

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR ROGERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL,  
CHAIR WEEKS AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING  
COMMISSION  
FROM: AMY LYLE, SUPERVISING PLANNER  
AMY NICHOLSON, SENIOR PLANNER  
BEATRIZ GUERRERO AUNA, EQUITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH  
PLANNER  
PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
SUBJECT: SANTA ROSA FORWARD LAND USE AND CIRCULATION  
ALTERNATIVES

AGENDA ACTION: NO ACTION - FOR INFORMATION ONLY

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning & Economic Development Department that the City Council and Planning Commission review and provide input on the Draft Alternatives, taking into consideration community feedback, to help guide the preparation of the General Plan 2050 Update.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Land Use and Circulation Alternatives present three potential approaches to achieve Santa Rosa's vision for the future, as detailed in the Vision Statement, while taking existing conditions, analyzed as part of the first phase of Santa Rosa Forward, into consideration. Each of the three Alternatives offers a different approach to distributing future housing and economic growth, presented in detail in the Alternatives Workbook. The Alternatives Workbook provides a comparative analysis of the alternatives with regards to housing, economics, sustainability, and safety outcomes, based on a limited initial framework for the alternatives which assumes an equal amount of housing growth but a unique pattern for future development. The three alternatives are intended as a starting point to support thoughtful discussions about where future growth and change should occur (including homes, shopping, office, and industrial uses) and what circulation improvements are needed to support people's ability to easily and safely move around the city. Community comments on the alternatives will inform development of a draft preferred alternative to be refined through additional outreach and then serve as the foundation for the updated General Plan.

BACKGROUND AND PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

In March 2020, the Planning & Economic Development Department started the Santa Rosa Forward project. This three-year project entails a comprehensive update of the City's existing General Plan.

On March 3, 2020, Council authorized the General Plan update with a total contract amount of \$2,500,000 (Professional Service Agreement F002144).

On August 25, 2020, Council accepted the Community Involvement Strategy for the Santa Rosa 2050 General Plan Update. At the same time a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was assembled with representation from the City's diverse neighborhoods and interests and from each of the Council Districts. CAC members provide input on the project and serve as liaisons to help to promote broad and inclusive public engagement. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was also convened among City departments to provide the Project Team with ongoing advice and guidance.

On October 13, 2020, Council amended the General Plan Update Professional Service Agreement to include an update to the Climate Action Plan and increased the total contract amount to \$2,599,909.

On December 8, 2020, Council accepted the CAC Member Selection Process and approved the CAC Organizational Framework.

On July 20, 2021, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, reviewed and provided input on the Santa Rosa Forward Community Vision Statement.

On November 16, 2021, the Council received a report on the Equity Priority Communities' Empowerment and Outreach Work Plan.

On November 16, 2021, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, received a report on the Housing Element Update which is part of Santa Rosa Forward.

WORK COMPLETED TO DATE

The Land Use and Circulation Alternatives is the third phase of eight as listed in Table 1. Each phase of work builds on previous efforts. This staff report provides a summary of the work that has been completed so far, as well as a detailed report on the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives phase.

*Table 1 Santa Rosa Forward Work Phases*

1. Community Involvement Strategy	2. Existing Conditions Analysis and Vision	3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives	4. Preferred Alternative	5. Draft General Plan	6. Environmental Analysis	7. Public Review and Adoption	8. Additional Zoning Amendments
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## 1. Community Involvement Strategy

Public engagement is a critical component of Santa Rosa Forward. At the outset of the project, the project team crafted a Community Involvement Strategy (CIS) to create an open, inclusive planning process that engages a representative cross-section of people and organizations with interest in the city. The CIS recognizes the need to employ innovative strategies to reach people who do not typically get involved in community planning projects or other civic activities. It presents an outreach component in each phase of the project to be further refined by the project team at that phase. The CIS also establishes the role of the TAC and CAC. The TAC is comprised of technical experts from City departments and partner agencies charged with providing feedback and technical insights to the project team. The CAC is composed of community members representing a variety of organizations and perspectives and is charged with assisting as project ambassadors to encourage their fellow community members to get involved in the project. Following the CIS as a guide, Santa Rosa Forward is working to engage a variety of stakeholders, representative of the city's diverse community. To accomplish that objective, the project is providing special attention to equity priority communities (areas in Santa Rosa that have the highest concentration of underserved populations) and 10 identified equity priority populations:

1. Low-income individuals and families
2. Racial or ethnic groups experiencing disparate health outcomes
3. Seniors, children, youth, and young adults
4. Individuals with disabilities
5. Immigrants and refugees
6. Outdoor workers and farmworkers
7. Individuals who are limited-English proficient (LEP)
8. Unhoused people
9. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ+) communities
10. Individuals who are incarcerated or who have been incarcerated

## 2. Existing Conditions Analysis and Vision

The Existing Conditions Report was released in December 2020. This technical background document analyzed and summarized a variety of data including demographic, economic, land use, community character, mobility, natural resources, infrastructure, environmental justice, community health, and other conditions in Santa Rosa. The comprehensive Existing Conditions Report was distilled into a high-level summary of the major findings and take-aways in a Briefing Book, released in February 2021. Information gathered through the existing conditions analysis is serving as the backbone for remaining work on the project by helping the community and project team understand and appropriately prioritize the various issues and opportunities facing Santa Rosa.

Following development of the existing conditions analysis, in March 2021, the project team met separately with the TAC and CAC to review takeaways from the Existing Conditions Report and gather initial ideas about the vision, leading to development of a Draft Vision Statement that is an aspirational expression that frames community needs and desires. In May 2021, the project team hosted 10 virtual Community Vision Workshops to gather community feedback on the draft Vision Statement. Input from the 160 community members who participated in the workshops informed refinements presented to City Council and Planning Commission in a study session on July 20, 2021. City Council and Planning Commission members provided comments to help further refine the Vision Statement. The Vision Statement, comprised of the 13 detailed points is stated as follows:

Santa Rosa is a diverse, equitable, and sustainable community built on civic engagement that empowers everyone to provide and support equal and affordable opportunities to obtain good housing, education and jobs; to enjoy vibrant cultural events and arts; and to live healthy lives in resilient neighborhoods that adapt to social and environmental change.

### 3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives

The Land Use and Circulation Alternatives was kicked off with a half-day planning charrette with staff to discuss how to reflect the Vision and account for the various existing conditions in three different alternative land use and circulation development scenarios or “alternatives”. The project team conducted a detailed analysis of demographic projections, the city’s current capacity for housing, and anticipated future housing allocations from the state, and arrived at the potential for 36,000 new housing units which reflects a modest growth forecast. All three alternatives include a comparative analysis of the impacts and tradeoffs of concentrating this same amount growth in different locations, although the amount of anticipated growth could change based on community input.

The three alternatives are described and analyzed within the Alternatives Workbook that provides a comparative assessment of each alternative in the areas of housing, economics, equity, efficiency, sustainability, community safety, and resilience. Additional important issues like public services (police and fire protection), access to childcare, housing availability and affordability, climate change, and many more will be addressed through policies and programs developed later in the Santa Rosa Forward process. The following is a summary of each alternative.

#### Alternative 1: Central Corridors

This alternative would focus future commercial and residential growth near Downtown and along central thoroughfares that are connected to transit facilities. Most community needs, such as jobs, retail, and commercial services, could be met in or near the central part of the city. This compact and efficient form of development would be supported by a robust transit system.

### Alternative 2: Neighborhood Main Streets

This alternative would concentrate housing, jobs, and community destinations along key corridors and at community centers. This includes both Shopping Center (larger commercial and services centers) and Neighborhood Center (smaller retail) nodes. Nearly all residents would have convenient access to many daily needs within walking or biking distance, reducing the need for many daily vehicle or bus trips around the city.

### Alternative 3: Distributed Housing

This alternative would disperse new duplexes, triplexes, courtyard, and similar types of homes throughout the city on parcels that can accommodate new housing, growing in a more distributed pattern. Since new housing is more spread out, people might need to travel more often by private vehicle or bus to access daily goods and services.

### Alternatives Outreach

On December 9, 2021, the project team presented the alternatives to the TAC to gather their suggestions for refinements to the Alternatives Workbook content and input on which alternative they liked best and changes they would want to see in the Preferred Alternative to be developed in the next phase of work.

On December 14, 2021, the project team presented the alternatives to the CAC. CAC members identified details they wanted to see clarified in the Workbook and requested a follow-up meeting to discuss the alternatives in more detail.

On January 24, 2022, the project team met held an additional CAC meeting to present a revised Workbook and gather input on the alternatives.

In March and April 2022, the project team led a robust outreach process to discuss the alternatives with the full community. The project team prepared an Alternatives Worksheet, which combined information on the alternatives with detailed questions designed to better identify community priorities. Outreach activities included a series of five in-person workshops, nine pop-up events, a virtual open house in English and Spanish and web-based survey, meetings with community organizations, and presentations to City Boards and Committees. To intentionally focus on the 10 equity priority populations, the project team started to coordinate listening or focus group sessions, starting with residents who have disability and farmworkers. These exercises provide a safe and comfortable space for people who usually face barriers to get involved in planning exercises, while informing the project team and the General Plan Update process in a more inclusive and equitable way.

Community responses favored Alternatives 1 and 2 (with Alternative 2 being slightly more favored). Many expressed interests in limiting housing and population growth within the wildland urban interface, growing efficiently by building new housing and jobs near transit, balancing the need for housing with water supply and safety considerations, and making thoughtful planning and investment decisions that consider the needs of Equity Priority Communities. Most communities requested to improve

sidewalks, bike lanes, tree canopy, and infrastructure to make the city more accessible and inclusive for everyone. For a comprehensive summary of responses, refer to Attachment 2.

Input received on the alternatives is now informing development of a draft Preferred Alternative, which will be presented to the community this summer. During the next phase, community members will be asked to suggest refinements to finalize this preferred scenario that will then be used as the basis for the updated General Plan.

All Santa Rosa Forward products, including the Community Involvement Strategy, Existing Conditions Report, Briefing Book, Vision Statement, Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Workbook, and Alternatives Worksheet are available on the project website in both English and Spanish: <https://www.santarosafoward.com/>.

### FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact related to this item as the funding has already been allocated to the Santa Rosa Forward project. The Circulation and Land Use Alternatives effort is a component of the authorized work plan and contract.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378. The full scope of the General Plan Update process includes a programmatic Environmental Impact Report to commence in late 2022 once a CEQA project (policy document) is developed.

### BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project team has met with most City Boards and Commissions to inform the members about the Santa Rosa Forward project and receive their individual input on the opportunities and challenges facing the city. No action has been taken by the individual Boards or Commissions.

### NOTIFICATION

A variety of notification and promotion was completed as part of the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives process, including the use of print and radio media, printed flyers, email blasts, website advertisements, City bus advertisements, targeted emails to community groups, promotion through members of the Community Advisory Committee, and discussions with individuals; all while adhering to State and County Health Orders.

### ATTACHMENTS

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- Attachment 1 – Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Summary of Comments and Feedback
- Attachment 2 – [Alternatives Workbook](#)

CONTACT

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