

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: ANDY GUSTAVSON, SENIOR PLANNER
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: ACCEPTANCE OF THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
STRATEGY FOR THE 2050 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, WAIVE
COUNCIL POLICY 000-06 AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO APPOINT
MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the City Council, by motion: 1) accept the Community Involvement Strategy for the Santa Rosa 2050 General Plan Update; 2) waive Council Policy 000-06, regarding appointments to Boards, Commissions, and Committees; and 3) authorize the Director of Planning and Economic Development to appoint members of the Community Advisory Committee as necessary.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recommended motion will accept the Community Involvement Strategy (CIS; Attachment 1) for the Santa Rosa 2050 General Plan Update (Project), waive Council Policy 000-06 (Attachment 3) to authorize the Director of Planning and Economic Development to appoint members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) as necessary to help ensure the committee represents the diverse neighborhoods, age-groups, community organizations, special interest groups and business stakeholders with the City.

On March 3, 2020 the City Council authorized the professional service agreement (PSA or Contract) for the Project. The CIS is the first deliverable product of the Project; it establishes the public engagement program for the Project and outlines how the planning process will engage a representative cross-section of people and organizations with interest in the City. The CIS also includes an adaptive approach to in-person and virtual community involvement during the COVID pandemic (Attachment 2). The CIS sets forth the membership and role of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the CAC, as well as outlines the tools the Project team will employ to fulfill the City's commitment to robust public engagement. The overarching goal of the CIS is

to provide opportunities for meaningful participation and consensus-building among residents, community groups, partner agencies, City departments, and other stakeholders to define a shared vision for Santa Rosa's future.

The draft CIS was posted on the [General Plan Update](#) website for public review on June 24, 2020. Over the next 30+ days City staff and the consultant team reached out the community with a series of social media announcements and targeted emails to community organizations and interested parties within the City. Latino Service Providers assisted by reaching out to the City's Latinx community. Public comments were collected through email and during two on-line public meetings held on July 18th and 25th, which were hosted in Spanish by the consultant team's bi-lingual planner. City staff also met through on-line meetings with the Community Advisory Board and Santa Rosa Together. The public was and continues to be encouraged to email their comments to GPComments@srcity.org. Several hundred people were notified through email blasts and social media postings, and nearly 60 people participated in one of the four online meetings. The City received over 70 individual comments or questions during these meetings. The result of this engagement effort was a wealth of ideas and suggestions for how the City and consultant team can execute the various activities and methods included in the CIS. These comments will be used by the team to execute the CIS. There were no comments that would change the actual structure of the CIS. The requested motion is to accept the Community Involvement Strategy for the Santa Rosa 2050 General Plan Update.

The requested motion to waive Policy 000-06 will allow the Director of the Planning and Economic Development Department to select CAC members, as necessary, to ensure it has diverse representation from neighborhoods, age-groups, community organizations, special interest groups, and business stakeholders with the City. The policy would otherwise require Council to appoint individual CAC members, which may result in delayed CAC review at critical stages of the 3-year Project schedule. The Director will be able make timely CAC membership adjustments that are likely due to vacancies and additions needed to ensure full public engagement during the entire Project timeline.

BACKGROUND

The current Santa Rosa 2035 General Plan was adopted by the Council in 2009. This plan states the City's long-term vision of community development and contains goals and policies that guide day-to-day decisions regarding housing and commercial development, and infrastructure improvements. It establishes priorities for public service and facility improvement, neighborhood social services, and natural resource protection within the City. It also serves as the baseline environmental document to help streamline California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review for private and public projects within the City.

In 2015, the Housing Element of the General Plan was updated in accordance with State Law.

On August 13, 2019, Planning and Economic Development (PED) reported to the Council and the Planning Commission at a joint study session the need and scope of a comprehensive update of the current 2035 General Plan. The Council authorized PED to proceed with the recommended comprehensive update of the General Plan and Environmental Impact Report.

On September 6, 2019, a Request for Proposals (RFP) for consultant services to assist in the drafting of the General plan update was posted and distributed. The original October 16, 2019 deadline for responses was extended to November 14, 2019.

On December 13, 2019, interviews were held with the three firms that submitted proposals. PlaceWorks, a California corporation based in Berkeley, was chosen based on the qualifications of their assembled consultant team, proposed time schedule, budget, and written and oral presentations.

On March 3, 2020, the Council, by resolution, authorized the Mayor to sign a PSA with PlaceWorks, Inc., to complete the General Plan update, environmental review, and public engagement. The cost of performing this service will be paid by the Advance Planning fund.

On April 16, 2020, the General Plan Technical Advisory Committee convened for its first meeting at which City staff introduced the consultant team, the Project work plan and schedule was presented, and information reports and documents were requested.

On May 18, 2020, City staff reviewed and accepted the attached CIS with revisions to adapt public engagement to COVID-19 restrictions on public assembly and social distancing.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

As noted in the Background section above, the City Council authorized the PSA on March 3, 2020 including the Project work plan which generally describes the Community Involvement Strategy.

ANALYSIS

Public engagement is a critical component of the Project. Outreach methods must be varied and responsive to ensure maximum participation and will have to include innovative strategies to reach people who do not typically get involved in community planning projects or other civic activities. The CIS is crafted to obtain input from residents, business proprietors, property owners, neighborhood groups, community and faith-based organizations, environmental advocacy groups, and members of the development community. Participation by these diverse stakeholders will be prioritized, with special attention given to low-income, youth, renter, and non-English speaking populations.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the CIS is to create an open, inclusive planning process that engages a representative cross-section of people and organizations with interest in the City.

2. Goals

- **Leverage Local Networks and Existing Community Engagement Efforts.** Build on the variety and depth of existing community involvement initiatives in Santa Rosa to effectively and efficiently engage the public in the General Plan process. Tap into existing community-based networks of local leaders and groups to connect with a wider range of community members. This includes specifically leveraging the deep community connections, networks and trust provided by Latino Service Providers.
- **Create Opportunities for Inclusive and Equitable Participation.** Provide multiple and varied opportunities for a broad range of community members, businesses and interest groups to share meaningful input. This engagement will focus on all neighborhoods throughout the city, and unique methods will be designed to specifically engage communities that have not traditionally participated in planning efforts, including disadvantaged communities, youth and limited-English proficient communities.
- **Collaborate and Inform General Plan Decision-Making.** Collect useful and relevant public input that reflects local expertise and values and informs decision-making related to the General Plan.
- **Build Long-Term Capacity for Civic Engagement around Growth, Development and Community Design.** Build social capital and support those engaged through the process to stay involved and share not only concerns and issues, but also solutions and strategies necessary to implement the General Plan.

3. Community Involvement Strategy

The CIS proposes a broad range of methods, including community meetings, pop-up outreach at events around the city, online and social media engagement, and public meetings, as well as activities specifically targeted to engage youth, disadvantaged populations, non-English speaking communities, and other traditionally under-represented constituencies. It includes opportunities for small group and one-on-one conversations with community members and stakeholders, with the intention of identifying and resolving issues and building consensus. In addition, the formation and administration of a Community

Advisory Committee, creation and distribution of an engagement toolkit, project branding, and maintenance of a webpage.

Considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be a continued emphasis on virtual engagement due to the need for social distancing; however, in-person activities will be conducted as the project progresses and as public health orders allow. It is possible that even if restrictions on in-person gatherings are loosened, many people may continue to choose to keep their distance and prefer methods that allow for online and telephone participation. The Consultant is committed to bridging the digital divide to ensure that a broad cross-section of Santa Rosa community members can access and fully participate in all engagement activities.

All in-person engagement activities, including community meetings and events will be adapted to allow virtual or hybrid engagement through virtual workshops, focus groups, etc., with the exception of two vehicle-oriented outreach tools (Tasks D.2.b and D.2.c). The Consultant's approach to in-person and virtual community involvement is detailed in Attachment 2. City staff and the Consultant will revisit and update this matrix in accordance with public health orders.

4. Community Advisory Committee

As part of the Community Involvement Strategy, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will be formed with members that engage a variety of organizations and perspectives including neighborhood groups, business groups, transportation and housing advocacy groups, and environmental organizations, as well as residents holding diverse perspectives, including youth and seniors.

a. Role of the CAC:

The CAC will meet 10 times during the Project to provide feedback on work products such as the City Profile, Existing Conditions Analysis, Land Use and Circulations Alternatives, and Draft General Plan.

The role of the CAC will be to provide feedback and to help refine materials before they are presented to the greater community. The CAC is not a decision-making body and will not have access to information or take action that differs from the opportunities made available to all outreach recipients. Most importantly, CAC members will act as project ambassadors and encourage those who live or work in the City to attend community workshops, events, and public hearings. In this capacity, CAC members will assist with information flow between the City, Consultants, and the community as the General Plan update is finalized.

b. Outreach to Potential CAC Members:

City staff and the Consultant will reach out to individuals, through virtual meetings and phone conversations, to encourage participation on the Community Advisory Committee following Council's acceptance of the CIS.

The opportunity to participate in the CAC will be outlined on the project website, through fliers and/or mailings, news media, and online resources such as the City's website and Nextdoor.

c. Community Involvement Committee Composition:

It is anticipated that the CAC will be comprised of members who represent a full range of community interests, organizations, and locales within the City. They will contribute perspectives from neighborhood groups, business groups, transportation and housing advocacy groups, and environmental organizations, as well as residents representing diverse perspectives, including youth and seniors.

d. Council Policy 000-06:

Council Policy 000-06, Appointments to Boards/Commissions/Committees, outlines specific requirements for appointments to City committees. This policy (Attachment 3) identifies specific requirements for recruitment, appointment, notification, sources of names, incumbents, applications, appointment procedures by individual Council members or by the full Council, chairs, attendance, and conflicts of interest/ethics. The Council Policy restricts membership to residents of the City of Santa Rosa which would not allow non-resident commercial or industrial owners on the CAC.

The CAC will be active for the duration of the 3-year General Plan update process. The CAC membership application will be distributed through individual contacts, virtual meetings and social media to residents, business and property owners, developers, students, and others who are involved in the community. On-going recruitment is anticipated as vacancies and emerging project issues are likely to require CAC membership changes. Strict adherence to the Council appointment requirement may add a significant amount of time to adjust the CAC membership and may hinder timely CAC review/feedback.

The Council has waived Policy 000-06 for similar community plans in last five years. In April 2015, the Council unanimously waived Council Policy 000-06 for the formation of the Roseland Steering Committee, and allowed for staff to add members as needed, based on the composition of the committee outlined in the PSA that was accepted by Council. In January 2019, the policy was waived again to authorize the Director of the Planning and Economic Development Department to appoint members of the CAC as necessary.

Staff is requesting that the Council accept the proposed CAC membership representation, as outlined in the CIS, for the General Plan update and authorize the Director of the Planning and Economic Development Department to appoint members of the CAC as necessary to establish and maintain the CAC membership representation.

The Council will be kept informed of the composition of the CAC as well as the results of CAC meetings through regular reports to the Council.

5. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been formed primarily to ensure technical accuracy of the General Plan Update and associated environmental review. The TAC is comprised of technical experts from City departments and partner agencies to provide feedback and help to ensure General Plan policies can be achieved and environmental impacts are analyzed and disclosed. The core TAC membership includes directors and technical liaisons from each of the City's departments including Planning and Economic Development, Housing and Community Services, Parking, Transportation and Public Works, Water, Fire, Police, Recreation and Parks, Office of Community involvement, and City Attorney's Office. The TAC will also engage key partner local, State and federal agencies for early consultation throughout the Project including, but not limited to, the following:

- Santa Rosa City school districts and Santa Rosa Junior College
- City of Rohnert Park
- City of Sebastopol
- Permit Sonoma
- Sonoma County Dept of Health Services
- Sonoma County Transportation Authority
- Sonoma County Transit
- Golden Gate Transit
- Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit
- ABAG/MTC
- Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board
- State Parks
- State Fish and Wildlife
- CALFIRE
- US Fish and Wildlife

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The draft CIS was released for public review on June 24th on the [General Plan Update](#) website. The public comment period ended on July 29th. The CIS release was announced on Community Connections and by email to community organizations and interested parties within the City. Latino Service Providers assisted the City's outreach effort by assisting with translated documents and by sending a Spanish language announcement to the Latinx community. City staff held on-line public meetings on July 18th and 25th, which was hosted in Spanish by the consultant team's bi-lingual planner. City staff also met with the Community Advisory Board and Santa Rosa Together. The

public was and continues to be encouraged to email their comments to GPComments@srcity.org.

This 30+day outreach effort engaged nearly 60 meeting participants who learned about the General Plan Update and draft CIS and resulted in over 70 individual comments or suggestions.

The main issues or comments raised included

- Focus the General Plan Update project at a neighborhood level to ensure neighborhood assets, challenges, and opportunities are fully addressed in new or updated policy. To this end, also focus the engagement process at a neighborhood level to ensure all parts of the community are fully engaged in the planning process.
- Form the Community Advisory Committee so that it includes topical and neighborhood experts who can cover the range of areas, issues, and perspectives present in Santa Rosa.
- Include a range of opportunities for digital engagement during the current pandemic and coming years, including video submissions, Facebook Live meetings, texting, social media, etc.
- Ensure the Latinx community is fully engaged and involved throughout the project.
- Ensure the engagement process also responds to the digital divide (e.g., include in-person meetings and events), and supports people of all ages, abilities, races, and sexual orientations.

Based on these comments, staff recommends the Council accept the CIS as proposed.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding has already been allocated to the General Plan update, of which the Community Involvement Strategy is a component.

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.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - Community Involvement Strategy, May 15, 2020
- Attachment 2 - Approach to In-Person and Virtual Community Involvement
- Attachment 3 - Council Policy 000-06, Appointments to Boards/Commissions/Committees
- Attachment 4 – Community Conversation, July 18th
- Attachment 5 – Community Conversation, July 25th

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