



City of Santa Rosa Community Engagement Plan

Introduction

The City of Santa Rosa is committed to building an inclusive, transparent, and participatory relationship with the community it serves. This Community Engagement Plan aims to create intentional process of actively listening and collaborating; by establishing and strengthening communication, ensuring that all voices are heard, valued, and reflected in decision-making processes. This plan focuses on fostering collaboration, enhancing public trust, and empowering residents to actively participate, shape and co-design the future of the City of Santa Rosa.

Community Engagement Definition

Community engagement is the intentional process of actively listening, collaborating, and trust building with every sector of our community, fostering active participation and mutual decision making. Through community engagement, we bring together our collective wisdom to forge a shared vision and shape a City that positions the community's best interest as its core.

Mission

To develop and sustain inclusive, accessible, and transparent engagement processes that empower residents to participate in decision-making and enhance the City's responsiveness to community needs.

General Goals

- 1- **Increase Civic Participation:** Provide diverse engagement opportunities that encourage broad and inclusive community involvement.
- 2- **Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Ensure that engagement methods are diverse and accessible to all residents, including marginalized groups, people with disabilities, and non-English speakers.
- 3- **Enhance Transparency and Trust:** Foster trust by providing clear, consistent, and transparent communication regarding government decisions and processes.
- 4- **Foster Community Collaboration:** Build partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community groups to enhance engagement efforts and create shared ownership in community outcomes.
- 5- **Integrate Feedback into Decision-Making:** Ensure that resident feedback is meaningfully incorporated through mutual decision making.



Key Stakeholders

City Government:

Mayor and City Council Members

City Department Heads and Staff

City Committees and Advisory Boards

Residents:

Vulnerable and marginalized populations (e.g., low-income, people with disabilities, non-English speakers)

Homeowners and renters

Small business owners

Organizations:

Non-profits and Community Based Organizations

Neighborhood groups and associations

Cultural groups

Advocacy groups

Healthcare providers

Institutions:

Schools, universities, and educational institutions

Government Institutions

Economic Institutions

Religious Institutions

Industry:

Healthcare

Wine Industry



Agricultural Industry

Other Business

Media:

Local print and broadcast media (newspapers, TV, radio)

Digital media outlets (websites, social media, next-door)

Priority Communities

- Latine
- Black Population
- Native American
- Indigenous groups
- AAPIC
- Eritrean
- Filipino
- LGBTQ+ members
- People with disabilities
- People with developmental disabilities
- Youth
- Families
- Seniors
- Non-English speakers
- Renters
- Veterans
- Rural Communities
- Low-income residents
- Farmworkers
- Homeless
- Build relationships with HOAs and neighborhood groups

Engagement Methods

A. Traditional Methods

***Town Halls & Community Meetings:** Regularly scheduled town halls, Community meetings, and public hearings for significant policy decisions, budget, and community discussions.



Surveys and Polls: Periodic surveys distributed via mail, email, and online platforms to gather community input on key issues such as the budget, public safety, and urban development.

Newsletters and Flyers: Continue to distribute and promote City Connections, providing updates on key city initiatives, upcoming events, and community projects.

***Community Workshops:** Host interactive workshops and neighborhood meetings on specific topics such as civic engagement, zoning changes, sustainability initiatives, or city planning, providing a platform for discussion and feedback.

B. Digital Engagement

Social media: Active presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Next Door, and other platforms to share news, updates, and events.

City Website: Maintain a dedicated community engagement section with resources, event calendars, and opportunities for residents to submit comments or questions. Embedded digital engagement platform.

Virtual Town Halls: Host online meetings using video conferencing platforms to ensure participation from those who cannot attend in person.

Mobile App: Promote and educate the community about My SR App for residents to report issues (e.g., potholes, streetlight outages).

Online Community Engagement Hub

C. Interactive Engagement

***Focus Groups:** Organize small, targeted discussions with specific demographic groups to explore issues in more detail, such as affordable housing safety, or access to resources. Staff support will be provided during discussions.

Participatory Budgeting: Implement participatory budgeting programs where residents can directly vote on how certain portions of the city budget should be allocated.

Community Advisory Board (CAB): Community engagement as a key component of CAB'S workplan. CAB to participate and table events, assist with hosting community and town hall meetings, fostering community building, empowerment, and resiliency.

Pop-up Engagement Stations & Events: Set up temporary booths or tables in popular locations and events (e.g., parks, transit stations, community centers) to conduct quick surveys or gather informal feedback.



* Accessible to all community members, providing interpretation, might need include childcare, food and beverages

Engagement Tools

- Community Engagement Plan
- City resource's guide and directory
- Flow chart/map of process for complex issues (e.g permits)
- My SR App
- Data dashboard
- Issues tracking sheet
- Surveys
- Events rubric
- City calendar of events
- Community events with details and contact information
- List of stakeholders, community-based organizations, community partners, neighborhood groups, HOAs, etc
- Community engagement online platform/hub.

Community Engagement Approach & Principles

- Alignment with City's Goals, the City's Community Empowerment Plan, and the City's Equity Plan.
- **Respect:** All participants, including staff, residents, and appointed and elected officials, demonstrate respect in words and actions and approach decisions with open-mindedness so that everyone feels comfortable expressing their opinion regardless of differences.
- **Inclusiveness and Equity:** Santa Rosa reaches out and encourages the participation of all members of the community in dialogue and decision-making processes, including those who will be affected by the issue as well as those who have not historically been engaged. All members of the community are informed and empowered to participate; all views are equally heard and inform the outcome; and all impacts and benefits are fairly distributed. Additionally, Santa Rosa makes every effort to be culturally and linguistically inclusive; Spanish language translation and interpretation are made available at all community meetings and in decision-making processes. Santa Rosa also agrees to look at culturally appropriate ways to engage those from marginalized



communities, particularly community members from our Latine and other diverse and underrepresented communities.

- **Early Involvement:** Identify and involve stakeholders (e.g. residents, community leaders, businesses, etc.) early in decision-making processes. Community members are involved in framing issues before any conclusions have been drawn, requiring early and ongoing communication with participants through each phase in the process.
- **Easy Access & Participation:** Promote an open and readily accessible government (Open Government Task Force Recommendation 2.2). Communications and information are timely, easy to understand, and offered in a variety of formats, appropriate to a given process. Information will also be available in Spanish throughout each project and decision-making process. The City will provide clarity about the public decision-making

process, including milestones and a defined endpoint. Participants have the flexibility to participate in a variety of ways, including online and in person.

- **Meaningful Engagement:** Santa Rosa provides opportunities for all community members to participate in an open and unbiased process, free of predetermined outcomes, to consider and deliberate feasible options. The City authentically solicits, acknowledges, incorporates, and responds to community input.
- **Mutual Accountability:** The City and community are mutually accountable for a fair process, honest and respectful participation, informed and fact-based discussion, outcomes that reflect input, and acceptance of the result. City processes will include meaningful assessments to measure progress, implementation of improvements as needed, and effective communication of both.
- **Transparency:** The City of Santa Rosa will act with integrity in an open process, and will provide timely access to clear, trustworthy information, presented and employed by all parties from the beginning to the end of the process, including the reasoning that leads to and supports policy conclusions.
- **Sustained Collaboration:** Promote a culture of community engagement that enhances public decision-making processes and invests in long-term working relationships, learning opportunities and ongoing, open collaboration among community members, community groups, City leaders, and staff.
- **Evaluation:** Santa Rosa will work in partnership with the community to assess community engagement efforts in decision-making processes. The evaluation will quantify participant feedback, document lessons learned, and identify strategies for improvement

Engagement Timeline

Ongoing Engagement:



Establish a schedule of monthly or quarterly meetings and communication updates. Make city events, meetings, and decision-making timelines publicly available via the website and newsletters.

Key Project Engagement:

For major projects (e.g., urban planning, transportation changes, large developments), begin engagement efforts at least 6-12 months before major decisions are made, with multiple opportunities for feedback throughout the planning process.

Crisis Communication:

In the event of an emergency (e.g., public health issues, natural disasters), engage the community immediately with information on safety measures, recovery efforts, and available resources.

Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms

Participation Metrics: Track the number of participants in each engagement method and gather feedback on the effectiveness of different platforms.

Resident Satisfaction Surveys: Conduct regular satisfaction surveys to gauge the community's perception of the engagement process and whether it led to positive outcomes.

Track Impact: Regularly assess whether community input has been incorporated into the City's decision-making process, particularly regarding policy changes, project implementation, and budget allocation.

Feedback Loops: After each major engagement activity, provide residents with feedback on how their input influenced decisions and what changes have been made.

Resources and Budget

Allocate Funding: Budget for engagement activities, including staff time, technology (e.g., web platforms, survey tools), and physical meeting spaces.

Staffing: Assign dedicated personnel (Community Engagement Manager, Outreach Staff, AmeriCorps Members, Interns) to manage the planning, coordination, and execution of engagement efforts.

Training: Provide training for city staff and elected officials on effective communication strategies, cultural competence, and how to facilitate inclusive community engagement.



Partnerships: Collaborate with local nonprofits, community centers, and media outlets to enhance outreach efforts and ensure diverse participation.

2025 Specific Goals

Increase Civic Participation: The City of Santa Rosa will host at least 2 community meetings/town hall meetings and 2 virtual meetings. Departments will continue to hold community meetings based on the need of their specific projects. If needed, the City will host focus groups with specific demographic groups and/or specific topics. In addition, the City will provide opportunities for the public to engage via its online community engagement hub (forums, pulse survey, live chat, Q&As, etc).

Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity: All community meetings/town hall will have interpretation available. The City will make sure that the location and time of the meeting are accessible to all sectors of our community and hosted in different geographic areas. One of the virtual meetings will be entirely in Spanish and the other on in English. The meeting will be promoted via

websites, City Connections, social media and flyers. The City will partner with key stakeholders to widely promote the meetings. The City website will also be compliant with ADA requirements.

Enhance Transparency and Trust: The City will implement a data dashboard, resource guide, flow chart for complex processes (e.g permits) and other educational materials available to all community members. The City will also conduct 2 annual surveys, one of them being a participatory budget survey. The surveys will be available via the online community engagement hub and in a printed version both English and Spanish. The City will produce and annual report of the State of the City. The finding of the report will be presented in one of the community/townhall meetings. The report will also be available on the website and online community engagement hub. In addition, the Community Engagement Manager will provide city-wide community engagement guidelines and training for staff, establishing collaboration across departments.

Foster Community Collaboration: The City will utilize the Neighbor-to-Neighbor interns to create a neighborhood engagement program. The program will work on building relationships, trust and collaboration among neighborhoods groups and HOA organizations. The interns will assist with organizing a general meeting and creating a training program/workshop that will lead to empowering neighborhood groups and trust building. In addition, the City will cultivate community partnerships with key stakeholders by organizing collaborative meetings. The



meeting will provide a great opportunity to share program information, survey findings, and promote engagement opportunities.

Integrate Feedback into Decision-Making: The City and the City will incorporate feedback by:

- Continuing to inform and engage our community
- Analyzing data: Review collected feedback to identify patterns and recurring themes. Generating reports of findings and making those reports widely available
- Regularly revisiting feedback: Continuously monitor community sentiment and adjust strategies as needed
- Providing community requested education and educational materials regarding City programs
- Reviewing and updating process, procedure and policies to increase clarity and efficiency
- Strengthening partnerships and increasing collaboration with key stakeholders and community-based organizations.

Community Meetings/Town Hall Topics

- Budget and goal setting
- Infrastructure projects and updates
- Safety
- Economic Resiliency
- Value of water campaign (rates)
- FEMA mapping
- Housing and voucher program
- Climate resiliency and disaster preparedness
- Civic engagement and volunteer opportunities (board and commissions)
- Educational campaign (permits, code enforcement, parking, services)
- Recruitment, mentorship, youth, and workforce development (SRPD & SRFD)



Conclusion

This Community Engagement Plan reflects the City's commitment to fostering an open, inclusive, and transparent governance process. By creating diverse opportunities for our equality diverse community to actively participate, providing transparent communication, and ensuring that all voices are heard, the City of Santa Rosa will strengthen its democratic processes, improve city services, and create a more connected and engaged community.

This plan will evolve over time based on feedback from the community and the effectiveness of various engagement methods, ensuring that it remains responsive to the needs and desires of the people it serves.