

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR ROGERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CHAIR WEEKS AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION
FROM: AMY LYLE, SUPERVISING PLANNER
BEATRIZ GUERRERO AUNA, EQUITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH
PLANNER
PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: SANTA ROSA FORWARD PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning & Economic Development Department that the Council and Planning Commission review and provide input on the Santa Rosa Forward Preferred Alternative, taking into consideration community feedback, to help guide the preparation of the General Plan 2050 Update.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The draft Preferred Alternative presents a refined approach to achieve Santa Rosa's vision for the future, as detailed in the Vision Statement and building from the community's input on the three Land Use and Circulation Alternatives reviewed in the previous phase of the General Plan Update. The draft Preferred Alternative, presented in graphic detail in the Preferred Alternative Summary, identifies "areas of change" where future housing, jobs, infrastructure improvements, and services investments will be concentrated. The Preferred Alternative Summary highlights key features related to housing, economics, sustainability, mobility, safety, equity, and health that would result from implementation of the draft Preferred Alternative. Once finalized based on further community input and direction from City Council and Planning Commission, the Preferred Alternative will serve as the foundation of the new General Plan 2050.

BACKGROUND AND PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

In March 2020, the Planning & Economic Development Department started the Santa Rosa Forward project. This three-year project entails a comprehensive update of the City's existing General Plan.

SANTA ROSA FORWARD PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

PAGE 2 OF 7

On March 3, 2020, Council authorized the General Plan update with a total contract amount of \$2,500,000 (Professional Service Agreement F002144).

On August 25, 2020, Council accepted the Community Involvement Strategy for the Santa Rosa 2050 General Plan Update. At the same time a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was assembled with representation from the City's diverse neighborhoods and interests and from each of the Council Districts. CAC members provide input on the project and serve as liaisons to help to promote broad and inclusive public engagement. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was also convened among City departments to provide the Project Team with ongoing advice and guidance.

On October 13, 2020, Council amended the General Plan Update Professional Service Agreement to include an update to the Climate Action Plan and increased the total contract amount to \$2,599,909.

On December 8, 2020, Council accepted the CAC Member Selection Process and approved the CAC Organizational Framework.

On July 20, 2021, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, reviewed and provided input on the Santa Rosa Forward Community Vision Statement.

On November 16, 2021, the Council received a report on the Equity Priority Communities' Empowerment and Outreach Work Plan.

On November 16, 2021, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, received a report on the Housing Element Update which is part of Santa Rosa Forward.

On May 24, 2022, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, received a report on the draft Land Use and Circulation Alternatives.

On June 21, 2022 the Council received a report and provided input on the draft Housing Element which is part of the SR Forward project.

WORK COMPLETED TO DATE

The Preferred Alternative is the fourth phase of eight, as shown in Table 1. Each phase of work builds on previous efforts. This staff report provides a summary of the work that has been completed so far, as well as a detailed description of the Preferred Alternative phase.

Table 1 Santa Rosa Forward Work Phases

1. Community Involvement Strategy	2. Existing Conditions Analysis and Vision	3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives	4. Preferred Alternative	5. Draft General Plan	6. Environmental Analysis	7. Public Review and Adoption	8. Additional Zoning Amendments
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1. Community Involvement Strategy

Public engagement is a critical component of Santa Rosa Forward. At the outset of the project, the project team crafted a Community Involvement Strategy (CIS) to create an open, inclusive planning process that engages a representative cross-section of people and organizations with interest in the city. The CIS recognizes the need to employ innovative strategies to reach people who do not typically get involved in community planning projects or other civic activities. It presents an outreach component in each phase of the project to be further refined by the project team at that phase. The CIS also establishes the role of the TAC and CAC. The TAC is comprised of technical experts from City departments and partner agencies charged with providing feedback and technical insights to the project team. The CAC is composed of community members representing a variety of organizations and perspectives and is charged with assisting as project ambassadors to encourage their fellow community members to get involved in the project. Following the CIS as a guide, Santa Rosa Forward is working to engage a variety of stakeholders, representative of the city's diverse community. To accomplish that objective, the project is providing special attention to equity priority communities (areas in Santa Rosa that have the highest concentration of underserved populations) and 10 identified equity priority populations:

1. Low-income individuals and families
2. Racial or ethnic groups experiencing disparate health outcomes
3. Seniors, children, youth, and young adults
4. Individuals with disabilities
5. Immigrants and refugees
6. Outdoor workers and farmworkers
7. Individuals who are limited-English proficient (LEP)
8. Unhoused people
9. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ+) communities
10. Individuals who are incarcerated or who have been incarcerated

2. Existing Conditions Analysis and Vision

The Existing Conditions Report was released in December 2020. This technical background document analyzed and summarized a variety of data including demographic, economic, land use, community character, mobility, natural resources, infrastructure, environmental justice, community health, and other conditions in Santa Rosa. The comprehensive Existing Conditions Report was distilled into a high-level summary of the major findings and take-aways in a Briefing Book, released in February 2021. Information gathered through the existing conditions analysis is serving as the backbone for remaining work on the project by helping the community and project team understand and appropriately prioritize the various issues and opportunities facing Santa Rosa.

Following development of the existing conditions analysis, in March 2021, the project team met separately with the TAC and CAC to review takeaways from the Existing

Conditions Report and gather initial ideas about the vision, leading to development of a Draft Vision Statement that is an aspirational expression that frames community needs and desires. In May 2021, the project team hosted 10 virtual Community Vision Workshops to gather community feedback on the draft Vision Statement. Input from the 160 community members who participated in the workshops informed refinements presented to City Council and Planning Commission in a study session on July 20, 2021. City Council and Planning Commission members provided comments to help further refine the Vision Statement. The Vision Statement, comprised of the 13 detailed points is stated as follows:

Santa Rosa is a diverse, equitable, and sustainable community built on civic engagement that empowers everyone to provide and support equal and affordable opportunities to obtain good housing, education and jobs; to enjoy vibrant cultural events and arts; and to live healthy lives in resilient neighborhoods that adapt to social and environmental change.

3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives

The Land Use and Circulation Alternatives was kicked off with a half-day planning charrette with staff to discuss how to reflect the Vision and account for the various existing conditions in three different alternative land use and circulation development scenarios or “alternatives”. The project team conducted a detailed analysis of demographic projections, the city’s current capacity for housing, and anticipated future housing allocations from the state, and arrived at the potential for 36,000 new housing units which reflects a modest growth forecast. All three alternatives included a comparative analysis of the impacts and tradeoffs of concentrating this same amount of growth in different locations.

The three alternatives were described and analyzed within the Alternatives Workbook that provided a comparative assessment of each alternative in the areas of housing, economics, equity, efficiency, sustainability, community safety, and resilience. Following is a summary of each alternative.

- Alternative 1: Central Corridors focused future commercial and residential growth near Downtown and along central thoroughfares that are connected to transit facilities.
- Alternative 2: Neighborhood Main Streets concentrated housing, jobs, and community destinations along key corridors and at community centers.
- Alternative 3: Distributed Housing dispersed new duplexes, triplexes, courtyard, and similar types of homes throughout the city on parcels that can accommodate new housing, growing in a more distributed pattern.

Community Comments and Council Direction on the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives

In Spring 2022, the project team led a robust outreach process to discuss the alternatives with the full community. Community responses favored Alternatives 1 and 2 (with Alternative 2 being slightly more favored). Many expressed interests in limiting housing and population growth within the wildland urban interface, growing efficiently by building new housing and jobs near transit, balancing the need for housing with water supply and safety considerations, and making thoughtful planning and investment decisions that consider the needs of Equity Priority Communities. Most communities requested to improve sidewalks, bike lanes, tree canopy, and infrastructure to make the city more accessible and inclusive for everyone.

On May 24, 2022, the three alternatives and community responses were presented to the City Council and Planning Commission. City Council and Planning Commission directed staff to proceed with preparing the draft Preferred Alternative based on input from the community on the three alternatives.

4. Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative, presented in detail in the draft Preferred Alternative Summary (Attachment 1), provides a plan to guide Santa Rosa's growth and change over the next 20+ years. The draft Preferred Alternative builds from all previous phases of work, including Community Visioning. In the Visioning phase, many community members expressed their love for the city's unique, inclusive, and vibrant neighborhoods. But not all areas of Santa Rosa have needed access to essential amenities and services, some need special attention to better serve their residents. The draft Preferred Alternative identifies 19 Areas of Change, places where the City will focus efforts on addressing housing, services, connectivity, and/ or infrastructure needs to make these complete neighborhoods. Although significant in their potential for positive change, General Plan and zoning map changes are anticipated to be minor and would generally be limited to within the Areas of Change. For example, already allowed densities for multi-family housing may increase slightly along a few major corridors, and residences may be allowed in mixed-use formats with commercial uses in several key locations.

The Areas of Change are complemented by a plan for major transportation improvements, illustrated with the Areas of Change in the diagram on page 14 of the Preferred Alternative Summary. Together, the land use and transportation network changes further major community priorities, including providing better access to jobs and services, reducing vehicle miles traveled, growing within the City's capacity to serve community-wide water needs, enhancing safety in evacuation events, and overcoming inequities.

In addition to the proposed land use and circulation changes, the Preferred Alternative summary introduces newly proposed General Plan goals. The goals presented are not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of goals for the Updated General Plan; instead, these provide a preview of some of the bolder ideas stemming from community input during previous phases of the project. A comprehensive set of goals and supporting policies and programs will be the focus of the next phase of the project.

Through those goals, policies, and programs, the project will address additional important issues, like public services (including police and fire protection), access to childcare, housing availability and affordability, climate change, and many more.

All Santa Rosa Forward products, including the Community Involvement Strategy, Existing Conditions Report, Briefing Book, Vision Statement, Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Workbook, and Alternatives Worksheet are available on the project website in both English and Spanish: <https://www.santarosafoward.com/>.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact related to this item as the funding has already been allocated to the Santa Rosa Forward project. The Circulation and Land Use Alternatives effort is a component of the authorized work plan and contract.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The full scope of the General Plan Update process includes a programmatic Environmental Impact Report to commence in late 2022 once a CEQA project (policy document) is developed.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project team has met with most City Boards and Commissions to inform the members about the Santa Rosa Forward project and receive their individual input on the opportunities and challenges facing the city. No action has been taken by the individual Boards or Commissions.

NOTIFICATION

A variety of notification and promotion was completed as part of the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives process, including the use of print and radio media, printed flyers, email blasts, website advertisements, City bus advertisements, targeted emails to community groups, promotion through members of the Community Advisory Committee, and discussions with individuals; all while adhering to State and County Health Orders.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Preferred Alternative Summary

CONTACT

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