

Candidate Name: Diane Howard

Q1: Redwood City's General Plan directs future growth to a revitalized downtown and along existing transit corridors, while conserving open space and protecting our quality of life. It also sets limits on the intensity of development within various land-use categories.

- a) **Do you agree with our community's current vision for building in the urbanized core of our City and not in areas that the General Plan designates as open space, such as the Redwood City salt ponds? Please explain your answer.**

A: Yes. There was a lot of time, effort and community input in developing and approving Redwood City's General Plan. I believe the message was clear from the community input we received that future building and density should be focused in and around our Downtown and along our transit corridors and not in areas designated as open space.

- b) **Do you agree with the land-use mix and development intensity within the current General Plan? Please identify changes you would like to see, if any.**

A: Yes, I agree with the land-use mix and development intensity within the current General Plan. Because of the time and community input gathered during the 4-5 year process of updating our General Plan, I feel that it is still a relevant document that was planned to be for our use until 2030. There may be times that a General Plan amendment may be advisable, but I don't take that lightly.

Q2: In considering the current Harbor View proposal, a council member argued that the City has an obligation to grant the developer "due process" by studying the project – eg. allowing the project to move forward with required environmental studies and initiation of a General Plan Amendment. California law, however, allows a city to deny outright, without further studies, any development proposal that is not in conformance with its General Plan.

In your opinion, what obligation does the City have to process an application and conduct environmental studies for a development project that is not consistent with its General Plan and current zoning?

A: The City Council has the ability to vote to process an application for a project that may or may not be consistent with its General Plan and current zoning. Before Council makes this decision, the Planning Commission and the City Attorney's office review the application and make recommendations that are given to the Council. The City Council is not obligated to approve the application even if it is processed and an environmental document completed.

Q3: In 2009, the City Council voted to accept the initial Saltworks development application and begin a lengthy (and divisive) environmental review process to fill in restorable wetlands on the Cargill salt ponds, which have long been designated as "Open Space" in the General Plan and are zoned "Tidal Plain".

If elected and a future development proposal for any portion of the salt ponds comes before you:

- a) **would you be inclined to accept the application and vote to initiate environmental studies and a General Plan Amendment process? Please explain why or why not.**

A: No, I would not be inclined to accept an application for a General Plan amendment for land designated as Preservation Open Space. Part of the Salt Ponds area is designated as “Urban Reserve” in our General Plan. We have spent many years on this issue. Our City has been through 2 councils, much public review, and a major division of opinion in our community. I have serious reservations about making any General Plan changes to this designation.

- b) **are there any circumstances that you believe would justify a Council decision to approve a development on the salt ponds? Please explain your answer.**

A: Again, I would not be inclined to accept an application for a General Plan amendment or zoning change to land designated as Preservation Open Space. For the Urban Reserve portion of the Cargill lands, if the City were to deny the land owner any value from the property as it is currently designated, that would be considered “a taking”, which is illegal.

Q4: Redwood City’s 2013 Climate Action Plan states that “*while the City has taken significant action on climate change in the past 7 years, it becomes increasingly important to begin climate adaptation planning as well*”, and suggests developing recommendations for adaptation measures based on the 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy, which includes measures for increasing, protecting and restoring wetlands as well as avoiding or limiting development in areas subject to sea level rise.

- a) **If elected, would you encourage Council/City staff to work with other agencies to increase areas of tidal marsh for flood protection in Redwood City?**

A: Recognizing that flood protection is a real priority in the Friendly Acres and the Bayfront Area, we are currently working with Menlo Park, Atherton and the County to resolve this issue as quickly as possible. I would be very open to working with additional agencies to ensure flood protection and would be open to best practices, potentially including increasing areas of tidal marsh.

- b) **If elected, would you be in favor of the City including adaptive measures for restoring and increasing tidal marsh in its Climate Action Plan?**

A: At this time we are in the process of updating our Climate Action Plan based on new science and best practices. The Council will be receiving this information in the fall, and I’d be very open to suggestions for improving and updating the Plan.

c) If elected, would you consider approving future development in areas subject to sea level rise beyond what is currently allowed by the General Plan? Please explain your answer.

A: I would be interested in knowing what the current projections are at this time for sea level rise. That information may initiate a review of our current assumptions in the General Plan. If adjustments are needed, there would have to be a public process created to address all the implications including flooding, property rights and state and federal regulations.

Q5: The July 2016 Redwood City Climate Action Plan and Environmental Initiatives Update states that “*if the current trend continues unchanged, the City’s 2020 [greenhouse gas] reduction goal will not be met*”. This conclusion was based on GHG inventories that ended in 2013, before the recent boom in office development and corresponding traffic increases.

a) Do you believe that it is important for Redwood City to strive to meet its community-wide goal of a 15% decrease in GHG over 2005 levels by 2020, and/or to meet California’s goal of a 40% reduction in GHG over 1990 levels by 2030?

A: Yes, I believe it is important. At this time we are in the process of updating our Climate Action Plan based on new science and best practices. The Council will be receiving this information in the fall and I’d be very open to suggestions for the Plan.

b) If elected, would you support adoption of local codes, ordinances and/or programs, as some other cities have enacted, that would help achieve those goals?

A: The City has always been very proactive and would look for opportunities to achieve the goals that we have set.

Q6: The current Highway 101/Woodside Road interchange improvement plan did not incorporate any increased traffic from potential development east of Hwy 101 beyond what is accounted for in the General Plan. If substantial new development there is allowed, the expected traffic relief for current commuters and Seaport industries from these improvements could be short-lived, or traffic through the interchange could end up worse than current conditions.

If elected, would you approve a development project east of Highway 101 if it would significantly increase traffic impacts on current Redwood City commuters and nearby industries? Please explain your answer.

A: As I have said, I have grave concerns about making any changes to the current General Plan designation to lands east of 101. I will have traffic concerns regardless of where the traffic comes from. We have identified possible solutions such as the 101 and Highway 84 Interchange and Blomquist Extension, but have a shortfall in funding to build them at this time. Traffic, its impacts and solutions, will have to be studied very thoroughly.

Q7: Despite significant housing construction in the last several years, the worsening jobs/housing imbalance in Redwood City contributes to our housing affordability crisis, adds to commute times and greenhouse gas emissions, and creates increased pressure to develop on open space lands.

a) **Do you believe the City's Downtown Precise Plan should be reopened to allow for additional office space development? Why or why not?**

A: I support the reopening of the DTPP but not necessarily to look for increasing more office development. I want to look at our caps and what has been produced within those caps. I would consider it imperative to have a full community process regarding next steps for development in our downtown and what should be focused on. Currently, the ratio of jobs to housing is 20 to 1 throughout the County. We do not have enough housing inventory available to close this gap. I would look for areas in and around our Downtown to produce more Affordable and Below Market Rate housing inventory. I think it is important for all cities and the county to continue to close this gap.

b) **Do you agree with the recent 4-2 City Council decision to proceed with the study of the Harbor View project proposal to amend the General Plan to allow for construction of more than 1 million square feet of office space and thousands of additional workers east of Highway 101? Why or why not?**

A: No, I did not agree with that decision. Unfortunately, I was not able to be at that meeting to cast my vote. When the proposed project comes back to the Council, I will listen and consider all the information as required, but still I have grave concerns.

Q8: In addition to publishing this questionnaire, RCNU will be informing voters about candidates' past Council and Planning Commission votes as well as public comments that candidates have made at City Council/Planning Commission meetings or to the media that are related to the topics covered in this questionnaire. If you have any comments you would like to make regarding your past actions or public statements, please take this opportunity to discuss them below.

A: I can honestly say in my almost 20 years of serving on the City Council that my decisions have always been based, after thorough investigation, on what I believe is best for the residents of our Redwood City community. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to answer some of the concerns and questions you have about Redwood City's future. I would consider it an honor to serve Redwood City once again.

Sincerely,
Diane Howard