



March 1, 2024

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San Rafael City Council  
1400 Fifth Avenue  
San Rafael, CA 94901

**RE: General Plan Progress Reports (item 6.a)**

Honorable Mayor and Council Members,  
To meet City and State goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% in the next six years and to net zero emissions in the next twenty years, early implementation of the robust climate actions in General Plan 2040 are essential.

We want to highlight a number of early actions noted in the General Plan Progress Reports for 2023 and recommend prioritizing others in the upcoming fiscal year:

**EV Acceleration Strategy (M-3.6A).** The increase of municipal EVs and charging stations noted in the staff report, together with the recent ordering of two Ford F150 Lightning trucks and two Ford Mustang Mach-E police cars, help set an example of EV adoption for residents to follow. For the coming year, we urge implementation of further actions from the EV Acceleration Strategy you adopted last September, including robust community outreach, finding funding for EVs and charging infrastructure in Priority Communities, and moving to a municipal fleet of 100% zero emission vehicles.

**Building Electrification (C-4.1D).** The report notes the adoption of a milestone reach code in December, 2022, limiting gas use in new buildings. San Rafael needs to work closely with the County to adjust this ordinance as needed to comply with subsequent court rulings. However, the code adopted by the County for building rehabilitation already appears compliant. Following legal review, we urge the City to adopt it this year. We applaud the City's active participation in the countywide Building Electrification Plan scheduled for completion this spring, and urge its adoption by San Rafael as a further step in implementing this General Plan program.

**Sea Level Rise Adaptation (NH-1.12A).** The funding and staff commitment to this process in the Canal, along with the Southeast San Rafael Community Plan (NH-3.1A) and Priority Development Area designation, are significant steps toward preparing for this increasingly inevitable climate impact. We concur with the Progress Report's call for these two processes to be closely integrated, along with other General Plan programs involving affordable housing and waterfront design.

We encourage the inclusion of 'living levees' that both protect the shoreline and sequester the CO<sub>2</sub> driving climate change.

**Increasing the Tree Canopy (C-1.16A).** We encourage the City to complement the tree planting on public property noted in the staff report with other actions listed in this program, such as encouraging trees on private property and minimizing tree removal. We are heartened to see that tree preservation (C-1.17A) will be considered when the update of the Tree Ordinance is finalized after the completion of the Tree Inventory (CDP-3.5B) scheduled for release next month. With these first steps in place, we urge the City to prioritize seeking State funding and a consultant team in 2024 to initiate the comprehensive Tree Master Plan (CDP-3.5A) necessary for a thriving urban forest to beautify and cool our neighborhoods and draw down greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

**Affordable housing in walkable neighborhoods.** The early progress on a number of programs in the Housing Element of the General Plan is encouraging to sustain a more diverse and less car-dependent community. Especially noteworthy are the increasing amount of ADUs being produced; the direction of over half of affordable housing trust fund to leveraging new units; and the start of a program to convey air rights over public properties for affordable housing development.

Still, the numbers of units projected in the Progress Reports do not indicate a clear roadmap to achieving RHNA goals, especially for the low, very-low, and moderate income households that are vital to an inclusive community. We urge the City to present such a roadmap in its upcoming evaluation of recent inclusionary housing revisions, including the numbers of units now being leveraged from 'in-lieu' and 'buy-out' payments and from updated commercial linkage fees. We continue to recommend adding a moderate-income category to the inclusionary housing program, which we expect would have little impact on the feasibility of developments.

Thank you for your close attention to implementing the multi-faceted vision of San Rafael provided by General Plan 2040.

Sincerely,

Howard Schwartz,  
Co-President

William Carney,  
Vice President