

August 2, 2021

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members

City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Avenue, room 203
San Rafael, CA 94901

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

PLEASE INCLUDE THIS LETTER IN PUBLIC COMMENTS for the August 2, 2021, City Council meeting for the General Plan 2040 (agenda item 6.a)

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members:

Please consider the following comments/recommended changes:

1.) Since the City began referring to the western end of the downtown as the West End Village, there has been considerable confusion between the West End Village and the West End Neighborhood. The West End Village is a district in the downtown described as the western end of Fourth Street and surrounding environs. The West End Neighborhood is defined by the City as Neighborhood 22 and includes the area west of downtown to the San Anselmo border.

The West End Neighborhood also has a neighborhood association formed as a non-profit corporation consisting of voluntary membership of residents and property owners in Neighborhood 22. I have seen the West End Neighborhood referred to as the West End Village and I have seen the West End Village described as a neighborhood association; both references are incorrect.

Although there is a description of the West End Village in the General Plan, I think it may be helpful to provide a description of the West End Village in 14.03 DEFINITIONS, as a quick reference, especially since the land use designation of WEV (West End Village) is being eliminated with the new Downtown Precise Plan. Suggested wording to be added to 14.03 DEFINITIONS, follows:

“West End Village” is a mixed-use village within the downtown, and is located along Fourth Street, west of E Street to the intersection of Second and Fourth Streets where the Miracle Mile begins. The West End Village is represented by the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) and consists of unique shops serving residents occupying the historic, small-scale buildings along this part of Fourth Street and the surrounding neighborhoods.

2.) Recommended changes to 14.16.090, as follows:

14.16.190 – Height bonus.

5. Public passageways in the West End area Village, with the recommendation of the design review board that the public passageway serves an important public purpose and is attractive and safe.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Victoria DeWitt
West End neighborhood residential

August 1, 2021

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members
City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Avenue, room 203
San Rafael, CA 94901

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

PLEASE INCLUDE THIS LETTER IN PUBLIC COMMENTS for the August 2, 2021, City Council meeting for the General Plan 2040 (agenda item 6.a)

I have the following comments:

1.) TREE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION

I urge the City Council to adopt a comprehensive tree ordinance. How can the City claim to be a “Tree City” and not protect and preserve our Redwoods and other native trees? Other designated “Tree City USA” cities have adopted tree ordinances defining protected and heritage trees, including Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Petaluma, Redwood City, Sacramento, San Mateo, Santa Clara County, and Santa Rosa.

San Rafael could easily duplicate an existing tree ordinance from another municipality. For example, the County of Marin (which is not a designated “Tree City”) has a tree ordinance which includes a list of 36 trees defined as protected and/or heritage trees. Adopting Marin County’s tree ordinance could provide consistency with San Rafael’s sphere of influence and planning areas.

The City needs to update Chapter 11.12 TREES to address more than just “street” trees. The City of San Mateo just adopted a new “Protected Trees” ordinance (SMMC 13.40) which replaced their “Street Trees” ordinance, on May 3, 2021. Given our current state of climate change, the City needs to think beyond “Street Trees” and think about “Protected Trees” as San Mateo has done.

2.) EXHIBIT C: I recommend adding the following language to be consistent with other recommended changes for expiration of exception approvals:

Add exception expiration wording to: **Chapter 14. 12.040 – Exceptions to property development standards:**

Section 14.12.040 – Exceptions to property development standards.

C. Exceptions are valid for two years unless a different expiration date is stipulated at the time of approval, a building permit has been issued and construction diligently pursued, a certificate of occupancy has been issued, or the permit is renewed or extended. If more than one phase of a development is approved in a single action and the later phases remain outstanding, their approval shall lapse at the end of the authorized time frame.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Victoria DeWitt
West End neighborhood resident



July 31, 2021

San Rafael City Council
14 Fifth Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901

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RE: Adoption of General Plan 2040, Downtown Precise Plan, and Supporting Findings and Ordinances

Honorable Mayor and Council Members,

As stated in our July 16 letter, Sustainable San Rafael heartily supports your adoption of General Plan 2040, the Downtown Precise Plan, and associated documents. We commend the stellar collaborative work of staff, consultants, and community in creating this framework for a sustainable future.

The next step is to implement key components of this vision soon enough to achieve real progress. In particular, we urge early action and sustained focus on the following programs:

1. **Greenhouse gas reduction.** Implementation of the organics recycling, building electrification, and electric vehicle actions identified in the General Plan and the Climate Change Action Plan 2-year priorities is necessary by 2022 in order to reach the climate goals detailed in the General Plan EIR documents during the term of the Plan. We must act quickly in face of a steadily worsening climate emergency.

2. **Housing Element.** Seamless revision of the housing element will round out the new General Plan, anchoring its economic, equity, and sustainability goals in compact workforce housing.

3. The **Equitable Economic Development Strategy** called for by the General Plan is needed near-term to help traditional commercial areas evolve into vibrant mixed-use districts energized by increased residential development, and to further the CCAP priority of realizing an equitable low carbon economy.

4. The **Downtown Precise Plan** offers a rich array of capital improvement investments and regulatory guidance for the City to pursue. We recommend these key early initiatives:

- a) Catalyzing model mix-use developments.
- b) Encouraging focused residential nodes and enclaves, especially at higher elevations like 4th and E Streets, and along 5th Avenue west of Lincoln.
- c) Pilot 4th St. 'shared street' improvements from A to Court and Lincoln to West Tamalpais to slow 4th St. traffic.
- d) Signature plazas and promenades between Court and A Streets, and along Tamalpais.

- e) Walkability and safety improvements along pedestrian priority streets.
- f) Extending 4th St. design treatments under the freeway to Montecito, with a key development node at Grand.
- g) Enhanced connection to nature, with creek and wetland restoration in the Gateway district, large street trees, and preserving sunlight on the north sidewalk of 4th St.

5. With the Downtown Plan in hand, additional **Northgate and Canal precise plans** need to be completed as soon as priority development area (PDA) funding can be secured, in order to provide community-based blueprints for potential new town centers within the overall framework of General Plan 2040.

6. Planning for the Canal also needs to coincide with the citywide **Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan** called for by the General Plan. Likewise, the long-deferred **Open Space Management Plan** (PROS 3.3A) needs to be developed now to fully address vegetation management for reducing the growing climate impact of wildfire and for increasing carbon sequestration on City lands. Both these actions further the CCAP 2-year priority the Council has placed on Adaptation Planning.

The key to timely implementation of the General Plan is dedicating skilled staff members to each key program. The steady, ongoing implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan provides an excellent model of how dedicated staffing could achieve each of the above plans and programs within the necessary timeframes. The City is fortunate to have such staff available, as demonstrated by the successful completion of the General Plan itself.

Thank you for your careful oversight of this ongoing process.

Sincerely,

William Carney
President

Copies:

Jim Schutz, Alicia Giudice, Barry Miller, Bill Guerin, Danielle O'Leary, Cory Bytof