

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Subsequent Environmental Impact Report

Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update

Date: 18 December, 2019

To: Reviewing Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update

Notice is hereby given that the City of Santa Rosa will be the lead agency for the preparation of a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update. Pursuant to section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City is soliciting comments from all interested persons, organizations, and responsible and trustee agencies as to the scope and content of the SEIR and the environmental information to be analyzed in connection with an update to the 2007 Downtown Station Area Specific Plan.

The Final EIR for the 2007 Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (SCH #2006072104) was certified in October 2007. The Proposed Plan makes certain changes to the land uses, development regulations, and circulation improvements envisioned in the 2007 Plan that could potentially result in new or substantially more severe impacts as compared to those analyzed and mitigated in the 2007 EIR. Additionally, since certification of the 2007 EIR, the California Natural Resources Agency has adopted updates to the CEQA Guidelines that represent a substantial change to the circumstances under which the Proposed Plan would be implemented. As such, the City has determined that an SEIR should be prepared. The Draft and Final EIR may be accessed here: <https://www.plandowntownsr.com/backgrounddocuments>

A description of the updated Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update (Proposed Plan), planning area location, and probable environmental effects to be addressed in the SEIR is provided below. Public agencies and members of the general public are invited to provide comments in writing as to the scope and content of the EIR at the earliest date possible, but no later than the close of the NOP review period, which runs as follows:

December 19, 2019 - January 21, 2020, 5:00pm. Written comments should be addressed to:

Patrick Streeter, Senior Planner
Planning and Economic Development Department
City of Santa Rosa
100 Santa Rosa Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
pstreeter@srcity.org

Additionally, the City will host a scoping meeting and community workshop to solicit input on the scope and content of the environmental analysis that will be included in the SEIR. The date, time,

**City of Santa Rosa
Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Downtown Station Area Specific Plan EIR**

and location of the meeting is at 5:30-7:00pm on January 15th, 2020 at the Sonoma County Library-Central Branch.

City of Santa Rosa
Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Downtown Station Area Specific Plan EIR

PROJECT TITLE: Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Update

PLANNING AREA LOCATION

Santa Rosa is located in central Sonoma County, about 55 miles north of San Francisco (see Figure 1). The planning area covers approximately 720 acres surrounding the Downtown Santa Rosa Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) Station in the heart of the city. The planning area extends approximately one-half mile in all directions from the Downtown Station and is roughly bounded by College Avenue in the north; Brookwood, Sonoma and Santa Rosa avenues in the east; Highway 12 and Sebastopol Road in the south; and Dutton Avenue and Imwalle Gardens on the west.

As part of the proposed update, the boundaries of the 2007 planning area have been expanded east to encompass an additional 70 acres between E Street and Brookwood Avenue, consistent with the eastern boundary of the downtown area as described in the Santa Rosa General Plan. The planning area has also been designated a Priority Development Area (PDA), one of five PDAs in Santa Rosa established by the City to provide opportunities for compact, infill development in proximity to transit, jobs, schools, shopping and services. PDAs are an integral part of Plan Bay Area 2040, the regional sustainable growth strategy that coordinates housing plans, open space conservation efforts, economic development strategies, and transportation investments.

BACKGROUND

A key purpose of the 2007 DSASP was to increase the number of residents and employees within walking distance of the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) site through the intensification of land uses in the planning area. However, halfway through the planning period, only 100 housing units and 194,000 square feet of office, retail, and institutional uses have been developed, with an additional 275 housing units and 107,000 square feet of office, retail, and institutional uses approved, but not yet constructed. Successful downtown development is an essential part of addressing the urgent housing need created by the housing crisis and loss of homes to the 2017 wildfires. As such, the City of Santa Rosa is undertaking an update to the 2007 DSASP to explore options for addressing the community's unmet housing needs as well as land use, transportation, economic development, and historic preservation issues associated with the intensification of housing development downtown.

DESCRIPTION OF KEY PROPOSED PLAN COMPONENTS

The Proposed Plan is an update to the 2007 DSASP intended to streamline and simplify the regulatory framework, facilitate development consistent with the community vision for the planning area, and update development standards and design guidelines to promote vibrant, livable environments downtown. A summary of key components is provided below and a more detailed description is included in the attached Initial Study:

- **Land Use Designations** - The Proposed Plan introduces a streamlined set of land use designations applicable in areas with clusters of vacant and under-utilized land where change is foreseeable. Outside of these areas, no change to the land use framework is envisioned and the current land use designations from the General Plan would remain in force. Proposed new land use designations include: Core Mixed Use; Station Mixed Use; Maker Mixed Use; and Neighborhood Mixed Use. In addition, an active ground floor overlay requiring uses and/or design techniques that promote comings and goings and enhance the pedestrian environment has been added.
- **Density and Intensity Regulations** - The Proposed Plan would remove residential density limits and maximum building heights in change areas, instead regulating density and intensity by establishing a maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR). Height in change areas would effectively be controlled by the size of the parcel and the maximum allowable FAR, and the removal of density limits would be expected to incentivize construction of smaller units affordable by design. Building heights above the current limit established in the Historic (H) combining district in the Zoning Code would remain subject to discretionary approval, and outside of change areas existing limits on building height and residential density would remain in force.
- **Roadway Reallocation**- The Proposed Plan would involve roadway reallocations (also known as “road diets”) to remove one vehicle travel lane and add bicycle lanes, sidewalk extensions/curb bulbouts, and curbside parklets at the following locations: Santa Rosa Avenue between Sonoma Ave and Maple Avenue; E Street from College to Sonoma Avenue; and Mendocino Avenue from Tenth Street to Fourth Street.
- **New and Enhanced Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections** - The Proposed Plan would create a continuous pedestrian and bicycle connection along Fourth Street from Railroad Square to Courthouse Square through the Santa Rosa Plaza Mall, and would enhance existing bicycle and pedestrian connections under elevated roadway segments at This Street, Fourth Street, Fifth Street, Sixth Street, Ninth Street, and the Joe Rodota Trail.
- **Other Circulation Improvements** - The Proposed Plan envisions the construction of two new multi-modal roadway connections: the extension of Donahue Street north from West Ninth to connect with Maxwell Court, and the creation of a new roadway connecting West Third and West Sixth Street through the SMART site west of the Downtown Station. Additionally, the Proposed Plan envisions a trackless trolley or shuttle connection operating on a frequent schedule to link the SMART station, Courthouse Square, and the Santa Rosa Plaza Mall.
- **Plazas, Parks and Civic Spaces** - The Proposed Plan involves promoting entertainment and activities in flexible, publicly accessible “civic spaces” that attract residents and visitors downtown and build vibrancy and sense of place. Civic spaces would be created by enhancing existing spaces in Courthouse Square and Depot Park, as well as by creating new public spaces in Imwalle and Maxwell Court.

**City of Santa Rosa
Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Downtown Station Area Specific Plan EIR**

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063, the City has prepared an Initial Study to determine which of the Proposed Plan's effects were adequately examined by the 2017 EIR and which effects should be further analyzed in the SEIR. Based on the findings of the Initial Study (attached), the SEIR will focus on the following effects determined to be potentially significant:

- Air Quality;
- Archaeological and Historic Resources;
- Tribal Cultural Resources;
- Groundwater Resources;
- Substantial Increases in Ambient Noise;
- Conflicts with programs, plans, ordinances or policies addressing the circulation system;
- Consistency with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b), requiring the analysis of vehicle miles travelled;
- Parks and Recreation;
- Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions; and
- Utilities and Service Systems.

Other impacts will not be further analyzed in the SEIR. The SEIR will also examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the Proposed Plan that could reduce or avoid its significant effects. As with the 2007 EIR, the SEIR will examine a No Project Alternative as well as other potential alternatives to the Proposed Plan.

SCOPING MEETING

A scoping meeting will be conducted on January 15th, 2020, 5:30-7:00pm, to collect oral comments from agencies and members of the public regarding the scope and content of the SEIR in accordance with CEQA Section 21083.9.

EIR Scoping Meeting on the DSASP Update

January 15, 2020 5:30-7:00pm

Sonoma County Library: Central Branch

211 E Street, Santa Rosa, CA 945404

For project information, please visit: <https://www.plandowntownsr.com>

Please contact Patrick Streeter at 707-543-4323 or pstreeter@srcity.org with any questions regarding this notice or the scoping meeting.

City of Santa Rosa
Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Downtown Station Area Specific Plan EIR



Patrick Streeter, Senior Planner

12.17.19

Date