

Introduction

San Rafael's outstanding quality of life and economy are linked – each supports and benefits the other. Business is drawn to San Rafael by such amenities as the natural setting, quality schools, and public services. In turn, the economy contributes to those qualities – it generates local goods and services for residents, jobs for community members and revenues for City services such as parks, libraries, schools, police and fire protection. Municipal revenue from the business community, through sales and hotel taxes and business license fees, exceeds the cost of City services, thereby contributing to City programs and infrastructure that are enjoyed by all residents.

San Rafael is the business center of Marin County. Over 10,000 businesses exist in Marin County, half of which are in San Rafael. The commercial base is broad and diverse, with many small and medium sized businesses. Approximately 50 of the almost 6,000 businesses in San Rafael have 100 or more employees.

Overall, San Rafael's robust and stable economy is due to three factors. First, San Rafael is viewed as a desirable place to do business with good transportation access, high income residents and a good reputation. Second, the City's economic base is diverse and buffers impacts from economic downturns. Third, San Rafael responds to change and accommodates new opportunities.

Economic Vision

The City of San Rafael envisions a future that continues to exhibit a healthy, vibrant economy, driven by the community's commitment to the vitality of our individual business enterprises and key industries, to the recognition of the importance of our cultural diversity and its significant contribution to our prosperity, and to the preservation of our unique environment. Attaining the economic vision will be the result of productive partnerships among businesses, schools, neighborhood groups, government and environmental interests that have balanced competing concerns.

San Rafael's businesses continue to be diverse: ranging from small to large; from local-serving to global; from traditional to high technology and from specialty to consumer goods. The city is a supportive environment for entrepreneurs starting and growing their businesses, and for mature businesses adapting to a dynamic marketplace. Our businesses are successful in attracting and retaining skilled workers, who are eager to live and work in Marin's transportation and cultural center. The business community is active in local affairs and embraces environmentally friendly business practices. In addition to being home to several prominent companies, San Rafael is known as a key North Bay center for automotive, building trades and home improvements, and technology-oriented industries.

San Rafael's downtown continues to be 'alive after five' with entertainment and cultural attractions, excellent restaurants offering a wide range of cuisines, and intriguing galleries and boutiques. The Canal waterway draws people to an appealing promenade that successfully links vibrant retail and maritime uses. Stores in a revitalized Northgate Town Center benefit from an efficient transportation network, drawing customers from beyond surrounding neighborhoods and nearby offices. Commercial properties are renewed in response to changing market conditions and opportunities. Throughout the City can be found appropriately scaled and sensitively designed mixed use projects that support the economy by providing, for example, both commercial square footage, and affordable and market rate housing, without compromising the integrity of our neighborhoods or worsening traffic congestion.

City government is positioned to provide efficient, cost-effective services and has been particularly adept in securing funding from many sources. While respectful of the free market's effectiveness, the City is willing to assert its authority to stimulate changes that are consistent with the City's goals.

The strength of San Rafael's economy benefits the businesses and workforce as well as its residents. Workers have opportunities to secure affordable housing and competitively priced goods and services. This in turn has enabled household income to enhance the quality of life of San Rafael's families, linking economic vitality to individual and collective prosperity.

GOAL 8: A SOUND ECONOMY

It is the goal for San Rafael to have a vital, forward-looking citywide economy developed with appropriate respect for our environment. *San Rafael has an economy that readily adapts to and takes advantage of changes in the way business is conducted. City government helps shape the existing economy and provide for its growth in a way that ensures sufficient municipal revenue without adversely impacting our quality of life. Policy and land use decisions promote San Rafael's economy with an emphasis on balance and infrastructure limits, while maintaining a commitment to the environment.*

EV-1. Economic Health and Quality of Life.

Understand and appreciate the contributions essential to our quality of life made by a healthy economy, especially to public safety, our schools, recreation, and government services.

EV-1a. Education About the Local Economy. Continue to promote a business-friendly climate by educating decision makers and the public about interrelationships of community life and economic vitality. Disseminate information through the City newsletter, City website, staff reports, the State of the City dinner, and other means.

Responsibility: City Manager, Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-1b. Economic Database. Maintain databases, generally available to the public, of economic and demographic information to support attainment of economic goals. Protect confidential economic data.

Responsibility: Community Development, Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-2. Seek, Retain, and Promote Businesses that Enhance San Rafael.

Recruit and retain businesses that contribute to our economic vitality, thus helping to provide needed local goods, services and employment, and enhance the City's physical environment.

EV-2a. Business Retention. Continue the business retention program in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to keep existing businesses thriving in San Rafael.

Responsibility: Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time, Partnership



The City partners with the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce to support new businesses.

EV-2b. Infill and Reuse Opportunities. Identify redevelopment opportunities and expansion potential and make this information available for the real estate community. Prepare an inventory of vacant and underutilized sites that could be redeveloped for more beneficial use. Address the type of infill appropriate, intensity of use, fiscal impacts, other likely impacts, and timing/phasing issues.

Responsibility: Economic Development, Community Development

Timeframe: Ongoing (Inventory: Long Term)

Resources: Staff Time

See EV-16a (Public/Private Partnerships).

EV-2c. Partnership with the Chamber. Continue to support the Chamber of Commerce's business promotion and recruitment efforts.

Responsibility: Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-2d. Promoting Revenue-Generating Businesses. Enhance San Rafael's fiscal climate by promoting high revenue-generating industries, such as automotive sales, building trades and home furnishings.

Responsibility: City Manager, Economic Development, Community Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-2e. Street Vendors. Continue to implement regulations and permit procedures for mobile vendors.

Responsibility: Community Development, City Attorney

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-3. Tourism.

Recognize and support tourism as a significant contributor to San Rafael's economy.

EV-3a. Tourism Strategies. Explore strategies to take advantage of tourism opportunities in the County, to improve hotel and conference facilities in San Rafael, and to support the City's, Chamber's and Business Improvement District's tourism enhancement programs.

Responsibility: Economic Development, Community Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-4. Local Economic and Community Impacts.

In addition to review of environmental, traffic and community design impacts, take the following into account when major projects, policies and land use decisions are under review:

- Fiscal impacts on the City's ability to provide and maintain infrastructure and services.
- Impacts on the community such as the provision of jobs which match the local workforce, commute reduction proposals, and affordable housing.
- Additional or unique economic, fiscal and job-related impacts.
- Fiscal and community impacts of not approving a project, plan or policy.

EV-4a. Economic Impacts. Continue and expand identification and evaluation of relevant economic impacts in staff reports to Planning Commission and City Council.

Responsibility: Community Development, Economic Development, City Manager

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-5. Strengthen Positive Relationships.

Strengthen the positive working relationships among the business community, neighborhoods, surrounding communities and City government.

EV-5a. Marin County Economic Commission. Work with the Marin County Economic Commission on shared approaches to the economic health of the region and on ways to encourage businesses to remain in and move to San Rafael.

Responsibility: Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-5b. Communications with Residents. Regularly communicate with residents regarding relevant economic issues. Maintain consistent and accessible contact with residents through, for example, monthly meetings with neighborhood associations, and the City newsletter and website.

Responsibility: City Manager

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-5c. Chamber of Commerce and Business Improvement District. Continue regular meetings to coordinate with and support the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business Improvement District.

Responsibility: Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

See G-8a (Information about Community Issues)

EV-6. Shop Locally.

Encourage local purchase of goods and services by residents, workers, businesses and City government so as to cycle dollars back into our local economy and generate revenue for the City.

EV-6a. Event Promotion. Continue to promote events that bring people to Downtown, Northgate and other community commercial centers to support local businesses.

Responsibility: City Manager, Economic Development, Community Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-6b. Education about ‘Shop Locally.’ Support the Chamber of Commerce and the Business Improvement District in their efforts to educate people about the benefits of shopping locally.

Responsibility: Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-6c. Local Preference. Where other factors, such as price, are equal, the City should give preference to purchasing goods and services from local vendors.

Responsibility: City Manager

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time



Double Rainbow is a popular local business.

EV-7. Environmentally-Friendly Business Practices.

Promote environmentally friendly business practices that reduce the need for non-renewable resources.

EV-7a. Green Business Practices. Coordinate with Marin County, environmental organizations and the Chamber of Commerce to promote green business practices (alternate transportation modes, energy conservation, water conservation, packaging reduction, etc.) and the County's Green Business Certification Program. Previous accomplishments have included promotion of environmentally-friendly business practices through the City's sustainability web pages, obtaining a green business certification for the City Hall, and City staff's participation with the Chamber of Commerce Green Business Committee and help in promoting green businesses.

Responsibility: Community Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

GOAL 9: A RANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES

The goal of San Rafael is to have an economy that provides a full range of goods and services, business, employment, educational and training opportunities, and ample work force housing. *San Rafael's economy is balanced. The City enjoys a broad diversity in its local business communities, which include industrial concerns, knowledge-based companies, professional and financial services, retail, cultural and entertainment providers, and restaurateurs.*

EV-8. Diversity of our Economic Base.

Keep San Rafael a full-service city by retaining and supporting a broad and healthy range of businesses.

EV-8b. Industrial Zoning. Maintain zoning for industrial areas to the extent feasible to prevent a loss of industrial businesses.

Responsibility: Community Development

Timeframe: Short Term

Resources: Staff Time

EV-8b. Day Laborers. (Deleted per Amendment on 12/5/16)

EV-9. Business Assistance Programs.

Support the creation and retention of programs that assist small businesses.

EV-9a. Business Education. Work with the Chamber of Commerce and other public and private organizations to strengthen business education programs.

Responsibility: Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-9b. Business Incubation. Evaluate the feasibility for business mentoring and incubation programs that could be undertaken in cooperation with public, institutional and/or private sector partners.

Responsibility: Economic Development

Timeframe: Long Term

Resources: Staff Time

EV-10. Cooperation with Local Training and Education Efforts. Assist and support the efforts of business associations, labor organizations, businesses, non-profit organizations, cities, county, state, and schools in providing job and language skills training programs and business education.

EV-10a. City Internships and Mentoring. Continue to participate in mentoring and internship programs, including cooperation with other agencies and organizations.

Responsibility: All Departments
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: Staff Time

EV-10b. English as a Second Language. Continue to support community wide efforts to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) training, citizenship, and other educational priorities as expressed by neighborhoods.

Responsibility: Community Services, Library
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: Fees, Grants

EV-10c. Workforce Education. Support the education of the workforce in order to strengthen skills needed to fill jobs in the community.

Responsibility: All Departments
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: Staff Time

See EV-9a (Business Education) and EV-9b (Business Incubation).

EV-11. Promotion of Workplace Alternatives.

Promote the establishment of workplace alternatives, including home-based businesses, telecommuting and satellite work centers.

EV-11a. Home Occupations. Work with neighborhood organizations and business owners to reexamine and update home occupation zoning regulations to reflect changing trends. Continue to enforce compliance of unlicensed home businesses.

Responsibility: Community Development
Timeframe: Short Term
Resources: Staff Time



Autodesk is a leading employer in promoting workplace alternatives.

EV-11b. Telecommute Policy. Consider establishing a telecommute policy for City employees.

Responsibility: City Manager
Timeframe: Long Term
Resources: Staff Time

EV-11c. Workplace Alternatives. Encourage employers to offer workplace alternatives and promote the formation of satellite business centers.

Responsibility: Community Development
Timeframe: Long Term
Resources: Staff Time

EV-12. Workforce Housing.

Aggressively encourage creation and retention of workforce housing, both owner and renter-occupied especially for public safety and community service personnel.

EV-12a. Benefits of Workforce Housing Educate residents regarding the benefits to the community of workforce housing.

Responsibility: Community Development, Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

EV-12b. Housing Opportunities for Local Public Service Workers. Aggressively support efforts to build and retain workforce housing opportunities for local public service workers such as, but not limited to, public safety employees and community service personnel.

Responsibility: Community Development, Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

See H-4b (Community Collaboration).

GOAL 10: DISTINCTIVE BUSINESS AREAS

It is the goal for San Rafael to have vital and attractive business areas, each with a distinctive character and emphasis. *San Rafael has a broad spectrum of businesses. The business areas within Downtown, North San Rafael, East San Rafael, West Francisco Boulevard and the Miracle Mile maintain the community's position as a full service city. In addition to these districts, there are distinct, attractive and convenient neighborhood-serving retail centers.*

Each of these areas has a unique economic role that contributes to and helps maintain San Rafael's position as a full service city:

- Downtown and the surrounding core area set the tone of the city.
- North San Rafael offers the City's largest employers, Kaiser Hospital, light industry and offices areas and the City's only regional mall.
- East San Rafael houses the building industry, auto retail and repair businesses, and offices.
- West Francisco Boulevard includes retail with convenient freeway access, auto sales and services, and the building trades.
- The Miracle Mile (Fourth Street between Second Street and San Anselmo) comprises a linear commercial corridor oriented towards a major thoroughfare with retail, restaurant and personal service uses.

EV-13. Business Areas.

Promote San Rafael's economy and the strengths and benefits of all of its business areas.

Pursue actions that revitalize and sustain San Rafael's business areas such as:

- Planning and managing the supply and operations of parking.
- Beautification efforts along City public areas, such as installation and maintenance of planters, street trees, and lighting.
- Housing and economic development.
- Multi-modal circulation improvements for residents, workers, suppliers and customers.

EV-13a. Zoning Regulations. Review zoning and development regulations for each business area and make sure that they are consistent, with the objective of strengthening the unique economic role of each area.

Responsibility: Community Development, Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

See C-14a (Transit Network), C-30 (Downtown Parking), I-8a (Street Tree Program), LU-2a (Development Review), H-14c (Continue to Implement Zoning Provisions to Encourage Mixed Use), NH-10 (Neighborhood Centers), NH-11 (Needed Neighborhood Serving Uses) and Neighborhood Element policies related to the specific commercial areas.

EV-14. Support for Business Areas.

Support and encourage public and private redevelopment and upgrading of both existing and underdeveloped commercial and industrial properties, while retaining economic and architectural diversity.

See LU-2a (Development Review).

EV-15. Mutual Support Between Business Areas and Adjacent Neighborhoods.

Promote productive relationships between residential neighborhoods and adjoining business areas to foster positive interaction.

EV-15a. Business/Neighbor Collaboration. Seek innovative ways for businesses and their residential neighbors to collaboratively solve mutual concerns. Encourage conflict resolution between businesses and neighbors.

Responsibility: Community Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time, Partnerships

EV-15b. Neighborhood Upgrades. Through development review, encourage neighborhood-friendly improvements, such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities and gathering places where appropriate that can be used by workers and residents.

Responsibility: Community Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

See NH-14 (Gathering Places and Events).

GOAL 11: CREATIVE INFILL

The goal of San Rafael is to have creative infill development and redevelopment that takes maximum advantage of our existing resources. *Little vacant land remains in San Rafael. Further development will have to be extremely creative, utilizing infill wherever possible, together with redevelopment designed to obtain the highest and best use of our limited space, and the preservation of open space and ecologically-sensitive areas. In some areas, reinvestment is needed to upgrade or replace buildings and make other improvements so that these commercial areas are more competitive and better serve the community.*

EV-16. Partnerships for Infill Development.

Encourage public/private partnerships as one means of redeveloping and revitalizing deteriorated and underdeveloped areas.

EV-16a. Public/Private Partnerships. Identify and pursue promising public/private opportunities for partnerships in infill development.

Responsibility: Community Development, Economic Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time

See EV-13a (Zoning Regulations), EV-2b (Infill and Reuse Opportunities).

EV-17. Development Review.

Expedite the development review process by encouraging design excellence, and effective community involvement.

EV-17a. Pre-submittal Process. Review the pre-submittal process to identify ways to foster quality project submittals. Refine the neighborhood notification and meeting procedures to ensure productive involvement in the development review process. Periodically update the pre-application process and public notice requirements for streamlining and consistency.

Responsibility: Community Development

Timeframe: Ongoing

Resources: Staff Time, Fees

See LU-2a (Development Review), CD-10a (Visual Compatibility), CD-11a (Compatibility of Building Patterns), CD-12a (Landscaping), and CD-15a (Notification and Information about Development Projects).