



February 28, 2022

Redwood City City Council  
1017 Middlefield Road  
Redwood City, CA 94063

Via email: [council@redwoodcity.org](mailto:council@redwoodcity.org)

Re: Sea Level Rise Vulnerability assessment and Risk Analysis

Dear Mayor Hale and members of the Redwood City Council,

Today's Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC) report on Climate Change, following on from its "Code Red for Humanity" report last fall, conveys a strong sense of urgency on the importance of adapting to a warming planet while also mitigating climate change.

Sea level rise is very predictable. Sudden storm events and King Tides exacerbate the inexorable rise in the level of the Bay, making it front page news. According to the IPCC report, 100-year storm events will become more frequent and routine in the coming decades.

- Redwood City is at Ground Zero for climate-driven sea level rise. At this time, Redwood City is one of the only cities in San Mateo County that has not undertaken a vulnerability assessment and risk analysis for its entire shoreline, its vital infrastructure, and its landfill areas.
- Sierra Club encourages Redwood City to make planning for sea level rise a high priority and to put on hold development proposals in vulnerable areas.
- We ask that the Council approve funds for this as we note that San Mateo County's One Shoreline is standing by with matching funds and has expressed serious concern that Redwood City should move on this issue with urgency as other cities have done.

We bring the following relevant items to your attention:

Inadequate Infrastructure Lawsuit

We note that Burlingame has been sued recently by business owners near the shoreline for alleged deficiencies in the city's infrastructure that have caused business losses and property damage during last year's storms.

Burlingame Sea Level Rise Ordinance

The City of Burlingame, last December, passed a Sea Level Rise Ordinance requiring 100' setbacks from the Bay edge and setbacks from all their creeks to accommodate sea level rise.

Inadequate planning for predictable sea level rise

We are concerned that Redwood City has continued to entitle development on the Bay side of Highway 101 without adequate planning for sea level rise and related groundwater rise issues in order to protect homes and businesses in the area. The risk to taxpayers is considerable.

### Support for resilient strategies

We are very supportive of the City's plan to accommodate land uses such as the RV "Safe Parking" and the new homeless shelter in the Inner Harbor area as these are movable so can be relocated in the future.

### Concern about piecemeal planning

It is cause for concern that the city is planning to take ownership and liability for owner-designed facilities, such as a concrete sea wall along Redwood Creek at the Britannia Seaport Center on Seaport Boulevard, without an overall protection plan. Walling off one area makes other areas more vulnerable. This gives too much risk to taxpayers. We are also concerned about the city designing some elevated road segments without a master plan for access and infrastructure.

### **Bay health needs Nature Based Adaptation**

The health of San Francisco Bay lies in the complex and interdependent ecology of the marshes and tidal wetlands along the Bay edge. Fed by creeks and streams, with sediment coming downstream, the Bay was historically ringed with rich complex wetlands. Over 90% of these have been lost to development.

We are still short by more than 50,000 acres to reach the present goal of 100,000 acres of wetlands. In addition, as sea levels rise and wetland areas become submerged, there is a need for these shallow tidal wetlands to have space to migrate upland to continue providing the ecoservices needed for our region's health. Without these wetlands, as sea levels rise and if only seawalls go up, we will end with a bathtub-like dead Bay rather than a Bay with a healthy ecology.

- We ask the council to keep in mind the need for creating pathways and space for tidal wetland migration as the City plans for the rest of this century. The Cargill salt ponds present a unique opportunity for nature-based adaptation.

**In summary**, we once again ask Council to make a Vulnerability Assessment and Risk Analysis a top priority and to pause all development proposals, in the areas that are subject to sea level rise, until this analysis is completed.

Respectfully submitted,

Gita Dev, Co-Chair  
Sustainable Land Use Committee  
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Jennifer Chang Hetterly, Campaign Coordinator  
Bay Alive Campaign  
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Cc Terence Kyaw, Director Public Works, Redwood City  
Gladwyn d'Souza, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter  
James Eggers, Executive Director, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Sierra Club's "Bay Alive" is a joint campaign by the three Sierra Club chapters that encircle San Francisco Bay: [Loma Prieta Chapter](#), [Redwood Chapter](#) and [San Francisco Bay Chapter](#).