



WHERE SUCCESS TAKES ROOT

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# City of Santa Rosa Economic Development Subcommittee Meeting

June 2025



# Agenda

1. Call to order and roll call
2. Remote Participation
3. Modifications to the Agenda
4. Announcements
5. Approval of Minutes
6. Public Comments
7. Matters held in Committee
8. Partner Reports
9. Department Reports
10. Future Agenda Items
11. Adjournment

## 8. Partner Reports

# 9. New Business Items

9.1 Economic Development Strategy Implementation Plan Update

9.2 Business Attraction, Retention and Expansion Update

9.3 Entrepreneurship and Small Business Update

9.4 Economic Vibrancy and Resiliency Update (Events)

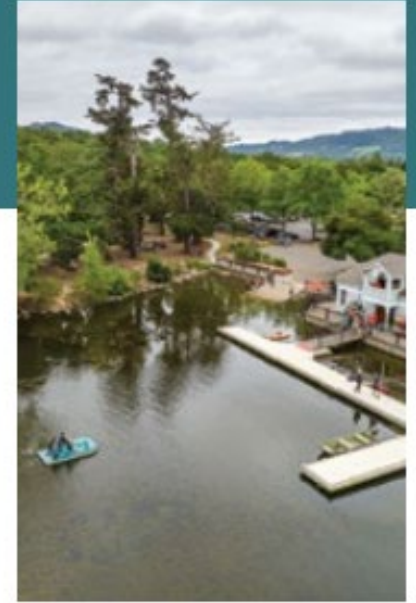
9.5 Community Investment Update (Art & Culture)

9.6 Metrics and Indicators

9.7 Other Updates or Announcements

## 9.1 Economic Development Strategy Implementation Plan Update

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Economic Development Strategy

Adopted April 2024

# 9.1 Economic Development Strategy Implementation Plan

Update on plan implementation – Scott Adair, Chief Economic Development Officer

## Business Attraction, Retention and Expansion:

### Large Business Attraction

Create a business-friendly, sustainable, and strong economy by attracting new businesses and expanding, retaining, and supporting existing businesses



#### Goals:

- Create fiscal stability for the City, businesses and property owners
- Support a thriving workforce
- Establish Santa Rosa as a business-friendly city
- Develop a communication strategy for the promotion of services and interactions with business owners
- Increase the number of medium and large businesses in key industries
- Create a business retention and expansion strategy for existing industry

#### Actions:

- Create a virtual one-stop-shop online portal of virtual tools to start or expand a business, customized to meet diverse cultural and language needs, building from partnerships with the County, State, and Sonoma Small Business Development Center.
- Obtain software platforms for tracking and reliable demographics

- Conduct a business gap analysis, existing cluster industry analysis, and key emerging industry sector analysis
- Identify key opportunities and land development sites and work with outside partners to prepare a market
- Align policies, procedures, and standards with plan to encourage mixed-use and innovative uses of commercial properties
- Establish site visits and open communication with businesses
- Strengthen and support partnerships with educational organizations and business associations to support workforce development needs
- Develop incentive packages to attract identified industries
- Create a comprehensive outreach and marketing plan to attract identified key industries
- Create a streamlined re-tenanting program with clear pathways for re-tenanting retail, professional office spaces
- Align efforts with Sonoma County's regional tandem approach to attraction efforts

# 9.2 Business Attraction, Retention and Expansion Update

City of Santa Rosa Economic Development Subcommittee  
Meeting April 2025

## 9.2 Business Attraction, Retention and Expansion

Report on ICSC activities – Scott Adair, Chief Economic Development Officer

Report on film tourism and attraction – Scott Adair, Chief Economic Development Officer

Report on Permit Ready program – Gabe Osburn, Director of Planning and Economic Development

## Entrepreneurship and Small Business

Actively support and empower the existing small business ecosystem while establishing clear pathways to enable successful and fulfilling small business ownership

### Goals:

- Support and grow existing small business
- Support and promote opportunities for entrepreneurship
- Understand and remove barriers for immigrant, BIPOC and women- owned business

### Actions:

- Strengthen support for entrepreneurship through incubator organizations
- Identify and promote available funding sources for small business owners
- Create Ombudsman program for technical assistance and process support
- Partner and connect students for training opportunities, mentoring and work force development upskilling
- Meet with Immigrant, BIPOC and women-owned businesses to identify barriers and build pathways for assistance and support
- Analyze opportunities to support home-based and work from home entrepreneur trends



### Business Attraction Retention and Expansion Measurements:

- % change in the number of business licenses compared to base year
- % change in startups
- % change in the number of business industries
- % commercial property vacancy rate
- Website analytics for virtual portal
- Monetary tracking for incentive programs
- # of site-visits
- % business demographics
- Track BIPOC and women-owned business support through an annual survey

# 9.3 Entrepreneurship and Small Business Update

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## 9.3 Entrepreneurship and Small Business

Report on North Bay Biz, “Best of North Bay” Award – Scott Adair, Chief Economic Development Officer  
Results of downtown activation survey and business meetings - Rachel Beer, Program Analyst

## 1. Small Business Support, Retention, and Expansion

Under the direction of the Chief Economic Development Officer, the Ombudsman will administer programs designed to support small businesses (fewer than 500 employees), including:

- **One-Stop-Shop Initiative** (*Implementation Plan, pg. 11*)
- **Site Visits and Open Communication with Businesses** (*Implementation Plan, pg. 15*)
- **Strengthening Support for Entrepreneurship through Incubator Organizations** (*Implementation Plan, pg. 19*)
- **BIPOC and Underrepresented Business Support** (*Implementation Plan, pg. 22*)
- **Home-Based Business and Work-from-Home Entrepreneur Support** (*Implementation Plan, pg. 22*)
- Additional small business and entrepreneurship support initiatives as assigned.

### Responsibilities Include:

- Providing one-on-one consultations to help businesses identify and access specific resources.
- Coordinating with City departments on behalf of small businesses.
- Connecting businesses with partners offering financial, workforce, and technical resources.
- Engaging partner agencies that provide business support and services.
- Analyzing and identifying trends related to business retention, expansion, and relocation.

## 2. Business Concierge Program

Under the direction of the Planning and Economic Development Director, the Ombudsman will oversee the City of Santa Rosa Business Concierge Program, which provides specialized planning and permitting assistance for businesses as assigned.

### Services Include:

- Early review of concepts or plans to identify potential challenges.
- Providing education and guidance on entitlement and permitting requirements.
- Advising business owners and developers on required fees, permits, and property use or development opportunities.
- Assisting with building permits, submission requirements, and inspection processes to ensure compliance with applicable building codes.
- Acting as a liaison within City Hall to guide businesses through ministerial and discretionary permitting processes for tenant improvements or new construction.
- Monitoring the permitting process to help advance construction projects.
- Offering additional support to help businesses navigate the permitting and licensing process while ensuring alignment with the Planning Department's customer service strategies.
- Support businesses impacted by graffiti through the PED graffiti abatement and removal program.

# Street Activation

## Tasks Completed:

- Explored impacts of pedestrianization in other communities
- Conducted discussions with business owners, support agencies, commercial real estate brokers, and property owners in the downtown area
- Received input from a local community action group
- Released a community survey to the general public
- Hosted business meetups with downtown business and property owners
- Conducted a business specific survey

# Street Activation

## Tasks Pending:

- Infrastructure analysis on impacts of street closures
- Traffic and parking analysis
- Cost and revenue analysis of street closures
- Submit findings to City Council, ask for further direction, and encourage public comment

# Street Activation

## Findings to Date:

### Community survey:

- Focus on improving walkability safety and outdoor seating options
- Accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists
- Concerned about decreased parking availability
- Majority of respondents report they would increase their downtown visits if streets became more pedestrian-friendly

### Business survey:

- Access and parking concerns
- Few businesses have a desire to use outdoor space
- Most oppose or are undecided about fully closing 4th Street to vehicles, though some are open to it if it's well-planned and beneficial.

### Business concerns :

- Business operations and logistics – deliveries, accessibility for customers
- Desire to have infrastructure improvements to support any potential closure
- Safety concerns – bicycles, crime, unhoused
- How the space will be programmed and used

### Staff observations:

- Pilot Program to start
- Confusion over downtown stakeholders, roles, and responsibilities
- Many businesses we invited that had differing views did not attend the meetups or complete surveys

**Goals:**

- Bolster Downtown housing, commercial and retail business
- Increase revenue to businesses and the City
- Support a thriving economy
- Support walkable neighborhoods
- Promote and enhance climate action goals and sustainability principles

**Actions:**

- Expand Downtown Asset Strategy activating city-owned property for economic development purposes, to include housing and housing supportive amenities with an emphasis on sustainability and walkable neighborhoods
- Establish an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District in Downtown
- Ensure General Plan and Economic Development Strategic Plan alignment
- Review and amend zoning code where needed to align with economic strategies in support of development initiatives and opportunities
- Conduct a downtown infill housing economic and fiscal impact study

- Create an Economic development feasibility studies
- Explore, develop, and implement sports entertainment as an economic driver for residents and tourists
- Continue to assess City Hall Complex redevelopment opportunities
- Implement the public art program strategy
- Support community events and activities through direct programming and grants
- Champion sustainability and the City's Climate Action Plan

**Measurements:**

- Identification of potential business opportunities
- Implementation of/or monetary amount for financial fund for feasibility areas
- % of empty store front/office space in downtown compared to Year 1
- Housing construction in progress on surplus sites number of available sites
- Feasibility and fiscal impact studies complete, and business opportunities defined

# 9.4 Economic Vibrancy and Resiliency Update



## 9.4 Economic Vibrancy and Resiliency

Downtown activation strategy update - Rachel Beer, Program Analyst

*-Pop Up Program (Shipping Containers)*

*-Theater Alley project (Comstock Mall)*

# Downtown Activation Strategy

## Pop Up Program

- Shipping Containers – Activating spaces for entrepreneurs, artisans, and small businesses

## Comstock Mall

- Beautification
- Outdoor Busking
- Public Art
- Wayfinding Signage
- Safety – Blue Light Phone Poles

## Community Investment

Invest in and support our diverse community to fortify current and future economic challenges

### Goals:

- Increase economic opportunity through upstream investment
- Support diverse needs of all districts
- Address childhood poverty
- Strengthen early childhood education sector

### Actions:

- Coordinate annual district-based surveys to solicit community input at a neighborhood level from all seven districts
- Advance childcare support programs
- Identify and capitalize on funding opportunities to expand upstream investment pilot programs
- Use ARPA funds to continue pilot programs addressing childhood poverty and increase advanced education opportunities – continue implementation through expenditure of funds by end of 2024

### Measurements:

- Report progress on all funded program implementation through online dash.
- # of programs funded, dollars provided, individuals impacted
- Report progress from annual surveys, yes, through dashboards



# 9.5 Community Investment Update

City of Santa Rosa Economic Development Subcommittee  
Meeting April 2025

# Ruth Asawa Panels

Importance of Ruth Asawa for the Santa Rosa community: Ruth's vision emphasized hands-on, inclusive arts education rooted in community values and equity. She had a cultural and historical impact for the bay area and beyond.

**Ruths work is centered on community, resilience, and innovation.**

- **Discussion of status, next steps, and temporary options**

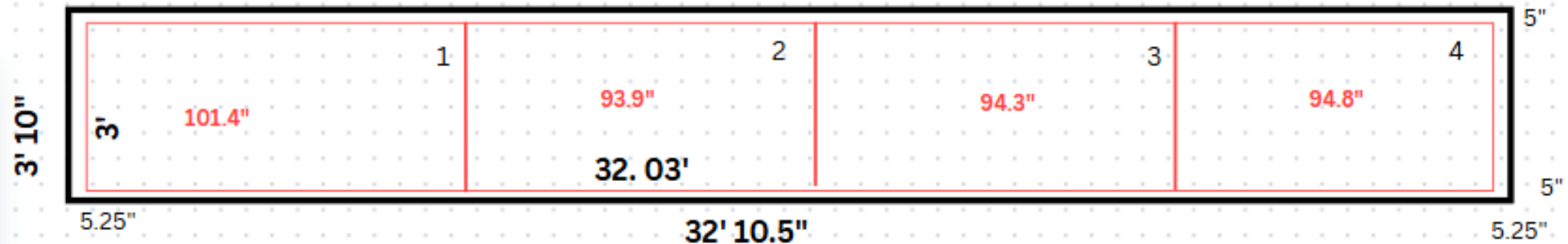
# Ruth Asawa Panels – Current Status

- Digital scanning executed; foundry contract expired
- Council item June 17: New contract with updated cost for 3d printing, casting, patina and finishing. Additional funds from CHS reunification and Public Art Fund to be used.
- Approval of digital edits needed by Ruth Asawa Family, exploring donating original panels once poured.
- Printing and casting estimated to begin summer, can take 6 + months.

# Updated Panel layout

- To continue moving forward with this project, we have moved to no cavity in the structure for the panels, allowing us to do a wall mount on concrete or if needed a temporary display.
- This will also allow for less room for error, and the ability to pour the panels before the final structure is built. Panels will shrink 2-3% during process
- Example front village scene measurements

**Front east village (facing 4th)**



# Alternative and temporary display and options

Possibility of doing a temporary display as we await final structure.



# Additional items

- Starting July 1, 2025, City is managing all events in Courthouse Square (previously contracted out to Chamber).
- Events will start paying for Courthouse Square rental starting July 1, 2025 (previously free under Chamber blanket permit)
- Arts and Events Specialist full time position
- Upcoming projects:
  - revisit event Fee schedule
  - signature events / application process

# 9.6 Metric and Indicators

One Stop Shop Update – Rachel Beer, Program Analyst

## 9.7 Other Updates and Announcements

Entertainment Zones – Gabe Osburn, Director of Planning and Economic Development

CUP and VBL Update – Gabe Osburn, Director of Planning and Economic Development

Tourism strategic planning – Scott Adair, Chief Economic Development Officer

SRTBIA update – Scott Adair, Chief Economic Development Officer

USL update – Scott Adair, Chief Economic Development Officer

# End Department Report

Public Comment

# 10. Future Agenda Items

# Adjourn