

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: GABE OSBURN, DIRECTOR
JILL SCOTT, ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A FIVE YEAR (2024-2029) ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Council, by resolution, approve a five-year (2024-2029) Economic Development Strategic Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the Council's direction, a five-year economic development strategic plan ("the Plan") has been developed to support the Council's economic and community vibrancy goal of creating a diverse and thriving economy that benefits Santa Rosa residents and businesses. While the Plan's main focus revolves around welcoming new and innovative businesses, workforce retention, and expansion, its objectives include community investment, infrastructure, and opportunity access. This well-vetted Plan rooted in sustainable, economic resiliency, encompasses a community engagement perspective and local and regional economic development alignment.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, staff was directed to develop an economic development strategic plan. The community-informed process began with a focus on three primary goals: for the City to be a champion of innovation and transformation for the Santa Rosa community, to design and implement data-driven policies and programs to elevate and support local business owners and entrepreneurs representing historically marginalized groups, and to implement policies and leverage partnerships to address urgent economic challenges and improve livability across Santa Rosa.

Staff was able to incorporate the community perspectives gained from interviews, focus groups, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis, case

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PLAN
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studies, and best practices, with regional economic development plans and the General Plan Update outreach efforts to develop a new community informed Plan designed to foster sustainable economic growth. Through this community engagement process, the needs identified re-emphasized housing and cost of living, an inclusive approach to economic development, and infrastructure needs as priorities. In early 2023, staff began working with the Economic Development Subcommittee as the public forum to outline and structure the new Strategic Plan, discussing objectives, and tactics throughout the year. Additionally, staff reached out to local and regional partners, such as the California Association of Local Economic Developers (CALED), the Sonoma County Economic Development Board, Sonoma County Tourism, the Santa Rosa Metro Chamber, and Santa Rosa Tourism to solicit feedback and discuss opportunities for partnership on shared goals and objectives.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On December 12, 2023, the City Council conducted a study session to review the draft Plan, gain information, ask questions, and provide feedback.

ANALYSIS

This comprehensive and equitable Plan for Council consideration has been crafted to consider economic growth, community vitality and ensure financial stability. The Plan's vision statement outlines the City's operating principles. It maintains alignment with City Council goals and values and the City's general plan while focusing on three key pillars: Business Growth, Economic Vibrancy and Resiliency, and Community Investment. Similar to industry standards, the Plan identifies the goal, lays out associated actions, and lists performance measurements and metrics to allow annual evaluation and modification. While each goal is important, emphasis is placed on new business attraction and creating fiscal stability for all of Santa Rosa.

The plan's three key pillars were identified through a process involving input from local and regional stakeholders. Feedback was gathered through many methods, including individual interviews, focus groups with community leaders and industry partners, community surveys, business surveys, and in-person engagement. A survey conducted in 2021 in English and Spanish, for which over 600 people responded, provided us with a deeper understanding of our community's needs, which led us to this forward-thinking strategy.

FISCAL IMPACT

This Economic Development Strategic Plan adoption does not contain nor anticipate additional funding recommendations outside of discussions and decisions made through the traditional budget process.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Council finds that the proposed approval of the Plan is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the approval of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and that no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Development Subcommittee: at the November 14, 2023, meeting, the Subcommittee recommended the attached Draft Economic Development Strategic Action Plan be forwarded to City Council as a Study Session, which occurred on December 12, 2023.

NOTIFICATION

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution/Exhibit A – The Economic Development Strategic Plan

PRESENTERS

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