

## District 7

*Note: Candidate responses are listed in the order that their names appear on the ballot*

Q1: Redwood City's General Plan directs future growth to a revitalized downtown and along existing transit corridors, while conserving open space elsewhere in the city. 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 undeveloped areas that the General Plan designates as open space, such as the Redwood City salt ponds? Please explain your answer.**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*I agree. I have consistently supported development within the downtown core, near Caltrain, and SamTrans bus lines on El Camino Real. Our own RWC Moves studies and ongoing CEQA analysis on a project-by-project basis demonstrate that proximity to downtown uses, transit, and existing housing and office make Redwood City's urbanized core the first place to propose new development.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*Yes, I agree with the current city vision of localizing development towards downtown, where there are more public transportation options. I want to prevent, or at least limit, development by the bay (as in east of 101). I definitely will resist any development on the salt ponds. Development there poses threats to the surrounding wildlife and the water purity. It is also an illogical place to develop due to isolation, unstable infrastructure, and rising sea levels.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*Yes, development in the urban core takes the pressure off of the underdeveloped areas not served by public transportation.*

- 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, as part of the current visioning processes for Central Redwood City and the Transit Center plans, or elsewhere within the City.**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*We need to find a more permanent path forward on ADUs, or we will continue to struggle between local restrictions constantly being forced to change based on new state rules. I think that RCNU could play a leading role in helping to educate residents in certain parts of the city about the benefits of ADUs. I look forward to seeing how the ongoing data coming out of RWC Moves and the switch from LOS to VMT under CEQA might play a role in the two visioning processes to determine what is possible. I also point you to the zoning district changes approved last December unanimously by the Planning Commission and City Council for the MUT Zoning District to encourage more housing and provide incentives for community benefits such as more housing, especially affordable housing, child care, open space, traffic calming, etc. I also want to see more child care in all new developments, more three bedroom family units, and more affordable ownership housing.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*I think the current land use mix and development intensity is decent and understandable but can be improved. Many residents are tired of the congestion stemming from all of the recent development downtown and feel that the city is hitting its upper-limit in capacity. Additionally, I think it is naïve to assume that people moving into these new, luxury complexes downtown will necessarily use public transportation. The vast majority of these people are wealthy and can more than afford a personal car. I think much of the increase in traffic the city has seen recently, especially prior to COVID-19, is a result of this flawed assumption. In the exception of specific work commutes, the public transportation network is generally not alluring to most people here. Many residents feel that the public transportation is not comprehensive enough, fares are not enticing, and it is not efficient. Our transportation system definitely needs improvements and new approaches. However, one way to limit congestion and traffic without altering transportation is through converting vacant office space into housing. There will likely be a plethora of vacant office space in the future due to telecommuting. This would be opportunistic to convert into housing, as it would lower construction costs to allow for a reduced rent rate, be more environmentally sustainable by re-using materials, and yield less congestion than traditional development. By repurposing already existing buildings, this may limit congestion while increasing supply for the housing crisis, especially since more people are allowed to occupy office space than residential per square foot.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*The current General Plan needs to be updated. The current plan is outdated and not sustainable.*

Q2: California law allows a city to deny outright, without further studies, any development proposal that is not in conformance with its General Plan. However, in the past, it has been argued that the City has an obligation to grant the developer “due process” by studying the project; i.e., allowing the project to move forward with required environmental studies through the initiation of a General Plan Amendment.

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

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*I support the staff's current approach to determining the possibility of a project seeking a general plan amendment under the Gatekeeper process. A project must demonstrate they are listening to this community, locating near transit, providing significant community benefits, and listening to concerns about balancing housing and jobs. Applications that simply meet the minimum standards tell me a developer is not listening or paying attention.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*The city has no obligation to proceed with proposals inconsistent with the General plan or current zoning. However, city staff and council should feel free in investigating projects they feel can be viable assets to the community. To allude to my response to the previous question, I would endorse converting office space into housing, which would involve re-zoning. This is an example of a good use of this power of the city. Whereas, developing on*

*the salt flats would be an example of a horrible use of this city's power. Thus, it is not the city's power in being able to evaluate projects outside of current frameworks that is inherently bad, it is the use of this power that can yield positive or negative effects. Also, of course, all planning costs incurred by the city should be passed down to the developer regardless if the plan is compliant with current guidelines or not.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*The City has no obligation to entertain changes to the General Plan. However, as mentioned previously, our General Plan is outdated. Serving the needs and interests of our community members must be our top priority. The needs of our community have changed since our General Plan was drafted in 2010.*

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 either "Open Space-Preservation" or "Open Space-Urban Reserve" in the General Plan, and are all zoned "Tidal Plain". While no new project plan has been submitted since the Saltworks application was withdrawn in 2012, a development proposal requiring a General Plan amendment for all or a portion of the salt ponds could come before Council in the future.

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

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*No. I have no plans to subject our community to that battle again. The salt ponds need to be preserved for wetlands restoration as an important tool to combat sea level rise and climate change.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*I would not be inclined to act in such a manner. If an environmental study and a General Plan Amendment are necessitated to commence with a project, the project is probably on fragile land. Thus, I would be resistant towards this, because I strongly prioritize the environment and protecting local ecosystems.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*In order to preserve my ability to vote on this issue or any similar issues that may come before Council in the future, I can convey my intention and commitment to represent the views and interests of my fellow community members, above all others.*

- 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.**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*No. I understand some believe this area might be used for limited affordable housing, but affordable housing needs to be near schools, transit, jobs, downtown uses and amenities, grocery stores, etc. I am also very focused on protecting the current and future operations of the Port of Redwood City and not creating incompatible uses on the salt ponds which impact*

*port operations. The port is a critical aspect of our regional economy and will be essential to our post COVID-19 economic recovery.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*I do not see any circumstances that would justify building on the salt ponds. The world is facing a catastrophic environmental crisis. As the recent fires have helped demonstrate, this is not a problem of the future, nor one that is isolated to certain countries, it is a global issue that needs to be addressed now.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*A decision of this magnitude must be vetted by our community members.*

Q4: Redwood City Council members are currently reviewing a draft “2030 Climate Action Plan Update”. While the City has taken significant actions in recent years to help mitigate climate change through greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions, it has become increasingly important to begin climate adaptation planning as well, in order to address the impacts from sea level rise, increased stormwater flooding and wildfires. The City’s adaptation measures can be based on recommendations from the [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 be in favor of adopting specific City adaptation measures that call for 1) restoring and increasing tidal marsh wetlands for natural flood protection and to buffer against sea level rise; and 2) avoiding or limiting development in areas at risk of flooding based on sea level rise projections? Please explain your answer.**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*We must address sea level rise with wetland restoration, carefully evaluate development in areas at risk of flooding, work with San Mateo County’s Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District, and also apply the same thinking to the western areas of San Mateo County and carefully consider any new development in the Wildland Urban Interface due to the increased risk of wildfires.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*I am open to preserving and rehabilitating significantly damaged marshland. Marshlands are important to me because I know they act as a buffer from excess water shed due to storms or rising sea-levels, provide habitats for animals including birds and amphibians, and are important in filtering pollutants to improve water purity.*

*I plan on preventing, or at least limiting, development in areas that are threatened by rising sea-levels. These developments are located closer to the bay and can be environmentally problematic by contaminating water sources and encroaching on wildlife.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*Climate change is one of the most challenging issues we face. What we do or fail to do in the next decade will be critical. This is why I am proposing I am proposing creating a Citizens Commission on Conservation & Sustainability to ensure we are working on this issue with the attention, urgency, and seriousness it demands. I believe our Redwood City Climate Action Plan 2030, falls short in preparing for and protecting our community from*

*sea-level rise. We must also work with neighboring cities, the County Task Force, and the Bay Area Restoration Authority to ensure we are working towards the same goals.*

- b. Do you believe that it is important for Redwood City to strive to meet California's goal of a 40% reduction in GHG over 1990 levels by 2030, or should Redwood City strive to exceed the State GHG reduction goal? Please explain your answer.**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*All anyone has to do is watch the fires across the western states, look up into the sky or try to take a deep breath to know we are in the middle of a climate crisis. Redwood City must look for ways to lead on GHG reduction goals and go beyond State goals whenever possible.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*I think that it is important for Redwood City to not only meet this goal, but also to strive to surpass it. As a focal point of the Silicon Valley, green technology is very accessible to Redwood City. Additionally, being nestled in a generally more progressive region of the country, and the state, environmental initiatives are met with relatively more support. Therefore, Redwood City should not take a back seat in addressing the climate crisis but should be a role model for other California cities. Obviously, the city is constrained economically in how much support it can allocate to environmental projects, but I think it is extremely important that the city makes the environment a top priority.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*Yes, I would like to see Redwood City take the lead on this by establishing goals that surpass California state standards for GHG emissions. While these standards include efforts to ensure expansions to mass transportation and investments in transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure and safety programs; we simply must do more.*

- c. If elected, would you be inclined to support adoption of specific local "reach" codes, ordinances and/or programs, as some other cities have, that would help achieve those goals? Please explain your answer.**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*Yes. We have been discussing reach codes for some time and I would like to see Redwood City be a leader on this issue. I am pleased our city council voted unanimously last night to approve reach codes for Redwood City.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*I am supportive of the all-electric reach codes passed at the last city council meeting. However, I did think that some of the exceptions were questionable, including for affordable housing. This is questionable because natural gas can potentially lead to considerable adverse health consequences. For instance, natural gas appliances have been closely linked to respiratory problems, and gas leaks can be deadly. Thus, exposing an already vulnerable population to these conditions is obviously far from ideal. Additionally, the ADU exception, for ADUs and JADUs, that are connected to the primary property could become a loophole for prospective builders. Since, the external units are relegated to all-electric reach codes,*

*but the connected units are not, so people may be deterred from constructing external units, resulting in more GHGs. Furthermore, I think the restaurant exception for now is appropriate, especially due to COVID-19 and its associated economic woes, particularly for restaurants. However, in the future I think it should be re-evaluated, once the economic climate has recovered, and battery technology has progressed to become more affordable. I am also receptive to investigating the viability of a rebate program for residents looking to replace their natural gas water heaters with electric units.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*Yes, I support REACH codes that bring us to 100% electric, with few exceptions.*

Q5: The Highway 101/Woodside Road interchange improvement project was not designed to incorporate any increased traffic from additional development east of Hwy 101 beyond what is accounted for in the General Plan. If substantial additional development is allowed east of 101, the limited 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, under what conditions, if any, would you approve a General Plan amendment for a development project east of Highway 101 if it would significantly increase traffic delays on current Redwood City commuters and nearby industries? Please explain your answer.**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*Despite approving a General Plan Amendment east of Highway 101 previously, I would not support any amendments at this time. Since that time, and as evidenced even during the pandemic, the viability of life science lab under the existing General Plan has convinced me that developers should be focused on this use. Life Science uses are clean, require fewer employees per square foot, and are a potentially important element of our post COVID-19 economic recovery strategy. Life Science uses are going up in San Carlos and would be a good fit in Redwood City.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*I cannot think of any realistic circumstances that would persuade me to approve such a project. Maybe, if there was an essential project needed to meet RHNA requirements, and there were absolutely no other options. Possibly, more generally, if there was something essential that provided significant benefit for the community, resulting in a net positive. However, this is highly unlikely, and I probably would never support a project like this.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*This intersection is one of the most challenging in our region. Woodside Rd is a major thoroughfare used by parents needing to get their children across town to and from our middle schools, high schools, sports events, and hospitals, residents needing to get to and from work. Pre-COVID-19, it has easily taken 25-30 minutes to get from Friendly Acres to Woodside High School, using Woodside Road. As mentioned previously, my sole purpose for seeking the District 7 seat of our City Council is to protect and serve the interests of my fellow community members.*

Q6: 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. According to the City's website, since 2012, just over 2 million square feet of new professional/medical office space and over 2,100 housing units have already been approved, built, or are under construction. In addition, there are currently projects submitted or in the Gatekeeper process due to build more than 2,500 additional housing units and more than 4.5 million square feet of new professional office space. Based on the [City's Commercial Linkage Fee Nexus Study](#), each 100,000 square feet of professional/medical office construction produces a demand for 185 new workforce households (eg. dwelling units). Therefore, the more than 6.5 million square feet of new and proposed office construction will likely produce a demand for more than 12,000 housing units. This represents an unmet demand of more than 7,300 housing units assuming that all of the currently proposed, approved and recently built projects come to fruition

**Given our current development trends, what city policies or programs should Redwood City adopt to address our community's critical jobs/housing imbalance?**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*First, I believe we must continue to build housing in the urbanized core of our City as noted above. This includes building housing at all income levels, and particularly housing at deep affordability levels. This will require that the City continue and strengthen our partnerships with nonprofits that provide affordable housing for the essential workers in our community, many of which now live in the outskirts of the Bay Area. I also believe we must hold office developers to a higher standard and require that they develop affordable housing concurrently with a new office development, rather than simply paying a fee. Finally, we must also look at our zoning districts that are near transit and currently only allow commercial development (for example our Commercial Office zone) and open up those areas to residential development, with a preference for affordable housing. Which is what we did with the new MUT Zoning District. Requiring office, and prohibiting homes, in large swaths of land through the Peninsula is one of the main reasons that we have the jobs-housing in-balance.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*To address the community's job/housing imbalance Redwood City should strongly limit, or completely prevent with a memorandum, future office space development. Additionally, Redwood City should facilitate converting vacant office space into housing. This eliminates the threat of a future increase in demand to move here if a company were to move in.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*As you can see the numbers above are simply not sustainable. We must work to level the jobs/housing imbalance in our city. COVID-19 has changed the way we are all working, living, and conducting business. Once this Pandemic is over, we will have the opportunity to see what this space looks like. I support an increase of housing, including workforce housing, low income housing, and support working with local non-profits such as Mid-Pen housing and HIP housing.*

**Q7: If you have any additional comments or statements you would like to make about yourself or your policy positions, please do so below.**

**Alicia Aguirre:**

*I believe that my core values, love of Redwood City, and overall voting record are more often than not in alignment with the goals of RCNU. I believe we can work together over the next four years to continue to create a balance in Redwood City. I would welcome the partnership.*

**Mark Wolohan:**

*I graduated from Occidental College in the winter of 2017. I work at The Riekes Center for Human Enhancement, a 501©3 nonprofit in Menlo Park. One of the departments that I work in is Nature Awareness. I have instructed, or facilitated in teaching, skills used originally by the indigenous peoples of this land including fire by friction, acorn processing, and tool and shelter building to adolescents. I have also completed Tom Brown's Tracker School Standard Course. The environment is not a distant theoretical concept to me, it is something that is personal to me, due to the direct, extensive engagement I have had with nature. Other environmental policies I support include establishing a BCC (board, committee, or commission) for environmental sustainability. I think it is eye-opening that the city has numerous BCCs but does not have one for the environment. Local businesses also need more recycling, and especially compost, options for their patrons.*

**Chris Rasmussen:**

*I have dedicated my life to the service of others. Tough decisions will need to be made in months and years ahead. I remain committed to protecting the interests of my community and serving with the courage, integrity, and the compassion I have demonstrated over the past 20+ years.*