

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: GABE OSBURN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: SOUTH SANTA ROSA SPECIFIC PLAN COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE FORMATION

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Council, by motion: 1) waive Council Policy 00-06 regarding appointments to Boards/Commissions/Committees to allow Staff to appoint members of the Engagement Advisory Committee for the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan; and 2) accept the Community Engagement Strategy for the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Planning and Economic Development Department has contracted with 4LEAF, Inc. to prepare the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan (Specific Plan). The Community Engagement Strategy for the Specific Plan outlines the open, thoughtful, and inclusive approach to community outreach that will occur throughout the Specific Plan process, and staff is seeking Council's acceptance of the proposed Strategy. An important component of the Community Engagement Strategy is the formation of the Engagement Advisory Committee (EAC), which represents residents and stakeholders in the development of the Specific Plan. Council Policy 000-06, Appointments to Boards/Commissions/Committees, outlines specific requirements for appointments to City committees. Because the Specific Plan EAC will be an official City committee, it is required to comply with this Council Policy. However, strict application of the Policy requires that members be residents of the City of Santa Rosa and requires member appointment by the City Council. Because a large portion of the Specific Plan area is in unincorporated Sonoma County, and to ensure an expedited appointment process for the project, staff is recommending that the Policy be waived to allow County residents within the Specific Plan area to participate and to allow City staff to appoint members based on the EAC composition included in the Strategy.

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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 the Mendocino and Santa Rosa Avenue corridors, 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, including six within the City of Santa Rosa: Mendocino Avenue Corridor, Santa Rosa Avenue Corridor, Sebastopol Road Corridor, North Santa Rosa Station Area, Downtown Station Area, and Roseland.

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.

On January 24, 2023, the City Council held a study session to consider City potential 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.

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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 the City's Santa Rosa Avenue Corridor PDA and the County's South Santa Rosa Area PDA. The project area encompasses approximately 1,900 acres, 1,400 of which is unincorporated County land, but within the City's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).

On March 28, 2023, the Council approved and ratified City staff's submittal of an application to 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, Council adopted Resolution No. RES-2024-005 approving a Professional Services Agreement with 4Leaf, Inc., for preparation of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and EIR, and authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to establish appropriations of \$1,200,000, with the source of funds being a \$1,200,000 grant from MTC/ABAG.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

See Background section above.

ANALYSIS

Community engagement is a critical component to the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan process. Outreach methods will be varied and customized to ensure maximum participation and will include innovative strategies to reach people who do not typically get involved in planning processes. Input will be sought from residents, business proprietors, property owners, neighborhood groups, community organizations, and faith-based organizations. Special effort will be made to include minority, low income, youth, renter, and non-English speaking populations.

The Community Engagement Strategy is outlined in the attached document. Engagement for the Specific Plan will continue throughout each phase of the process.

1. Purpose

The purpose 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.

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2. Engagement Objectives

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.

3. Community Engagement Methods

The consultant team, in coordination with the Planning and Economic Development Department and the City's Communications and Intergovernmental Relations Office, will employ a local, "Embedded Planning" approach to community engagement to activate members of the community and meet them where they are. Embedded Planning is when planners conduct their work in the spaces and places of the community to understand people's needs, build trust and authentic relationships, increase participation for marginalized communities, participate in community life, and ultimately advance equity.

The attached Community Engagement Strategy outlines the following engagement methods (see Strategy for specific details):

- Engagement Advisory Committee (see below for more details)
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Translation and Interpretation Services
- Project Branding
- Project Webpage
- Community Canvassing

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- Community Surveys
- Pop-Up Events and Workshops
- Community Walks
- Local Planning Office
- K-14 Schools Engagement
- Social Media Materials

4. Engagement Advisory Committee (EAC)

As part of the Community Engagement Strategy for the Specific Plan, an EAC will be formed. The role of the EAC will be to lead the community's participation and serve as the City's embedded connection to the communities in the Specific Plan area. The EAC will provide community review of and feedback on project products, will help to prioritize what issues to bring to the larger community, and will help to refine materials before they are presented at community workshops. EAC members will act as project ambassadors and encourage those who live and work in the Specific Plan area to attend community workshops, events, and public hearings. After the final workshop, the EAC will represent the community in refinement and finalization of the Specific Plan.

Outreach, through in-person meetings and phone conversations, for the EAC will begin following Council's acceptance of the Community Engagement Strategy and waiver of Council Policy 000-06 (see below) to allow Staff to appoint EAC members.

The opportunity to participate in the EAC will be outlined on the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan website and in a project information flyer that will be posted around the community. In addition, all possible sources will be consulted for potential members, including an inquiry to the City and County of Sonoma contact lists, lists from previous projects and stakeholder committees, and recommendations from residents, community members and City and County staff.

The EAC will comprise 10 to 15 members that reflect the rich social diversity of the Specific Plan area. EAC members will be stakeholders who live, work, play, shop, travel in, or use the area. This includes stakeholders within the City and unincorporated County areas and in adjacent areas outside the Plan area. A priority will be placed on current residents, including homeowners and renters, property owners, students, businesses, customers, and public space users, but membership is open to all stakeholders.

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Following the outreach to potential EAC members, Staff will develop a list of members for subsequent selection by Staff. To ensure an open and inclusive process, additional members may be added based on volunteer interest and need for representation.

5. Council Policy 000-06

Council Policy 000-06, Appointments to Boards/Commissions/Committees, outlines specific requirements for appointments to City committees. Because the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan EAC will be an official City committee, it is required to comply with this Council Policy.

The Council Policy identifies specific requirements for recruitment, appointment, notification, sources of names, incumbents, applications, appointment procedures by individual Council members or by the full Council, chairs, attendance, and conflicts of interest/ethics. The strict requirements of the Council Policy, which includes that members be residents of the City of Santa Rosa and that they fill out a formal application, do not fit with the desired composition or creation of the Specific Plan EAC.

Approximately 1,400 acres of the 1,900-acre Specific Plan area is unincorporated Sonoma County. The City has not created a formal application process for the EAC because this is a unique group that will be formed for this project only and recruitment is being done through individual contacts/meetings/conversations with residents, business and property owners and others who are actively involved in the community. Further, if selected EAC members ultimately decide to terminate their membership of the EAC, Staff's ability to appoint replacement EAC members will ensure the Specific Plan remains on track within the schedule and under budget.

While the City Council typically provides appointments to City boards, commissions and committees, appointment by City Staff utilizing the composition guidelines outlined in the attached Community Engagement Strategy will provide the necessary selection criteria for this limited term committee, and will allow Staff to reappoint quickly if members resign mid-project.

City Staff has found that the strict application of Council Policy 000-06 is not appropriate for the development of this unique committee.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and EIR professional services agreement with 4Leaf Inc. is not to exceed \$1,000,000, and City staff costs to manage the project are not to exceed \$200,000, totaling a not to exceed amount of \$1,200,000.

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While the \$1,200,000 has been appropriated from the General Fund, that money will be paid back through reimbursements from the grant that the City received through MTC/ABAG. Therefore, there will be no impact to the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed acceptance of the Community Engagement Strategy and waiving of Council Policy 000-06 are exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and no further environmental review is required. The preparation of the Specific plan will be subject to CEQA.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – South Santa Rosa Specific Plan Boundary Maps
- Attachment 2 – Council Policy 000-06
- Attachment 3 – Community Engagement Strategy

PRESENTER

Conor McKay, Senior Planner
Planning and Economic Development