



January 10, 2018

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

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415.457.7656

RE: Downtown Parking & Wayfinding Study

Honorable Mayor and Council Members,
Sustainable San Rafael has followed the development of the Parking and Wayfinding Study carefully, considering it critical to the sustainable development of the downtown area. It comes at a particularly propitious time with the opportunity of folding the results into the General Plan.

The recommendations before you suggest simple zoning code changes and management guidelines that will bring our parking strategies up to date with developing realities. Significant changes are coming to our downtown and to transportation and retail in general. Our parking polices need to adapt to these realities. Most critical are:

The need to increase options for parking in the Station Area by extending the parking district past Lincoln is a core component of the Station Area Plan. This would allow flexibility for new development and help avoid barren pedestrian street fronts caused by first floor parking in a pedestrian friendly area.

As the study points out, parking in the downtown area is adequate, if not well distributed. A zoning change to encourage shared parking and public use of parking makes common sense by using existing facilities more efficiently. Likewise, our public parking structures are underutilized. Giving the Parking Department the flexibility to monitor demand and adjust rates as needed can efficiently direct parkers to better utilize these resources.

The encouragement of transit options like SMART can reduce the parking needed for new development. It is therefore time to look at reducing parking requirements and helping the economic viability of desirable projects, especially in tandem with employee incentives for non-car commute options. Bicycle use is also growing and our codes need to respond to the demand. Encouraging bicycle use by requiring bike parking in new residential developments is a common sense sustainability measure.

This study was thoroughly vetted by stakeholders and recommends items that should be part of the over-all process of designing the future of our city as we update our General Plan. In the interests of sustainability, we recommend accepting the study's recommendations.

Most importantly, we urge you to direct staff to adjust the timelines for considering all the suggested zoning and municipal code changes concurrent with the two-year General Plan process now getting underway.

Sincerely,

Jerry Belletto
Land Use Task Force
and Board Secretary

cc: Cristine Alilovich , Jim Myhers, Paul Jensen, Raffi Boylan