

Agenda Item # _____
For Planning Commission Meeting of: September 14, 2023

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: CHAIR WEEKS AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION

FROM: SHARI MEADS, SENIOR PLANNER

SUBJECT: DRAFT SANTA ROSA GENERAL PLAN 2050

AGENDA ACTION: PROVIDE COMMENTS

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Economic Development Department recommends that the Planning Commission review and provide input on the draft General Plan 2050 to inform revisions to the document before it is finalized for review and adoption in 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City's General Plan plays the foundational role in regulating land use and contains goals, policies, and actions that together provide a roadmap for how Santa Rosa should prepare for and manage growth and change. Actions included in the General Plan can be viewed and used as an implementation program to guide City department work programs and budgeting.

The draft Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 introduces goals, policies, and implementing actions that, together with the Land Use and Circulation Diagram developed with community input and Council oversight in 2022, work to achieve the community's vision for the future that was established at the start of the General Plan Update project.

While input on any aspect of the draft General Plan 2050 is welcome, staff are especially interested in gathering feedback on the implementing actions that will guide future work programs and budgeting.

BACKGROUND

In March 2020, the Planning & Economic Development Department started the General Plan update project (called Santa Rosa Forward). Santa Rosa Forward entails a comprehensive update of the City's existing General Plan.

On March 3, 2020, Council authorized the General Plan update with a total contract amount of \$2,500,000 (Professional Service Agreement F002144).

On August 25, 2020, Council accepted the Community Involvement Strategy for the Santa Rosa 2050 General Plan update. At the same time, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was assembled with representation from the City's diverse neighborhoods and interests and from each Council District. CAC members serve as liaisons to help promote broad and inclusive public engagement. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was also convened among City departments and partner agencies to provide the project team with ongoing advice, feedback, and technical insight. .

On October 13, 2020, Council amended the General Plan Update Professional Service Agreement to include an update to the Climate Action Plan and increased the total contract amount to \$2,599,909.

On December 8, 2020, Council accepted the CAC Member Selection Process and approved the CAC Organizational Framework.

On July 20, 2021, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, reviewed and provided input on the Santa Rosa Forward Community Vision Statement.

On November 16, 2021, the Council received a report on the Equity Priority Communities' Empowerment and Outreach Work Plan.

On November 16, 2021, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, received a report on the Housing Element Update which is part of the Santa Rosa Forward project.

On May 24, 2022, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, received a report on the draft Land Use and Circulation Alternatives.

On June 21, 2022, the Council received a report and provided input on the draft Housing Element which is part of the Santa Rosa Forward project.

On October 25, 2022, the Council, jointly with the Planning Commission, received a report and provided input on the draft Preferred Alternative.

On February 14, 2023, the Council took action to adopt the Housing Element.

On April 7, 2023, the California Department of Housing and Community Development certified Santa Rosa's updated Housing Element.

On July 17, 2023, draft General Plan 2050 was released for public review.

WORK COMPLETED TO DATE

The draft General Plan is the fifth of eight phases included in the Santa Rosa Forward project (see Table 1 below). Each phase of the project builds on previous efforts. This staff report provides a summary of the work that has been completed in each of the completed phases, as well as a detailed description of the draft General Plan phase and next steps.

Table 1 Santa Rosa Forward Work Phases

1. Develop Community Involvement Strategy	2. Existing Conditions Analysis and Vision	3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives	4. Preferred Alternative	5. Draft General Plan	6. Environmental Analysis	7. Public Review and Adoption	8. Implementing Zoning Amendments
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Phase 1. Community Involvement Strategy

Public engagement is a critical component of Santa Rosa Forward. At the outset of the project, the project team crafted a Community Involvement Strategy (CIS) to create an open, inclusive planning process that engages a representative cross-section of people and organizations with interest in the City. The CIS recognizes the need to employ innovative strategies to reach people who do not typically get involved in community planning projects or other civic activities. It presents an outreach component in each phase of the project to be further refined by the project team at that phase. The CIS also establishes the role of the TAC and CAC. The TAC is comprised of technical experts from City departments and partner agencies charged with providing feedback and technical insights to the project team. The CAC is composed of community members representing a variety of organizations and perspectives and is charged with assisting as project ambassadors to encourage their fellow community members to get involved in the project. Following the CIS as a guide, Santa Rosa Forward is working to engage a variety of stakeholders, representative of the City’s diverse community.

Phase 2. Existing Conditions Analysis and Vision

The Existing Conditions Report was released in December 2020. This technical background document analyzes and summarizes a variety of data including demographic, economic, land use, community character, mobility, natural resources, infrastructure, environmental justice, community health, and other conditions in Santa Rosa. The comprehensive Existing Conditions Report was distilled into a high-level summary of the major findings and take-aways in a Briefing Book, released in February 2021. Information gathered through the existing conditions analysis is serving as the backbone for remaining work on the project by helping the community and project team understand and appropriately prioritize the various issues and opportunities facing Santa Rosa.

Following development of the existing conditions analysis, in March 2021, the project team met separately with the TAC and CAC to review takeaways from the Existing Conditions Report and gather initial ideas about the vision, leading to development of a draft Vision Statement. The Vision Statement is an aspirational expression that frames community needs and goals. In May 2021, the project team hosted 10 virtual community workshops to gather community feedback on the draft Vision Statement. Input from the 160 community members who participated in the workshops informed refinements presented to City Council and Planning Commission in a study session on July 20, 2021. City Council and Planning Commission members provided comments to help further refine the Vision Statement. The Vision Statement, comprised of the 13 detailed points, or words, is stated as follows:

Santa Rosa is a diverse, equitable, and sustainable community built on civic engagement that empowers everyone to provide and support equal and affordable opportunities to obtain good housing, education and jobs; to enjoy vibrant cultural events and arts; and to live healthy lives in resilient neighborhoods that adapt to social and environmental change.

Phase 3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives

Three different land use and circulation development scenarios or “alternatives” were prepared at the start of this phase, each reflecting a unique approach to achieve the community’s Vision, accommodate up to 36,000 new housing units, and account for the various existing conditions. All three alternatives included a comparative analysis of the impacts and tradeoffs of concentrating this same amount of growth in different locations.

The three alternatives were described and analyzed in an Alternatives Workbook that provided a comparative assessment of each alternative in the areas of housing, economics, equity, efficiency, sustainability, community safety, and resilience. Following is a summary of each alternative.

- Alternative 1: Central Corridors focused future commercial and residential growth near Downtown and along central thoroughfares that are connected to transit facilities.
- Alternative 2: Neighborhood Main Streets concentrated housing, jobs, and community destinations along key corridors and at community centers.
- Alternative 3: Distributed Housing dispersed new duplexes, triplexes, courtyard, and similar types of homes throughout the city on parcels that can accommodate new housing, growing in a more distributed pattern.

On May 24, 2022, the three alternatives and community responses were presented to the City Council and Planning Commission. City Council and Planning Commission directed staff to proceed with preparing the draft Preferred Alternative based on input from the community on the three alternatives that favored a combination of Alternatives 1 and 2.

Phase 4. Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative built on all previous phases of work, including community visioning, and incorporated aspects of the different alternatives evaluated in the third phase. The Preferred Alternative identifies 19 Areas of Change, defined as places where the City will prioritize efforts to address housing, services, connectivity, and/ or infrastructure needs required to make them complete neighborhoods. Areas of Change are complemented by a plan for major transportation improvements. Together, the land use and transportation network changes further important community priorities, including providing better access to jobs and services, reducing vehicle miles traveled, growing within the City's capacity to serve community-wide water needs, enhancing safety in evacuation events, and overcoming inequities.

On October 25, 2022, the Preferred Alternative was presented to City Council and Planning Commission. City Council and Planning Commission directed staff to proceed with finalizing the Preferred Alternative to be used as the foundation for the draft General Plan.

Phase 5. Draft General Plan

A general plan is a city's road map for the future; describing a community's aspirations and identifying strategies for managing preservation and change. The draft Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 (Attachment 1) grows from work products developed in close collaboration with the community and with oversight and direction from the Planning Commission and City Council. Using the land use and circulation diagram from the Preferred Alternative (Phase 4) as its foundation, the draft General Plan works to achieve the community's vision and address existing challenges and opportunities identified in the Existing Conditions Analysis (Phase 2) with a set of goals, policies, and actions that will guide future decision making, City work programs, and budgeting over the next 20+ years.

The draft Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 consolidates the State mandated General Plan elements into five chapters that address both required and optional General Plan topics. The General Plan includes new optional subject areas and carries over optional topics from the existing General Plan. Each chapter includes goals, policies, and actions that work together to achieve the community's vision for the future. Once General Plan 2050 is adopted, the included actions will comprise an implementation program to guide City department work programs and budgeting.

Included among the optional topics is greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction. The draft General Plan includes goals, policies, and actions that support reductions from community-wide and municipal sources of emissions, supported by a stand-alone GHG Reduction Strategy, which is slated to replace the City's Community-wide Climate Action Plan.

In addition to the five main topical chapters in the General Plan, State law requires an update to the General Plan Housing Element every eight years. The most recent Santa Rosa Housing Element, which was adopted by the City Council on February 14, 2023, and certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development on April 7, 2023, covers the planning period through 2031. The draft General Plan 2050 does not propose any amendments to the Housing Element, however the adopted Housing Element will be included as one of the chapters in the final General Plan. .

The draft General Plan is summarized in an Executive Summary included as Attachment 2 and a comprehensive list of all draft General Plan goals, policies, and actions can be reviewed in Attachment 3. All other Santa Rosa Forward products, including the Community Involvement Strategy, Existing Conditions Report, Briefing Book, Vision Statement, Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Workbook, and Preferred Alternative are available on the project website (many of which are available in English and Spanish): <https://www.santarosafoward.com/>.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact related to this item as the funding has already been allocated to the Santa Rosa Forward project. The draft Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 is a component of the authorized work plan and contract.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The full scope of the General Plan Update process includes a programmatic Environmental Impact Report, which is currently underway. A Draft Environmental Impact Report based on the contents of Draft General Plan 2050 is anticipated to be released for public review by the end of 2023.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Draft General Plan 2050
- Attachment 2 – Executive Summary – Draft General Plan 2050
- Attachment 3 – Summary of Goals, Policies, and Actions – Draft General Plan 2050

PRESENTER

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