

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: CHAIR WEEKS AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION
FROM: CONOR MCKAY, SENIOR PLANNER
SUBJECT: SOUTH SANTA ROSA SPECIFIC PLAN DRAFT PREFERRED
ALTERNATIVE

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Economic Development Department recommends that the Planning Commission review and provide input on the Draft Preferred Alternative to help guide the preparation of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan (SSRSP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Santa Rosa Specific Plan Draft Preferred Alternative is a result of the synthesis of feedback received on the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives from the community, technical experts, the Council, and both City and County boards and commissions. The Draft Preferred Alternative is a major milestone of the SSRSP process and presents land use and transportation network changes that would serve as the foundation of the SSRSP.

This Study Session will provide an opportunity for the Commission and the public to provide feedback and guidance on the Draft Preferred Alternative.

BACKGROUND

In September 2008, the City applied for a new Priority Development Area (PDA) for the Mendocino Avenue/Sebastopol Avenue corridors. The PDA was established primarily to create gateways into the downtown area, create a “sense of place” along both Mendocino and Santa Rosa Avenues, and to connect the Santa Rosa Junior College in a substantial way to the downtown area through improved transit infrastructure.

In September 2019, the City re-established the PDA in order to analyze residential density, non-residential intensity and multi-modal circulation along the PDA corridors during the General Plan Update process. Also in 2019, Sonoma County established the South Santa Rosa Area PDA in order to gain access to regional funding dedicated to

planning and infrastructure improvements.

The PDA program is a voluntary partnership between local governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission/Association of Bay Area Governments (MTC/ABAG). Through the PDA program, local governments identify areas envisioned for future housing and job growth that are served by transit. Bay Area cities have nominated 218 PDAs since 2007.

PDAs facilitate coordinated regional planning for future growth and transportation investment. In addition to shaping the location of anticipated growth and major transit investments, PDAs receive a dedicated share of funding for local planning and for transportation improvements such as complete streets, bikeways, and parking programs. This is reflected in Plan Bay Area 2050, the region's current long-range land use and transportation plan.

On December 1, 2022, MTC/ABAG released a Call for Projects for PDA Planning Grants open to local governments with one or more existing PDA. The application deadline was January 23, 2023.

On January 24, 2023, the City Council held a study session to consider City initiated annexation of areas within south Santa Rosa, including Moorland Avenue, Santa Rosa Avenue and the Todd Creek/"2010 area". The study session identified the need to adopt a specific plan in the south Santa Rosa area prior to annexation. At that time, the Council indicated general support for pursuing a grant to cover the cost of the specific plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

On January 30, 2023, the County of Sonoma's Moorland Annexation Ad Hoc Committee met and confirmed their support for the City's submittal of a PDA grant application for a specific plan in south Santa Rosa to include the Moorland area. A resolution of support of the City's PDA grant application was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on April 4, 2023.

On February 23, 2023, City staff submitted a PDA grant application to MTC/ABAG for development of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and EIR. The plan area includes both a portion of the City's Mendocino Avenue/Santa Rosa Avenue Corridor PDA and the County's South Santa Rosa Area PDA.

On March 28, 2023, the Council approved and ratified City staff's submittal of an application to the MTC/ABAG for a Priority Development Area Grant for \$1,200,000 to prepare the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and EIR.

On June 28, 2023, the MTC/ABAG authorized funding for the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and EIR in the amount of \$1.2 million, through Resolution No. 4505 Revised.

SOUTH SANTA ROSA SPECIFIC PLAN – DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
STUDY SESSION
PAGE 3 OF 7

On January 9, 2024, the Council approved a Professional Services agreement with 4Leaf, Inc. in the amount of \$1 million for the preparation of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan.

On January 9, 2024, the Council authorized the Chief Financial Officer to pay all claims for services performed under this agreement from project JL Key 08070 – South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and appropriate expenditures of \$1.2 million in JL key 08070 and offsetting grant revenue to be received in the General Fund 1100-4426.

In January 2024, the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan project commenced, including the preparation and Council adoption of a Community Engagement Strategy in April 2024.

Throughout 2024, draft technical background reports on the Specific Plan were developed, which include an Existing Conditions Report, Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy, a Plan Area Profile, and Market Demand Analysis.

During 2024, the Specific Plan Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed. The TAC includes both internal and outside agency staff members which provide technical review and comment on Specific Plan deliverables.

During September and October of 2024, the Specific Plan Engagement Advisory Committee (EAC) was formed. The EAC is comprised of Plan area residents and business owners, who were selected by City staff after a review of 37 applications. The role of the EAC members is to work with the project team to support community engagement, with members sharing upcoming engagement opportunities and bringing input to City staff.

During October 2024, the City held three community workshops within the Plan area to engage members of the public and identify areas of issue and opportunity.

On December 4, 2024, after several months of attempting to resolve ongoing work product concerns, the City terminated the PSA with 4Leaf, Inc.

In December 2024, Planning staff contacted Dyett & Bhatia requesting an updated scope, budget, and schedule to complete the Specific Plan and EIR. Dyett & Bhatia, an urban and regional planning firm based out of Oakland, was identified as the second highest rated consultant in the original competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process that took place in winter of 2023.

On March 4, 2025, the City Council, by resolution approved the Professional Services Agreement (PSA) with Dyett & Bhatia to complete the public engagement, planning, and environmental review for the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and EIR in an amount not to exceed \$765,272, and authorized the Chief Financial Officer to establish appropriations of \$104,428 with the source of funds being the Planning and Economic Development Department's Advance Planning Fund in order to bridge the cost gap

between the originally adopted contract with 4LEAF, Inc. and the newly adopted contract with Dyett & Bhatia.

On July 10, 2025, the Existing Conditions Report, Plan Area Profile, Anti-Homelessness & Anti-Displacement Strategy, and Market Demand Analysis were released for public review.

On January 28, 2026, the City released the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report for public review. This release was accompanied by a survey where community members were invited to provide feedback on the different approaches to land use and circulation changes associated with the Specific Plan.

On February 4, 2026, the City held the first EAC meeting where opportunities for public engagement related to the Alternatives Report and the Specific Plan in general were discussed.

On February 26, 2026, a Study Session was held with the Planning Commission to review and receive comments on the three Land Use and Circulation Alternatives presented in the Alternatives Report.

On March 4 and 5, 2026, public workshops were held at Amarosa Academy and Taylor Mountain Elementary School to gather feedback from the community about the Alternatives Report.

On March 24, 2026, a Study Session was held with the City Council to review and receive comments on the three Land Use and Circulation Alternatives presented in the Alternatives Report.

On April 22, 2026, the survey associated with the Land Use and Circulation Alternative Report was closed.

ANALYSIS

Draft Preferred Alternative

The Draft Preferred Alternative incorporates feedback received from a broad range of stakeholders on the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives report and will serve as the basis for land use and circulation changes associated with the adoption of the Specific Plan. Components of each alternative, which are explained in greater detail below, are reflected in the Draft Preferred Alternative.

Survey responses and the Santa Rosa Planning Commission indicated a slightly greater preference for Alternative 1, but Alternative 2's city-centered growth received positive feedback from both the Planning Commission and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board. Residents of Moorland expressed concerns about any increase to residential

density in the neighborhood, so strongly preferred Alternative 1. Moorland residents also preferred a multi-modal Highway 101 crossing at Bellevue Avenue, as opposed to W Robles Avenue, in addition to improved connectivity between Moorland and Santa Rosa Avenue that connects existing residents with daily needs and services.

Many community members, in addition to the Santa Rosa and Sonoma County Planning Commissions, and City Council members emphasized the need for the establishment of anti-displacement and other equity-related strategies with the adoption of the Specific Plan.

The Draft Preferred Alternative reflects the support received for the mixed-use district on the southern portion of Santa Rosa Avenue that would increase residential density and revamp retail and service uses to be more neighborhood-serving. The Draft Preferred Alternative also proposes increased residential density surrounding the Santa Rosa Marketplace shopping center on Santa Rosa Avenue to incorporate more city-centered growth.

Community parks are distributed throughout a new low- and medium-density residential neighborhood on the eastern portion of the Plan Area, while neighborhood parks are incorporated into the mixed-use district on Santa Rosa Avenue.

The Draft Preferred Alternative also leverages creek corridors to introduce greenway connections along the creek that provide bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the Plan Area without the use of Santa Rosa Avenue.

The Draft Preferred Alternative is the next major milestone in the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan process. There have also been other documents prepared to support the Specific Plan efforts that are described below:

1. Community Engagement Strategy

The Community Engagement Strategy aims to foster an inclusive, collaborative planning process that centers community voices by reducing barriers to participation and ensuring meaningful involvement from diverse and historically underrepresented groups, including seniors, youth, people of color, low-income households, individuals with limited English proficiency, and people with disabilities.

2. Existing Conditions Report, Plan Area Profile, Anti-Homelessness & Anti-Displacement Strategy, and Market Demand Analysis

The SSRSP is supported by four core documents that collectively provide a comprehensive foundation for planning. The Existing Conditions Report outlines key factors such as economic conditions, demographics, land use, infrastructure, and regulatory context, identifying challenges and opportunities to inform decision-

making. The Plan Area Profile complements this with detailed insights into population, housing, zoning, and employment characteristics to support data-driven growth aligned with community needs. The Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy evaluates current affordability conditions and policies while evaluating new approaches to preserve housing and reduce displacement. Finally, the Market Demand Analysis assesses economic and real estate trends using both public and proprietary data to guide feasible and sustainable development strategies.

3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report

The Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report presents different ways the area could develop in the future. Each alternative shows a distinct approach to where housing, businesses, parks, and transportation improvements might be located.

The alternatives were tools used to gather community feedback before drafting a Preferred Alternative, which will serve as the foundation of the land use and transportation changes associated with the Specific Plan.

Alternative 1: Mixed-Use Corridor

This alternative focuses on growth along the central and southern portions of Santa Rosa Avenue. The Avenue would be re-imagined as a pedestrian-friendly boulevard, featuring ground-floor, neighborhood-serving commercial uses, along with higher-density housing.

Alternative 2: City-Centered Growth

This alternative focuses residential growth in the northern portion of the Plan Area, both to the north and south of the Santa Rosa Marketplace shopping center (Costco). This approach creates a compact higher density district with access to Downtown, existing commercial centers, and Taylor Mountain Regional Park. This area is within City limits and is well-served by existing infrastructure and services.

Alternative 3: Centers

This alternative promotes distributed growth across the Plan Area, with new higher density development in three "centers": adjacent to Andy Lopez Unity Park, along Santa Rosa Avenue south of Robles Avenue, and along Santa Rosa Avenue south of Todd Road. The centers along Santa Rosa are part of mixed-use districts that are much smaller in size compared to those in Alternative #1.

Next Steps

Staff is conducting community outreach to gather feedback on the Draft Preferred Alternative. There is currently an online survey in English and Spanish that asks specific questions about various topic areas included in the Draft Preferred Alternative to ensure Staff has properly incorporated feedback received on the Draft Land Use and

SOUTH SANTA ROSA SPECIFIC PLAN – DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
STUDY SESSION
PAGE 7 OF 7

Circulation Alternatives Report. Staff will also attend Community Based Organization (CBO) meetings and conduct pop-up tabling events throughout the Plan Area to spread the word about the Draft Preferred Alternative. Feedback received throughout this phase of the Specific Plan process will inform the final Preferred Alternative, which is anticipated to be released in Fall of 2026. The Infrastructure Development and Financing Plan, which evaluates the scale and cost of infrastructure improvements to achieve the full buildout of the final Preferred Alternative, is also anticipated to be released in Fall of 2026. A draft version of the Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report are anticipated to be released in late Fall of 2026 or early Winter of 2027, with final adoption by the Council in Spring 2027.

FISCAL IMPACT

This Study Session does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The full scope of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan process includes a programmatic Environmental Impact Report to commence later in 2026 once a project, as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act, (policy document) is developed.

NOTIFICATION

A variety of notifications and promotions were completed as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative process, including the use of social media, printed flyers, email blasts, website advertisements, targeted emails to community stakeholders, promotion through members of the Engagement Advisory Committee, and discussions with individuals.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Draft Preferred Alternative
- Attachment 2 – Summary of Draft Preferred Alternative (English)
- Attachment 3 - Summary of Draft Preferred Alternative (Spanish)
- Attachment 4 – [Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report](#)
- Attachment 5 – [Community Engagement Strategy](#)
- Attachment 6 -- Public Correspondence

PRESENTER(S)

Conor McKay, Senior Planner