

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: GABE OSBURN, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: ENTERTAINMENT ZONES

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Economic Development Department recommends that the Council hold a study session for Council to receive information and provide direction to staff related to the establishment of entertainment zones within the City of Santa Rosa. This item has no impact on current fiscal year budget.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study session is to provide an overview of California Senate Bill (SB) 969 which allows cities to establish entertainment zones where outdoor alcohol consumption is permitted; consider options for establishing entertainment zones, by ordinance, in the downtown area; and seek Council's direction for determining boundaries, hours of operation, and other regulations for a future ordinance.

GOAL

This item relates to Council Goal #3 - Promote Citywide Economic Development and has been identified as an opportunity to attract more people downtown.

BACKGROUND/PRIOR COUNCIL REVIEW

On October 10, 2023, the California State Legislature adopted Senate Bill (SB) 76, which authorized the City and County of San Francisco to establish "entertainment zones." SB 76 defined an "entertainment zone" as a zone created by the City and County of San Francisco where patrons are permitted to leave certain licensed premises with open containers of alcoholic beverages for off-site consumption on public streets, sidewalks, and rights-of-way.

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In September 2024, the Legislature adopted SB 969, which empowers any city or county to establish entertainment zones to allow outdoor alcohol consumption. Since its effective date of January 1, 2025, several other jurisdictions have successfully adopted ordinances pursuant to SB 969, including Santa Monica, Sacramento, and Redding. The Planning and Economic Development Department has since undertaken effort to identify potential boundaries and hours of operation for the future establishment of entertainment zones within Santa Rosa, and has conducted outreach to assess community perspectives and potential impacts.

On September 2, 2025, staff held a consultation with the Police Department to request feedback on the proposed operation of entertainment zones and potential health and safety impacts, as required by SB 969.

On September 9, 2025, the City Council held a study session to discuss potential street closures for pedestrianization, including Fourth Street. During staff's presentation, the concept of entertainment zones was briefly discussed.

On September 17 and 18, 2025, staff met with the Downtown Action Organization and the Historic Railroad Square Association (respectively) to inform them of the City's intent to establish entertainment zones and gather feedback.

On September 23 and 24, 2025, staff held two community meetings open to businesses in the Courthouse and Railroad Square areas to introduce the concept, answer questions and receive feedback.

ANALYSIS

The following analysis provides a summary of 1) the key requirements under SB 969; 2) progress to date; and 3) potential options for Council to consider:

1. Key Requirements Under SB 969

The following are the key requirements for the establishment of entertainment zones pursuant to SB 969:

- The city or county must adopt a local ordinance to establish entertainment zones.
- The city or county must consult with law enforcement on boundaries, days/hours, and safety considerations.
- The city or county must conduct biennial review of operations and impacts.
- Eligible participants of entertainment zones include establishments with on-sale alcohol licensees, winegrowers, and beer manufacturers inside the zone;

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- Annual notification to the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) is required by businesses that want to participate.
- The following information is required upon establishing an entertainment zone:
 - a. How to readily identify patrons who are 21 years and older in the entertainment zone;
 - b. Information necessary to identify the boundaries of the entertainment zone;
 - c. The days and hours of operation;
 - d. Types of alcoholic beverages permitted; and
 - e. Approved non-glass and non-metal containers.

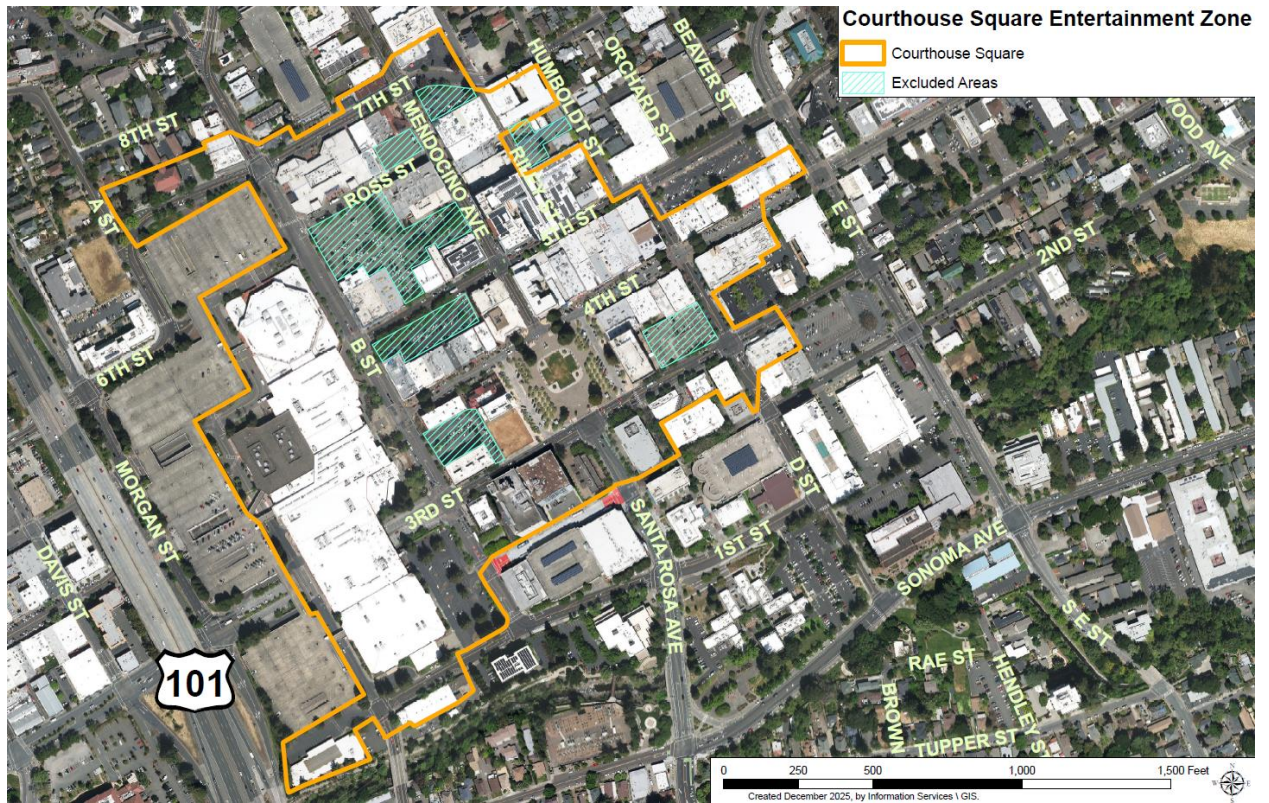
In researching jurisdictions who have successfully implemented entertainment zone programs, most have done so with a two-tiered approach. First, the adopted ordinance identifies the boundaries of the zones and the days and hours during which the zone is permitted to operate, which is generally broad to allow for flexibility in implementation. Second, each entertainment zone has an associated management plan, which identifies more specific days and hours; the type of permitted containers allowed; process of identifying patrons 21 years and older; and any other regulations specific to the zone. While the ordinances are adopted by City Council, the management plans are issued by either the Department Director or the City Manager, as set forth in the ordinance.

These jurisdictions have also had different approaches to the days and hours which their entertainment zones are active. San Francisco and Sacramento's entertainment zone ordinances limit activation to only during "entertainment zone events;" alternatively, Santa Monica's entertainment zone is active every Friday-Sunday 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and Redding's is active every day from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

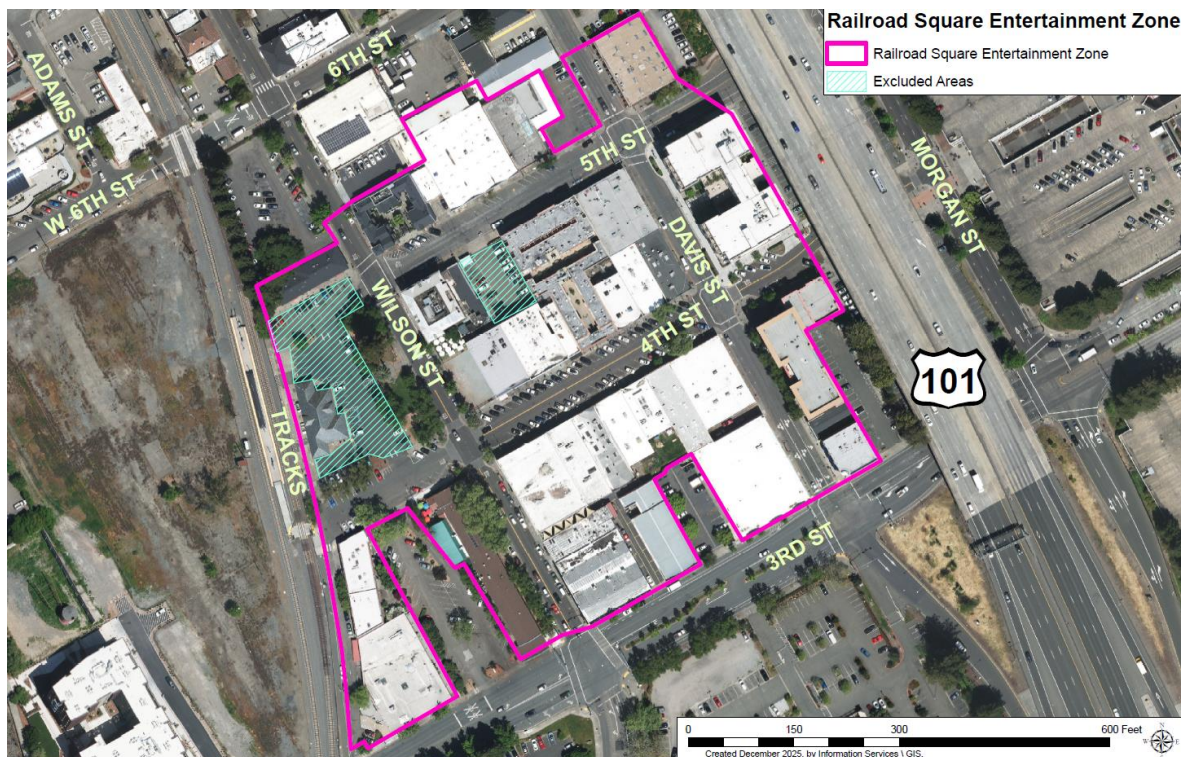
2. Progress to Date

At the September 9, 2025 consultation with the Police Department, staff introduced two potential entertainment zones in the Courthouse Square and Railroad Square areas. Staff also presented an option for a third zone intended for activation only during "signature events," including recurring parades and special events.

The potential Courthouse Square entertainment zone would be from B Street to D street, and from 3rd Street up to 7th Street. 4th Street would extend to E Street to include Russian River Brewery, and the zone would extend to part of 1st Street as well, to include Shady Oak Brewing:



The potential Railroad Square entertainment zone would be from 3rd Street to 5th Street, from Davis Street to Wilson Street:



Initial discussions focused around the two zones being active every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 12:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The Police Department noted that having regular recurring hours of operation on the same days each week could be preferable from an enforcement standpoint, in comparison to activations only during special events. Such a schedule could make it easier to allocate staffing and resources.

The third entertainment zone in consideration would cover the entirety of the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan area and would only become active during specified “signature events” such as, but not limited to, Wednesday Night Market, Winter Blast, Rose Parade, Peggy Sue Cruise, and the Pride Parade. This zone would only be active for the duration of the event and within the event boundary or along the parade route.

During the community meetings held on September 23 and 24, 2025, staff gathered feedback from affected business owners in the Courthouse Square and Railroad Square areas. Several comments and questions were related to safety and liability, especially with regularly recurring days/hours every week. Some suggested starting with a smaller area, or less frequent activation, and expanding in the future if the program is successful.

In addition, on December 18, 2025, the City received a letter of support for the proposed Entertainment Zones from the Downtown Action Organization and the Historic Railroad Square Association. The organizations cited the potential benefits of the program and expressed their commitment to cooperate with the City on its implementation.

3. Options

The following are potential options for Council to consider, which could include those listed, a combination thereof, and/or a limited pilot program intended to review community impacts and adjust accordingly:

- A. Direct staff to proceed with developing an ordinance and associated draft management plan with the following options:

Location of Entertainment Zones

- a. Two entertainment zones in Courthouse Square and Railroad Square, with or without a third for “signature events”;
- b. One entertainment zone in either Courthouse Square or Railroad Square, or a smaller area within those boundaries, with or without a second for “signature events”; or

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- c. “Signature events” only.

Days and Hours of Operation

- a. Every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 12:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. for primary, and during the day(s)/hours of the “signature events”, if included;
 - b. Alternate/reduced days and/or hours for primary entertainment zones, and during the day(s)/hours of the “signature events”, if included; or
 - c. During the day(s)/hours of the “signature events” if there is no primary entertainment zone.
- B. Direct staff not to proceed with establishing entertainment zones at this time.

When discussing these options, staff will present Police calls for service related to alcohol consumption within the potential boundaries and operational impacts to management and policing.

FISCAL IMPACT

This study session does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund. Any direction for establishment of entertainment zones that may have an impact on the General Fund will be analyzed at that time.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, the recommended action is not a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is a discussion item only and does not have a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. In the alternative, the recommended action is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the recommended action may have a significant effect on the environment.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

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Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – California Senate Bill 969
- Attachment 2 – Courthouse Square Entertainment Zone Map
- Attachment 3 – Railroad Square Entertainment Zone Map
- Attachment 4 – Signature Events Entertainment Zone Map
- Attachment 5 – Public Comment

PRESENTER(S)

Sachnoor Bisla, City Planner