



San Rafael

FOCUS MAGAZINE

New Tree Advisory Committee



We will soon have in place a group of people with a passion for trees—protecting, promoting, and preserving our City's beautiful tree canopy. The City Council called for a Tree Advisory Committee in order to review and expand management policy for its street trees and

trees in the public right of way. The importance of trees to our community has been noted historically in planning, planting, and maintaining trees in the public and private sector. Applications for this committee were due in June, and appointments will be made this summer.

Climate Change Action Plan Underway

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." This famous quote by Albert Einstein is very relevant today as we think about how to reduce our carbon footprint both locally and globally. At the city level, a committed group of people are meeting to address the serious issues of energy conservation, waste management, land use and transportation, green building, expansion of our urban forest and adaptation to sea level rise. This 17-member Green Ribbon Committee and four volunteer Green Teams have been appointed to look at ways to make our city green. A recent survey of our community's greenhouse gas emissions shows that the transportation sector is 64% of the problem, followed by the residential and commercial industrial sectors, both at 18%.

Measuring emissions is only a part of the solution. Now we must decide how to meet specific reduction goals. The next milestone in the planning process will be a public "visioning" session, asking members of the community how they would like the City to respond locally to this global issue. To follow our progress, visit www.cityofsanrafael.org/climatechange.



How can San Rafael address Climate Change?

Add your thoughts at our **Vision Green Community Workshop** on Saturday, July 26, 9:30am–3:00pm at the Marin Youth Center, 1115 Third Street (parking in the Third & C Street Garage).



High Danger Fire Season: A Message from San Rafael's Fire Chief Chris Gray

Meteorologists are forecasting extreme drought conditions for Northern California, requiring firefighters and residents to be on heightened alert for the threat of wildfire. Each year, wildfires consume hundreds of homes in the Wildland/Urban Interface. However, it is estimated that as many as 80 percent of the homes lost to wildfires could have been saved if their owners had only followed a few simple fire-safe practices. It is not a question of if but when the next major wildfire will occur. Continued on page 2.

Energy Power Choice

City Councils, residents and businesses across Marin County have a big decision to make regarding who will be their energy provider. Beginning in September, San Rafael's City Council will begin holding a series of neighborhood meetings about a proposed new countywide agency called Marin Clean Energy (MCE). The new agency would be created through the adoption of a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA).

This issue, at its core, is evaluating whether local governments in Marin want to become electric power providers. At a June 24th study session, Council Members heard an overview of the business plan proposal. MCE would buy and sell electric energy and be an alternative provider to the current sole provider, PG&E. If the City Council becomes a member of the JPA, ratepayers would have the option of being a member of MCE, or of opting out of the MCE program to continue receiving electrical power from PG&E. MCE would focus on the purchase and provision of renewable (i.e. solar, wind, etc.) energy.

In September, the City Council will meet with neighbors at the community centers to hear residents' questions and comments about the proposed Marin Clean Energy agency. Later this fall, the City Council will hold a public hearing and make its decision about whether or not to adopt an ordinance to join the JPA. For more information, please visit www.marincleanenergy.info.

Budget Talk

It's become commonplace these days to hear about the fiscal problems of California cities facing mounting budget deficits. This is due to a combination of a downturn in the economy and the problems associated with a massive state budget deficit. The City of San Rafael is not immune to these challenges, as they are impacting our bottom line.

In May, we determined a projected General Fund budget deficit of \$2.1 million. By way of context, the overall budget for the current year is about \$90 million, of which \$60 million is our General Fund. You may be interested to know that 82% of the General Fund pays for workforce salary and benefits, most of it going toward public works, police and fire services. Thankfully, Measure S funds (from the 2005 Transaction and Use Tax) have been absolutely critical to maintaining our essential services such as police, fire, streets, and parks.

The reality is that we remain an organization whose greatest sources of revenue are tied to economic cycles. A decline in auto sales, department store sales and a sluggish construction industry resulted in a more than 2% reduction in our sales tax. This is quite significant given the fact that 37% of our revenue comes from sales tax.

High Danger Fire Season:

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That is why the most important person in protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but you. Through



333 G Street fire, May 2008. Photo by Jared Van Leuven

Property tax revenues are rising slightly, however the City only receives 11 cents on every tax dollar, so this doesn't mitigate the higher costs of doing business. 74% of homes provide a maximum \$600 per year in property tax income to the City.

The looming \$17 billion State budget deficit impacts our local budget as the Governor is looking for ways to fill the hole, such as taking revenue from voter-approved Prop 172 public safety dollars. We will continue to closely monitor the news coming out of Sacramento.

In June this year, the City Council directed that we freeze six positions across various departments – including street and park maintenance, information technology, and police administration – and took other measures, so that we now have a balanced budget for fiscal year 2008-09.

Despite this challenging financial news, the City is working to improve the local economy with several projects, including the renovation of the Mall at Northgate, consideration of a Target at the Shoreline Center, construction of new car dealerships and the completion of the San Rafael Corporate Center.

advance planning and preparation, we can all be ready for wildfire. We are very pleased with the response from our San Rafael citizens to the new Wildland Urban Interface Vegetation Management Program. It is rewarding to the Fire Department, and comforting to others, to know that homes that could have easily been lost to the "rain & shower" of sparks and brands, now have a fighting chance.

If you have any questions about our Vegetation Management program please contact the "Hotline" at 415-721-2875 or visit our website: www.cityofsanrafael.org/firevegetation

Warning to Hand Held Cell Phone Users



If you are still holding your cell phone while talking and driving you could be one of the first to get a ticket under the new state law that went into effect starting July 1. You must now have a hands-free device if you are using your cell phone in the car. San Rafael police are required to enforce the cell phone law and will begin citing drivers for the violation—\$20 for the first ticket, \$50 for the second violation. In addition, people under the age of 18 will be ticketed if they are seen talking on a cell phone while driving, and that includes using hands free devices. So, if you haven't yet purchased a new hands-free device, you might want to consider holding off on the phone conversation until you've reached your destination. For further questions on these laws, please visit www.chp.ca.gov.

Red Light Cameras

In an effort to reduce traffic injuries and to help ease congestion, the San Rafael Police Department is exploring the idea of installing red light enforcement cameras in the city. If the program is approved by the City Council, the police department will have the cameras installed at intersections in the Downtown area where most of the violations occur because of heavy traffic during commute hours.

The photo enforcement system would free officers from having to issue tickets on the spot. A sensor would indicate if a motorist is moving too fast, taking a snapshot of the car and the driver as it moves past the intersection. The photo and a video would be sent to the Police where an officer would review the tape to make sure that a violation in fact occurred. The City held a series of public meetings in order to educate drivers about the cameras. If and when the cameras are installed, drivers will be given a 30-day grace period in which violators would get a warning instead of a ticket.



Fourth Street/West End Village Update

San Rafael's Fourth Street/West End Village Revitalization project is on schedule to complete construction by Thanksgiving 2008, months ahead of the City's original estimate. Ghilotti Construction is currently working on



West End Village

two sidewalk segments simultaneously to accelerate construction and to keep disruption to residents, business owners and shoppers to a minimum. All stores have remained open during construction and all are accessible.

Streetscape improvements are the final phase of this \$5.2 million project designed to upgrade the area from D Street to the

Miracle Mile. Crews will plant 121 trees designed to flourish in an urban environment historically more suited to cars, trucks and buses. When finished, the West End Village will be home to level sidewalks, improved lighting, and street amenities that will enhance the character

of one of San Rafael's most unique neighborhoods. Curb ramps, improved crosswalks and other upgrades will make the corridor safer and more hospitable for pedestrians and individuals with disabilities.

Project updates are available on San Rafael's website—www.cityofsanrafael.org/westendvillage

New Development Underway

AUTO DEALERSHIPS

City approvals are in place for a new VW/Audi facility on Francisco Blvd. West. The current VW/Audi dealership at 740 West Francisco will be remodeled to become the home of a new Nissan facility, bringing Nissan back to San Rafael after an extended absence. Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge will be under construction this summer, with a new facility at 1075 East Francisco Blvd., bringing these auto



Sonnen VW and Audi

lines back to the City as well. Infiniti will be relocating to East Francisco Blvd. after the completion of a remodel of the former John Irish dealership facility. And finally, a Smart Car dealership has been approved near RAB Motors on West Francisco Blvd. These infill developments are reusing former facilities and formerly developed sites. These projects help the City maintain a healthy local economy and meet the retail development goals along these corridors.

TARGET

A new Target store is on its way to the Planning Commission this fall. After approval by the city's Design Review Board, the retailer hopes to bring Marin's second Target to 125 Shoreline Parkway, near The Home Depot. The Commission will be considering an Environmental Impact Report, before a final vote is taken.



Proposed Target

The proposed project includes a large buffer between the parking lot and Shoreline Park, and outdoor seating facing the bay. It also includes the planting of trees along the bay frontage to provide view corridors out to the bay, and incorporates bicycle parking.

Events Listing

July through December

Downtown Farmers' Market Celebration

Every Thursday 5 PM – 8 PM
April thru September / Fourth Street
415-492-8007 / www.sanrafaelmarket.org

Sunset Movies in Albert Park

July 12th & 13th / Albert Park Field
415-485-3333 / www.cityofsanrafael.org

Carrera de San Rafael (Bike Race)

August 9th / Fourth Street
415-485-3465 / www.carrerasanrafael.com

San Rafael Food & Wine Festival

August 16th / Falkirk Cultural Center
800-310-6563 / www.sresproductions.com

Great American Blues & BBQ

September 13th / Fourth Street
415-383-3470 / www.teamproevent.com

Mill Valley Film Festival

at The Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center
October 2nd – 12th / 1118 Fourth Street
415-383-5256 / www.rafaelfilmcenter.org

Trick or Treat on Fourth Street

October 25th / Fourth Street
415-720-5591 / www.downtownsanrafael.org

Craft Fair

November 7th / B Street Community Center
415-485-3333 / www.cityofsanrafael.org

Marin's Glorious Glass Pumpkin Harvest

October 25th & 26th / Falkirk Cultural Center
415-485-3328 / www.falkirkculturalcenter.org

Art Works Downtown Open Studios

November 8th & 9th / 1337 Fourth Street
415-451-8119 / www.artworksdowntown.org

Parade of Lights & Winter Wonderland

November 27th & 28th / Fourth Street
800-310-6563 / www.sresproductions.com

Victorian Holiday & Dickens Celebration

December 5th (6:30pm) / Falkirk Cultural Center
415-485-3328 / www.falkirkculturalcenter.org

Teddy Bear Tea

December 13th & 14th / Falkirk Cultural Center
415-485-3328 / www.falkirkculturalcenter.org

Community Action Marin Lighted Boat Parade

December 13th / San Rafael Waterfront
415-485-1489 / www.camarin.org

Breakfast with Santa

December 13th / B Street Community Center
415-485-3333 / www.cityofsanrafael.org

Reaching out to our Community

City staff has heard from dozens of organizations, businesses and residents through our new San Rafael Connects outreach effort over the past six months. Employees volunteered to be divided into four separate teams, each serving in a designated area of San Rafael. Issues surrounding traffic were at the top of the list of concerns for many respondents. There was also a lot of interest in the community to improve its emergency readiness in both homes and businesses. The teams learned

that residents, employees, non-profit agencies and business owners agree that they like having City Hall staff take the time to visit them in their neighborhoods. City Manager Ken Nordhoff said that giving people the opportunity to have a voice and stake in their community is a great way to target services and leverage resources in the areas most important to those who live, work and do business here. If you would like to schedule a Connects meeting, please call 485-3383.

Library Centennial

San Rafael will celebrate its Carnegie Library centennial on January 25, 2009. Following a \$25,000 gift from Andrew Carnegie in 1905, a group of 58 civic-minded individuals and three corporations purchased the land at the corner of Fifth and E in 1906. However, construction was delayed when a major earthquake leveled nearby San Francisco. During construction, the Marin Journal reported, "When completed, the building will present a fine appearance, and will be both an ornamental and useful structure."

It opened to the public in January 1909, and continues to be an ornamental and useful structure – with public Internet stations in the Carnegie Reading Room!

Save the Date!

January 25, 2009

LIBRARY CENTENNIAL

For updates on centennial celebrations, visit www.cityofsanrafael.org/library

San Rafael City Focus is a publication of the City of San Rafael and is designed to inform residents and the community about city policies, services, and goals.

For more information on articles in this issue or to suggest future topics, email city.manager@cityofsanrafael.org or write Terri Hardesty, City of San Rafael, PO Box 151560, San Rafael, CA 94915-1560.

www.cityofsanrafael.org

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Subscribe to Snapshot



Ken Nordhoff,
City Manager

As some of you may know, I have been writing a weekly e-newsletter called *Snapshot*. It's an additional communications tool that gives our residents and businesses

an opportunity to learn about news that's taking place within our local government. In order to give you better information on relevant issues concerning our programs, projects and services, I invite you to take a minute to give me some feedback on *Snapshot* or this *Focus Magazine*.

- Do you like the content in *Snapshot/Focus*?
- How can we improve?
- What topics most concern you?
- Do you prefer to receive your news via internet or standard mail?

Please email your comments to city.manager@cityofsanrafael.org, or call Public Information Officer Terri Hardesty at 485-3072.

***Snapshot* comes out every Thursday evening.** I encourage you to subscribe to get the latest inside information on key issues, community events and important meetings. Please go to: **www.cityofsanrafael.org/snapshot** to subscribe.



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