



**City of Santa Rosa**  
**City Council Priority Setting Workshop**  
**Held March 9 and 10, 2023**

**April 2023**



## Table of Contents

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<b>Workshop Report.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Workshop Overview.....	1
Opening Comments.....	3
Ice-breaker Exercise .....	4
Fiscal and Other Updates.....	5
Review of Accomplishments .....	6
Working Together to Achieve Results .....	7
Priority Setting.....	9
Wrap-up and Next Steps.....	13



## Workshop Report

The City of Santa Rosa held a City Council workshop on Thursday, March 9 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and reconvened the morning of Friday, March 10 at the Bennett Valley Golf Course. The workshop provided an opportunity for Councilmembers to set intentions for the organization's focus of time and limited resources for the upcoming year. This report contains a summary of the results of the goal setting session.

Nancy Hetrick, Managing Director for Baker Tilly, facilitated the workshop. Ashley Garcia, Consulting Manager, assisted and served as recorder.



### **Workshop Overview**

#### **Objectives**

- Affirm the City's mission, vision, and values;
- Establish strategic goals and direction for FY 2023-24; and
- Define expectations and methods for providing regular updates about Council priorities.

#### **Participants**

##### **City Council**

- Mayor Natalie Rogers, District 7
- Vice Mayor Dianna MacDonald, District 3

- Councilmember Eddie Alvarez, District 1
- Councilmember Mark Stapp, District 2
- Councilmember Victoria Fleming, District 4
- Councilmember Chris Rogers, District 5
- Councilmember Jeff Okrepkie, District 6

**Staff**

- City Manager Maraskeshia Smith
- Assistant City Manager Jason Nutt
- Assistant City Manager Daryel Dunston
- City Attorney Sue Gallagher
- Planning and Economic Development Director Clare Hartman
- Assistant Finance Director Scott Wagner
- City Clerk Dina Manis
- Police Chief John Cregan
- Fire Chief Scott Westrope
- Director of Human Resources Amy Reeve
- Director of Water Jennifer Burke
- Director of Housing and Community Services Megan Basinger
- Chief Information Officer Brian Tickner
- Communications and Intergovernmental Relations Director Lon Peterson

**Thursday Agenda**

- Welcome and call to order by the Mayor
- Public comment
- City Manager's remarks
- Fiscal and Other Updates
  - Financial outlook
  - ARPA/PG&E funds update
  - CIP and Infrastructure
  - Annexation
- Departmental Updates on Strategic Goals
- Celebration of Accomplishments
- Working Together to Achieve Results
- Identification of Council Priorities

**Friday Morning Agenda**

- Recap of Thursday's Outcomes
- Affirm Council priorities from the prior day
- Wrap up and next steps

## Workshop Ground Rules

At the start of the workshop, Nancy suggested the following ground rules to help the group have a successful workshop.



- Listen to understand each other's point of view,
- Assume good intent,
- Speak up if we need course correction,
- Seek consensus, and
- Stay focused.

**Bike Rack.** Nancy explained that if items were brought up that could not receive immediate attention, they would be added to a "bike rack." The following items were added.

- CAB community committees
- Present capital project updates with color coding
- Show CIP investments by district to help councilmembers communicate with residents
- Isolate the option of the 2010 annexation for further discussion
- Begin discussions with the County for potential annexation

## Opening Comments

### Mayor Rogers

Mayor Rogers convened the City Council meeting and asked for the roll call. The Mayor welcomed everyone and thanked Councilmembers for attending. She noted that the purpose of the day's discussions was to meet as a team to discuss the vision for what they want to accomplish for the City of Santa Rosa. Mayor Rogers then opened the session to public comments.



### **City Manager Smith**

City Manager Maraskeshia Smith offered opening remarks. She expressed her interest in balancing core services, operationalizing one-time funding and encouraging innovation to drive a philosophy of high performance. She highlighted the need to “re-fall” in love with Santa Rosa and focus on the quality and consistency of services. She thanked staff for a job well done and stressed the desire to move Santa Rosa forward.

### ***Ice-breaker Exercise***

Participants were asked to participate in live polling using the Mentimeter feedback tool. The group, which included Council, staff and members of the public present, was asked to consider the question, “What about Santa Rosa makes you most proud?” A total of 27 attendees responded. The answers are shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Responses to “What about Santa Rosa Makes You Most Proud?”

Beautiful mountain, tree lined streets and central square	Tight-knit engaged community	The heart and dedication of the community	Commitment to each other
Gorgeous!	Dedication people have to the community	The engagement of the community staff and leaders	The commitment of the community to identify and address issues impacting residents
Resilience	The people	The amount of parks and the natural beauty of the area	Great place to raise your family
We have nonprofits that work together to better the future of families	Engaged community that cares and loves SR	Working wonderful culture at the City. The staff are the best!	Volunteerism
Our children and seniors	Natural beauty	People care	The people!
Natural beauty	Our passion from our community to make it a better place than it already is	Residents	Great community with a strong and committed staff
The sense of community no matter if we are dealing with successes or tragedies	Willingness to support each other	Its desire to improve the lives of its neighbors through annexation and provision of services	

Following the activity, the group offered reflections on the themes, including the people, natural beauty, sense of community, and commitment.

### ***Fiscal and Other Updates***

Assistant Finance Director Scott Wagner reviewed the City’s financial outlook, outlining positive aspects, challenges ahead, guiding principles, and a brief long-range financial forecast. This was followed by an update on ARPA funding and PG&E funding. Assistant City Manager Nutt then

presented an update on the City's CIP and Infrastructure to set the context about current maintenance needs and potential future investment.

Potential opportunities for annexation and the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan were discussed, including costs and staff capacity. Notes from the discussion about annexation are listed below.

- Advantages about City-initiated vs. applicant-initiated annexation; both require public review and analysis
- Opportunity for the City to partner with the County
  - County would not commit financially, but working with an internal ad-hoc
  - Would have to negotiate fair share
- Significant start-up costs and ongoing operating costs
- Estimated levels of service
- Council expressed interest in the South Santa Rosa Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
- Acknowledged difference in the dollar figure between City and economists
  - Staffing costs
  - Additional funds (could be developer) to backfill cost
  - Will review study and different methodology/projections
- Define 2010 terminology
  - Developer building new vs. existing infrastructure
  - Return on investment, would increase Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) requirements
  - State law prevents focus purely on new development
    - Equity issue
    - Cherry-picking
  - Net negative revenue impact (City and economists) needs clarity
  - Decided to move forward with initial study
- If City-initiated, would bear 100% of the cost

### ***Review of Accomplishments***

Staff highlighted major accomplishments by each department over the past year (a handout was provided), as well as updates on goals and priorities. The City Council and staff reflected on the accomplishments.

Following the presentation, participants were invited to offer reflections. Those are listed below.

- Extensive accomplishments list is a testament to awesome staff
- Major success of inRESPONSE collaborative; impressive numbers
- Recognized exemplary use of ARPA funds
- Grant funding
- Improved quality of life
- Staff professionalism and information provided



### ***Working Together to Achieve Results***

Nancy led a good governance check-in with Council. She reviewed four key elements for effective councils identified by the Institute for Local Government:

- Unity of purpose;
- Clear roles and responsibilities;
- Positive governance culture; and
- Norms, protocols, and policies.

She posed two discussion questions, and the feedback is summarized below.

*As a body, how do we work effectively to become an exceptional Council?*

#### ***Discussion***

- Put community needs first
- Differentiate between governance vs. management
- Maintain internal and external focus
- Read packets and come prepared
- Demonstrate respectfulness
- Have confidence in colleagues, including the ability to listen and learn from each other
- Teamwork!

The next discussion was centered on ad hoc committees and subcommittees as well as the needs of the City Attorney's office for Brown Act compliance. Highlights of the conversation are provided below.

*What is the appropriate scope and time frame for ad-hoc committees and subcommittees?*

### ***Discussion***

- Clarify specific goals
- Vet recommendations before they come to Council
- Provide space for the public to bring ideas
- Socialize issues through part of Council
- Have reliable meeting schedules
- Analyze right mix/review options
  - Don't meet for meetings sake – do we have quorum?
  - Eliminate duplicative work and make effective use of staff time
- Make sure ad hoc committees are short, temporary, single focused (no Brown Act)
- Subcommittees can be ongoing
- Climate Action committee was intentionally broad
- Economic development –City Council assigned – community-driven
- Clarity for operation for next two years
  - Retiring ordinances and fine tune
  - Define purpose, mission, scope and who sets agenda
  - Allow public input
  - Be careful to not to shut down creativity
- Subject matter expert development
- CAB role (elections, charter, origination documents)
- Analyze annually which committees to continue or discontinue and communicate the “why”
- Define scope and deliverable expectations
  - Aligned with council goals
  - Help set agenda
    - Clearly identify which are required to be staffed by City Attorney's Office
    - When is the task completed?
- If not through committees, how are policies developed?
- Establish procedure to set Council goals first, then establish committees based on the goals

## Priority Setting

Referencing the Strategic Plan framework implemented the prior year, Nancy provided a definition for goals. Goals provide direction and focus to the organization, including resource decisions; are multi-year in nature; and are achieved through a range of strategies.

Context for priority setting was provided including a review of the allocation of managers' time and the "big rocks" metaphor to allocate time and resources to focus on getting the important things done. Council was reminded that they can't do everything, but they can do some things well with focus.

Nancy presented the themes heard during her interviews with the members of the City Council.

The graphic titled "Interview Themes" features a dark red header. On the left, the text "Interview Themes" is enclosed in a white box with a bracket pointing to a list of themes. The list includes: "Stay the course; continue work that is underway; focus on what we can achieve", "Focus on the basics/ core services", "Care and feeding of good governance", "Organizational health - Fiscal stability; securing funding; long -term planning; recruitment and retention", "Community engagement and operating across districts", and "Priority themes:" followed by sub-points: "Housing and Homelessness", "Infrastructure", "Economic development – downtown, railroad square, Roseland", and "Organizational effectiveness". Logos for Baker Tilly Management Partners and the City of Santa Rosa are at the bottom.

**Interview Themes**

- **Stay the course**; continue work that is underway; focus on what we can achieve
- Focus on the basics/ **core services**
- Care and feeding of **good governance**
- **Organizational health** - Fiscal stability; securing funding; long -term planning; recruitment and retention
- Community **engagement** and operating across districts
- Priority themes:
  - Housing and Homelessness
  - Infrastructure
  - Economic development – downtown, railroad square, Roseland
  - Organizational effectiveness

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City of Santa Rosa

Participants reviewed and discussed the previously established goals and strategies and provided suggestions for updates. The agreed upon City Council goals are provided below. They reflect the changes discussed and affirmed during the workshop. Councilmembers agreed that these goals should last longer than one year.

## Council Goals

The strategic goal areas established in 2022 were affirmed to continue for FY 2023-24, with the addition of a new strategic goal: **Address Climate Change**. Councilmembers provided feedback and proposed adjustments to the current goals. Updates to the goal statements are highlighted in red text below.

## Strategic Goals

Deliver housing for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue housing options for residents of all income levels.</li> </ul>
Reduce Homelessness and its impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with key stakeholders to offer housing and support services to the unsheltered and address the issues and causes of homelessness.</li> </ul>
Ensure a healthy and safe community for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the public's safety by engaging residents and using a broad range of proactive approaches <b>that reduces racism and inequality in our community.</b></li> </ul>
Promote economic and community vibrancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustain and develop a diverse and thriving economy that benefits Santa Rosa residents and businesses and contributes to the community's economic health <b>while preserving historical and cultural integrity.</b></li> </ul>
Build and maintain sustainable infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in and maintain infrastructure that supports environmental sustainability, <b>multi-modal transportation options</b>, and a vibrant City.</li> </ul>
Achieve organizational excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a high performing organization <b>that pursues excellence, efficiency and engagement</b>; is fiscally sound; promotes diversity, equity and inclusion; and reliably delivers outstanding services to the community.</li> </ul>
<b>NEW: Address Climate Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take proactive steps toward carbon neutrality and environmental education for all.</li> </ul>

### Strategies

Strategies for each goal area are presented on the following pages. Refinements made by Councilmembers during the workshop are noted in **red** font. The City Manager and her team will use these strategies as they evaluate available resources and develop a proposed budget and workplan for the coming year. The Council will have an opportunity to affirm the plan for the next year.

FY 2023-24 City Council Goals and Strategies	
Strategic Goal	Strategies
<b>Deliver Housing for all</b> <i>Pursue housing options for residents of all income levels</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Implement</b> the City's <b>Housing Action Plan</b> to address ongoing unmet housing needs – facilitate housing options/supply for all</li> <li><b>Reduce barriers</b> to ownership and <b>access</b> to housing opportunities through education, awareness and financial assistance</li> <li>Encourage <b>higher density housing</b> development in the downtown, expand <b>options</b> of housing stock</li> <li>Encourage <b>innovation</b> in achieving increased inclusionary housing</li> <li><b>Streamline</b> the approval process; be nimble and quick</li> <li><b>Implement state and federal regulations</b></li> </ul>

FY 2023-24 City Council Goals and Strategies	
Strategic Goal	Strategies
<p><b>Reduce Homelessness and its Impacts</b> <i>Partner with key stakeholders to offer housing and support services to the unsheltered and address the issues and causes of homelessness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the tenets of the <b>Homeless Strategic Plan</b></li> <li>• <b>Minimize impacts</b> on neighborhoods and businesses</li> <li>• Maintain the City’s commitment to the <b>Housing First Strategy</b> in partnership with the Sonoma <b>County Continuum of Care</b> (<i>Home Sonoma County</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Fund programs</b> that enable emergency shelter and deliver individualized assistance to people experiencing homelessness</li> <li>• Support <b>temporary housing options</b>, like the Safe Parking Pilot Program <b>throughout the City</b></li> <li>• Invest in <b>prevention and intervention</b> programs to prevent vulnerable individuals from becoming homeless</li> <li>• Improve and expand coordinated <b>outreach and engagement</b> (i.e., Homeless Outreach Services Team, Downtown Enforcement Team)</li> <li>• Use a <b>compassionate approach</b> to address the health, safety and shelter needs of those living in encampments and ease the impacts on surrounding communities</li> <li>• Rely on <b>evidence-based or best practices</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure a Healthy and Safe Community for All</b> <i>Ensure the public’s safety by engaging residents and using a broad range of proactive approaches that reduces racism and inequality in our community.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase <b>community partnerships, engagement and accountability through an equity lens</b></li> <li>• Utilize <b>data driven strategies and tactics</b> to deploy resources and reduce crime</li> <li>• <b>Engage neighborhoods</b></li> <li>• Develop and implement strategies for <b>mental health response</b></li> <li>• Invest in <b>prevention and intervention</b> programs</li> <li>• Implement the <b>Fire Resiliency and Response Strategic Plan</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure safe routes to school and crosswalk safety</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Promote Economic and Community Vibrancy</b> <i>Sustain and develop a diverse and thriving economy that benefits Santa Rosa residents and businesses and contributes to the community’s economic health while preserving historical and cultural integrity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop <b>business incentives and tools</b> for underserved neighborhoods</li> <li>• Promote open dialogue with <b>education</b> partners to improve quality of life, increase literacy, and work together to connect students to potential career paths in public service</li> <li>• Engage private employers and the business community in <b>workforce development and job placement</b></li> <li>• <b>Support and engage local businesses and workers to promote prosperity</b></li> <li>• Establish Santa Rosa as a desired <b>destination for business</b></li> <li>• <b>Create spaces</b> for residents to gather, learn and connect</li> <li>• Support access to <b>childcare</b>, including preschool and early childhood support and recreational and summer camp programming</li> <li>• Encourage <b>public-private partnerships</b></li> <li>• <b>Acknowledge local cultural resources</b> and assets</li> <li>• <b>Evaluate opportunities to integrate unincorporated areas</b> into the City</li> </ul>

FY 2023-24 City Council Goals and Strategies	
Strategic Goal	Strategies
<p><b>Build and Maintain Sustainable Infrastructure</b></p> <p><i>Invest in and maintain infrastructure that supports environmental sustainability, multi-modal transportation options, and a vibrant City.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be responsive and competent <b>stewards of public infrastructure and the environment</b></li> <li>• Safeguard the City’s assets by <b>anticipating, planning and allocating resources for infrastructure</b> upgrades and replacement as needed</li> <li>• <b>Establish a plan to address deferred and ongoing maintenance</b></li> <li>• <b>Educate the public</b> about water usage impacts and long-term water-saving strategies to meet conservation goals</li> <li>• <b>Enable movement</b> within and around the city to reduce reliance on vehicles</li> <li>• Complete <b>solid waste system</b> improvements (engage businesses)</li> <li>• Finalize the <b>Roseland Creek Community Park Master Plan</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Achieve Organizational Excellence</b></p> <p><i>Create a high performing organization that <b>pursues excellence, efficiency, and engagement</b>; is fiscally sound; promotes diversity, equity and inclusion; and reliably delivers outstanding services to the community.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustain <b>fiscal health</b> by maintaining reserves, forecasting impacts of budget choices, monitoring revenue trends, maintaining competitive salaries for employees, and creatively leverage other funding sources</li> <li>• Plan for <b>asset and technology maintenance</b> needs (i.e., streets, facilities, technology, capital assets, adjust facilities for gender accommodation, include supporting cost for public safety, such as recreation, sheltering, water, building safety, etc.)</li> <li>• Utilize <b>data driven</b> strategies and tactics</li> <li>• Implement <b>process improvements and best practices</b> that prioritize customer experience</li> <li>• Workforce planning (recruitment and retention; training <b>and professional development for staff, volunteers and policy makers</b>)</li> <li>• Create a culture of that cultivates <b>diversity, equity, inclusion, safety, and belonging</b></li> <li>• Optimize <b>organization structure</b> to strengthen teamwork through interdepartmental collaboration to deliver results</li> <li>• Support employee wellness</li> <li>• <b>Build and strengthen interagency partnerships</b> with key stakeholders on issues facing the City</li> </ul>
<p><b>NEW: Address Climate Change</b></p> <p><i>Take proactive steps toward carbon neutrality and environmental education for all</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mitigate the impacts of climate change</b> with comprehensive planning and implementation</li> <li>• Establish policies that support environmental <b>sustainability in building and infrastructure investment</b> to facilitate carbon neutrality (electric fleet, bikeways, SWOT analysis of PG&amp;E independence)</li> </ul>



## Updates and Communication

Nancy led a discussion on what success looks like for the next 12 to 18 months and the format of quarterly updates.



## Wrap-up and Next Steps

### Recap

A recap of the goals discussion emphasized that goals are multi-year in nature. Prioritizing strategies and initiatives will occur when staff returns to Council with the report.

### Closing Comments

Councilmembers and staff spent time reflecting on their key takeaways from the workshop. Overall, participants expressed the value of being together face-to-face for the workshop and were grateful for a collaborative and productive time.



### Next Steps

This report will be used by the City Manager and Executive Team to build the workplan and establish metrics to measure success. The intent is for the City Council to affirm and adopt the strategic goals and strategies identified during the workshop.

