

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
FROM: PATRICK STREETER, SENIOR PLANNER  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
SUBJECT: DOWNTOWN STATION AREA SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE SCOPE  
AND VISIONING

AGENDA ACTION: RECEIVE REPORT

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Council and Planning Commission receive a report regarding the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan update.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 9, 2007, the City Council adopted the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan) which, as part of its 20-year vision, included development of more than 3,400 new downtown residential units. Presently, midway through the planning period, approximately 100 units have been constructed. While a lack of vitality in the downtown can in part be attributed to market forces, feedback has indicated that the Specific Plan is too restrictive, in terms of development standards such as density and height, to finance and fully realize the City's need for high density downtown housing and job centers within walking distance to the Downtown Station. Following the Council's designation of downtown housing as a top priority, the City applied for a Planning Grant Program through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), which was approved on April 25, 2018. The grant provides funding for an update to the Specific Plan to address land use and transportation issues, as well as infrastructure needs associated with intensification of housing development in the downtown. The City has entered into contract with Dyett & Bhatia Urban and Regional Planners for assistance in the preparation of the specific plan update.

## BACKGROUND

On October 9, 2007, the City Council adopted the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan). The primary objective of the Specific Plan is to increase the number of residents and employees within walking distance (1/2 mile) of the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) station through the intensification of land uses in the Plan area.

In 2007, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) designated the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan boundaries as a Priority Development Area (PDA). PDAs are areas within existing communities that local governments have identified and approved for future growth. These areas are accessible by one or more transit services, and are often located near established job centers, shopping districts and other services. Santa Rosa has six PDAs: Downtown Station Area, North Santa Rosa Station Area, Roseland, Mendocino Avenue Corridor, Santa Rosa Avenue Corridor, and Sebastopol Road Corridor.

In October 2016, the Council accepted the Housing Action Plan, which was prepared to address the City's ongoing unmet housing needs and to implement the City's General Plan Housing Element.

In October 2017, the City experienced devastating fires, resulting in the loss of nearly 3,000 homes in Santa Rosa. Prior to the fires, the City was already in a housing crisis, with less than 300 units per year being realized each year, compared to the 625 units per year needed to reach the City's goal of 5,000 new housing units by 2023.

On December 14, 2017, MTC notified local governments in the Bay Area of the availability of grant funding for the PDA Planning Grant Program for up to \$800,000 (with a 12% local match). The PDA Grant Planning Program provides financial support for planning processes that seek to intensify land uses by increasing both housing supply (including affordable housing) and jobs, thereby boosting transit ridership, increasing walking, bicycling, carpooling and car-sharing, and retaining and expanding community assets.

On February 13, 2018, the Council adopted a new set of priorities, which includes downtown housing as a Near Term (six month) and Tier 1 top priority.

On March 5, 2018, based on Council Policy 000-62 authorizing the City Manager or his designee to submit grant applications, the City submitted an application to MTC for the PDA Planning Grant Program to amend the existing Specific Plan. The grant would allow the City to comprehensively address land use and transportation issues, as well as infrastructure needs, associated with intensification of housing development in the downtown.

On April 25, 2018, MTC approved a grant in the amount of \$800,000 to the City of Santa Rosa to update the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan. A match of 12%

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(\$109,090) is required, which will be provided as in-kind staff time from the Planning and Economic Development Department's existing budget.

On September 4, 2018, the Council approved a Master Funding Agreement with MTC, accepted the \$800,000 grant to update the Specific Plan, and committed to the requisite local match.

On August 23, 2018, a Request for Proposals (RFP) for consultant services to assist in the drafting of the Specific Plan update was posted and distributed generally. The deadline for responses was September 24, 2018.

On October 3, 2018, interviews were held with six of the firms that submitted proposals. Dyett & Bhatia Urban and Regional Planners, a California corporation based in Oakland, was chosen based on their qualifications, proposed time schedule, budget, and written and oral presentations.

On November 27, 2018, the Council, by resolution, authorized the Mayor to sign a Professional Services Agreement with Dyett & Bhatia.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

See Background section above.

ANALYSIS

1. Scope

The project scope is attached to this report and is divided into ten tasks with associated deliverables:

Task 1	Project Commencement and Community Engagement Strategy
Task 2	PDA Profile, Existing Conditions and Opportunities, Market Demand Analysis, and Affordable Housing/Anti-Displacement Strategy
Task 3	Initial Outreach and Engagement
Task 4	Land Use and Circulation Alternatives
Task 5	Preferred Plan
Task 6	Infrastructure Development and Services Plan
Task 7	Draft Downtown Station Area Specific Plan
Task 8	Zoning Regulations and General Plan Amendments
Task 9	Environmental Analysis
Task 10	Public Review and Adoption; Final Specific Plan

The project scope includes a robust outreach program with an emphasis on inclusivity, diversity, and participation. Efforts will be made to involve community members that may not typically participate in planning efforts and to broadly

reach existing and future users of the City's downtown. The update process will identify alternatives and allow for a preferred plan to be selected. The required environmental review will be completed and ultimately an updated specific plan will be adopted. The General Plan and Zoning Code will be updated to allow consistency across all regulatory documents.

## 2. Schedule

Because of the high priority given to downtown development as well as the urgent need for housing, the City is pursuing an aggressive timeline for completion of the specific plan update. The schedule includes information gathering and background study preparation through December 2018 and January 2019. Initial outreach efforts, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Community Advisory Committee (CAC) formation, and community workshops will be held through January and February. A preferred plan is scheduled to be identified and presented for consideration by the Planning Commission and the Council by the end of March. By June, it is anticipated that the draft updated Specific Plan and draft Zoning Code and General Plan amendments will have been reviewed and any necessary environmental review will have been completed. Public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Council for consideration of the final updated Specific Plan are scheduled to take place in July.

## FISCAL IMPACT

Funding has already been allocated to the specific plan update, of which the Community Engagement Strategy is a component.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This report on the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The report and discussion item is not a project that 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 Guidelines section 15378.

## BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

## NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

## ATTACHMENTS

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- Attachment 1 - Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Study Area Map
- Attachment 2 - Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update Scope and Schedule

CONTACT

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