UPCOMING LOCAL FUNDING MEASURES

City of Redwood City Essential Services Protection Measure

Redwood City is a recognized leader in proactive financial planning and sound fiscal management. The City passes a balanced budget every year and is consistently rated by auditors and outside experts as having excellent financial planning, discipline and management best-practices. Most cities in California, including Redwood City, face a growing structural deficit due to commitments made at the state level to fund employee retirement obligations. New state mandates have increased the amount that cities must contribute. Redwood City officials are working with legislators and other cities to find long-term solutions. In the short term, Redwood City is seeking balanced budget solutions through a combination of cuts to services and revenue enhancements. In June, the City Council voted to cut $3.7 million from the 2018-19 operating budget. Additionally, while property values have increased, Redwood City only receives 18% of property tax revenue, while the rest goes to the County, school districts and other agencies. Simply put, revenue has not kept up with the rising costs of providing services. As such, the City Council has placed two revenue measures on the November ballot for voter consideration.

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In order to prevent cuts to core City services, the City Council unanimously voted to place a half-cent sales tax measure on the November ballot. If approved, this measure would generate approximately $8 million annually, which would be entirely dedicated to essential City services here in Redwood City, such as: protecting the safety of Redwood City residents, maintaining rapid 911 emergency response times, supporting fire, paramedic and police services, providing recreation and afterschool programs that keep kids safe and maintaining library hours and programs. By law, sales tax revenue cannot be taken away by the State and all local sales tax dollars must stay here to fund local services in Redwood City. Essential purchases like groceries and medicine would be exempt. The measure would add 50 cents to a $100 purchase. For more information on Measure RR, go to www.redwoodcity.org/measureRRFAQ.

CANNABIS BUSINESS TAX MEASURE

Also on the ballot this November will be a tax on all cannabis businesses operating in Redwood City. If approved, the measure would provide approximately $210,000 annually in locally controlled funding to support essential City services. The tax would only apply to cannabis businesses operating in Redwood City and would not increase taxes for Redwood City residents. In 2017, the City established that cannabis delivery, commercial cannabis delivery centers and nurseries could operate within the boundaries of the City with a specific business permit. Delivery centers and nurseries may only locate in specific industrial and commercial locations, away from facilities serving children and youth. For more on Measure DD, go to www.redwoodcity.org/measureDDFAQ.

City Strategic Initiatives

Last newsletter we looked at the City’s seven strategic initiatives that ensure department objectives align with the City Council’s vision. The adopted strategic initiatives are community building and communication, community for all ages, economic development, government operations, housing, public safety, and transportation. Updates in this newsletter are organized by strategic initiative. Staff will update the City’s progress addressing these strategic initiatives twice a year with the development of the budget. To view the latest progress report from the Fiscal Year 2018-19 Adopted Budget, go to www.redwoodcity.org/strategicplan.

Municipal Election: City Charter Amendments

The City Council is asking registered voters to consider City Charter amendments this November. The Charter serves as Redwood City’s local constitution, which sets out the foundation for the City’s governing structure and laws. Redwood City’s Charter was adopted by residents in 1929; it’s been amended 16 times, most recently in 2011.

The ballot measure would approve nine amendments. Amendments range from updating public notice procedures to be in line with procedures established by ordinance of the Council, and adding a four-term limit for all boards and commissions, to making the language of the Charter gender neutral and several cleanup items. Other amendments seek to streamline City procedures, conform to best practices, clarify administrative functions, and comply with State law.

The Charter can only be amended by a majority vote of City voters and cannot be overruled by City Council action. For more details on Measure OO: City Charter Amendments, go to www.redwoodcity.org/ballotmeasures.
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: COMMUNITY BUILDING AND COMMUNICATIONS

City Council Approves Smoking Ban

In November 2017, the City Council passed an ordinance to ban smoking of all kinds in multi-family housing units as a result of community concerns and the hazards of secondhand smoke. The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke exposure and that separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot completely prevent secondhand smoke exposure. Several studies have confirmed that smoke free multi-unit housing policies are the most effective method to fully reduce secondhand smoke exposure in multi-unit housing.

This new law will affect all multi-family buildings with two or more attached units including duplexes, apartment buildings, condominium complexes, senior and assisted living facilities, and long-term health care facilities. The City regulations are already in effect for newly built dwellings (as of January 1, 2018) and will extend to existing buildings effective January 1, 2019. The City recommends that landlords update leases as soon as possible to reflect the ordinance. Within the new law, smoke is defined as tobacco smoke, electronic smoking device vapors, cannabis smoke, smoke released by vaporization of any illegal drugs and other less common smoke definitions.

For more information and to read the City ordinance, go to www.redwoodcity.org/smokingban.

Local Minimum Wage Increase Planned

The State of California enacted a minimum wage that will reach $15 per hour for all employers in January of 2023. The City Council approved a new local minimum wage ordinance after prioritizing the issue in 2017 to help assist low wage earners with the high cost of living in Redwood City. The City’s approach seeks to move quicker than the State’s minimum wage, reaching $15 by 2020 after gaining extensive input from local businesses over the last year. Starting on January 1, 2019 a local minimum wage of $13.50 will go into effect in Redwood City. On January 1, 2020, the City’s local minimum wage will increase to $15 per hour plus the consumer price index (CPI). After 2020, Redwood City’s local minimum wage will adjust with the Consumer Price Index. This new law applies to all businesses within the geographic boundaries of Redwood City and any employee working at least two or more hours per week.

For more information, go to www.redwoodcity.org/minimumwage.

UPCOMING COUNCIL MEETINGS

City Hall Council Chambers
1017 Middlefield: All meetings at 7 p.m.
• October 1 and 22 • November 5 and 19 • December 3, 10 and 17

JOIN YOUR NEIGHBORS BUILDING COMMUNITY

Through our Neighborhood Associations, the City works to address each neighborhood’s unique needs and to maintain Redwood City’s small town charm. The City’s motto is “Building a Great Community Together.” Through collaboration, we can address evolving community needs, develop innovative ideas and enhance Redwood City’s quality of life. Join your neighbors at an upcoming Neighborhood Association meeting or event and make lasting community connections.

www.redwoodcity.org/neighborhoodassociations
In 2017, the City Council directed staff to assess the feasibility of a downtown park. Staff is currently completing preliminary site planning and identifying site improvements and amenities on two City owned parcels, the Main Street Parking Lot and Library Parking Lot A. Following extensive outreach to the community and local downtown businesses, including hosting a pop-up park event where the public could visualize amenities and options on these two sites, the City Council will consider staff recommendations at their September 24 meeting. Staff recommendations will include site selection, design and community outreach. Staff’s report will include high-level diagrams of what the two study sites could become.

For more about this initiative, go to www.redwoodcity.org/downtownparks.

While Downtown Redwood City has a thriving restaurant and entertainment scene and a low vacancy rate, the City is exploring how to enhance Downtown retail. Earlier this year, the City Council appointed a volunteer task force composed of local business and property owners, real estate professionals and community members and asked them to develop recommendations to help strengthen retail offerings downtown. The Downtown Task Force (Task Force) is discussing current retail trends; comparing Redwood City and five other Peninsula downtowns’ key demographic indicators, rents, vacancy levels, retail mix, and zoning regulations; and evaluating best practices used by other communities to strengthen and preserve retail in their downtown areas. The Task Force will present recommendations to the City Council later this year.
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: HOUSING

New Housing Policies Approved

We are all connected: what happens to one part of the community impacts everyone. Affording a home in Redwood City and the broader Bay Area is becoming increasingly more challenging. The lack of affordable housing threatens our community’s well-being and the City Council’s vision of a community for all ages. Achieving housing security for all in the community is a top priority for the City.

Through a recent collaboration with the County of San Mateo’s Home for All initiative, the City recently held four community meetings and seven pop-up events, engaging over 1,000 residents on housing issues affecting the community. Based on this feedback, many new initiatives are underway.

HOUSING RESOURCE GUIDE AVAILABLE IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH

In response to community members seeking short-term and emergency housing resources, the City recently developed a housing resource guide in English and Spanish. This guide provides details on City and City partner programs to support housing security in the community including emergency housing and emergency financial assistance, affordable housing programs, support for low income homebuyers, and more. View the guide at www.redwoodcity.org/housingresourceguide or pick up a printed copy at any of Redwood City’s community centers or libraries.

NEW PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT RENTERS AND HOUSING SECURITY

Did you know that almost half of the City’s residents rent their home? In an effort to support housing security for renters, the City Council approved new rental protections this spring which become law on January 1, 2019. To help address housing challenges facing our community members who rent, the City has established minimum rental lease terms and is requiring relocation assistance under certain situations. Landlords in Redwood City must provide at least a 12-month lease and rents can only be increased after the 12 month lease period ends. In addition, a new law to support renters requires that if a landlord evicts a renter, under certain situations, the landlord must provide the renter with money equal to three months rent. Details on these new programs to support renters can be found at www.redwoodcity.org/rentalprotections.

SHORT TERM RENTAL REGULATIONS

The City Council recently adopted short-term rental housing regulations to allow these uses while preventing the loss of the City’s existing housing stock and preserving the residential character of Redwood City neighborhoods. Short-term rental property owners will need to bring their properties into compliance by April 2019. An online registration process will be available later this fall for owners to register their properties. Tax revenues generated from these regulations will support affordable housing. Learn more at www.redwoodcity.org/shorttermrentals.

To continue the City’s focus on housing security for all in our community, the Council approved the Housing and Human Concerns Committee’s two-year work plan. The committee will work closely with staff to implement ideas generated in the Home For All effort, and continue the momentum to address housing issues in the community. To learn more go to www.redwoodcity.org/housing.
The Redwood City Fire Department achieved a Public Protection Classification rating of Class 1 this year, making it the only fire department in San Mateo County to accomplish such a rating. This classification puts Redwood City Fire Department among the top 1% in the nation. The Redwood City Fire Department protects and serves the communities of Redwood City, San Carlos and some unincorporated areas of San Mateo County.

This new classification rating of Class 1 represents superior property fire protection through an analysis of a community’s fire suppression system including dispatch, fire department operations and training, and water supply. In addition, the Insurance Services Office (ISO) evaluates community efforts to reduce losses through fire prevention, public fire safety education and fire investigation. Insurance companies use the classification system combined with other factors to establish business and residential property insurance rates. Generally, higher class ratings mean lower premiums in better protected communities. Property owners are encouraged to check with their insurance companies on potential insurance rate adjustments. For more details, go to www.redwoodcity.org/fire.

The City is developing a shared service approach for Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) services in partnership with the County’s Office of Emergency Services. The County will create a new position to staff this program. The shared services approach ensures the sustainability of the program as the City employs creative approaches to ensure a balanced budget. The City of Redwood City and City of San Carlos appreciate your input and information gained through community meetings and an online survey will help ensure that the CERT program serves Redwood City and San Carlos well into the future. Join the City on September 25 at the Veterans Memorial Senior Center located at 1455 Madison Ave. and September 27 at the Redwood Shores Library located at 399 Marine Parkway. Both meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. Share your feedback through an online survey at www.redwoodcity.org/fire.

This year there are three City Council seats open and three City related ballot measures for voter consideration. The measures are Measure RR: Redwood City Essential Services Protection, Measure DD: Cannabis Business Tax, and Measure OO: Charter Amendments. To learn more, visit www.redwoodcity.org/election.
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: TRANSPORTATION

City Council Approves Citywide Transportation Plan

Earlier this summer, the City Council approved the Citywide Transportation Plan, a guiding document to implement a “Vision Zero” approach to reduce congestion, cut-through traffic, and eliminate traffic fatalities and severe injuries. The Plan identifies many projects to accomplish these goals over the next several years. Here are a few updates on key transportation projects underway.

The Citywide Transportation Plan will lead the City’s transportation initiatives into the future. To learn more about this planning effort and other transportation priorities and projects, go to www.redwoodcity.org/rwcmoves.

HOPKINS AVENUE TRAFFIC SAFETY PILOT PROGRAM

In response to concerns raised by residents about the speed and volume of traffic on Hopkins Avenue, the City collected preliminary traffic related data and used this information and additional community feedback to define a preferred traffic safety design. This spring, the City Council approved a conceptual design for traffic calming efforts on Hopkins Avenue and in August, City staff hosted community meetings to discuss locations of the pilot installations. Based on community input, the median locations for the pilot have been marked in white spray paint and staff anticipates installation will be complete by the end of the year. Visit www.redwoodcity.org/hopkins for additional updates.

MIDDLEFIELD UTILITY UNDERGROUNDING PROJECT SET TO BEGIN THIS OCTOBER

The Middlefield Utility Undergrounding Project, a much awaited infrastructure project focused on road improvements on Middlefield Road from Main to Douglas, will begin this October. The project goals include increasing pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility by relocating overhead utility lines and poles underground and reconfiguring the roadway to provide wider sidewalks, protected bicycle lanes, street trees, pedestrian lighting, benches, and green infrastructure. Once completed, the project seeks to create an attractive gateway to downtown Redwood City. Visit www.redwoodcity.org/middlefieldundergrounding to learn more about this project.

CONNECTING BAIR ISLAND ROAD TO MAIN STREET

Another important transportation project set to begin in early 2019 is the U.S. Highway 101 Pedestrian Undercrossing, which will connect the bike path along Bair Island Road and the bike lanes on Main Street via a new undercrossing beneath the freeway and adjacent to Redwood Creek. Visit www.redwoodcity.org/101undercrossing to learn more about this project.