

Agenda Item #8.1
For Planning Commission Meeting of: February 26, 2026

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: CHAIR WEEKS AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: CONOR MCKAY, SENIOR PLANNER, PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: SOUTH SANTA ROSA SPECIFIC PLAN LAND USE AND CIRCULATION ALTERNATIVES

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning & Economic Development Department that the Planning Commission review and provide input on Draft Alternatives to help guide the preparation of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan (SSRSP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Land Use and Circulation Alternatives present three potential approaches to achieve Santa Rosa's vision for the future of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan Area while taking existing conditions into consideration. Each of the three Alternatives offers a different approach to distributing future housing, recreation areas, economic growth, and circulation improvements presented in detail in the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report (Attachment 1). The Alternatives Report is a key step in the Specific Plan process and provides an opportunity for the community to consider how South Santa Rosa will look in the future, where growth will occur, and what areas to preserve. The Alternatives present variations in the location and density of future housing, park and open space improvements. They reflect different ways to achieve the fundamental goals of the General Plan Update, aligning with the community vision and policies outlined in the General Plan.

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

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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 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 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.

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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 Environmental Impact Report.

On June 28, 2023, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission authorized funding for the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and EIR in the amount of \$1,200,000, through Resolution No. 4505 Revised.

On January 9, 2024, the Council approved a Professional Services agreement with 4Leaf, Inc. in the amount of \$1,000,000 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 \$1.2M 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 which resulted in 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 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 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 was identified as the second highest rated consultant in the original competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process that took place in winter of 2023.

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On March 4th, 2025, the City Council, by resolution 1) approved the Professional Services Agreement (PSA) with Dyett & Bhatia, Urban and Regional Planners, Oakland, California, for public engagement, planning, and environmental review services for a twenty-two month period to prepare the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report in an amount not to exceed \$765,272, and 2) authorized the Chief Financial Officer to establish appropriations of \$104,428 with the source of funds being the Planning and Economic Development's Advance Planning Fund.

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

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

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

WORK COMPLETED TO DATE

1. Community Involvement Strategy

The core goal of the Community Engagement Strategy is to establish an inclusive and collaborative approach to engagement that recognizes the importance of planning with the community, rather than for the community. This approach recognizes the importance of removing barriers to participation in the planning process and strives to amplify the voices of community members, including seniors, youth, people of color, low-income families, individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and representatives of other equity priority populations, to ensure they are not left out of the conversation. More specifically, the Community Engagement Strategy is designed with the following key objectives in mind:

- Ensure that the planning process actively seeks input from all residents, businesses, and other stakeholders, particularly those who are traditionally underrepresented in the planning process.
- Facilitate effective communication between the project team and the community to encourage the exchange of information, concerns, and ideas throughout the project.
- Foster a collaborative environment to create a shared vision for the Plan Area that reflects the diverse values and needs of the community.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure that feedback and input from the community is echoed back to the public, fostering a sense of trust and transparency in the

planning process.

- Lay the groundwork for enduring partnerships between the community and the City of Santa Rosa.

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

The Existing Conditions Report serves as the foundation for the SSRSP and describes economic conditions, demographic composition, urban form, land use, circulation, public services, infrastructure, and climate adaptation. The Existing Conditions Report also describes the regulatory framework that applies to each of these topic areas. The report presents the existing conditions, challenges, and opportunities in the project area and is crucial for making informed decisions during the planning process. Ultimately, this report helps to shape the strategies and policies of the SSRSP to align with the existing context and community needs.

The Plan Area Profile provides a comprehensive overview of the demographics, housing, land use, zoning, and employment characteristics within the Plan Area. The document serves as a foundational resource for the Specific Plan process, offering critical insights into the current conditions of the community. These insights support data-driven planning and decision-making, ensuring future growth aligns with the needs of the local population and the principles of sustainable development.

The Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy describes the current affordability conditions within the Plan Area, existing policies and programs in place, and proposes new policies and programs to further preserve affordable housing and reduce displacement. The report helps to shape the strategies and policies of the SSRSP to preserve affordable housing and reduce displacement while increasing the availability and quality of housing and other community assets.

The Market Demand Analysis provides an analysis of economic and market data based on publicly available information from a variety of sources as well as proprietary data sources such as CoStar Group.

3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives

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 are not final decisions. They are tools to gather community feedback before selecting a Preferred Alternative, which will serve as the foundation of the land use and transportation changes associated with the Specific Plan.

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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.

Alternatives Outreach

The Alternatives Report and associated survey were released on January 28th, 2026.

Public workshops are scheduled to solicit feedback on the Alternatives:

- Amarosa Academy - March 4th, 6–7:30pm
- Taylor Mountain Elementary – March 5th, 6-7:30pm
- Held virtually on Zoom – March 11th, 5:30-6:30pm

City staff will also attend existing community gatherings, such as club meetings, farmers markets, and other local events to spread the word about the Specific Plan and gather feedback on the Alternatives.

On March 24th, 2026, Staff will hold a study session with the City Council about the Alternatives Report.

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 Circulation and Land Use Alternatives effort is a component of the authorized work plan and contract.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The full scope of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan process includes a programmatic

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Environmental Impact Report to commence later in 2026 once a CEQA project (policy document) is developed.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No action has been taken by any individual Boards or Commissions related to the Alternatives Report.

NOTIFICATION

A variety of notifications and promotions were completed as part of the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives 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 – Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report
- Attachment 2 – [Existing Conditions Report](#)
- Attachment 3 – [Community Engagement Strategy](#)

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