

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: PATRICK STREETER, SENIOR PLANNER  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY – DOWNTOWN  
STATION AREA SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION TO WAIVE COUNCIL POLICY AND TO ACCEPT  
REPORT

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Council, by motion, waive Council Policy 000-06 regarding appointments to Boards/Commissions/Committees, accept the Community Engagement Strategy for the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update, and authorize the Director of Planning and Economic Development to appoint members of the Community Advisory Committee as necessary.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 9, 2007, the City Council adopted the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan), which has yielded approximately 100 residential units and 194,000 square-feet of office and retail uses, with approximately 275 residential units and 107,000 square-feet of office and retail uses approved for future development. Midway through the planning period, these numbers are far below the projected the development of 3,409 new dwelling units, 197,500 square-feet of office and institutional uses, and 296,000 square-feet of retail uses by 2027. While a lack of vitality in the downtown can in part be attributed to market forces, feedback has indicated that the Specific Plan is too restrictive, in terms of development standards such as density, parking, and height, to finance and fully realize the City's need for high density downtown housing and job centers within walking distance to the Downtown Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) Station. Following the Council's designation of downtown housing as a top priority, the City applied for a Planning Grant Program through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), which was approved on April 25, 2018. The grant provides funding for an update to the Specific Plan to address land use and transportation issues, as well as infrastructure needs, associated with intensification of housing development in the downtown. In the time since the Specific Plan was originally adopted, the City has implemented several successful outreach and transparency initiatives that can be leveraged to foster broader community participation

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in the planning process. City staff have worked with Dyett & Bhatia Urban and Regional Planners, the consultant planning firm selected to assist in preparation of the specific plan update, to outline a Community Engagement Strategy, the purpose of which is to ensure that effective, diverse communication occurs through a community-wide outreach and engagement program.

## BACKGROUND

On October 9, 2007, the City Council adopted the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan). The primary objective of the Specific Plan is to increase the number of residents and employees within walking distance (1/2 mile) of the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) station through the intensification of land uses in the Plan area.

In 2007, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) designated the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan boundaries as a Priority Development Area (PDA). PDAs are areas within existing communities that local governments have identified and approved for future growth. These areas are accessible by one or more transit services, and are often located near established job centers, shopping districts and other services. Santa Rosa has six PDAs: Downtown Station Area, North Santa Rosa Station Area, Roseland, Mendocino Avenue Corridor, Santa Rosa Avenue Corridor, and Sebastopol Road Corridor.

In October 2016, the Council accepted the Housing Action Plan, which was prepared to address the City's ongoing unmet housing needs and to implement the City's General Plan Housing Element.

In October 2017, the City experienced devastating fires, resulting in the loss of nearly 3,000 homes in Santa Rosa. Prior to the fires, the City was already in a housing crisis, with less than 300 units per year being realized each year, compared to the 625 units per year needed to reach the City's goal of 5,000 new housing units by 2023.

On December 14, 2017, MTC notified local governments in the Bay Area of the availability of grant funding for the PDA Planning Grant Program for up to \$800,000 (with a 12% local match). The PDA Grant Planning Program provides financial support for planning processes that seek to intensify land uses by increasing both housing supply (including affordable housing) and jobs, boosting transit ridership, increasing walking, bicycling, carpooling and car-sharing, and retaining and expanding community assets.

On February 13, 2018, the Council adopted a new set of priorities, which includes downtown housing as a Near Term (six month) and Tier 1 top priority.

On March 5, 2018, based on Council Policy 000-62 authorizing the City Manager or his designee to submit grant applications, the City submitted an application to MTC for the PDA Planning Grant Program to amend the existing Specific Plan. The grant would allow the City to comprehensively address land use and transportation issues, as well

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as infrastructure needs, associated with intensification of housing development in the downtown.

On April 25, 2018, MTC approved a grant in the amount of \$800,000 to the City of Santa Rosa to update the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan. A match of 12% (\$109,090) is required, which will be provided as in-kind staff time from the Planning and Economic Development Department's existing budget.

On September 4, 2018, the Council approved a Master Funding Agreement with MTC, accepted the \$800,000 grant to update the Specific Plan, and committed to the requisite local match.

On August 23, 2018, a Request for Proposals (RFP) for consultant services to assist in the drafting of the Specific Plan update was posted and distributed generally. The deadline for responses was September 24, 2018.

On October 3, 2018, interviews were held with six of the firms that submitted proposals. Dyett & Bhatia Urban and Regional Planners, a California corporation based in Oakland, was chosen based on their qualifications, proposed time schedule, budget, and written and oral presentations.

On November 27, 2018, the Council, by resolution, authorized the Mayor to sign a Professional Services Agreement with Dyett & Bhatia.

#### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

See Background section above.

#### ANALYSIS

Community engagement is a critical component of the specific plan update process. Outreach methods will be varied and customized to ensure maximum participation and will include innovative strategies to reach people who do not typically get involved in this type of process. Input will be sought from residents, business proprietors, property owners, neighborhood groups, community and faith-based organizations, environmental advocacy groups, and members of the development community. Diversity will be prioritized, with efforts to engage low-income, youth, renters, and non-English speaking populations.

##### 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Community Engagement Strategy is to create an open, inclusive planning process that engages a representative cross-section of people and organizations with interest in the specific plan area.

2. Objectives

- Communicate the purposes, benefits and implications of the update, including its physical, economic, and social implications; the planning process; and opportunities for involvement.
- Inform the public about current conditions within the planning area—its issues and opportunities that may affect its future—as well as how this project relates to other planning efforts.
- Expand the public’s awareness of planning strategies, policies, and best practices that have been used in downtown settings to effectively achieve a community vision similar to that envisioned by the people of Santa Rosa.
- Provide opportunities for vigorous discussion of and meaningful input regarding issues, visions, planning principles, development scenarios, policies, and programs as they are being formulated.
- Build public ownership of the specific plan update.

3. Community Engagement Strategy

The attached Community Engagement Strategy 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. The Community Engagement Strategy 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. The Community Engagement Strategy includes twelve pop-up outreach events, formation and administration of a Community Advisory Committee, creation and distribution of an engagement toolkit, project branding, and maintenance of a webpage.

4. Community Advisory Committee

As part of the Community Engagement Strategy, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will be formed to represent community members and stakeholders in the development of the specific plan update.

a. Role of the CAC:

The role of the CAC will be to provide feedback on project products 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. Instead, Community Advisory Committee members will act as project ambassadors and encourage those who live and work in the project area to attend community workshops, events, and public hearings. After the final workshop, the CAC will assist with information flow between the City, consultants, and the community as the specific plan update is finalized.

b. Outreach to Potential CAC Members:

Outreach, through face-to face meetings and phone conversations, for the Community Advisory Committee will begin following Council's acceptance of the Community Engagement Strategy.

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

c. Community Advisory Committee Composition:

It is anticipated that the CAC will be comprised of members of each Council election district, each of the six historic preservation districts within the study area (West End, Railroad Square, St. Rose, Cherry Street, Olive Park, Burbank Gardens), business owners, property owners, advocacy groups, the development community, and potential future residents (students, young professionals, retirees). The proposed makeup of the CAC would be as follows, for a total of 25 members:

- One (1) representative from each City Council district (total 7):
- One (1) downtown property owner
- One (1) downtown renter
- Two (2) future downtown residents
- Two (2) downtown business owners
- Two (2) representative of the real estate development community
- Two (2) representative of local community and advocacy groups
- One (1) representative from each of the downtown Historic Preservation Districts (total 6)
- One (1) transit rider
- One (1) youth or student representative

d. Council Policy 000-06:

Council Policy 000-06, Appointments to Boards/Commissions/Committees, outlines specific requirements for appointments to City committees. Because the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update Community Advisory

Committee, which is required as part of the grant funding for the project, will be an official City committee, it is required to comply with this Council Policy.

The Council Policy 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 strict requirements of the Council Policy, which includes that members be residents of the City of Santa Rosa and that they fill out a formal application, do not necessarily fit with the desired composition or creation of the CAC, nor does it fit with the timeline of the Specific Plan Update.

Based on the current timeline, the Specific Plan Update is anticipated to be complete in July 2019. Strict adherence to Council Policy 000-06 would add a significant amount of time to creation of the CAC, thereby delaying the start of the community engagement and the overall project by several months.

Further, stakeholders in the development of the City's downtown may or may not be current residents of the City. The City has also not created a formal application process for the CAC because this is a unique group that will be formed for this project only, with a limited timeframe, and recruitment is being done through individual contacts, meetings, conversations, and other outreach with residents, business and property owners, developers, students, and others who are involved in the community.

As was done for the development of the Community Steering Committee for the Roseland Area/Sebastopol Road Specific Plan (which was the same type of committee as the proposed CAC), City staff has found that the strict application of Council Policy 000-06 for the formation of the CAC is not appropriate for the development of this unique committee.

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 Community Engagement Strategy that was accepted by Council. Similarly, staff is requesting that the Council accept the proposed CAC composition for the Downtown Specific Plan Update, as described above, and authorize the Director of the Planning and Economic Development Department to appoint members of the CAC as necessary.

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's Downtown Subcommittee.

e. CAC Meeting Schedule:

The CAC will meet four times over the specific plan update process.  
Meetings will include the following:

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| Meeting 1 | Review and discussion of the committee's role, discussion of the Priority Development Area (PDA) profile, discussion of priorities for the update. |
| Meeting 2 | Review and discussion of the alternative concepts.   |
| Meeting 3 | Review community feedback of alternative concepts and discuss a preferred plan.  |
| Meeting 4 | Review of components of the administrative draft Specific Plan Update prior to preparing the public draft.   |

5. Community Meetings

Four community meetings will be conducted to provide information and gather direct public input on issues of importance to the planning process. These meetings will be structured for maximum involvement to ensure each participant has the opportunity and ability to provide meaningful direction on the future of the specific plan area. Lessons learned in interactions and feedback from the first meeting will affect the presentations and format of later meetings. Community input at each meeting will be reviewed and will inform project products.

The purpose of each community meeting is described below:

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| Meeting 1 | Identify issues, community assets, challenges, and opportunities in the planning area through interactive exercises and visioning. |
| Meeting 2 | Same as Meeting 1, held during the same week but at a different time, date, and location.  |
| Meeting 3 | Interactive workshop for exploration of alternatives.  |
| Meeting 4 | Open house with maps and visual materials to review the draft Specific Plan Update.  |

6. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be formed primarily to ensure technical accuracy of the Specific Plan update and associated environmental review. The TAC will be comprised of technical experts from City departments and partner agencies to provide feedback and ensure plan concepts can be achieved. TAC membership will be sought from, but will not be limited to: the

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Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Sonoma County Transportation Authority, Sonoma County Transit, Golden Gate Transit, Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management (Permit Sonoma) and Health Services Departments, Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit, Santa Rosa City Schools, Santa Rosa Departments of: Planning and Economic Development, Housing and Community Services, Parking, Transportation and Public Works, Water, Fire, Police, Recreation and Parks, Office of Community Engagement, and City Attorney's Office.

The purpose of each TAC meeting is described below:

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|-----------|--|
| Meeting 1 | Discussion the PDA profile and discussion of specific issues or areas of concern that may affect future development within the planning area |
| Meeting 2 | Presentation of alternative concepts for review, feedback, and suggested refinements.  |
| Meeting 3 | Review community feedback of alternative concepts and discuss a preferred plan.  |

Members of the TAC will also be expected to review draft environmental documents and to review and comment on the draft specific plan update.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding has already been allocated to the specific plan update, of which the Community Engagement 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 - Downtown Station Area Specific Plan study area



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- Attachment 2 - Council Policy 000-06, Appointments to  
Boards/Commissions/Committees
- Attachment 3 - Community Engagement Strategy for the Downtown Station Area  
Specific Plan Update, dated December 13, 2018

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