABSENT: Councilmembers:

and will come up for adoption as an Ordinance of the City of San Rafael at a Regular Meeting of the Council to be held on the _____.

LINDSAY LARA, City Clerk

CITY OF SAN RAFAEL

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The City Council of the City of San Rafael will hold a public hearing:

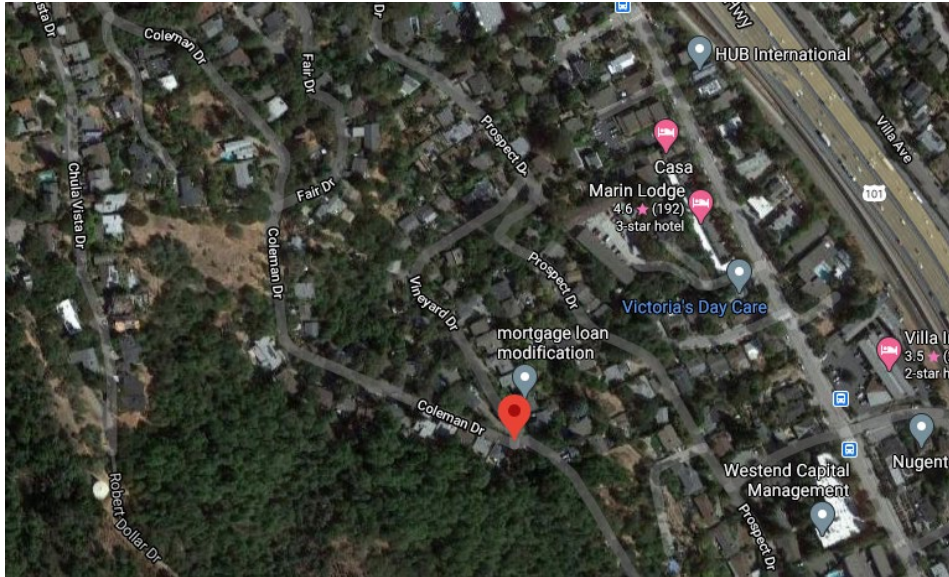
- PURPOSE:** Public Hearing: To consider adoption of an ordinance amending Title 5 (Traffic Regulations), section 5.40.080 of the San Rafael Municipal Code to establish a parking box program on narrow streets to improve routine emergency access and evacuation along such streets and thereby better protecting lives and property from wildfire. The ordinance would provide that the City's Traffic Engineer may restrict on-street parking on narrow streets to areas that are specially marked as parking boxes.
- DATE/TIME/PLACE:** Monday, February 1, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.
Consistent with Executive Orders No.-25-20 and No. N-29-20 from the Executive Department of the State of California and the Marin County Shelter in Place Order, the San Rafael City Council hearing of February 1, 2021 will not be physically open to the public and the meeting will be streamed live to YouTube at www.youtube.com/cityofsanrafael. Instructions on how to participate online will be available on the YouTube channel. You will also be able to listen/speak by telephone. The number will be provided on agenda.
- WHAT WILL HAPPEN:** You may comment on the proposed amendment to establish parking boxes on narrow streets. The City Council will consider all public testimony and will then decide whether to pass the amendment to print .
- IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND:** You may send a letter to City Clerk, City of San Rafael, 1400 Fifth Avenue, Room 209, San Rafael, CA 94915 or by email Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org.
- FOR MORE INFORMATION:** You may contact Quinn Gardner, Emergency Manager, at (415) 485-5336 or quinn.gardner@cityofsanrafael.org. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL

/s/ LINDSAY LARA
LINDSAY LARA, City Clerk

Attachment 3-Visual Examples

Coleman Drive, in the Lincoln Hill neighborhood, is an example of a winding and narrow road within the City of San Rafael. The parked vehicles in the image from Google maps, are parked legally according to current regulations, but impede emergency traffic. As part of the proposed program, vegetation along the roadway would be cleared, reducing potential ignitions such as from hot mufflers, and creating more space to safely park in newly marked spaces. In this example, the spot near the bend where visibility and turning radius creates challenges, a parking spot may be eliminated if the topography, rather than removable vegetation, limits the capacity to safely park off the roadway.



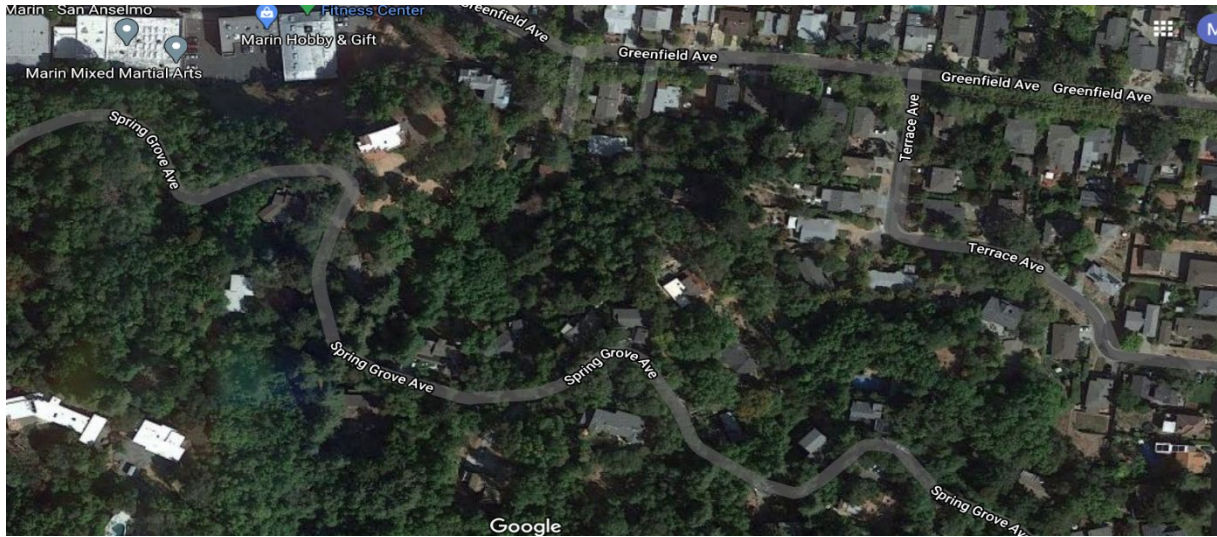
Attachment 3-Visual Examples

Fair Drive provides a good example of how parked cars can constrict roads and impede access. If the engine can safely travel the area pictured, parking boxes would be installed in similar locations to which the vehicles are currently parked. The boxes would clearly indicate safe and allowable parking locations.



Attachment 3-Visual Examples

Spring Grove Avenue, below, is another example of a street that presents challenges to evacuation and emergency egress. The truck in the photo from Google Maps is parked on a blind curve and pushes traffic to a single lane around the curve. Parking may be retained in the area behind the truck, but specific on-site measurements may demonstrate a need to limit parking in the space occupied.



Attachment 3-Visual Examples

Below are some examples of marked parking boxes as implemented in Larkspur, CA, clearly delineating where parking is allowed. As part of the City's proposal vegetation would be removed along the roadways, further increasing visibility and improving emergency access and egress. Note, the boxes are painted to be as long as it is safe, and not designed to be one vehicle per spot, providing for the additional flexibility.

