



June 15, 2020

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415.457.7656

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

RE: Letters of Interest for Priority Development Areas (PDAs) in the Canal and North San Rafael/Northgate

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

Despite unfounded warnings in years past that PDA designation would destroy the character of north San Rafael, the truth is that the commercial area has declined significantly in the interim, in part because it has lacked the resources that a PDA could offer. The Downtown PDA received millions of dollars, while the Northgate community has seen core businesses close.

Likewise, the vulnerable Canal neighborhood could greatly benefit from PDA dollars. The difference today is that there are growing numbers of residents in both these communities that see the value of planning for the future and accessing regional resources to make improvements. The involvement of these local residents and businesses is in fact critical to the comprehensive planning process needed to realize the potential and enhance the character of both areas.

The Canal and Northgate deserve the kind of community-based, no-strings-attached, planning that the PDA designation provides a community. It's time that these two neighborhoods have the same kind of attention and investment that downtown has enjoyed. There are critical climate change, transportation, housing, and displacement issues to address.

The evidence is irrefutable that PDAs receive cash. As the City faces years of rebuilding its tax base, we must turn over every stone to bring in outside resources. The letter of interest to apply for PDA status for Southeast San Rafael/Canal and Northgate provides an excellent start. We urge your approval.

Sincerely,

Bob Spofford
Vice-President, Sustainable San Rafael