



July 31, 2021

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

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

William Carney, President  
Bob Spofford, Vice President  
Greg Brockbank  
Linda Jackson  
Kay Karchevski  
Kiki La Porta  
Samantha Mericle  
Sue Spofford  
Stuart Siegel

415.457.7656

**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 4<sup>th</sup> and E Streets, and along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue west of Lincoln.
- c) Pilot 4<sup>th</sup> St. 'shared street' improvements from A to Court and Lincoln to West Tamalpais to slow 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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