

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: CLARE HARTMAN, DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
SUBJECT: SANTA ROSA GENERAL PLAN 2050

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning & Economic Development Department that the City Council review and provide input on the draft General Plan 2050 to inform revisions to the document before it is finalized for review and adoption in 2024.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City's General Plan plays the foundational role in regulating land use and contains goals, policies, and actions that together provide a roadmap for how Santa Rosa should prepare for and manage growth and change. Actions included in the General Plan can be considered an implementation program to help guide City department work programs and budgeting.

Draft Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 introduces goals, policies, and implementing actions that, together with the Land Use and Circulation Diagram developed with community input and Council oversight in 2022, work to achieve the community's vision for the future that was established at the start of the General Plan Update project known as Santa Rosa Forward.

While input on any aspect of the draft General Plan 2050 is welcome, staff are especially interested in gathering feedback on the implementing actions that will guide future work programs and budgeting.

BACKGROUND AND PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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 Santa Rosa 2050 General Plan Community Involvement Strategy. At the same time, staff convened a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) with representation from the City's diverse neighborhoods and interests and from each Council District. CAC members serve as liaisons to help promote broad and inclusive public engagement. A technical advisory committee (TAC) of City department representatives and partner agencies was also established to provide ongoing advice, feedback, and technical insight.

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 that staff had used to assemble the CAC and approved the CAC Organizational Framework.

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

On November 16, 2021, the Council received a report on the Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 Equity Priority Communities Empowerment and Outreach Work Plan.

On November 16, 2021, the Council and Planning Commission together received a report on the Housing Element update. The Housing Element update is part of the Santa Rosa Forward project but was completed on a different timeline due to State requirements.

On May 24, 2022, the Council and Planning Commission together 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.

On October 25, 2022, the Council and Planning Commission jointly received a report and provided input on the draft Preferred Alternative.

On February 14, 2023, the Council took action to adopt the Housing Element.

On April 7, 2023, the California Department of Housing and Community Development certified Santa Rosa's Housing Element.

On July 17, 2023, the City released draft General Plan 2050 for public review.

On September 14, 2023, the Planning Commission received a presentation of the draft General Plan 2050 and provided input on goals, policies, and actions.

WORK COMPLETED TO DATE

Draft General Plan 2050 is the fifth of eight Santa Rosa Forward project phases (see Table 1 below). Each phase of the project builds on and is informed by previous efforts. This staff report provides a summary of the work that has been completed in each of the prior phases, as well as a detailed description of the draft General Plan phase and next steps.

*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 2050	6. Environmental Analysis	7. Public Review and Adoption	8. Additional Zoning Amendments
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Phase 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 participate in community planning projects or other civic activities, and it presents an outreach strategy which the project team will further refine as appropriate for each phase of the project. 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. CAC members represent a variety of community organizations and perspectives and assist as project ambassadors by encouraging 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.

Phase 2. Existing Conditions Analysis and Vision

The Existing Conditions Report was released in December 2020. This technical document analyzes and summarizes 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. A Briefing Book released in February 2021 provides a high-level summary of the major findings and take-aways of the Existing Conditions Report. Information gathered through the existing conditions analysis serves 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.

In March 2021, the project team met separately with the TAC and CAC to review takeaways from the Existing Conditions Report and to start crafting an overall vision for

the Santa Rosa Forward project. These visioning exercises led to the development of a draft Vision Statement that is an aspirational expression framing community needs and goals. 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 Vision Statement refinements that were presented to City Council and Planning Commission at a July 20, 2021, study session. City Council and Planning Commission members provided comments to help further refine the Vision Statement. The Santa Rosa Forward Vision Statement encompasses 13 detailed concepts prioritized by the community:

*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.*

### Phase 3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives

Three different land use and circulation development scenarios or “alternatives” were prepared at the start of this phase, each reflecting a unique approach to achieve the community’s Vision, accommodate up to 36,000 new housing units, and account for various existing conditions.

The three alternatives are described and analyzed in an Alternatives Workbook that provides a comparative assessment of each alternative in the areas of housing, economics, equity, efficiency, sustainability, community safety, and resilience. The 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, courtyards, and similar types of homes throughout the City on parcels that can accommodate new housing, growing in a more distributed pattern.

Phase 3 outreach included seven different opportunities for community members to participate and provide feedback:

- 1 virtual open house with 657 attendees
- 1 online survey with 284 total responses (261 in English and 23 in Spanish).
- 5 community workshops with almost 100 participants

- 9 pop-up tents during community events located throughout Santa Rosa
- 18 focus group meetings with local organizations

On May 24, 2022, the three alternatives and community responses were presented to the City Council and Planning Commission. City Council and Planning Commission, based on community input, directed staff to proceed with preparing the draft Preferred Alternative to reflect a combination of Alternatives 1 and 2.

#### Phase 4. Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative built on all previous phases of work and incorporated aspects of the different alternatives evaluated in the third phase. The Preferred Alternative identifies 19 Areas of Change where the City will focus on housing, services, connectivity, and/or infrastructure needed to make these complete neighborhoods. Areas of Change are complemented by a plan for major transportation improvements. Together, the land use and transportation network changes further significant 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.

Between September and October 2022, the project team held various in-person and online activities that offered opportunities for community members to review and discuss the draft Preferred Alternative. The project team hosted:

- 5 pop-up tents during community events throughout Santa Rosa.
- 2 in-person Community Open Houses with more than 60 participants
- 1 online survey with 621 responses

On October 25, 2022, the Preferred Alternative was presented to the City Council and Planning Commission. City Council and Planning Commission directed staff to proceed with finalizing the Preferred Alternative to serve as the overall foundation for General Plan 2050.

#### Phase 5. Draft General Plan (current phase)

A general plan is a city's road map for the future, describing a community's aspirations and identifying strategies for managing preservation and change. Draft Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 (Attachment 1) grows from work products developed in close collaboration with the community and with oversight and direction from the Planning Commission and City Council. With the Preferred Alternative (phase 4) land use and circulation diagram as its foundation, draft General Plan 2050 works to achieve the community's vision (phase 1) and address identified existing challenges and opportunities (phase 2) through goals, policies, and actions that will guide future decision making, City work programs, and budgeting over the next 20+ years.

Draft Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 consolidates the State mandated general plan elements into five chapters that address both required and optional topics. Each chapter includes goals, policies, and actions that work together to achieve the community's vision for the future. General Plan 2050 includes new optional subjects and carries over some optional topics from the existing General Plan 2035.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction is included among the new optional topics. The draft General Plan includes goals, policies, and actions that support reductions from community-wide and municipal sources of emissions, supported by a stand-alone GHG Reduction Strategy, which is slated to replace the City's Community-wide Climate Action Plan and will be included as an Appendix to General Plan 2050.

One of the State-mandated general plan elements is a Housing Element. The Housing Element must be updated on an eight-year schedule and be approved by the State's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The Housing Element identifies housing conditions and needs, establishes the goals, objectives, and policies that are the foundation of the City's housing strategy, and provides an array of programs to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community. The most recent Santa Rosa Housing Element, which was adopted by the City Council on February 14, 2023, and certified by HCD on April 7, 2023, covers the planning period through 2031. Draft General Plan 2050 does not propose any amendments to the Housing Element.

Draft General Plan 2050 is summarized in an Executive Summary which is included as Attachment 2. A complete list of all draft goals, policies, and actions can be found in All Santa Rosa Forward products, including the Community Involvement Strategy, Existing Conditions Report, Briefing Book, Vision Statement, Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Workbook, and Preferred Alternative are available on the project website (many of which are available in English and Spanish):  
<https://www.santarosafoward.com/>.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project team has focused on engaging the community throughout the General Plan update process with special emphasis placed on reaching communities who usually do not participate in planning activities, including youth, low-income communities, and people of color, among other groups.

As of August 2023, community involvement reach has been evaluated in the following ways:

- Opportunities: Conducted more than 100 events, meetings, activities, and surveys
- Participation: More than 4,220 community members have participated
- Impact: Received over 21,500 individual comments and ideas

- Diversity: Engaged with more than 80 community groups, organizations, and neighborhoods

The project team has tracked and evaluated participant demographics throughout the General Plan update process to inform improvements to engagement methods and identify community members who are not yet engaging in the General Plan update process. Santa Rosa residents, by age, have been participating proportionally to the City's population, except for youth. Residents between five and 24 years of age have been underrepresented by 15 percentage points or more in outreach related to the first four project phases.

For this reason, an additional suite of engagement focused on youth has been employed for the draft General Plan phase and is detailed in the following section.

### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Objectives of the youth engagement activities have been to inform, teach, and empower young residents about what is a general plan and to spur participation in the General Plan update project. Several innovative strategies have been implemented to increase participation of Santa Rosa's young community members.

1. Planning Classes with Montgomery High School (MHS) Students, December - March 2023.

In collaboration with MHS Government and Civics teachers Jim Rudesill and Jeremy Hahn, a General Plan update-related class [curriculum](#) was developed for 120 students. The students learned about local government structure and processes and were introduced to the urban planning profession and process. Students self-selected into 20 working groups where they researched a general plan project/subject of their interest(s) and presented their final work to seven City of Santa planners.

Curriculum objectives included:

- Learning about the General Plan process and the urban planning profession
- Interacting with diverse planners including young professionals and people of color
- Identifying a community concern, priority, or challenge
- Developing recommendations using research and lived experience to overcome identified City challenges
- Presenting as a team the findings and recommendations to city staff

Over the course of the semester, the project team visited each class six times to implement the five curriculum objectives. Each meeting included foundational education components about the field of urban planning, in-person presentations from the

consultants about local government, and individual support leading up to the final presentation.

Measures of Success:

- 120 high school students learned about general plans, and the urban planning profession
- 20 groups of students presented [recommendations](#) to the City staff (presentations and recommendations are available on the SR Forward website)
- A planning high school class [curriculum](#) was developed which can be used for future classes as well as at different schools.
- Meaningful relationships built among City staff, students, and school staff and teachers.

2. Youth Engagement through Public Art, March – August 2023

In collaboration with the Santa Rosa Public Art Program and Kimzin Creative, a series of art engagements with local artists were held to expand awareness and participation of youth (5 – 24 years old) in the General Plan update process and to collect through art, information related to health and environmental justice. The art engagements included creation of an art installation, a coloring book, and a song and music video.

- Coloring Book. A bilingual coloring book for grades 3-8 on the topics of health and environmental justice was developed by [Blanca Molina](#). The coloring book which includes both Spanish and English text was distributed to arts and youth organizations for more than 800 kids, including Santa Rosa's Equity Priority Areas. Distribution started over the summer of 2023 at youth camps and will continue at school events and other youth activities through the 2023/2024 academic year.
- Art Installation. Four workshops were facilitated by [Erika Lutz](#) and [Briona Hendren](#) for over 100 high school students to talk about the future of Santa Rosa while developing art in partnership with the following organizations:
  - Roseland University Prep (29 students)
  - Amarosa Institute (28 students)
  - Latino Service Providers (24 students)
  - Environmental Justice Coalition and Development, Advocacy, Leadership, & Engagement (DALE) (28 students)

Information collected from the four workshops was incorporated into an interactive art installation reflecting the dreams of the youth. The art installation was formally introduced at an event in Court House Square on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and has been displayed at other events including one of Santa Rosa Forward Open Houses.

- Song and Music Video. Four workshops were facilitated by [Kayatta Patton](#), at Juvenile Hall for 60 young adults and with 20 students from the Black Student

Union in Santa Rosa Junior College. The data collected was turned into a song and music video representing Santa Rosa youth desires for 2050.

Measures of success:

- 800 students in grades 3-8 were exposed to urban planning and getting involved in City decision making
- 176 young residents and students learned art skills and about the General Plan process
- Meaningful collaboration among youth, artists, and City Staff was accomplished.

### 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 draft Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 phase 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, which is underway now. A Draft Environmental Impact Report evaluating any potential environmental effects based on Draft General Plan 2050 is anticipated to be released for public review in Fall 2023.

### NOTIFICATION

A variety of notification and promotion has been utilized as part of the draft General Plan process, including the use of print and radio media, printed flyers, a survey, social media and email blasts, City bus advertisements, targeted emails to community groups, promotion through members of the Community Advisory Committee, and discussions with individuals.

### ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Draft General Plan
- Attachment 2 – Draft General Plan Executive Summary
- Attachment 3 – Draft General Plan Executive Summary - Spanish
- Attachment 4 – Draft General Plan Summary of Goals, Policies, and Actions
- Attachment 5 – Draft General Plan Summary of Goals, Policies, and Actions - Spanish
- Attachment 6 – Kayatta - Life Reimagined (I wanna know) - Video

PRESENTERS

Shari Meads, Senior Planner (Advance Planning), Planning and Economic Development Department

Beatriz Guerrero Auna, Equity and Public Health Senior Planner, (Advance Planning), Planning and Economic Development Department