

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD
STAFF REPORT
September 17, 2020

SUBJECT

Downtown Station Area Specific Plan
Update: Bicycle and Pedestrian Master
Plan Amendments

ISSUE

The Board will review the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update and may provide a recommendation on amendments to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

STAFF PRESENTER

Amy Lyle, Supervising Planner

RECOMMENDATION

The Board may provide a recommendation on amendments necessary to implement the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 Specific Plan is utilizing the adopted 2018 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and proposes additional enhancements of pedestrian facilities and bicycle connections that are not contained within the existing Master Plan. The Planning and Economic Development Department is presenting these amendments to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board for review and recommendation.

The Plan and Subsequent Environmental Impact Report can be reviewed on the website here: <https://www.plandowntownsr.com/>

BACKGROUND

On October 9, 2007, the City Council adopted the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan), which as part of its 20-year vision, included development of more than 3,400 new downtown residential units. Presently, midway through the planning period, approximately 100 units have been constructed. 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 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 Station.

Following the Council's designation of downtown housing as a top priority, on April 25, 2018, the MTC 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 30, 2018, City staff held 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 presented to 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 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 was held 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, virtually. 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.

ANALYSIS

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.

Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Enhancements

The Specific Plan is utilizing the adopted 2018 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and proposes additional enhancements of pedestrian facilities and bicycle connections that are not contained within the existing Master Plan. The Planning and Economic Development Department is presenting these amendments to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board for review and recommendation.

Pedestrian Safety Improvements. This includes signal timing and crosswalk markings at the following intersections:

1. Maxwell Court and the new Donahue Street extension
2. Ninth Street and Donahue Street
3. Ross Street and Healdsburg Avenue
4. B Street and Fourth Street
5. B Street and Third Street
6. Third Street and Santa Rosa Avenue
7. West Third Street and the SMART rail tracks
8. First Street and A Street
9. Santa Rosa Avenue and Juilliard Park Drive
10. Santa Rosa Avenue and Oak Street
11. Sebastopol Road and the SMART rail tracks

Bicycle Facility Improvements

1. Class II facility on B Street between Fourth and First Streets: This segment completes a gap in the existing Master Plan network and connects the Prince Memorial Greenway with the Transit Mall, Santa Rosa Plaza, and Fourth Street.
2. Programmatic bicycle and pedestrian connection through Santa Rosa Plaza Mall
3. Bicycle facility with new north-south roadway through SMART site
4. Activated underpasses (lighting, public art, wayfinding, and pop-up space) at Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Olive Streets

RECOMMENDATION

The Board may provide a recommendation on amendments necessary to implement the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan.