14 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Introduction

The Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Element recognizes environmental justice and social equity as important issues in San Rafael and expresses the City's commitment to work toward a more just and equitable future for all of its residents. In 2016, the State legislature passed SB 1000, mandating that all cities with disadvantaged communities incorporate environmental justice policies into their general plans upon the next revision of two or more elements beginning in 2018. Because this is a new requirement, San Rafael is one of the first cities in the Bay Area to adopt such an element. The City has interpreted the State mandate broadly, addressing not only environmental justice but other issues related to the greater inclusion of all people in local decision-making.

Acknowledging equity and environmental justice as planning issues reflects consensus among policy makers that marginalized groups, including lower-income residents, communities of color, and indigenous people, are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards and resulting health impacts due to past land use decisions. These inequities are the result of structural factors both explicit and implicit throughout history, beginning with the displacement of Coast Miwok people from their lands more than two centuries ago. During the 20th Century, practices like exclusionary zoning, racial covenants, and discriminatory lending practices ("redlining") by public and private entities shaped land use patterns that still define cities across the country today.

The concept of environmental justice recognizes that present-day policies may have unintentionally negative impacts on communities that are still affected by previous practices of discrimination, exclusion, and inequality. In addition to addressing these issues in a stand-alone element, environmental justice and equity are key considerations in other elements of the General Plan, including Housing, Transportation, Environmental Hazards, and Arts and Culture.

Planning with an Equity Lens

The use of an "equity lens" in planning means that decisions about the allocation of future resources should consciously consider the historic advantages or disadvantages that have affected residents, the efforts being made to authentically include residents who have been historically excluded from planning processes, and the extent to which our decisions place unfair burdens on future generations. "Opportunity for all" is a guiding principle of General Plan 2040—it is intended to inform and shape future planning, decision-making, and resource allocation. In particular, decisions about land use, transportation, housing, parks, and public services must consider their potential impacts on under-served individuals and groups, including how they may mitigate displacement and contribute to reducing inequity.

The State of California has provided guidance in how to address equity and environmental justice in the General Plan, identifying seven areas of focus:

- Pollution Exposure and Air Quality (largely addressed through Safety and Resilience Element policies to prevent and mitigate sources of air pollution and protect sensitive populations)

- Public Facilities (largely addressed through policies in the Community Services and Infrastructure Element, and also in the Mobility and EDI Elements)

- Food Access (including policies in the EDI Element to promote access to healthy food)

- Safe and Sanitary Homes (largely addressed through Housing Element policies that ensure safe and healthy living conditions, and access to affordable housing)

- Physical Activity (addressed through Mobility Element policies on safe streets and bicycle and pedestrian travel, through Park and Open Space Element policies on park access, trails, and athletics programming, and through the EDI Element on environmental health)

- Civil or Community Engagement (including policies in the EDI Element promoting equitable, inclusive, and meaningful community engagement in local planning processes).

While many of these topics are addressed in other parts of the General Plan, the EDI Element provides an opportunity to connect them to each other and to the broader issue of equity.

Photo Credit: Ross Bishop

Defining Environmental Justice

The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) defines Environmental Justice as "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from local policies.

Ancillary to this formal definition are the concepts of distributive justice, social justice, and procedural justice. Distributive justice refers to the inequitable distribution of public harms and benefits across geographies and/or other groupings. Social justice is more specific, referring to the way historical injustices have had lasting intergenerational impacts that continue to be distributed along race and class lines An example is how indigenous people and people of color were openly discriminated against in home loan markets prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act. As a result, families belonging to these groups in the U.S. have had far less access to property and home ownership, the primary driver of inter-generational wealth transfer and social mobility. Procedural justice refers to decision-making processes themselves as opposed to their outcomes. It ensures that all people who are potentially affected by a decision or policy can participate as equal partners in every level of decision-making.

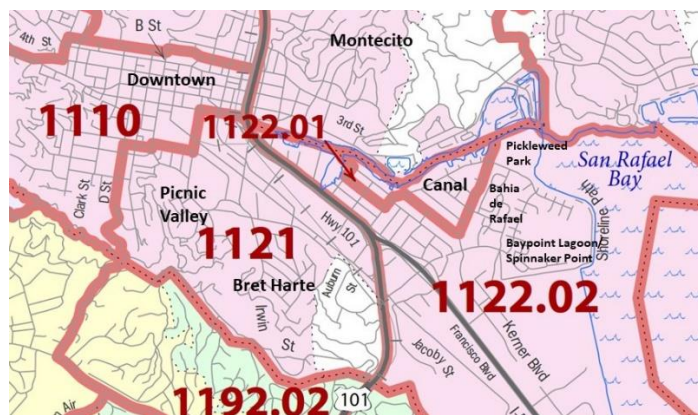## Summary of Disadvantaged Community Data for San Rafael

The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) has developed specific metrics to identify "disadvantaged communities" in California. These are areas that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution or negative public health conditions, as well as areas with high concentrations of poverty, unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, and low rates of English fluency. OEHHA has developed a mapping tool known as CalEnviroScreen to identify these areas. This program assigns a score to every census tract in California and then ranks each tract with a percentile relative to the entire State of California.

The San Rafael Planning Area includes 13 census tracts. CalEnviroScreen was used to map 19 different indicators at the census tract level in order to compare conditions in different parts of the city, and to compare San Rafael's census tracts to the rest of the Bay Area and the State as a whole. City staff also evaluated other indicators, including access to parks and grocery stores, and overall walkability (Walkscore). The findings of this analysis are contained in a background report available on the City's website.

As a whole, San Rafael residents are healthy, with low rates of asthma, low rates of cardiovascular disease, and very few infants born with low birth weights compared to the rest of California. Every census tract in San Rafael scores at the median or better compared to the rest of the State in terms of these three indicators, which generally correlate with high levels of pollution exposure and poverty.

Compared to the rest of California, San Rafael has very high-quality drinking water and good air quality. Areas of San Rafael near highways as well as industrial-commercial areas with high volumes of truck traffic score worse than the rest of the city in terms of air pollution but are still roughly at the median for the State as a whole. San Rafael has very low rates of pesticide exposure, and very few sites where toxic chemicals have been released. There are a few sites with hazardous materials issues (contaminated groundwater or soil, etc.); these are generally located in the southeastern industrial areas. The city's built environment is relatively conducive to healthy physical activity: roughly two-thirds of the city has a complete sidewalk network that facilitates access to destinations like parks, transit stops, grocery stores and schools.

The Canal neighborhood stands out as having a disproportionate concentration of households facing significant socioeconomic disadvantages. Tract 1122.01—corresponding to the "Core Canal" area—scores consistently lower than the rest of the city on almost every indicator. The adjacent census tract (1122.02) covers a larger geographic area including most of southeast San Rafael (Bahia, Spinnaker, Bay Point, etc.) and also scores below the citywide average on many variables (see map inset below for tract locations).

Both of these census tracts are also vulnerable to flooding and the impacts of sea level rise. Table 14-1 displays demographic data for these two Census Tracts and for the City as a whole. While the Canal today is 80 percent Latino, it was also a gateway community for Vietnamese immigrants in the 1980s and is still culturally diverse. U.S. Census data indicates that roughly four percent of Canal area residents speak Asian languages at home, with Vietnamese being the predominant language in those cases.

Table 14-1: Socio-Economic Comparison of Canal Area Census Tracts with Entire City

Demographic Variable	Tract 1122.01		Tract 1122.02		City of San Rafael	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Total Population	8,176		4,964		58,939	
Hispanic Origin	7,188	87.9%	3,430	69.1%	18,522	31.4%
Speak English "Less than Very Well" (*)	3,792	60.3%	2,325	54.8%	10,494	19.1%
Renter-Occupied Households	1,665	91.8%	786	61.8%	11,557	50.3%
Average Household Size	4.47		3.87		2.48	
Overcrowded Households	1,246	68.7%	398	31.3%	2,411	10.5%
Population Under 18	2,824	36.7%	1,353	29.4%	12,665	21.4%
Median Age	26.8		32.9		41.0	
Median Household Income	$42,399		$65,250		$87,262	
Per Capita Income in 2018	$14,928		$29,586		$53,559	
Percent of Residents Below Poverty Line in 2018		33.9%		13.8%		13.3%
Percent of Residents 25 or older with no high school diploma		56.3%		36.9%		14.6%
Unemployment rate (2018)		7.8%		3.1%		3.9%
Renter households spending more than 35% of income on rent (**)	944	56.7%	453	60.7%	5,264	47.5%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey (data retrieved 2020, covers 2014-2018). Citywide totals may not precisely align with other estimates in General Plan due to sampling methods.
Notes: (*) based on persons older than 5 years.; (**) In "Percent of Total" column, the "Total" refers to all renters in this Tract

As Table 14-1 indicates, the "Core Canal" census tract (roughly bordered by the San Rafael Canal, Kerner, Larkspur Street, and Mill Street) is home to 14 percent of San Rafael's population. The adjacent tract (including Bahia de Rafael and the southeast San Rafael employment district) is home to about eight percent of the city's population. These two tracts have significantly higher percentages of Hispanic residents, non-English speaking households, and renters than the city as a whole. The average household size in the Canal area is 80 percent higher than the city as a whole, despite the fact that most of the housing units are smaller multi-family apartments. More than two-thirds of the households in the Core Canal tract meet the Census definition of "overcrowded" (more than 1 person per room).

The Canal area (Census Tract 1122.01) also has a significantly larger percentage of children, with almost 37 percent of its population under 18. The median age is almost 15 years below the citywide average—nearly half of all residents are 26 or younger. Median household income is less than half the citywide average, but because of the larger household sizes, the median per capita income is about one-quarter the citywide average. Approximately one-third of the residents, including many children, were living below the poverty line in 2018, compared to 13 percent in the city as a whole. More than half of all residents over 25 did not have a high school diploma.

In 2018, the Canal's unemployment rate was 7.8 percent. While this was higher than the citywide average, it is still indicative of a highly engaged workforce. In fact, the less populous Canal census tract (1122.02) had an unemployment rate *below* the citywide average, and a large number of moderate income households. Many Canal residents work in essential service industries, retail positions, health care, and other services that are the foundation of the city's economy.

Evaluating finer-grained Census block group data indicates that there are disadvantaged populations in other parts of San Rafael, including downtown, the Woodland Avenue corridor, the Contempo area of North San Rafael, and portions of Terra Linda near Northgate. San Rafael also has a relatively large population of unsheltered residents, including persons with mental health needs and chronic illnesses.

As noted elsewhere in this General Plan, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disparate impact on Latino residents, representing 70 percent of all cases in Marin County despite a Latino population that is 16 percent of the county total. Much of the impact can be attributed to crowded housing conditions, as well as higher-risk occupations such as construction, food service, and health care. Persistent disparities in employment, income, and access to health care have contributed to increased vulnerability. Many lower-income residents in San Rafael cannot shelter in place, social distance, work from home, or even attend school remotely because they do not have the resources or life circumstances to do so.

The six goals in this Element are informed in part by the data presented above, but more broadly by parallel efforts taking place in San Rafael, ranging from improving internet access in the Canal to district-based elections. This Element also draws from best practices in urban planning, including equity-based initiatives recommended by the American Planning Association (*Planning for Equity Policy Guide, 2019*) and the State of California (SB 1000 Toolkit, 2018). As described in the text box on the following page, a Spanish language outreach and engagement program was included in General Plan 2040, providing insights into community priorities that could not be obtained through traditional methods.
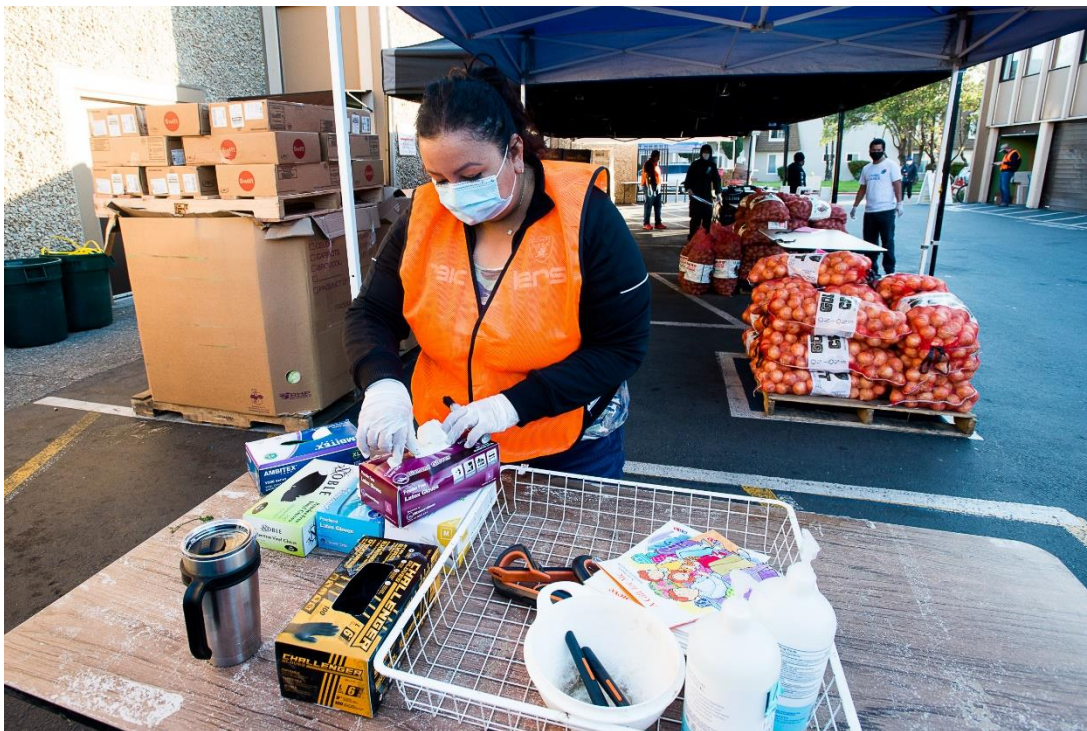

Photo Credit: Susan Adler

General Plan 2040 Spanish Language Survey Findings

A Spanish-language community engagement initiative was included in General Plan 2040. Working with the non-profit Canal Alliance and Communities in Collaboration, a consulting firm, a local leadership team was created to explain the purpose of the General Plan and gather input on key issues and priorities. An important part of this effort was to provide a framework for building the community's capacity to understand and engage in future planning processes. The effort included a community survey, which was administered through in-person interviews. A total of 135 people took the survey. The work was completed in late 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Findings: Housing, Safety, Parking, and Quality of Life

The survey results indicate a strong message about the most urgent priorities: housing, safety, parking, and quality of life. The community is ready to engage as partners with the City in pursuing solutions to these issues. The community indicated relatively high levels of satisfaction with community services, including police and fire. However, only 31 percent were satisfied with the Canal as a "place for visiting family" and only 43 percent were satisfied with street cleanliness.
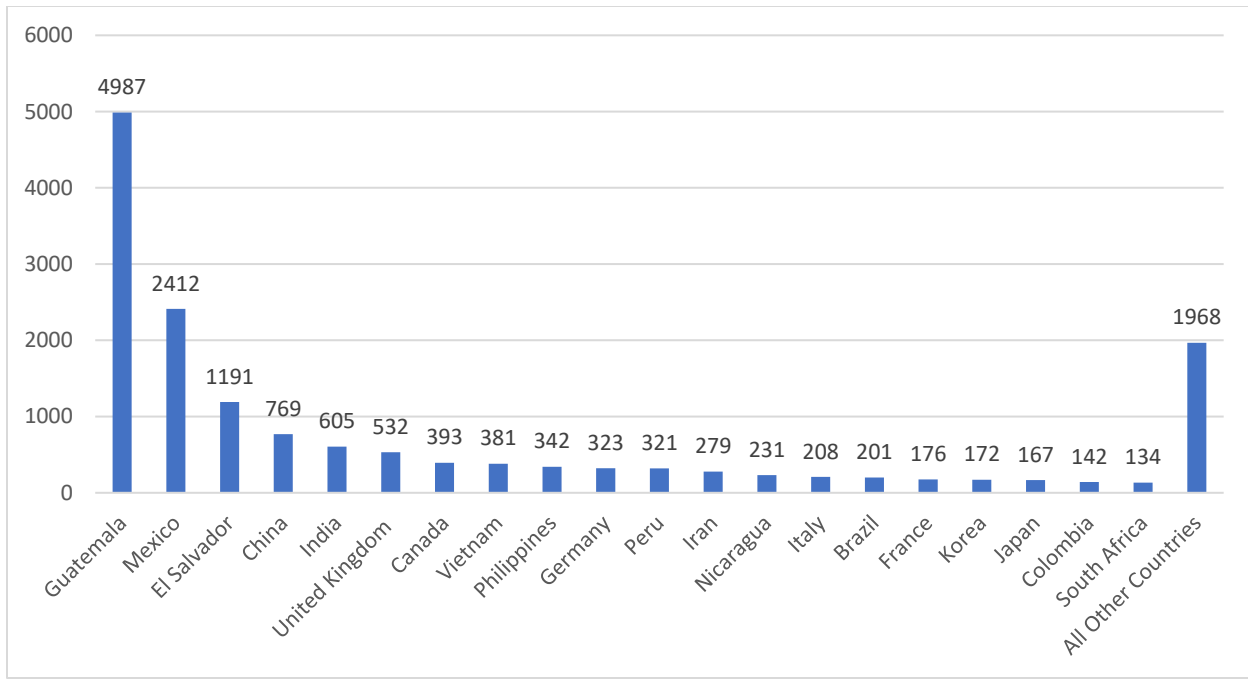
Almost 90% of respondents reported that smoke and fumes from sources such as outdoor cooking and idling cars were major nuisances. Perhaps most alarming is that 90% of residents reported that they do not "feel safe walking at night in the Canal." Some 87% suggested that better street lighting could help improve safety. The responses indicate a higher-than-expected level of trust in police as partners for addressing these issues. There also appears to be high awareness of and concern about potential threats to the community, such as sea level rise, flooding, drought, fires, and earthquakes. This awareness is an opportunity for resilience and preparedness.

The most pressing and worrisome issue was housing; a situation that has worsened over the last few years, reaching crisis levels. Respondents were nearly all renters (97%). Of all respondents, 83% paid one third or more of their incomes on housing; of these, over half were paying 40% or more. About 40% of respondents reported that their rents had doubled in the last 5 years. Another 25% said their rent had tripled or more.

Survey Report Recommendations

- **Build on the Momentum!** The capacity-building provided to the Leadership Team resulted in momentum to continue to learn about city planning and civic engagement to drive further participation in the Canal. The momentum toward greater engagement should be continued.
- **Expand Partnerships:** The City has a remarkable opportunity to continue its partnership with the Canal Alliance to sustain long-term civic engagement. Establishing formal partnerships and standing meetings with key City staff is a critical piece to achieving lasting solutions.
- **Neighborhood Planning:** The recent designation of the Canal as a Priority Development Area, as well as a focus area for future adaptation plans, creates opportunities for deeper engagement and more specific and tangible outcomes.

A full copy of the survey report is available on the City's website at www.sanrafael.org.

Chart 14-1: Place of Birth for Foreign-Born San Rafael Residents, 2019

Planning for a Diverse Community

Diversity is one of San Rafael's strengths. About 27 percent of the city's residents are foreign-born. As Chart 14-1 indicates, the largest immigrant groups in the city are from Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, China, and India. The "all other countries" column in Chart 14-1 includes more than 40 nations around the world. San Rafael's Latino community is itself extraordinarily diverse and includes a mosaic of distinct cultures from many countries, including the United States. The City aspires to create a welcoming environment for persons of all cultures and countries of origin, regardless of citizenship status.

Continued community dialogue about race and social justice in the city is important. Black, Asian, and Latino residents have been disproportionately impacted by systemic and institutional discrimination in our country. San Rafael is not immune to these issues. The City is committed to addressing racism in housing, criminal justice, health care, employment, education and other aspects of community life. It will work proactively toward greater equality and a more just community.

San Rafael is also home to LGBTQ individuals and families, including LGBTQ people of color at the intersection of multiple identities that may experience discrimination. The City strives to eliminate homophobia and improve the well-being of its LGBTQ residents.

A diverse, inclusive city also cares for residents with mental health issues, persons with physical and developmental disabilities, and its unsheltered population. The city's network of social service providers is an essential resource in improving the quality of life for all residents. Many of the county's social service agencies are based on San Rafael. While each city in Marin should do its fair share to meet these needs, San Rafael recognizes that as the county seat and largest city, it has a responsibility to be a regional leader and facilitate compassionate care and creative solutions to homelessness and mental health challenges.

Photo Credit Canal Alliance

Goal EDI-1: Authentic and Inclusive Public Participation
Provide for the meaningful involvement of all residents in local governance and policy making, regardless of their income, language, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, or citizenship family status.

Active, authentic, and inclusive public participation is essential to becoming a more just and equitable city. The City of San Rafael strives for clarity and transparency in city planning processes and promotes opportunities for effective inclusive public participation. It partners with residents and community-based organizations to develop, implement, and evaluate engagement strategies that meet the needs of each community. It promotes shared leadership and decision-making to empower communities that have historically been under-represented in public processes. All residents are invited and enabled to participate in government in a meaningful way.

San Rafael has actively engaged its neighborhood groups in planning and has benefited from thousands of hours of volunteer participation in its planning processes. It is essential that this input is balanced and fairly represents the perspectives of everyone in the community. Lower income, undocumented, and immigrant communities have been less engaged in these processes in the past, limiting the diversity of opinions that are heard. This creates the potential for outcomes that favor higher income areas. All people should have access to local decision-making.

New approaches to community engagement should be explored to involve the public more inclusively, and to ensure that renters, lower-income households, persons experiencing homelessness, youth, and people of color have a voice in City processes. The lack of participation from these groups is typically not due to apathy, but rather engagement formats that may not reflect cultural norms, work schedules, transportation access, income, and competing household priorities. Some communities have responded by providing stipends to community organizers, launching grass roots education programs in other languages, and reprioritizing the messaging of their outreach programs to be more culturally relevant. This may require a shift in resources, including staff or volunteers who speak multiple languages and are more directly aware of neighborhood needs.

An important part of more inclusive outreach is to follow this outreach with tangible results. Engagement strategies in disadvantaged communities should be linked to real change, such as local investments in parks or bike lanes, zoning changes, and approval of projects that benefit the community. Plans should be realistic and should not over-promise. Continued strong relationships with community-based organizations are key to building trust and achieving success.

Policy EDI-1.1: Leadership in Equity and Inclusion

Provide countywide and regional leadership in the incorporation of equity and inclusion into local decision-making.

> *Program EDI-1.1A: Training and Education. Provide training and education on issues of equity and inclusion for City staff, Boards and Commissions, and advisory groups. This should include information about best practices in inclusive civic leadership.*

> *Program EDI-1.1B: Equity Plan. Prepare a citywide Equity Strategic Plan or similar document that provides guidance on ways to incorporate equity into City practices and procedures. Metrics to measure progress, including goals for public participation, should be developed and monitored after Plan adoption.*

> *Program EDI-1.1C: Community Dialogue on Race and Equity. Provide opportunities for ongoing community dialogue on issues of race and equity, including anti-racism education and sanctioned space for public expression.*

Policy EDI-1.2: Broad-Based Involvement

Partner with community-based organizations to engage populations whose voices have been under-represented in public processes because of language, mobility, age, citizenship, economic, and other barriers. Engagement should support self-determination and empowerment, as well as input on projects and plans.

> *Program EDI-1.2A: Community Stakeholders. Actively provide engagement opportunities for all residents through outreach programs specifically aimed at those who are under-represented in public processes, such as immigrant communities, people of color, youth, and younger families. Use creative and community-driven methods for reaching under-represented groups, such as markets, churches, home visits, school events, cultural activities, and informal social networks.*

> *Program EDI-1.2B: San Rafael Website. Use the City's website and social media presence to improve participation in City government and increase access to City information and documents.*

> *Program EDI-1.2C: Scheduling of Meetings. Schedule public meetings and workshops at times and locations convenient to community members. Where feasible, provide child care, food, and other services to make meeting attendance easier.*

> *Program EDI-1.2D: District Elections. Optimize the opportunity for district-based elections to increase resident participation in local government, particularly among Latino residents (for example, by considering Commission appointments by District).*

> *Program EDI-1.2E: CEAP Update. Update the 2015 San Rafael Community Engagement Action Plan (CEAP) to implement General Plan 2040 EDI policies and programs.*

Policy EDI-1.3: Effective and Equitable Communication

Emphasize effective two-way communication between City Hall and the community at large, including multilingual and culturally appropriate messaging, and engagement formats that reach all segments of the community.

Program EDI-1.3A: Removing Language Barriers. Ensure that Latino and other non-English-speaking populations may actively participate in local decision-making through such methods as bilingual notices, translation of meeting materials, the use of accessible (non-jargon) and culturally competent language, Spanish language meetings, new platforms for commenting (such as Facebook and Zoom), and having interpreters at public meetings.

Program EDI-1.3B: Surveys. Regularly use multilingual, culturally appropriate surveys, focus groups, and other outreach methods to solicit input from under-represented communities. When funding is available, outsource survey work to community organizations with engagement grants or stipends for participation (see also Program CSI-5.3B and PROS-2.2B on surveys).

Program EDI-1.3C: Regularly Scheduled Community Meetings. Convene regularly scheduled meetings with businesses and residents in lower income areas to address local priorities, report out on program implementation, and support shared leadership and decision-making.

Policy EDI-1.4: Supporting Community-Based Organizations

Support community-based organizations and advocacy groups in their efforts to communicate effectively with the City and other public agencies. At the same time, enhance the City's capacity to improve listening, accountability, and reporting back to these organizations, and to the community at large.

Program EDI-1.4A: Advocacy Programs. Support training, education, and advocacy programs by local institutions and social service providers to address the issues facing San Rafael's lower income, immigrant, and older adult, and LGBTQ populations, as well as others who have historically faced discrimination or have special needs.

Program EDI-1.4B: Collaborations. Collaborate with local community-based organizations to develop and implement strategies to engage under-represented groups or populations with unique issues, reduce community disparities, and address critical issues.

Photo Credit: Canal Alliance, Transit and Trails

Policy EDI-1.5: Advisory Committees

Use boards, commissions, task forces, and committees to assist City staff and the City Council in decision-making processes. Such groups should reflect San Rafael's demographics and be representative of all segments of the community.

>*Program EDI-1.5A: Board and Commission Diversity. Monitor the composition of City Boards and Commissions, making efforts to provide representation that mirrors the city. When filling vacancies, focus recruitment and outreach efforts on under-represented populations.*
>
>*Program EDI-1.5B: Public Input. Encourage public input at Board, Commission, and Committee meetings. Clearly identify issues, actions, and ways to comment, and provide information early enough to allow meaningful participation.*

Policy EDI-1.6: Youth in Government

Encourage and support the engagement of youth and young adults in government, particularly on issues that directly affect them such as youth services, education, mobility, and climate change.

>*Program EDI-1.6A: Youth-Focused Outreach. Work with local school districts, schools, youth and student groups, colleges, universities, and community-based organizations to increase youth involvement in local government and public processes. This could include school "clubs" organized around topics of interest. Youth engagement should be inclusive and reflective of San Rafael's demographics (see also Program EDI-5.2A on "Buddy" programs).*

Goal EDI-2: Healthy Communities and Environmental Justice
Support public health and wellness through community design in all parts of the city.

San Rafael's development pattern and transportation system should support the fitness of its residents. Physical activity such as walking and cycling can reduce rates of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic ailments. Land use decisions should avoid further compounding health risks in disadvantaged communities, and should reduce exposure to unhealthy air, high levels of noise, contaminated soil, smoke, and odors. San Rafael will promote a safe environment for all residents and ensure that people in every part of the city can lead healthy, active lives.

As the introduction to this Element observed, San Rafael is a healthy community, and its metrics indicate relatively low rates of asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and other illnesses, as well as long-life expectancies. In fact, Marin County is consistently ranked the healthiest county in California by several organizations. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 pandemic ~~has~~ demonstrated that lower income communities in the city and county are far more vulnerable to public health emergencies than the general population, and have fewer resources available to cope with and recover from those emergencies. Moreover, San Rafael's lower income and immigrant residents have limited access to open space, while at the same time they live in the city's densest housing. There are few amenities such as street trees, gardens, and yards, and limited places for outdoor exercise and fitness. Having safe, healthy places to play, ride a bike, go for a walk, and experience nature are critical parts of childhood development.

A healthy environment also includes access to healthy food. This concept has several dimensions, including improving nutrition and healthy eating, eliminating hunger, and providing opportunities for local food production. Most of San Rafael is well-served by markets and groceries, but not all households have sufficient income to buy food for their families. Factors such as acceptance of food stamps at local markets, and access to community gardens or other places to grow fresh food, can improve health outcomes. Likewise, the City can use its land use regulations to avoid excessive concentrations of fast food or alcohol, vaping, and tobacco businesses around K-12 schools and in other places where children gather. Efforts are also needed to address the health and nutrition needs of persons experiencing homelessness and others who may be hungry or in need.

Policy EDI-2.1: Neighborhood Design for Active Living

Improve the design of San Rafael's neighborhoods to promote physical activity for all residents, including opportunities for safe walking and cycling, and walkable access to goods and services.

> ***Program EDI-2.1A: Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements.*** *Implement pedestrian and bicycle improvements, as described in the General Plan Land Use and Mobility Elements and the San Rafael Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. This should include improved safety features, streetscape and landscape improvements, and other improvements that make it safer, easier, and more comfortable to be physically active in San Rafael, particularly in neighborhoods with less access to these features today.*

> ***Program EDI-2.1B: Public Health as an Evaluation Metric.*** *Consider public health data such as rates of asthma, heart disease, and obesity when prioritizing capital improvements such as bike lanes, new parks, and sidewalk improvements.*

> *See also Goals M-5 and M-6 on connected, pedestrian-friendly streets*

Photo Credit: Ross Bishop

Policy EDI-2.2: Safe Space for Physical Activity

Provide safe physical spaces for children and families to play and be physically active in all neighborhoods, particularly in the Canal area and other neighborhoods where many homes lack outdoor living space.

> *Program EDI-2.2A: Increasing Usable Public Space.* Pursue opportunities for additional programmed public outdoor space, with a priority on higher density neighborhoods. Consider the use of City-owned vacant lots or rights-of-way as improved open space.
>
> *See also policies under Goal PROS-1 on park improvements*

Policy EDI-2.3: Community Health

Increase community awareness about best practices for maintaining physical and mental health. Incorporate such practices in City-sponsored activities and programs (see also Policy PROS-2.5).

Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL)

The Marin County HEAL Hunger Initiative is intended to align systems across government agencies and community organizations so everyone in Marin County has access to affordable, healthy food. HEAL partners work to improve access to CalFresh (the "food stamp" program) among lower income households, reducing food insecurity by removing barriers and improving food distribution systems, and improving nutrition through school gardens and public education.

> *Program EDI-2.3A: HEAL Campaign.* Participate in the Marin Countywide Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) campaign, supporting actions that transform the physical environment to improve health, well-being, and physical activity.
>
> *Program EDI-2.3B: Health Fairs.* Encourage multilingual community health fairs and other events that raise awareness of public health among all residents. Demonstrate best practices for public health and wellness at City-sponsored activities, such as serving healthy foods and encouraging walking and bicycling to the event.
>
> *Program EDI-2.3C: Municipal Code Review.* Periodically evaluate City codes and ordinances for their impact on health, including provisions for tobacco, vaping, and smoke-free multi-family housing; standards for indoor air quality; and HVAC systems able to sustain safe living conditions during wildfires, power outages, and extreme weather events.

Policy EDI-2.4: Access to Health Care

Promote access to health care for all residents to safeguard individual and community well-being.

> *Program EDI-2.4A: Local Health Care Facilities.* Support the development of easily accessed health care and medical facilities in the city, including access to mental health services.

Policy EDI-2.5: Environmental Justice

Ensure that land use and transportation decisions do not create disparate environmental health conditions, such as air pollution and exposure to hazardous materials, for lower income residents and other vulnerable populations. Work to reduce or eliminate such hazards where they currently exist.

> ***Program EDI-2.5A: Reducing Exposure to Hazards.*** *As appropriate, utilize conditional use permit requirements for businesses adjacent to residential neighborhoods to reduce resident exposure to noise, odor, smoke, vibration, and other potentially harmful impacts. Work with business owners to encourage responsiveness when these issues arise.*

> ***Program EDI-2.5B: Reducing Indoor Air Pollution.*** *Support the distribution of bilingual information on indoor air pollution hazards to vulnerable populations, including lower income renters. Respond to complaints about smoke and odors in multi-family projects and facilitate remediation.*

> ***Program EDI-2.5C: Environmental Hazard Data.*** *Maintain data on environmental hazards, such as soil and groundwater contamination and the vulnerability of the population to such hazards, using sources such as Cal Enviroscreen.*

See the Safety Element for policies and programs to (a) require health risk assessments for new development near freeways and (b) reduce exposure to hazardous materials, including contaminated sites and new uses handling hazardous substances. See the Conservation and Climate Change Element for policies to improve air quality, and the Mobility Element for policies to encourage cleaner fuel vehicles.

Policy EDI-2.6: Neighborhood Greening

Encourage the greening of San Rafael's multi-family districts, including tree planting, landscaping, and other improvements that enhance aesthetics, reduce pollutants, and improve climate resilience.

> ***Program EDI-2.6A: Greening Priorities.*** *Prioritize City-sponsored urban greening and tree planting projects in residential areas that currently have lower rates of tree cover, higher residential densities, and limited access to open space (for example, the Canal area and Montecito).*

Policy EDI-2.7: Responsible Retailing

Encourage responsible retailing of products with the potential to have adverse health impacts, such as tobacco, vaping, and alcohol. Enforce laws that prohibit the sale or provision of such products to minors. Avoid their overconcentration in areas with large numbers of K-12 students.

See the Economic Vitality Element for policies and programs on neighborhood business attraction and retention

Policy EDI-2.8: Food Access

Expand access to healthy food and nutritional choices in San Rafael through conveniently located grocery stores, small markets, farmers markets, and community gardens, particularly in lower income areas where existing fresh food options are limited.

> ***Program EDI-.8A: Incentives.*** *Explore incentives for small local markets to offer healthier food options for nearby residents.*

Canal Community Garden

The Canal Community Garden is located on the corner of Bellam Boulevard and Windward Way, a short walk from the Canal neighborhood. For years, Vietnamese and Latino residents in the neighborhood expressed a desire to be able to grow and produce foods important to their heritage and culture. The Garden opened in 2013, with funding assistance provided by the Trust for Public Land. It has been operated by the City of San Rafael since 2018.

The garden includes raised beds for 92 gardeners; a greenhouse, shed, potting tables, and composting bin; a trellised outdoor classroom; vegetated rainwater treatment and educational signage; native planting; and street trees. Sustainable design features such as a rainwater catchment system have been incorporated to reduce irrigation needs and educate visitors about water conservation. A second community garden is operated by the City in Terra Linda.

Policy EDI-2.9: Urban Agriculture

Promote and support small-scale, neighborhood-based, food production, urban agriculture, and reliable food supply lines from regional growers.

> *Program EDI-2.9A: Obstacles to Food Production. Review, and revise as needed, San Rafael's zoning regulations and codes to identify and remove barriers to urban gardening and small-scale food production in residential neighborhoods.*

Policy EDI-2.10: Resiliency Planning

Improve resiliency planning for climate change, public health emergencies, and other community stressors among non-English speaking and lower-income populations. Increase awareness of sea level rise and flooding risks in the Canal area and in other vulnerable areas, as well as the importance of adaptation measures.

Goal EDI-3: Housing Stability

Improve housing stability for all San Rafael residents, particularly those with low or very low incomes.

Residents should live without fear of being displaced by high rents and a shortage of affordable housing options. The City will work to reduce overcrowded and substandard living conditions and provide additional housing choices for people of all incomes. It will also work with landlords and rental property owners to develop fair, workable solutions.

In 1968, the average American household paid 15 percent of its income for housing. Today, 47 percent of San Rafael's renter households and 22 percent of its owner households pay more than 35 percent of their incomes for housing. The burden is greatest for very low-income households, many of whom pay more than half of their incomes on rent. These households faced steep rent increases between 2012 and 2019, creating economic hardship, displacement, and even homelessness. The impact of rising rents has fallen disproportionately on San Rafael's Latino families, leading to overcrowding and sometimes unsanitary or unsafe housing conditions. Loss of income during the COVID-19 pandemic ~~has~~ made the situation even worse.

The City should ensure that its planning and development decisions proactively address these conditions and do not result disproportionate burdens on households of color. Housing should be produced for persons at all income levels, and for renters as well as owners. Measures to address the displacement of existing residents—particularly very low-income tenants—are needed. This is perhaps more important in San Rafael than anywhere else in Marin County given the vulnerability of the Canal area to sea level rise and the plans for substantial amounts of new housing in Downtown San Rafael. New and innovative housing types are encouraged, as is accelerated production of accessory dwelling units.

Safety and sanitation are two critical issues addressed in the policies below. This includes protection from excessive heat and cold, toxic building materials, mold and poor ventilation, insects and vermin. Over the years, the City has implemented a number of programs to mitigate these problems, including Residential Building Record (RBR) inspections on resale of homes and the housing inspection program. The City will also be developing programs to make housing more resilient to the impacts of sea level rise and tidal flooding, and to help those needing to relocate in the event of natural disasters.

Most of the City's housing production strategies and policies are contained in the Housing Element of the General Plan. The policies below are intended to help frame those policies around issues of equity and affordability.

Policy EDI-3.1: Preventing Displacement

Prevent the displacement of lower income residents from their homes due to rising costs, evictions without cause, and other economic factors that make it difficult for people to stay in San Rafael.

> ***Program EDI-3.1A: Anti-Displacement Strategies.*** *Evaluate anti-displacement strategies in future plans or programs that could result in the direct removal of affordable housing units, the displacement of tenants, or economic hardships due to rapid rent increases.*

> ***Program EDI-3.1B: Renter Protection Measures.*** *Continue to explore and promote measures to protect San Rafael renters and facilitate positive communication between landlords and tenants.*

Program EDI-3.1C: Climate-Related Displacement. *Consider measures to address the potential for loss or displacement of affordable or lower cost housing in the City's climate change adaptation planning.*

Policy EDI-3.2: Affordable Housing Development

Encourage the development of affordable rental housing to meet the needs of all San Rafael households.

See also Housing Element H-6, H-14, H-15, H-17, and H-18 for additional policies and programs supporting affordable housing development, including Program H-17c on fee reductions and H-17d on streamlined review.

Policy EDI-3.3: Acquisition and Rehabilitation

Support efforts by local community-based organizations and other housing organizations to acquire private market rate apartment complexes and convert them to affordable housing using state and federal tax credit programs or create community land trusts to purchase existing housing in order to maintain it as affordable .

See the San Rafael Housing Element for program recommendations to facilitate implementation of Policies 3.2 and 3.3.

Policy EDI-3.4: Healthy Homes

Promote and ensure safe and sanitary housing and healthy living conditions for all residents, particularly lower income renters.

Program EDI-3.4A: Healthy Homes. *Support programs and regulations that support healthier homes, including the abatement of toxic hazards such as lead and mold, the use of non-toxic materials and finishes, and design features that improve ventilation and indoor air quality.*

Policy EDI-3.5: Property Maintenance

Improve property maintenance and housing conditions in all parts of the city and encourage corrective rehabilitation of housing that is substandard or poses a hazard to its occupants.

Program EDI-3.5A: Code Enforcement. Provide effective code enforcement efforts in all neighborhoods to abate unsafe or unsanitary conditions. Ensure that the abatement of violations does not increase housing cost burdens or result in displacement of lower-income households.

Program EDI-3.5B: Rental Inspections. Continue the Periodic Housing Inspection Program and Residential Building Record (RBR) inspections to ensure the safety and habitability of all housing units.

Policy EDI-3.6: Reducing Overcrowding

Work with local advocacy groups to evaluate the housing circumstances of immigrant and refugee populations in San Rafael, including overcrowding. Determine appropriate implementation measures to reduce overcrowding without displacement.

Program EDI-3.6A: Incentives for Family Housing. Consider density bonuses and other incentives for three-bedroom affordable rental units in new construction to meet the need for housing suitable for larger families and extended households.

Policy EDI-3.7: Emergency Housing Services

Support agencies and organizations that provide emergency shelter, housing, and other services related to the needs of vulnerable communities, including temporary housing for displaced persons and persons experiencing homelessness.

Program EDI-3.7A: Temporary Housing for At Risk Groups. Work with community-based organizations to develop and support temporary housing solutions for lower-income immigrants, older adults, and other at-risk groups during and after an emergency.

Homeward Bound

The recently approved Homeward Bound facility on Mill Street will provided a much-needed housing resource for San Rafael, including 32 low-income apartments and a 60-bed emergency shelter. The complex replaces an existing homeless shelter on the same site. The new apartments will include on-site support services, helping people transition out of homelessness and find a path to housing security.

Goal EDI-4: Equitable Service Delivery

Improve self-sufficiency and empowerment among lower income and immigrant communities through equitable access to education, health care, public safety, transportation, and social services.

The City supports the equitable distribution of City facilities and delivery of City services and prioritizes improvements in communities with the greatest needs.

One of the pillars of equity-driven planning is to prioritize projects and investments that directly benefit disadvantaged communities. Historically, these communities have experienced a lack of investment or deferred investments. Lower income communities also may have needs that are different from those of the community at large, reflecting their culture of origin. Prioritizing improvements in disadvantaged areas at the local level also may help cities leverage funding at the state and federal levels, and through foundation grants and other private sources.

The Spanish language survey conducted through General Plan 2040 (see Page 14-6) found that some of the Canal community's highest priorities related to capital improvements. More than 40 percent of respondents indicated they were "not satisfied at all" with street cleanliness and conditions, and 97 percent indicated that garbage in public spaces was a problem in the community. Survey participants also raised the need for better street lighting and a more visible police presence, with an alarming 90 percent indicating they did not feel safe walking at night in the neighborhood. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents indicated they were affected "a lot" by the lack of green space in the community. Budgeting and capital improvement planning processes should consider these factors as resources are allocated.

Policy EDI-4.1: Prioritizing Public Investment in Disadvantaged Communities

Prioritize public investment in capital projects and public facilities that meet the needs of disadvantaged communities.

> *Program EDI-4.1A: Equity Metrics. Use benchmarks and indicators such as household income, the presence of children and older adults, and past investment patterns, to inform decisions about the location of future public investments.*

Policy EDI-4.2: Equitable Maintenance of Streets and Public Space

Ensure that street cleaning, litter removal, abatement of illegal dumping, and the repair of roads, sidewalks, streetlights and public facilities, is performed equitably across the city. Responses to reports of nuisances and violations should be performed without regard to income or tenure.

Program EDI-4.2A: Nuisance Reporting Systems. Support programs that allow residents and businesses to easily report incidences of illegal dumping, roadside garbage and litter, vandalism, graffiti, noise, smoke and fumes, and other nuisances. Maintain data on calls, responses, and follow-up activities.

Program EDI-4.2B: Security and Safety Improvements. Pursue public safety improvements, including street lighting, security cameras, better wayfinding signage, and improved sidewalk conditions, with a focus on neighborhoods with higher levels of need and fewer available resources.

Policy EDI-4.3: Public Safety in Disadvantaged Communities

Build positive relationships between law enforcement, residents, and businesses in the Canal and other disadvantaged communities to create a stronger sense of trust and confidence. Ensure that the safety concerns of disadvantaged communities and persons experiencing homelessness are heard and recognized by law enforcement, with a focus on serious crimes rather than minor infractions.

> *Program EDI-4.3A: Neighborhood Safety Partnerships. Encourage partnerships between lower-income residents and local police to address law enforcement concerns, including organized events such as neighborhood walks and police "walking the beat" to create personal relationships and learn about community issues.*

Policy EDI-4.4: Public Health Equity

Promote community health services, programs, and partnerships that improve outcomes for economically disadvantaged residents, including better access to medical, mental health, and social services.

Program EDI-4.4A: Mobile Health Care. Facilitate the use of public buildings such as libraries and community centers for "pop up" health services and other activities that promote wellness.

Policy EDI-4.5: Food Security
Improve food security and nutrition, particularly among lower income and frail elderly residents.

Program EDI-4.5A: Food Assistance Programs. Support resident access to food assistance programs, including local food banks and food stamp programs. Encourage the acceptance of food subsidy vouchers at retail food outlets throughout San Rafael.

Program EDI-4.5B: Reduced Cost Meals. Encourage free and reduced cost meal programs for those with the greatest needs, including low income children, seniors, and persons experiencing homelessness.

Policy EDI-4.6: A Compassionate City
Support organizations and service providers that help those in need in San Rafael. Non-profit and public entities providing housing, transportation, health care, and other social services to lower income clients and older adults are valued community partners and should remain an essential part of San Rafael's "safety net."

Program EDI-4.6A: Connecting Social Service Providers. Increase awareness of social service and mental health programs by improving communication between residents and service providers, facilitating communication among the service providers themselves, and providing more opportunity for interaction between residents and city leaders.

Program EDI-4.6B: Collaborative Service Model. Encourage and support collaborative efforts to address local health care and social service needs, including partnerships with community-based organizations and service providers, partnerships with the County of Marin and other Marin cities, and interdepartmental efforts within the City of San Rafael.

Photo Credit: Fabrice Florin

Photo Credit: Canal Alliance

Policy EDI-4.7: Transportation Improvements

Integrate equity into San Rafael's transportation planning and operations. Work with Caltrans, TAM, and local transit agencies to ensure that their services and improvements recognize the needs of households with more limited travel options and focus on increasing mobility for all residents. This should include the funding of transportation improvements that better connect the Canal neighborhood to the rest of the city.

> ***Program EDI-4.7A: Transit Improvements.*** *Work with Marin Transit, SMART, and GGBHTD to collect and analyze data on the workplace location of San Rafael's transit-dependent population so that transit routes and schedules are responsive to needs, and optimally serve those without cars.*

> ***Program EDI-4.7B: Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements.*** *Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements in areas where the concentration of pedestrians and bicycles is highest, and where residents have fewer resources and options to travel. Improve access to bicycles, helmets, and related equipment for lower income families.*

See the Mobility Element for additional guidance on this topic. See Program NH-3.15A on parking management in the Canal.

Policy EDI-4.8: Community Benefits

Support community benefit programs in which new projects receive development bonuses in exchange for providing facilities and amenities that benefit underserved communities, such as affordable housing, childcare, and recreation facilities *(see also Policy LU-1.14 and LI-1.18 on bonuses for projects incorporating community benefits).*

Goal EDI-5: Access to Education and Economic Opportunity
Reduce barriers to education and economic mobility for all San Rafael residents.

The City collaborates with private, non-profit, and other public partners to support quality education, affordable childcare and after school programming, vocational training and career advancement, and programs to help residents overcome barriers to employment and economic stability. Every San Rafael resident should have the chance to learn, grow, prosper, and succeed.

As the building blocks of our communities, schools should be an essential consideration in an equity-driven General Plan. Quality schools are among the highest priorities in the community, affecting real estate values and the desirability of our neighborhoods. Education shapes the life experiences of our youth, provides access to future employment, and can ultimately lift individuals out of poverty. Schools are also community hubs, providing resources for community services and places to gather.

Because they are separately governed and administered, schools have not always been integrated into local planning processes. State requirements for General Plans address functional topics such as transportation and housing, but do not directly address the role of schools or the importance of education in creating a better future for children and families. Latino students represent 54 percent of the student body in San Rafael; many of these students enter school speaking English as a second language and do not have the resources their fellow students have. The City and School Districts can work collaboratively to address these conditions, beginning with early childhood education and childcare programs, and continuing through after-school programming and partnerships between schools, local colleges and universities, and the business community.

While increasing access to economic opportunity begins with education, it further extends to policies and programs that recognize and support San Rafael's lower income workforce, many of whom provide essential services to the community. This includes working with small local businesses and entrepreneurs to facilitate their success and leveraging the Canal's designation as an "Opportunity Zone" to create new jobs and encourage investment in the community. It also includes implementing the policies and programs in the Economic Vitality Element to sustain a diverse economy.

Policy EDI-5.1: Child Care and Early Childhood Development
Support expanded capacity for affordable childcare and early childhood development centers in San Rafael, including City-sponsored programs (see also Policy PROS 2-4).

> ***Program EDI-5.1A: Business Partnerships.*** *Support partnerships with local employers to make child care more affordable and accessible for low-wage workers. Quantify the potential benefits to employers to help make these services available.*

Policy EDI-5.2: After School Activities
Provide safe, affordable after-school opportunities for children and teens, along with information on programs for members of the community who may be unaware of these opportunities. Work with the community to identify gaps and unmet needs, such as extended hours and weekend activities, and to increase access to services.

Program EDI-5.2A: Buddy Programs. *Collaborate with the school districts to develop "buddy" or "host" programs enabling San Rafael families to provide social, cultural, and academic support to English learners and new students from other countries.*

Program EDI-5.2B: Cultural Competency. *Ensure that the City uses culturally appropriate strategies and messaging when providing information to students and parents regarding extra-curricular activities.*

Policy EDI-5.3: Reducing Academic Achievement Gaps

Support local schools in their commitment to equity among students from different socio-economic groups. Encourage programs and initiatives to assist students with special educational needs or household circumstances that create barriers to learning.

Program EDI-5.3A: Financial Aid. *Raise student and family awareness of opportunities for grants, scholarships, internships, and programs that provide financial assistance for education and career development.*

Policy EDI-5.4: Employment Readiness

Create strong partnerships between schools, community-based organizations, and the business community so that San Rafael students and adults are prepared for jobs in the local and regional economy and can access career resources in a variety of fields.

Program EDI-5.4A: Youth Employment. *Encourage youth training and employment programs, partnerships with the private sector and community-based organizations, and similar measures to improve career opportunities for younger San Rafael residents.*

See also Policy EV-1.8 on workforce development

Marin County School to Career (STC) Partnership

The Marin County STC Partnership brings schools, businesses, and organizations together to expand educational opportunities for students. The Marin County Office of Education coordinates this partnership on behalf of local school districts, serving students from all academic, social, and economic backgrounds. The Partnership provides internships, job shadowing, and informational interview opportunities that allow student to explore possible careers, think about their futures, and develop workplace skills. More than 200 business and organizations have been engaged in the program.

Policy EDI-5.5: Career Ladders

Support investment in programs and services that create career ladders for lower income workers and support advancement to better paying jobs and greater financial stability. Encourage local employers to coach and mentor students and young professionals seeking career advancement.

See the Economic Vitality Element for relevant programs

Policy EDI-5.6: Local Workforce Retention

Recognize the economic contribution of San Rafael's low- and moderate-income workforce to the local and regional economies, and to providing essential services in times of crisis. Preserve existing jobs and ensure that the City continues to provide pathways to employment for persons with a variety of skill and education levels.

> *Program 5.6A: Measuring Workforce Contributions. Develop data to quantify the contribution of San Rafael's low- and moderate-income workforce to the local and regional economies. Use this data to develop responsive economic development policies and programs and increase the safety net for critical low-income workers.*

See the Economic Vitality Element for Workforce Development and Workforce Housing policies and programs

Policy EDI-5.7: Small Business Support

Create a supportive environment for small businesses in San Rafael. Effectively respond to small business concerns related to crime, infrastructure, litter, parking, loitering, and similar issues.

> *Program EDI-5.7A: Business Assistance. Explore opportunities to assist San Rafael's small businesses and entrepreneurs, including minority-owned businesses. This should include partnerships with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and similar organizations.*

> *Program EDI-5.7B: Hiring Incentives. Support incentives for contractors and builders to hire local workers, with a focus on increasing business opportunities for lower-income tradespersons.*

> *See also Program EV-2.2A on "shop local" campaigns and EV-2.2C on local purchasing preferences*

Policy EDI-5.8: State and Federal Programs

Identify areas in San Rafael that are eligible for state and federal funding or other financial benefits due to demographic and economic conditions. Pursue grants and participate in programs that address these conditions and improve economic opportunity for local residents and businesses.

> *Program EDI-5.8A: Opportunity Zone. Continue to evaluate the potential benefits of the designation of the Core Canal Census Tract as an "opportunity zone" by the State of California, including possible funding for transit, affordable housing, and capital improvements. Activities related to the Opportunity Zone designation should include specific provisions to minimize the displacement of residents and businesses.*

Wi-Fi and Digital Equity in San Rafael

Access to the internet is necessary for so many facets of our lives including getting news and information, participating in civic life, applying for jobs or unemployment, access to education, and more. Residents in San Rafael do not have equal access to the internet and computers at home. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated digital equity issues as the shelter-in-place orders have led to remote learning, high levels of unemployment, and a reliance on digital civic engagement methods.

In June 2020, the City asked 1,500 residents about how they accessed the internet; 850 of the survey responses were from people living in the Canal. Among the Canal respondents, 42 percent said their internet was not fast enough to watch a video without it buffering; this compared to only 13 percent outside the Canal area. Moreover, 44 percent said it was difficult to connect to the internet.

When schools moved to an online learning model, an immediate need arose to better connect students to the internet and provide them with laptops. The City started working with the County of Marin, San Rafael City Schools, and Canal Alliance on a multi-pronged approach to the problem. These collaborative efforts include providing families with personal hotspots; promoting low-cost/free home internet programs; boosting WiFi signals at libraries, schools, and community centers; and providing Chromebooks to students. Thanks to several community volunteers and these partnerships, work is underway to create a public Wi-Fi network in the Canal, which is the area with the greatest, concentrated need.

Policy EDI-5.9: Affordable Commercial Space

Encourage below market rent space for community-based organizations, supportive service providers, and organizations that assist disadvantaged populations. Avoid the displacement of these businesses due to rising rents.

> *Program EDI-5.9A: Cooperatives. Encourage cooperate ownership of assets such as housing, vacant land, local energy systems, and incubator business space as a way to reduce business operating costs.*

> *Program EDI-5.9B: Community Benefit. Recognize below market space for community-based organizations as a community benefit that triggers eligibility for density or height bonuses in new development.*

Policy EDI-5.10: Bridging the Digital Divide

Encourage future advances in technology and new technology infrastructure to be equitably distributed so that households of all incomes may benefit. Implement strategies to make technology resources more affordable and accessible to lower income households.

See also Policy CSI-4.16 on technology infrastructure

> *Program EDI-5.10A: Access to On-Line Learning and Work. Support efforts to provide all students with access to on-line learning and the capacity to work remotely. Work with local service providers to improve access for lower income households, especially households with children.*
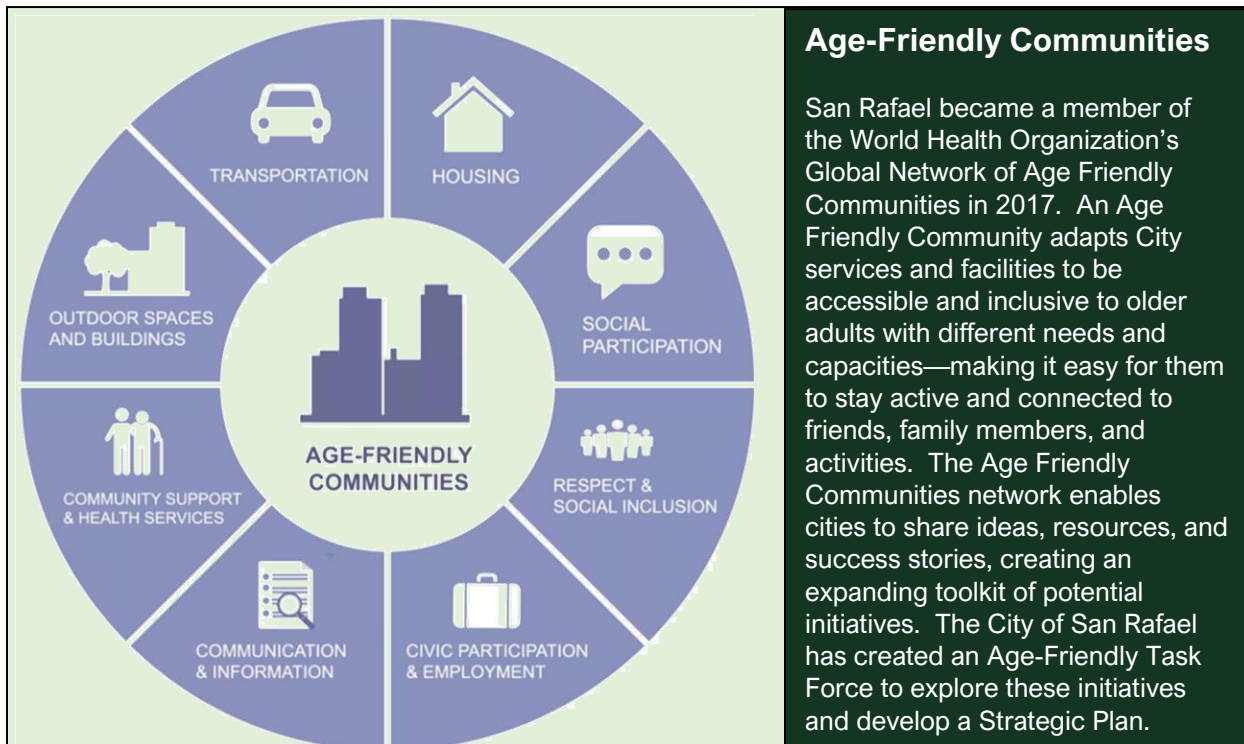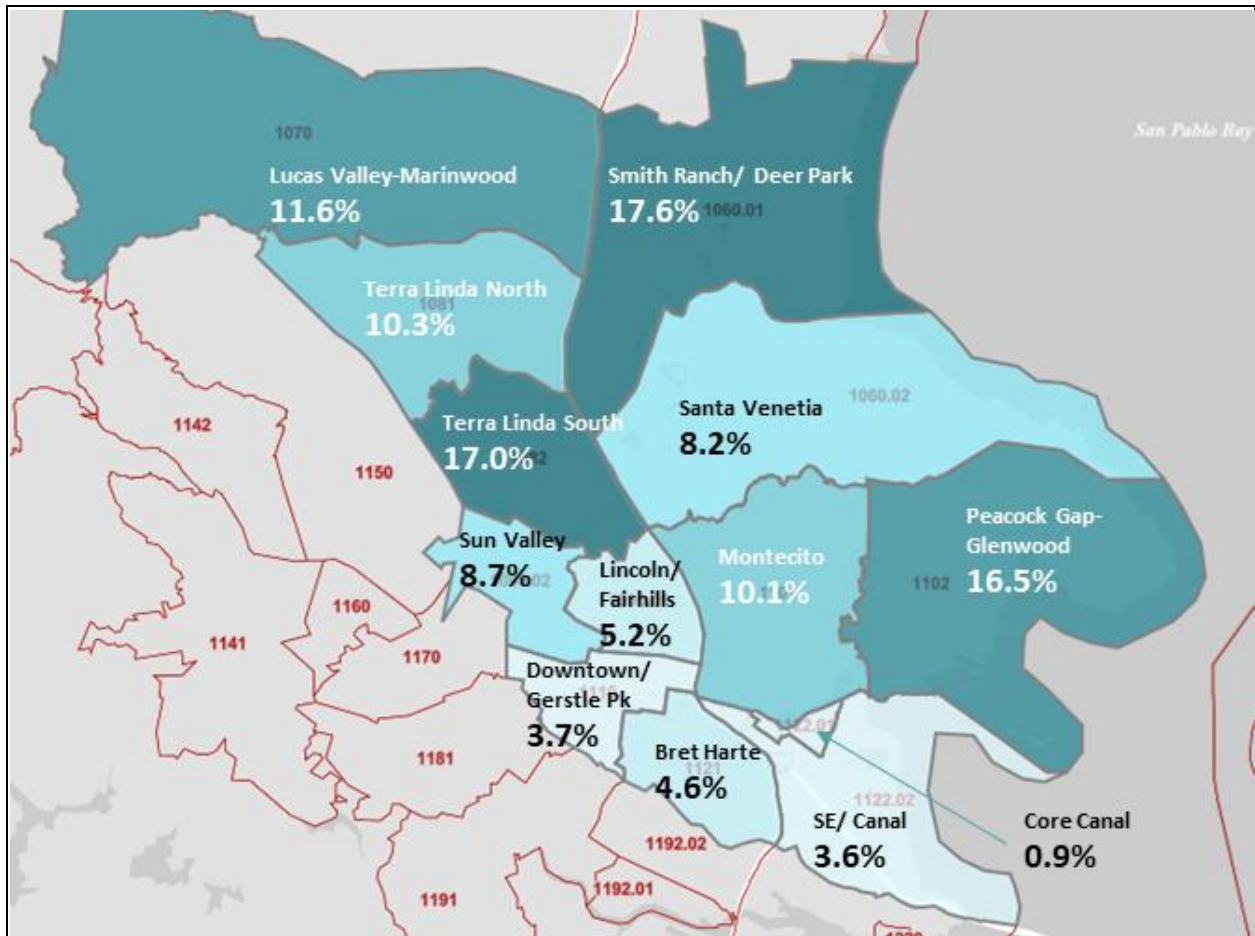
Goal EDI-6: An Age-Friendly Community
Enhance the quality of life for older adults in San Rafael.

As an inclusive community, San Rafael is a city that works for everyone, regardless of age or ability. The City provides access to services and resources that make it easier for older adults to stay active and connected. It plans and provides appropriately for older adults who need assistance.

Persons over 65 are projected to be the fastest growing segment of the population during the time horizon of the 2040 General Plan. Marin County already has the highest median age of any county in the Bay Area, and that median will rise in the future. As this population ages and increases in size, it will become more important to put strategies in place that recognize the housing, health care, mobility, social, and other needs of older adults. This is particularly important for frail elderly residents who require greater levels of care and assistance.

Figure 14-1 indicates the percentage of San Rafael residents who are 75 years or older in each census tract. The figures range from 0.9 percent in the Canal to 17.6 percent in the Smith Ranch area. In some neighborhoods—including Terra Linda, Peacock Gap, and Glenwood—roughly ~~than~~ one in six residents is over 75. Many of these residents reside in single family homes, most living independently and sometimes alone in one-person households. Looking forward, a growing number of residents may seek to modify their homes, making it easier to "age in place." Others may require on-site care, or greater assistance around their homes. Single seniors may seek to share their homes or add an accessory dwelling unit. Still others may seek to downsize to smaller homes or find housing with supportive services. The City should plan for and accommodate all of these options.

Age-Friendly Communities

San Rafael became a member of the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age Friendly Communities in 2017. An Age Friendly Community adapts City services and facilities to be accessible and inclusive to older adults with different needs and capacities—making it easy for them to stay active and connected to friends, family members, and activities. The Age Friendly Communities network enables cities to share ideas, resources, and success stories, creating an expanding toolkit of potential initiatives. The City of San Rafael has created an Age-Friendly Task Force to explore these initiatives and develop a Strategic Plan.

Source: US Census, ACS 2020. City of San Rafael.

Figure 14-1:

Percent of Residents Over 75 by Census Tract

Housing is only one area where policies and programs may need to adapt to meet changing needs. Transportation services are critical for those who are disabled or unable to drive. The design of City facilities, parks, and other outdoor spaces should consider the needs of a growing population of older visitors. Opportunities for social engagement, ongoing participation in civic and community life, and social participation are also important. Health care services will also need to evolve, recognizing changing demographics and helping older patients access the services they need. These changes should occur in a way that recognizes the other principles of the EDI Element, ensuring that services are available to all residents, regardless of their ethnicity, income, neighborhood, or family circumstances.

Policy EDI-6.1: Planning for an Aging Population

Proactively address the needs of San Rafael's aging population through collaboration, planning, and programs. Monitor trends and data so that services are responsive to needs.

> *Program EDI-6.1A: Age Friendly Plan*. *Prepare an Age-Friendly Stregic Plan for San Rafael that identifies specific and culturally responsive actions to ensure that older adults may thrive in the community. Periodically monitor progress on Plan implementation, consistent with WHO Age-Friendly Global Network guidelines.*

Policy EDI-6.2: Aging in Community

Improve opportunities for older adults to age in place and continue living independently in their San Rafael homes. This should include recognition of the importance of in-home support services and caregivers, At the same time, provide more options for those seeking to "age in community" and relocate to suitable housing in the city that includes supportive services, smaller units, and access for persons with mobility limitations. This includes support services and facilities for those suffering from dementia-related illnesses and those who have become homeless due to medical or mental health conditions,

> *Program EDI-6.2A: Aging in Place.* *Continue to support programs and services that assist older adults with home modifications that facilitate aging in place. Support home sharing programs that pair empty nesters with rental seekers.*
>
> *Program EDI-6.2B: Affordable Housing Options for Older Adults.* *Encourage the construction of affordable senior housing, and accessory dwelling units that provide more affordable alternatives for older adults. Also, support programs that provide direct and indirect assistance for older renters.*

Policy EDI-6.3: Mobility for Older Adults

Maintain mobility options for San Rafael's older adults by providing safe streets and flexible, responsive public and private transportation services, including services specifically designed for those with mobility limitations.

> *Program EDI-6.3A: On-Demand Transportation Services.* Improve on-demand transportation options for older adults, including volunteer driver programs and programs pairing new student drivers with seniors.*

> *Program EDI-6.3B: Universal Access.* Incorporate principles of universal access in the design of public facilities, sidewalks, and outdoor spaces and buildings. Reduce risks associated with falling and improve lighting and sidewalk conditions in areas where hazards may exist.*

Policy EDI-6.4: Accessible Community Services

Provide a range of convenient and accessible services for San Rafael's older adults, including health and wellness, caregiving, recreation and fitness activities, age-friendly technology, and social services.

> *Program EDI-6.4A: Access to Resources.* Improve access to community programs and resources for older adults, including increased on-line services and technology training and partnerships with Marin County In-Home Supportive Services.*

Policy EDI-6.5: Disaster Preparedness

Ensure that the needs of older San Rafael residents are specifically considered in disaster preparedness planning, and that barriers and challenges are effectively addressed.

> *Program EDI-6.5A: Outreach and Education.* Engage older adults in focused disaster preparedness outreach and education, emergency and shelter-in-place drills, wildfire prevention programs, and evacuation plans. Focus on older adults with the greatest needs, including in-home support.*

> *See also Goal S-6 on emergency preparedness*

Policy EDI-6.6: Social Connections

Strengthen social connections for older adults living alone by providing accessible community activities, programs that avoid loneliness and social isolation, and demonstrating respect and value for each individual.

> *Program EDI-6.6A: Inclusion and Participation Initiatives.* Provide opportunities for social connections, including discounted or free community events, intergenerational programs (for example, pairings of students and older adults), mental health services, multicultural programs, and working with organizations such as Marin Villages to engage and empower older adults.*