



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 8/25/2026

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma

Staff Name and Phone Number: Scott Orr, Director (707) 565-1754; Katrina Braehmer, Supervising Planner (707) 565-1903

Vote Requirement: Informational Only

Supervisory District(s): Third and Fifth

Title:

Public Workshop on the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan (SSRSP) Draft Preferred Alternative

Recommended Action:

This item is for informational purposes only and no formal action or decision is requested. Permit Sonoma recommends that the Board of Supervisors hold a public workshop and provide input on the draft Preferred Alternative for the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan.

Executive Summary:

The City of Santa Rosa (City), in partnership with the County of Sonoma, is preparing a Specific Plan for portions of incorporated and unincorporated south Santa Rosa to guide development through 2050. The South Santa Rosa Specific Plan (SSRSP) will develop a vision for the Plan Area, addressing land use, circulation and infrastructure, community health and equity policies, standards for private development and the public realm, capital improvements, and parks, with necessary implementation actions and investment priorities.

The SSRSP Plan Area is within two Priority Development Areas (PDAs) designated by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission/Association of Bay Area Governments (MTC/ABAG), and encompasses 1,900 acres, of which 1,400 acres are unincorporated Sonoma County and the remaining 500 acres are within the City of Santa Rosa. To collaborate on planning efforts for the adjacent PDAs, the City is the lead on the project and the County is a key partner in the process. The Plan is envisioned to be adopted by both the Santa Rosa City Council and County Board of Supervisors to create a cohesive development pattern within the City's Sphere of Influence and better facilitate potential future annexations.

On May 7, 2026, the Sonoma County Planning Commission considered and provided comment on a set of three land use and circulation alternatives to inform the draft Preferred Alternative.

This item presents the SSRSP draft Preferred Alternative prepared by the City, which features:

- A pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use corridor along Santa Rosa Avenue;
- Additional high-density housing within City limits;
- Distributed parks and open space; and
- Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity improvements.

Permit Sonoma recommends that the Board of Supervisors hold a public workshop and provide input on the

draft Preferred Alternative for the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan. After the workshop, County staff from Permit Sonoma will continue to work with the City to develop a final Preferred Alternative, which will be the foundation of the Specific Plan and undergo environmental review in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Detailed background on the history of the Specific Plan project and completed work to date is available in Attachment 4 (Planning Commission Staff Report, May 7, 2026).

Discussion:**Project Description**

A specific plan is a planning document that implements the goals and policies of a city or county general plan and guides the development of a particular geographic area. The South Santa Rosa Specific Plan (SSRSP) will develop a vision for the Plan Area, addressing land use, circulation and infrastructure, including development and public realm standards, community health and equity policies, capital improvements, and parks, coupled with necessary implementation actions and investment priorities. The Specific Plan is envisioned to be adopted by both the City Council and County Board of Supervisors to serve the communities within City limits and within the unincorporated County.

The Plan Area includes the City's Sphere of Influence and Urban Growth Boundary, and the County's Urban Service Area boundary. The unincorporated areas are also within the boundaries of the recently adopted City of Santa Rosa General Plan 2050 as the City's Sphere of Influence represents the probable future physical boundary and service area of the City. The Plan Area includes a portion of the City's Mendocino Avenue/Santa Rosa Avenue Corridor Priority Development Area (PDA), designated by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission/Association of Bay Area Governments (MTC/ABAG), and the County's Santa Rosa Avenue PDA, which includes the Moorland neighborhood. City and County staff have started conversations about possible future annexation of unincorporated areas within the Plan Area, however, annexation is not part of the Specific Plan project.

Concurrent to the Specific Plan effort, the County is in the process of a comprehensive General Plan update ("General Plan Sonoma") that will consider changes to land use and circulation policies similar to the Specific Plan process. Staff are coordinating among the planning efforts, although the Specific Plan is expected to come forward for adoption in 2027 while the General Plan update is anticipated to run through 2029.

Background**Priority Development Areas**

The City-led Specific Plan effort is funded by a Priority Development Area (PDA) Grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments (MTC/ABAG) are jointly responsible for developing long range planning for land use and transportation growth within the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Priority Development Areas (PDAs) are specific areas identified within regional planning frameworks, such as MTC's Plan Bay Area 2050, designated to support growth that is compact, walkable, and oriented around public transit. PDAs are typically located near major transit hubs and are intended to encourage development that reduces reliance on cars, promotes accessibility, and aligns with sustainability goals. In 2019, the City nominated and MTC/ABAG designated the Santa Rosa Avenue corridor, from Highway 12 South to the southern City limit line, as a Priority Development Area (PDA). The following year, the County designated its own PDA to the south of and abutting the City's PDA.

The PDA designation qualifies jurisdictions for certain infrastructure and funding opportunities to support planning for housing, jobs, and transportation investments in the area.

South Santa Rosa Area Plan

The SSRSP Plan Area includes land currently served by the South Santa Rosa Area Plan. Area plans are legislatively distinct from specific plans. Area Plans are considered components of the General Plan, provide localized policy, and their content is not prescribed by California law; whereas Specific Plans are separate from, but implement, the General Plan for a particular geography, and their content is regulated by California Government Code Sections 65450-65457. Specific plans often provide detailed land use and zoning regulations, including design and development standards and development approval processes, and are required to provide a program of implementation measures, including infrastructure projects and financing measures to support the planned land uses. Specific plans further provide the benefit of streamlined environmental review of development projects that are consistent with the plan.

The South Santa Rosa Area Plan was first adopted as a Specific Plan by the Board of Supervisors in 1982 to provide detailed planning consistent with the County's 1978 General Plan. The Area Plan is still in effect although it has been amended multiple times; after the adoption of the 1989 General Plan, the Plan was converted from a Specific Plan to an Area Plan and in 2008, the Plan was amended again with adoption of the current General Plan 2020. The 1982 Area Plan encompasses a broader area of about 18,000 acres, while the proposed Specific Plan focuses on 1,900 acres along the Santa Rosa Avenue corridor, as well as the Moorland community, industrial areas on the west side of Highway 101, and areas within City limits.

Project History and Alternatives Process

Table 1 presents a summary of the major project milestones and events. Detailed background on the history of the Specific Plan project and completed work to date is available in Attachment 4 (Planning Commission Staff Report, May 7, 2026).

In July of 2025, the City released an Existing Conditions Report, Plan Area Profile, Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy, and Market Demand Analysis (Attachments 6-9), which explore in detail the environmental, economic, and social challenges facing the Plan Area along with potential strategies to improve deficiencies and shape sustainable growth. The Plan Area is a diverse community home to 11,500 residents. Approximately half are Hispanic or Latino, and residents have a younger median age (31.1 years) and lower median household income (\$60,700) than both City and County metrics. The area also has a higher poverty level (14.45 percent) and average household size (3.03 persons) than the City and County. The most common housing type is detached single-family homes including mobile homes and 54.6 percent of all housing is renter-occupied. Residents experience significant overcrowding (9.5 percent compared with the City's 3.8) and high housing cost burden (60 percent spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing; 28 percent spend more than 50 percent). There are significant disparities in services and infrastructure across neighborhoods, limited east-west connectivity, particularly for bicycles and pedestrians, and the area is exposed to frequent urban flooding and various pollution sources (e.g. Diesel Particulate Matter and other traffic emissions, groundwater threats, hazardous waste sites, and solid waste sites).

After evaluating existing conditions, consideration of alternatives is the next key step in the process and provides an opportunity for decisionmakers and the community to consider how south Santa Rosa will look in the future, where growth will occur, and what areas to preserve. In January of 2026, the project team released

three potential alternatives for the future of the Plan Area, each offering a different approach to distributing future housing, open space and recreation areas, economic growth, and circulation improvements, considering existing issues and opportunities. The three alternatives are discussed in the Planning Commission staff report for its May 7, 2026 meeting (Attachment 4) and detailed in the project's Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report (Attachment 5).

Table 1. Major Project Milestones

Date	Major Project Milestones
June 28, 2023	MTC authorized funding for the South Santa Rosa Specific Plan and EIR in the amount of \$1,200,000, through Resolution No. 4505.
January 2024	South Santa Rosa Specific Plan project commenced.
October 2024	City hosted three community workshops on Plan Area issues and opportunities.
July 8, 2025	County Board of Supervisors authorizes \$50,000 from District Formation Funds allocated to District 3 to assist in closing a project funding gap.
July 10, 2025	City releases the Existing Conditions Report, Plan Area Profile, Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy, and Market Demand Analysis.
January 28, 2026	City releases the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report.
February 26, 2026	Santa Rosa Planning Commission holds a study session on the land use and circulation alternatives.
March 24, 2026	Santa Rosa City Council holds a study session on the land use and circulation alternatives.
March 2026	City hosts community workshops to solicit feedback on the alternatives. • March 4 th at Amarosa Academy • March 5 th at Taylor Mountain Elementary • March 11 th held virtually on Zoom
May 7, 2026	County of Sonoma Planning Commission holds a public workshop on the land use and circulation alternatives.
July 29, 2026	City hosts a virtual community workshop on the draft Preferred Alternative.
August 13, 2026	Santa Rosa Planning Commission holds a study session on the draft Preferred Alternative.
August 18, 2026	Santa Rosa City Council holds a study session on the draft Preferred Alternative.

Community Engagement

The City leads community engagement efforts guided by the project's Community Engagement Strategy (Attachment 10), which emphasizes planning with the community, rather than for the community. The City held seven public workshops and conducted three online surveys to solicit feedback at key points in the planning process. County staff continue to collaborate with the City to ensure residents and representatives of the unincorporated areas have equitable opportunities to engage in the process.

Community feedback shows general support of the Specific Plan effort. Residents of the Moorland neighborhood in the southwest of the Plan Area have advocated for improved east-west connectivity between Moorland and the areas east of Highway 101, more neighborhood-serving uses, and infrastructure and service improvements. Commenters generally oppose increased residential density in Moorland and a primary concern is the potential for displacement. Community members would like the Specific Plan to incorporate strategies and policy to preserve affordable housing, prevent displacement, and facilitate the production of affordable housing where increased density is proposed.

County Planning Commission Review of Alternatives

On May 7, 2026, Permit Sonoma staff and City staff presented the three land use and circulation alternatives to the Sonoma County Planning Commission. The Commission generally favored Alternatives 3 (Centers) and 2 (City-Centered Growth) over Alternative 1 (Mixed-Use Corridor).

Commissioner discussion and comments were primarily focused on the following:

- The need to protect current residents in the Plan area from displacement pressure and protect future residents from flood and fire risks
- Concerns about the viability of a mixed-use land use approach;
- The lack of parkland across all three alternatives and the importance of connectivity to parkland; and
- How new development facilitated by the Plan could help finance broader infrastructure improvements for the area.

The Commission also expressed support for incorporating measures into the Plan that prevent inequitable outcomes, particularly policies that would protect existing mobile home parks in the Plan Area from closure or conversion.

The Commission further asked about the potential of and procedures for annexation of any portion of the Plan Area. While City-initiated annexation is not part of the project, the City has received conceptual development plans for 1,700 new units of low- to medium-density housing on approximately 282.5 acres of vacant unincorporated land in the eastern portion of the Plan Area. The conceptual plan would include annexation of the area to the City, although no formal development application has been submitted at this time.

City Planning Commission and City Council Review of Alternatives

The City of Santa Rosa Planning Commission and City Council held study sessions on the three land use and circulation alternatives in February and March this year, respectively. The City Planning Commission emphasized improved connectivity to and safety on Santa Rosa Avenue and provided broad support for each alternative. The City Council expressed support for Alternatives 1 and 2, distributed parkland, a Highway 101 crossing at Bellevue Avenue, and anti-displacement strategies.

Draft Preferred Alternative

Attachment 1 provides the Draft Preferred Alternative Report. The draft Preferred Alternative incorporates components of Alternatives 1 (Mixed Use) and 2 (City-Center Growth), featuring a central mixed-use district along Santa Rosa Avenue and additional high-density housing within City limits near the Santa Rosa Marketplace. Retail uses will be located at a commercial center near Robles Avenue to provide goods and services where the most new and existing residents can easily access them. Outside of the mixed-use corridor, another commercial center will be located across from Andy Lopez Unity Park to bring greater access to goods

and services to the Moorland neighborhood. New lower-density neighborhoods are planned in the east. A total of 96 acres of net new park and open space land is distributed across the Plan Area and located to maximize access by residents and connection from creekside pathways. Industrial uses will be maintained west of Highway 101, and commercial uses are designated in the south. In Attachment 1, buildout totals by use type are in Table 2-2 and the draft land use map is presented in Figure 2-2.

The draft Preferred Alternative plans for nearly three million square feet (sf) of new non-residential uses and 6,300 new housing units:

- **Retail and business service:** 1,178,700 sf
- **Industrial:** 1,276,200 sf
- **Mixed-Use:** 456,500 sf
- **Public/institutional** 6,300 sf
- **New Housing:** 6,300 units total (1,500 low-density, 1,500 medium-density, 1,300 high-density, and 2000 mixed-use)

Community feedback on the three alternatives guided development of the draft Preferred Alternative, including the following:

- Support for the mixed-use development and bicycle and pedestrian improvements along Santa Rosa Avenue from Alternative 1;
- Support for high-density housing within City limits from Alternative 2;
- A preference for distributed parks and open space; and
- A preference for improved east-west connections to Santa Rosa Avenue and no increase in residential density in the Moorland neighborhood.

The Plan Area includes 10 sites currently listed in the County's General Plan Housing Element Site Inventory and planned to accommodate 457 new units, including 271 affordable units. The County's Environmental Justice Element further designates the majority of the Plan Area as an Environmental Justice (EJ) Community - low-income areas that experience disproportionate pollution burden and housing cost burden - in which General Plan policy prioritizes improvements and programs. As the project team develops the Plan's draft policy and implementation measures, County staff will ensure the County maintains adequate sites zoned and available to accommodate the remaining of its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for the 6th housing element cycle and that the needs of EJ Communities are prioritized.

Board of Supervisors Consideration

Staff recommends that the Board consider and provide comment or direction to staff on the following:

- The appropriate locations and densities or intensities of land uses in the draft Preferred Alternative, including areas that should be preserved, intensified, or proposed for an alternative land use.
- The adequacy of proposed circulation and mobility improvements in the draft Preferred Alternative, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, the street network, and overall connectivity.
- Whether the draft Preferred Alternative reflects the Board's goals for housing, economic development, environmental protection, and sustainability.
- The Board's priorities for policy and implementation, such as anti-displacement policies, infrastructure projects and financing measures, or design and development standards.

Next Steps

After the workshop, County staff will coordinate with the City to prepare a final Preferred Alternative incorporating comments from City and County decisionmakers and the community. The final Preferred Alternative will form the basis of the Specific Plan and is anticipated to be released in fall of 2026. Staff will then prepare the draft Specific Plan and draft environmental impact report (EIR) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The current project schedule anticipates release of the draft Plan and EIR for a public review period and subsequent refinement in late fall this year or early 2027 prior to adoption hearings with the County and City Planning Commissions, City Council, and Board of Supervisors in spring of 2027.

During Plan development, the project team will evaluate the type and scope of infrastructure improvements needed to support the Preferred Alternative and explore financing measures for implementation (e.g. development impact fees, assessment districts, infrastructure financing districts, etc.).

County staff will also analyze plan consistency and work with the County Planning Commission to recommend an approach to align the Specific Plan with the current County General Plan and South Santa Rosa Area Plan. Because the Specific Plan boundaries only include a portion of the larger Area Plan boundaries, maintaining consistency across all plans will likely require either 1) adopting the Specific Plan and amending the Area Plan boundaries to exclude the area addressed by the Specific Plan, or 2) repealing the Area Plan entirely. The ongoing General Plan update will also provide the opportunity to explore the effectiveness of all adopted area plans and approaches to address issues unique to individual local communities, such as through placed-based General Plan policy (currently area plan policies) or local area development standards in the Zoning Code.

Strategic Plan:

This project does not directly support an objective in the County's Five-year Strategic Plan, however, the Specific Plan's future policy and programs will contribute to various goals in the Strategic Plan's Climate Action and Resiliency, Healthy and Safe Communities, Racial Equity and Social Justice, and Resilient Infrastructure pillars.

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

Yes

A full racial equity toolkit analysis will be available once the draft Specific Plan is completed and presented to the Board of Supervisors for adoption. Equity considerations are embedded in all stages of the project. The toolkit promptings are used throughout the planning effort to guide community engagement, data collection and analysis, and development of policies, program, and accountability strategies. As the Specific Plan develops, the toolkit will be used to evaluate how proposed policies, programs, and land use decisions may affect different racial and socioeconomic groups within the community and refine them prior to adoption to minimize disparate outcomes.

Prior Board Actions:

July 8, 2025: [Board of Supervisors authorizes \\$50,000 from District Formation Funds allocated to District 3 to assist in closing a project funding gap. <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7451375&GUID=272A0E4C-7F41-4433-9650-A6157D5144BB>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7451375&GUID=272A0E4C-7F41-4433-9650-A6157D5144BB)

April 4, 2023: 'Resolution in Support of the City of Santa Rosas Metropolitan Transportation Commission Grant

Agenda Date: 8/25/2026

Application for South Santa Rosa Specific Plan <<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6106988&GUID=5F6E0446-3CA4-4829-BC40-81AD58B4B736&Options=&Search=>>

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1. Draft Preferred Alternative Report, July 2026

Attachment 2. Summary of Draft Preferred Alternative - English

Attachment 3. Summary of Draft Preferred Alternative - Spanish

Attachment 4. Planning Commission Staff Report, May 7, 2026

Attachment 5. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Report

Attachment 6. Existing Conditions Report

Attachment 7. Plan Area Profile

Attachment 8. Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy

Attachment 9. Market Demand Analysis

Attachment 10. Community Engagement Strategy

Attachment 11. Public Comment

Attachment 12. Board Presentation

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A.