

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION
AUGUST 13, 2020

PROJECT TITLE

Downtown Station Area Specific Plan
Subsequent Environmental Impact Report
Public Hearing

APPLICANT

NA

ADDRESS/LOCATION

Various

PROPERTY OWNER

Various

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER

Various

FILE NUMBER

ST18-002

APPLICATION DATE

NA

APPLICATION COMPLETION DATE

NA

REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS

NA

FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

NA

PROJECT SITE ZONING

Various

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION

Various

PROJECT PLANNER

Amy Lyle

RECOMMENDATION

No formal action required at this time.

Agenda Item # 10.1
For Planning Commission Meeting of: August 13, 2020

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: CHAIR CISCO AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION
FROM: AMY LYLE, SUPERVISING PLANNER
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPT

SUBJECT: DOWNTOWN STATION AREA SPECIFIC PLAN SUBSEQUENT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

AGENDA ACTION: PUBLIC HEARING, NO FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Planning Commission hold a public hearing on the Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and provide comments on the Draft EIR. Oral comments made during this Planning Commission meeting will be summarized for inclusion in the Final EIR. Members of the public wishing their verbatim comments to be incorporated are directed to submit their comments in writing. No action is required at this time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Plan Update, referred to as the "Proposed Plan."

An EIR is intended to inform decision-makers and the general public of the potential significant environmental impacts of a Proposed Plan. The EIR also considers the availability of mitigation measures to minimize significant impacts and evaluates reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Plan.

The Draft EIR is available for review to the public and interested agencies for a period of 45 days, which closes on August 31, 2020. The purpose of the review period and this public hearing is to obtain comments "on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided and mitigated" (Section 15204, CEQA Guidelines).

ROLE OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission has an opportunity to review and provide comments on the Draft EIR. All comments and responses will be published within a Final SEIR document to be distributed prior to the Commission's next meeting. At this next and final meeting, tentatively scheduled for September 24, 2020, the Commission will be asked to take a final action by providing a recommendation to the City Council.

BACKGROUND

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

A prior EIR for the 2007 DSASP was certified in October 2007 (SCH #2006072104). That EIR described and disclosed the environmental effects associated with adoption of the existing Downtown Station Area Specific Plan. As evaluated in the 2007 EIR, the 2007 DSASP involved changes to land use and zoning regulations intended to foster a vibrant mix of housing, shopping, and jobs in proximity to transit, as well as a range of circulation and infrastructure improvements needed to support the densification and intensification of uses downtown.

On April 25, 2018, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission 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 November 27, 2018, the Council, by resolution, authorized the Mayor to sign a Professional Services Agreement with Dyett & Bhatia Urban and Regional Planners, a California corporation based in Oakland to assist the City in preparing the Specific Plan update.

On November 30, 2018, the consultant team met with City staff for a kick-off meeting and walking tour to establish goals and lay out a strategy and schedule for the update process.

On January 8, 2019, the City Council considered the scope and visioning of the Specific Plan update and adopted a Community Engagement Strategy.

On January 17, 2019 the project was before a joint meeting of the Cultural Heritage Board and the Design Review Board to provide feedback on the proposed scope and visioning.

On March 3, 2019, the first meeting of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was held, with the purpose of outlining the project's goals and objectives and developing a strategy and methodology to maximize community engagement.

On May 1 and May 4, 2019, Community Workshops numbers 1 and 2 were held at the Central Library Branch and Chop's Teen Center, respectively. The workshops represented a culmination of Phase I: Outreach and Opportunities.

On May 30, 2019, representatives of City departments, outside agencies, and other technical experts met for Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting number 1. The purpose of the meeting was to consider two potential project alternatives and develop additional items of consideration that should be tested toward preparation of a preferred alternative.

On June 20, 2019, at a joint meeting, the Cultural Heritage Board and the Design Review Board received a summary of Phase I and provided feedback regarding potential land use and circulation alternatives to be considered.

On July 16, 2019, at a joint meeting, the Planning Commission and the Council received a summary of Phase I and provided feedback regarding potential land use and circulation alternatives to be considered.

On July 29, 2019, Community Workshop number 3 was held at the Central Library Branch. More than 120 attendees participated in a small-group exercise designed to gather feedback and preferences regarding the draft alternatives.

On October 2, 2019, representatives of City departments, outside agencies, and other technical experts met for Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting number 2. The purpose of the meeting was to review the draft preferred alternative concept prior to it being presented to decision makers.

On November 6 and 7, 2019, the draft preferred alternative concept was presented to the Cultural Heritage Board and the Design Review Board, respectively.

On July 16, 2019, at a joint meeting, the Planning Commission and the Council received a summary of Phase I and provided feedback regarding potential land use and circulation alternatives to be considered.

On December 3, 2019, at a joint meeting, the Planning Commission and the Council received a report regarding the update of the DSASP and the preferred land use and circulation concept.

On December 19, 2019 the City published an Initial Study and Notice of Preparation for the SEIR which initiated a 30-day review and comment period.

On January 15, 2020 the City held a public scoping meeting at the Central Library Branch to gather additional input.

On May 20, 2020 representatives of City departments, outside agencies, and other technical experts met for the TAC meeting number 3. The purpose of the meeting was to review the certain policy decisions for the Proposed Plan before public release.

On June 29, 2020 a virtual CAC meeting was held, with the purpose of reviewing and providing comments on the community engagement plan.

On July 15, 2020 the Proposed Plan and Draft EIR were released for public review. A virtual open house was held to present both documents, receive comments, and respond to questions.

1. Project Description

The project includes an update of the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan consisting of goals, policies, standards, guidelines, and diagrams to guide the future development of the Planning Area. The Proposed Plan will legally function as a Specific Plan for regulating land use and coordinating the provision of public services and infrastructure. The Proposed Plan is a document to be adopted by the City Council that serves the following purposes:

- Establish a long-range vision that reflects the aspirations of the community and outlines steps to achieve this vision;
- Establish long-range development policies that will guide City departments, Planning Commission, and City Council decision-making;
- Provide a basis for judging whether specific development proposals and public projects are in harmony with plan policies;
- Plan in a manner that meets future land needs based on the projected population and job growth;
- Allow City departments, other public agencies, and private developers to design projects that will enhance the small-town character of the community, preserve environmental resources, and minimize hazards; and
- Provide the basis for establishing and setting priorities for detailed plans and implementing programs, such as the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, specific and master plans, and the Capital Improvement Program.

The Proposed Plan would replace the existing 2007 Specific Plan in all elements. The Proposed Plan would establish a planning and policy framework that would extend to horizon year 2040.

Objectives

The Proposed Plan provides the basis for the City's land use and development policy and represents the basic community values, ideals, and aspirations that will govern development and conservation. Specific objectives established for the project include the following:

- Enhance the role of Downtown Santa Rosa as an energetic commercial and cultural center with a range of housing, employment, retail and restaurant options in a vibrant, walkable environment;

- Facilitate the production of housing that provides a range of options for people of all incomes, abilities, and stages of life;
- Enhance connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users within in the Planning Area and to/from key destinations;
- Increase the number of residents and employees within one half mile of high frequency transit options;
- Strengthen sense of place by providing welcoming civic spaces, public art, and uses and design that promote day and nighttime vitality;
- Leverage City-owned properties in the planning area to catalyze redevelopment that can provide for the community's unmet housing needs within the Planning Area.

SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:

The Draft EIR consists of analysis of the following environmental issue areas that may be impacted by the Specific Plan:

1. **Air Quality-** This section assesses potential local and regional impacts on air quality from future development under the Proposed Plan, including those related to air quality plans and standards, criteria pollutants, sensitive receptors, and objectionable odors. The section provides context regarding air quality standards and local air quality, as well as relevant federal, State, and local regulations and programs.
2. **Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources-** This section describes the existing cultural resources in the Planning Area and discusses the relevant federal, state, and local regulatory considerations; evaluates potentially significant impacts to cultural and historic resources as a result of project implementation; and provides, where appropriate, mitigation measures to address those impacts.
3. **Energy, Greenhouse Gases, and Climate Change-** This section assesses potential environmental impacts related to energy, greenhouse gases (GHGs), and climate change from future development under the Proposed Plan, including those related to GHG emissions, energy usage, and energy efficiency standards. This section describes existing energy usage, GHG emissions, and sources of GHGs in the Planning Area, as well as relevant federal, State, and local regulations and programs.
4. **Hydrology and Water Quality-** This section assesses potential environmental impacts on hydrology and water quality from future development under the Proposed Plan. The section describes existing surface water and groundwater hydrology, water quality, and flood hazards in the Planning Area, as well as relevant federal, State, and local regulations and programs.
5. **Noise-** This section assesses potential environmental impacts related to noise from future development under the Proposed Project. The section describes the

characteristics, measurement, and physiological effects of noise and existing sources of noise in the Planning Area, as well as relevant federal, State, and local regulations and programs.

6. **Public Services and Recreation-** This Section assesses potential environmental impacts on parks and recreational facilities and includes a discussion of the regulatory structure and proposed policies.
7. **Traffic and Transportation-** This section assesses potential environmental impacts on the transportation system from future development under the Proposed Plan, including those related to performance standards, congestion management, air traffic patterns, hazards, emergency access, and public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. This section describes the existing transportation system, characteristics, and operations of the Planning Area, as well as relevant federal, State, and local regulations and programs.
8. **Utilities-** This section assesses potential environmental impacts on utilities and service systems from future development under the Proposed Plan. Issues addressed include the water system, wastewater system, stormwater drainage, solid waste system, and dry utilities including electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications. This section assesses future water availability under the Proposed Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

The total project budget is \$909,090. \$800,000 is awarded from the MTC grant and the City's 12% local match, \$109,090, comes from the City's general fund for staff time.

NOTIFICATION

On July 15, 2020 a Notice of Availability of EIR was published in an 1/8-page advertisement in the Press Democrat.

On August 1, 2020 a Notice of Public Hearing was published in an 1/8-page advertisement in the Press Democrat.

ATTACHMENTS

The Draft Plan and Draft EIR were distributed in hard copy to those Planning Commissioners who made a request. Electronic copies of both documents can be found on the website here: <https://www.plandowntownsr.com/>

CONTACT

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