

Candidate Name: John Seybert

1. Redwood City has plans to grow significantly over the next few years, and the way in which that growth is directed will shape our city for years to come. The 2010 Redwood City General Plan envisions a revitalized downtown area with housing located near our existing transit hubs and entertainment and retail venues, while conserving our open space areas and protecting the community's quality of life.

Do you agree with our community's vision for building housing in the urban core and not in designated open space areas? If not, how would you describe where you see our city's growth progressing?

I worked hard to pass the Downtown Precise Plan and have supported its implementation and other projects around the urban core. See other answers below as it relates to development in un-developed areas.

2. According to Redwood City's General Plan EIR, key traffic corridors, including Highway 101, Woodside Road and Whipple Avenue, are already at or near capacity and do not have excess capacity to absorb a significant influx of new cars from development on the salt ponds. Recent plans for improving traffic flow through the Highway 101/Woodside Road interchange did not incorporate any development on the salt ponds. If a development is allowed, 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, would you approve a development project on the salt ponds that significantly increases traffic impacts on current Redwood City commuters and nearby industries? Please explain your answer.

I voted in a 6-0-1 vote to deny the application and end the process of moving the former project forward. I believe the original plan by DMB was unrealistic and a major distraction to the development (Downtown, etc.) that our community needs to be focused on. As I have done in my 8+ years on the Planning Commission and almost 4 years on the City Council, I will study every project that comes before us with great scrutiny as it relates to traffic and a large number of other potential environmental impacts. If there is ever to be development in that area, it would need to be a decision of the community, protect existing industrial uses at the Port, and expand active open space as elements of the project. Without drawing specific percentage similarities, I believe the project at "Area H" in Redwood Shores (The Preserve) is a shining example of proper development in those sensitive areas. Our community benefited from active park space, much-needed housing, a critical school site, restoration of almost 90% of the area, and a FEMA approved levee at NO cost to the taxpayers.

3. Sustainability and protection of our land, air and water are becoming increasingly important. By concentrating growth in the core of our city, we conserve energy, reduce the emission of

greenhouse gases, and maintain our open spaces for the benefit of wildlife, the enjoyment of hikers and other recreational users, and for restoration of Bay tidal marsh. Scientific studies have shown that marshlands can provide valuable protection for residents and businesses from flooding and sea level rise, and provide effective mitigation for global warming by absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

Moving forward, what are your views on the best way to protect Redwood City's natural resources and mitigate for climate change?

I believe making a series of important decisions and having the City as an organization model appropriate environment behavior is the best way to prepare the community. I also believe partnering with organizations to provide outreach and education to our community on climate change and other environmental issues is an important role for the City.

In April 2013, the Council unanimously adopted the Climate Action Plan, which includes 15 key measures to help the City meet the state-recommended target reductions in (GHG) emissions. You can see that plan here:  
<http://www.redwoodcity.org/ClimateActionPlan.pdf>

Highlights of the plan include renewable energy, smart growth development, residential, commercial, and City energy efficiency programs, solid waste diversion, water conservation, parking management policies, etc. With a targeted reduction of 62,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions of the end of 2020, our plan is actually slated to exceed that goal for a reduction of 63,500 metric tons. I will continue support achieving this objective. As an individual, I have begun to use mass transit more, moved to home very close to downtown to have more walk-able access to areas I frequent, converted lighting in my home to CFL's and professionally led the school I work for to significantly reduce solid waste, achieve 25% of our energy from solar, retrofit lighting and other systems, and save water.

4. In 2009, the City Council voted to accept the initial Saltworks development application and begin a lengthy environmental review process even though the project had no clear plan in place for supplying water for the projected residents. Water supply options the developer proposed included a complicated Kern County agricultural water transfer with an expiration date. A desalination plant located on the Redwood Shores Peninsula also surfaced as a potential option.

In the future, should the City Council accept and review a project application for a development that has no clear plan in place for water, or a water supply plan that could increase future costs to Redwood City ratepayers? Please explain your answer.

As I have done in my 8+ years on the Planning Commission and almost 4 years on the City Council, I will study every project that comes before us with great scrutiny. Certainly water is one of the most critical studies that would need to be conducted. Redwood City, thanks to our aggressive conservation and recycling efforts, is well below our Hetch Hetchy allotment.

However, we need to ensure any future development doesn't jeopardize the current position we're in.

Development in Redwood City has not been the cause of rate increases. The current rate increases we've experienced are the result of the much-needed seismic upgrades on the Hetch Hetchy system. In fact, in recent years, the rates charged to Redwood City by Hetch Hetchy have increased almost 60% while Redwood City has only passed on about half of that to its rate payers.

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5. According to the Pacific Institute, San Mateo County already has more property at risk of inundation from sea level rise (estimated to be worth \$24 billion) than any other county in California, and it will cost taxpayers significant amounts of money in coming years just to protect already developed infrastructure. To address the regional adverse impacts of climate change, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) recommends that:

*"...undeveloped areas that are both vulnerable to future flooding and currently sustain significant habitats or species, or possess conditions that make the areas especially suitable for ecosystem enhancement, should be given special consideration for preservation and habitat enhancement and should be encouraged to be used for those purposes." (Bay Plan Climate Change Policy #4)*

Cargill's Redwood City salt ponds are a good example of an undeveloped area (no existing infrastructure) vulnerable to future flooding, and requiring construction of new levees for flood protection. In the 1999 report, *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals*, regional scientists determined that these salt ponds are especially suitable for ecosystem enhancement, where managed ponds and restored tidal marsh could increase valuable wetlands for waterfowl and expanded habitat for nearby endangered species.

Do you agree with BCDC's policy discouraging building in undeveloped areas vulnerable to future flooding and suitable for ecosystem enhancement? Please explain why or why not.

I appreciate the work BCDC does in promoting a regional look at development of areas along the water front. I believe there are places around the Bay Area and globally that have had great success balancing development in the areas you've mentioned and, if anything were proposed on such land in Redwood City, I would look to draw upon those places for guidance on how to best develop in a way that does not negatively impact the development, as it relates to flooding, or the ecosystem.

6. All of the Redwood City Cargill salt ponds are designated as "Open Space" in the General Plan and are zoned "Tidal Plain". In addition to salt making, parks, public recreation and restoration to tidal marsh are all permitted uses. Commercial/residential development is currently not allowed.

If you were elected to the City Council, would you approve a change in the City's current General Plan and zoning to allow development on the salt ponds? Please explain your answer.

(see answer #2)

Thank you again!

Redwood City Neighbors United  
Council Election Subcommittee

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