



San Mateo, Santa Clara and San Benito Counties

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**24 Bay Area groups say Redwood City cannot wait to act on climate change impacts**

REDWOOD CITY, California, September 1, 2020: Neighborhood groups, conservation, wildlife, and climate sustainability organizations, and even a public agency, joined forces today to issue an urgent and united call for Redwood City to include specific, actionable steps in their 2030 Climate Action Plan Update - not just to reduce emissions, but also toward adaptation to sea level rise and other climate change impacts.

The coordinated effort by a diverse coalition serves as a signal to the region that climate disruption is here and concrete action to protect against damaging impacts is overdue. "Communities, cities, and regional agencies each have a part to play and each must be held accountable for doing so," said Maryann Tekverk, Community Organizer at Save The Bay. "With 3.3 feet of sea level rise now projected by the year 2050 (not 2100 as previously anticipated), Redwood City cannot afford to wait for the county or state to protect vulnerable communities and promote flood resilience."

The urgent need for climate adaptation planning is abundantly evident in current headlines about local wildfire devastation and anticipated "unsurvivable" flood impacts from Hurricane

Laura on the Gulf Coast - all while the COVID pandemic lays bare the dangers of being caught unprepared. Climate change impacts are known threats; no level of government can afford not to plan now to mitigate them.

### **59 percent of Redwood City is vulnerable to flooding in the next 30 years**

San Mateo County tops the state in potential property loss from sea level rise inundation. With 3.3 feet of sea level rise, Redwood City alone would face approximately \$9 billion in property damage - impacting 568 commercial parcels and residential parcels currently housing 21,000 people, nearly 25% of the city's population.

Other key assets at risk in Redwood City include: six outpatient health care facilities, including the Kaiser hospital emergency center; the Port of Redwood City; the County jail; three mobile home parks; over 80 miles of roadway; and 27 hazardous material sites. (Sea Change San Mateo County's 2018 *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment*)

### **Redwood City's Climate Action Plan Update contains no specific actions for climate adaptation**

Redwood City's original, 2013 Climate Action Plan committed the City to "establish planning priorities, determine decision criteria, and build community support for taking action" to adapt to climate change impacts. Yet seven years later, that critically important work still has not begun. As Alice Kaufman, Legislative Advocacy Director for Green Foothills put it: "The draft 2030 CAP Update essentially reiterates the vague and generalized adaptation language from the 2013 CAP, with no progress towards specific actions. It seems that Redwood City is content to continue running in place when it comes to climate adaptation planning."

The Joint Statement issued today calls on Redwood City to include specific and measurable climate adaptation actions targeted at shoreline resiliency, green stormwater infrastructure, and mitigation of wildfire risk in the CAP Update.

"Significant climate change impacts on the community are certain - and already upon us," said Dan Ponti, spokesperson for Redwood City Neighbors United. "Rather than recycle an appendix of boilerplate ideas for adaptation strategies, as the current draft CAP Update does, we need leadership from our city to assess vulnerabilities and opportunities, to educate and engage the public, and to get going before time runs out."

Although Redwood City has joined the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District to support integrated regional planning and investment, the District has neither the authority nor the ability to undertake each city's adaptation efforts. It is incumbent on local jurisdictions not only to support long term regional goals and projects, but *also* to adopt and implement local policies for land use and flood and fire mitigation to address ongoing impacts and risks to their own communities. The urgent realities of climate change disruption demand action at every level of government.

### **Cargill Salt Ponds, and city action to protect them, are vital to regional flood mitigation**

The Joint Statement issued today calls on Redwood City to prohibit new development on undeveloped baylands at risk of flooding from sea level rise, including the Redwood City Salt

Ponds owned by the Cargill company. The Cargill salt ponds could protect communities against the threat of sea level rise if restored to their former state as tidal wetlands. Allowing development on the ponds would place even more residents, businesses and infrastructure at risk, behind levees that the city tax-payers must maintain and fortify in the future.

“Redwood City is in a unique position in the Bay Area,” said Gita Dev, Co-Chair of the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter’s Sustainable Land Use Committee. “They face extreme vulnerability from sea level rise flooding, while also controlling land use decisions for the privately-owned Cargill Salt Ponds - 1,436 acres of restorable wetlands that could act as a natural sponge to mitigate flood impacts across the peninsula.”

In an additional, separate letter to Redwood City, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District requested that the city add restoring the Redwood City Salt Ponds as a specific goal in the CAP Update, saying “The **preservation and restoration of the Cargill Redwood City Salt Ponds** represents the most significant opportunity for Redwood City to meet its sea level adaptation goals.”

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