



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2024-2029



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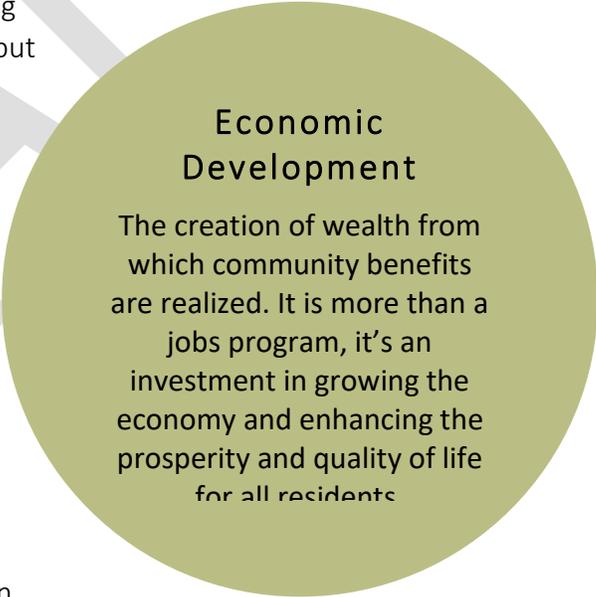
SUMMARY

In an era defined by rapid change and evolving global dynamics, communities that aspire to thrive and prosper must have a clear vision and a well-defined strategy for economic development. This Strategic Plan is the culmination of our collective commitment to shaping a vibrant and resilient future for our community.

With a vision rooted in long-term prosperity and a mission dedicated to equitable sustainable growth, this plan stands in alignment with the City’s General Plan, enabling a path to grow our community’s economic landscape. Through a blend of innovation, collaboration, and strategic foresight, this plan charts a course towards a future where opportunities abound, businesses flourish, and residents enjoy an unparalleled quality of life.

Our plan revolves around three key pillars:

1. **Business Climate and Communication:** We recognize that an environment conducive to business growth is built on a foundation of clear communication and supportive policies. By simplifying regulations, enhancing collaboration, and promoting our region as a prime destination for business, we aim to create a thriving ecosystem where businesses can not only survive but thrive.
2. **Economic Vibrancy:** The heart of our strategy lies in the economic vibrancy of our community. Through a holistic approach encompassing business retention, expansion, and attraction, we strive to empower our existing businesses, provide opportunities for growth, and attract new enterprises that align with our vision.
3. **Resiliency and Community Investment:** In a world marked by unpredictability, we understand the paramount importance of resilience. By investing in infrastructure, supporting community initiatives, and nurturing a skilled and adaptable workforce, we aim to fortify our community against the challenges of today and tomorrow.



Economic Development
The creation of wealth from which community benefits are realized. It is more than a jobs program, it’s an investment in growing the economy and enhancing the prosperity and quality of life for all residents

Our success will not be measured solely by economic metrics, but by the vitality of our community, the well-being of our residents, the strength of our partnerships, and the City’s own fiscal stability. We move forward with shared purpose to shape a future that is prosperous, resilient, and filled with opportunities for all who call our community home.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Council Goal: Economic & Community Vibrancy

Sustain and develop a diverse and thriving economy that benefits Santa Rosa residents and businesses and contributes to the community's economic health while preserving historical and cultural integrity.

Equitable Sustainable Growth

GOAL 1: BUSINESS CLIMATE AND COMMUNICATION

Create a business-friendly environment; promote the city's unique assets and advantages; communicate effectively with business; support the development of a strong entrepreneurial community.

Objective 1.1: Enhance Business-Friendly Policies and Processes

- **Develop and Implement a Development Services Strategic Plan.**
Conduct a comprehensive review of existing regulations and processes to identify opportunities for simplification, streamlining, and other process improvements. This is focused on changing existing vs. adding new processes and adding policies to better support the business environment.
- **Establish a flexible ad hoc business advisory group to identify and address areas of concerns early, and to be opportunistic in the pursuit of business attraction, expansion, and process improvements.**
Regularly solicit input from business groups and local businesses to address emerging concerns and/or opportunities; link efforts to the Business Retention Program (2.1) and the Business Visitation Program (1.2); add staff/subject matter experts as needed.
- **Enhance and bolster the City's One-Stop-Shop in-person and on-line portals.**
Ensure website is easy to navigate and kept up to date and responsive; highlight virtual tools and easy to follow "1-sheets" and process mapping for most common permit and process needs; cross reference across departments for seamlessness amongst multiple points of entry.



Objective 1.2: Improve Communication and Collaboration

- **Create a centralized platform for tracking and sharing economic development opportunities, and business needs and inquiries.**
Obtain HubSpot and build-out with shared information from County EDB; leverage real estate apps to link opportunities to suitable available properties.
- **Organize quarterly business site visits to facilitate direct idea sharing.**
Include Economic Development Subcommittee Chair, PED Director, and Economic Development Deputy Director at minimum. As needed include other subject matter experts depending on needs of the business/industry sector (e.g. Water, Building, Public Works, Transit...), as well as the City Manager, Assistant City Manager and Mayor as desired. Linked to the business advisory group findings (1.1).
- **Collaborate with chambers of commerce and other business associations and affiliations on quarterly business forums to facilitate networking and idea exchanges among local businesses.**
Leverage existing forums, mixers, and meetings, and plan additional forums around any industry sector gaps. Link effort to 1.1 and the business advisory group.
- **Strengthen and support partnerships with educational institutions and workforce investment organizations to align workforce development with industry needs.**

Objective 1.3: Develop a Robust Business Satisfaction and Marketing Strategy

- **Design a comprehensive marketing plan to promote business and developer attraction, retention, and expansion, starting with Downtown and other existing job centers and opportunity areas.**
Highlight key advantages, such as infrastructure, demographics/population, quality of life, streamlining policies, etc.
- **Utilize digital marketing, social media, and participation in industry trade shows to raise Santa Rosa's profile.**
Create a variety of marketing packets to suit various industry focus trade show needs.
- **Create a feedback loop to monitor business satisfaction regarding City services and support.**
Leverage engagement opportunities for specific initiatives, in addition to traditional feedback methods.



Objective 1.4: Assess, Track and Support Equitable Economic Opportunities

- **Coordinate annual district-based surveys to solicit community input at a neighborhood level.**
Create an economic development- and quality of life-centered survey, in coordination with relevant City departments, to understand and track the diverse interests and needs of the City's 7 Council Districts and numerous job centers; use input to inform annual work plans. Align business attraction to stated needs and desires from neighborhood input; couple with business assistance tools.
- **Conduct a BIPOC business audit to gain a better understanding of needs and challenges.**
Work with the Small Business Development Centers and BIPOC business organizations and conduct additional research to understand the BIPOC business landscape as a foundation for any policies, programs and service needs.
- **Support and collaborate with partners that strengthen BIPOC and women-owned businesses.**
Strengthen business networks for people of color and women-owned businesses; establish support programs that help BIPOC and female entrepreneurs.
- **Provide resources and customize programs and services to meet cultural and language needs of businesses.**
Work with the Hispanic and Black Chambers of Commerce and the business/economic development divisions of other BIPOC associations to ensure economic development resources and tools accommodate the needs of minority-owned businesses.

GOAL 2: ECONOMIC VIBRANCY & BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION AND ATTRACTION

Create a diverse and sustainable economy through the attraction of new businesses to the City, supporting the growth and expansion of existing businesses, retaining businesses that are considering relocating, and addressing infrastructure in support of economic accelerators.

Objective 2.1: Support Business Retention

- **Establish a Business Retention Program to identify and address the needs of existing businesses.**
Link efforts to the Business Advisory Committee (1.1) and the Business Visitation Program (1.2). Work cross departmentally to develop strategies, programs, and initiatives to retain existing businesses.



- Partner with Sonoma County Economic Development Board, Sonoma SBDC, local chambers of commerce and other business associations and affiliations to provide customized training and resources to help businesses adapt to changing market conditions.

Ensure services and resources are available in Spanish and other languages as needed.

- Identify incentive options and develop industry focused incentive programs for businesses that commit to long-term growth in the community.

Leverage existing local, State, and Federal programs as available.

- Implement the ARPA funded business support programs.

Distribute façade improvement, parklet, and placemaking grants; implement the FoodInc business incubation program in coordination with the SBDC.

Objective 2.2: Promote Business Expansion

- Develop a Small Business Expansion Fund to provide low-interest loans and grants to local enterprises; partner with a CDFI to manage these funds.

Seek partnerships, one-time fund allocations, public, and private fund sources to seed program.

- Create incubator programs to nurture startups and facilitate their growth into thriving businesses.

Support existing program models and partner with co-working sites and co-op pilots to establish and expand industry-sector focused incubators.

- Leverage City and community partner technical assistance and funding to support key-sector business development and growth.

Objective 2.3: Attract New Businesses

- Conduct industry specific cluster analysis to identify target industries and sectors for business attraction, with a focus on increasing business to business commerce in Santa Rosa.

Work with Planning to monitor land use and development trends to ensure an adequate supply of land that offers diverse use designations and development intensities; utilize commercial real estate tracking tools to ensure capacity to accommodate sector-specific attraction.

- Develop an incentive package to attract companies that align with the Council's economic goals and add high wage employment opportunities.

Employ regulatory mechanisms and incentives to maintain sites and buildings in suitable locations, and consider traditional incentive programs to attract major employers.

- **Work with business park owners to encourage new distribution and research uses in addition to office uses; focus on emerging technologies.**
Research emerging trends and technologies to identify best fit potentials. Encourage the integration of workforce amenities within business parks to encourage walkability near job centers.
- **Establish a dedicated team to actively recruit businesses and provide them with support during the relocation process.**
Link to 1.1 to ensure seamless points of entry and provision of permitting services; work with the Sonoma County Economic Development Board, the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce, and other private sector partners to bolster industry-specific recruitment success.
- **Provide access to area specific online data and data tools.**
Create virtual tools including an interactive map (e.g. ArcGIS story maps) that provide access to data helpful to businesses and developers to assess the Santa Rosa area market, and to help new businesses identify where within the city to locate.
- **Create a streamlined retail, restaurant, and office re-tenanting permit program.**
Include process mapping with clear pathways and permit triggers for re-tenanting a retail, restaurant, or office site.

Objective 2.4: Bolster Economic Accelerators and Development Infrastructure

- **Support Downtown City assets strategy and civic investment city-wide in support of walkable neighborhood nodes and the 15-minute city concept.**
- **Establish Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts in Downtown and in Roseland.**
- **Use the South Santa Rosa Priority Development Specific Plan and the North-West Station Area Specific Plan to support intensification of available industrial land uses and recruitment of targeted industries and business sectors.**
- **Create one-time incentives to jump start flexible land uses called for in the General Plan and Specific Plans that call for maker mixed use and innovation district uses.**
Be aware of and market areas that have special assets and opportunities to layer with enabling policies.

- **Research and establish appropriate state and federal business zone to strengthen manufacturing competitiveness.**
Review the incentives, benefits, and appropriateness of participating in state and federal business zones such as California Enterprise Zones, Federal Foreign Trade Zones, and Community Reinvestment Areas.
- **Assess supply chain needs for existing, emerging, and desired industry clusters.**
Seek ways to reduce risk and increase flexibility for local companies by improving access and reliability to suppliers and creating more distribution points and networks.
- **Analyze opportunities around supporting and increasing home-based entrepreneurs and the new work-from-home trends.**
Consider programs and tools to assist the increase of remote and home-based companies and services as a way to increase local employment and expenditures in the community.

GOAL 3: RESILIENCY AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Build a resilient economy that can withstand economic shocks and stressors; invest in the community to make it a more attractive place to live and work; promote equity and inclusion in the city's economy.

Objective 3.1: Enhance Infrastructure Resilience

- **Assess infrastructure needs to ensure adequate support for business growth in General Plan identified employment centers and areas of opportunity.**
Ensure business considerations in the planning of civic infrastructure, e.g., address broadband needs/gaps; assess and plan for anticipated alternative right of way issues and future needs; assist lead departments with business coordination.
- **Conduct a downtown infill housing economic and fiscal impact study and plan for and fund other topical economic and fiscal impact studies to better understand the return on investment of development policies and initiatives. Consider findings in policy, program and initiative development.**
- **Develop and implement a plan to reinforce infrastructure against natural disasters and other threats.**
Led by the City's operational departments, conduct a risk assessment to identify vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure in key employment and financial hubs in the city.

- **Embrace climate action and sustainability principles as an economic necessity**
Promote sustainable practices to reduce the environmental footprint of the community; establish tools and processes to accelerate growth of climate solutions and enabling enterprises.

Objective 3.2: Foster Community Investment

- **Create a community investment fund to support initiatives that improve the quality of life for residents.**
- **Encourage private sector partnerships for community development projects.**
Include the consideration of expanding support of community benefit districts to enable self-sustaining funding sources.
- **Assist with locating community amenities within new and infill developments, including education, healthcare, and cultural amenities.**

Objective 3.3: Build a Skilled and Resilient Workforce

- **Analyze workforce needs and gaps by industry.**
Conduct a workforce study on needs and gaps by industry sector. Use in working with area higher education institutes and vocational programs related to training needed to meet the needs of key employers.
- **Collaborate with local educational institutions, training providers and local business associations to align curricula with industry needs.**
- **Develop a workforce development program that includes apprenticeships, internships, and retraining opportunities.**
Leverage and support work of community partners.
- **Promote lifelong learning and upskilling to ensure residents remain competitive in the evolving job market.**
Leverage and support work of community partners.

Objective 3.4: Advance Placemaking and Place-Keeping

- **Implement the Public Art Program strategic plan.**
- **Support community events and activities through direct programming, grants, and other support.**

- Collaborate with community- and arts-based placemaking organizations to pursue and implement ARPA funded placemaking opportunities.

Objective 3.5: Address Poverty and Increase Economic Opportunity Through Upstream Investments

- Strengthen the early childhood education sector by advancing the Childcare Support Program.
- Capitalize on funding opportunities to extend upstream investment pilot programs or develop new programs.
- Use ARPA funds to pilot programs addressing childhood poverty and increase advanced education opportunities.

Continue implementation of the ARPA funded Childcare Facility Fund, Child College Savings Account and Guaranteed Basic Income Programs through expenditure of funds by end of 2024.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The monitoring and evaluation of this strategic plan will be a dynamic process, and the Implementation Plan a living document allowing the City to adapt plans to changing circumstances. By regularly tracking progress and assessing the effectiveness of the strategies, the City can identify areas of success, and where adjustments are needed to ensure the plan remains relevant and aligned with the organization's goals and objectives.

Objectives

- Identify and respond to new opportunities and threats.
- Learn from mistakes and success.
- Communicate progress to stakeholders.

Tactics

- Develop and implement robust metrics and targets and/or enhance existing performance measurement systems to track progress toward each goal and objective.
- Conduct regular assessments and adjust strategies as needed to adapt to changing economic conditions.
- Solicit feedback from stakeholders, including City departments and divisions, businesses, residents, and community organizations to ensure alignment with their needs and expectations in tandem with those of Council.

