

ANNUAL REVIEW

Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan



City Council / Planning Commission Joint Session

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INTRODUCTION

The General Plan addresses issues related to the physical development and growth of Santa Rosa, and it represents the community's aspirations for the future. The General Plan is required by state law, and it has a long range focus, looking 20 years into the future. It guides the City's planning and zoning functions as well as the funding of public improvement projects, such as parks and streets.

The Santa Rosa General Plan was adopted by the City Council in June 2002. Each year, the Planning Commission and City Council review the General Plan, consistent with City Council Policy 200-01, the General Plan Amendment and Consistency Policy and State Planning and Zoning Law. State law directs that an annual report be provided to the legislative body on the status of the plan and progress in its implementation, including meeting its share of regional housing needs. This report is developed to assist citizens and the Planning Commission and City Council in understanding recent decisions involving the General Plan.

The annual review covers General Plan actions in 2003 and addresses General Plan implementation. The yearly review of the Growth Management and Housing Allocation Plan Ordinances is also included, following the General Plan information. A separate report outlines the activities of the Community Development Department in 2003.

GENERAL PLAN ACTIONS IN 2003

According to City Council policy and consistent with State law, the General Plan can be amended three times per year. Amendments to the Land Use Diagram and the text can be considered. Any change to the General Plan requires a hearing before both the Planning Commission and the City Council. The following General Plan Amendment requests were considered during the three 2003 Amendment cycles:

- ξ ***Chestnut Street:*** A request to amend the General Plan Land Use Diagram to change the land use designation of one parcel totaling approximately 0.55 acres from Low Density Residential to Light Industry to recognize an existing warehouse building in the Olive Park neighborhood. The Planning Commission denied the request due to neighborhood compatibility issues. On appeal to the City Council, the Council determined a striped Medium Density/Light Industry designation was appropriate. The City Council initiated a General Plan Amendment for about 1.5 acres across Chestnut Street from Light Industry to Medium Density/Light Industry. This was considered later in 2003 and was approved by the City Council.

- ξ ***Sebastopol Road:*** A request to amend the General Plan Land Use Diagram for seven parcels totaling 3.78 acres from Business Park to Light Industry to better recognize existing uses. The Planning Commission recommended approval and the City Council approved the amendment.

- ξ ***Morris Court:*** A request to amend the General Plan Land Use Diagram from Very Low Density Residential to Low Density Residential for 1.6 acres on a cul-de-sac in southeast Santa Rosa. The Planning Commission denied the amendment due to neighborhood compatibility and heritage tree issues. On appeal, the City Council also denied the requested amendment.

- ξ ***Sebastopol Road Reclassification:*** The Planning Commission initiated a General Plan Amendment to study the configuration of the eastern portion of Sebastopol Road. The Planning Commission supported reclassification of the road from the Northwest Pacific Railroad to Olive Street, and the City Council concurred.

- ξ ***Northpoint Parkway/Dutton Avenue Reclassification:*** The request was for Northpoint Parkway and Dutton Avenue, south of Hearn Avenue, to be reclassified from four lane to two lane regional/arterial streets. The Planning Commission found that these arterials should be four lanes, and it denied the request. The City Council upheld the Planning Commission's decision and denied the General Plan Amendment.

- ξ ***Range Avenue Reclassification:*** The request was to reclassify Range Avenue from Jennings to Cleveland from a four lane regional/arterial street to a two lane transitional/collector street. The Planning Commission found this change to be appropriate and recommended its approval to the City Council, which approved the reclassification.

The effect of the approved land use amendments is a loss of about one half acre of Low Density Residential, an increase of 2.3 acres of Light Industry, an increase of 2 acres of Light Industry/Medium Density Residential, and a loss of 3.8 acres of Business Park. The approved amendments will allow for approximately 30 more dwelling units than prior designations, if residential is the chosen land use over industrial in the Light Industry/Medium Density areas. If industrial land use is chosen, the overall effect is loss of 4 units possible under the former Low Density designation.

GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The General Plan contains hundreds of policies which guide the daily decision making of City staff, the City Council and City Boards and Commissions. The following addresses the progress in implementing the General Plan.

Growth and Development

Residential

There were 786 residential building permits issued by the City of Santa Rosa in 2003. Of the permits issued, 304 were for single family dwellings, 411 were for multifamily dwellings, 63 were for second dwelling units and 8 were for mobile homes. Of the 786 units, 299 were constructed in northeast, 273 in southeast, 181 in southwest and 33 in northwest Santa Rosa.

The new multifamily development is concentrated in three large projects: Cypress Ridge (122 units, southeast), Harvest Apartments (104 units, southeast), and the Lakes at Fountaingrove (124 units, northeast). Two smaller multifamily projects began construction last year: Mendocino Marketplace (28 units, northeast) and Arborita Court (14 units, southeast). Smaller multifamily structures and duplexes make up the remainder of the multifamily total.

Residential permitting was up just slightly from 2002, increasing 1 percent. In 2002, there were 778 permits issued for residential dwellings. Permitting has increased in the southeast (95 units in 2002) and decreased in the southwest (278 units in 2002) over the prior year.

As of January 2004, there was a total of 2,476 residential units approved and ready for development. There were 3,285 residential units proposed and proceeding through the review process. Of these 5,761 pending and approved units, 2,384 in 34 projects are located within the potential range of the Sonoma County California Tiger Salamander, which will affect their development timeline. In addition to the pending and approved units, it is estimated that 6,700 future units are located within the CTS range.

Santa Rosa had 154,453 residents on January 1, 2003, according to the State Department of Finance. This represents an increase of 1 percent over the 2002 population. (Note: the estimate for January 1, 2004 is not available until May 2004).

Non Residential

Santa Rosa issued building permits for just under 200,000 square feet of new commercial buildings in 2003. Included in this total are Safeway and shops in the Mendocino Marketplace, Les Schwab Tires on Santa Rosa Avenue, J Jill in Montgomery Village and shell improvements for a new Sharper Image store also in Montgomery Village. A new industrial shell on Industrial Drive and a small office building on Montgomery Drive were also permitted.

Using General Plan assumptions of non residential square feet per employee, about 650 jobs would be generated by this new commercial development.

Non residential square footage decreased 30 percent from 2002, when 284,655 square feet was permitted.

Significant non residential square footage has been approved (755,889 square feet) with an additional 531,192 square feet in the review process as of January 2004. The type of square footage and the estimated number of jobs it will generate are outlined in the following table.

Non Residential	Pending	Jobs	Approved	Jobs
Retail	195,587	650	66,433	220
Office	99,391	400	513,505	2,055
Light Industrial	55,900	140	146,510	365
Public/Institutional	180,314	600	29,442	100
TOTAL	531,192	1,790	755,889	2,740

Of this 1.3 million square feet of pending and approved non residential development, 217,063 square feet is impacted by the Sonoma County California Tiger Salamander. This square footage will support about 600 new jobs. An analysis of vacant and underdeveloped non residential land shows that an additional future 3.9 million square feet with the potential for 10,800 jobs is within the range of the CTS.

Jobs / Housing Review

The jobs housing ratio refers to the relationship between the number of jobs and the number of employed residents in the city. The ratio is found by dividing the number of jobs by the number of employed residents. The basic idea is that a jobs / housing ratio of 1.0 indicates a balance. A ratio greater than 1.0 indicates a net in-commute due to the fact there are more jobs than employed residents. A ratio of less than 1.0 indicates a net out commute or workers, since there are not enough jobs in the community for all its workers. The Association of Bay Area Governments projects Santa Rosa's jobs/housing ratio to be about 1.36 in 2005. Santa Rosa's ratio has increased over the last decade, indicating continued job growth, with residential growth not occurring at the same pace.

As outlined in the sections above, 786 new units and 200,000 commercial square feet with the potential to generate about 650 jobs were permitted in 2003. The annual jobs/housing ratio can be determined using the following factors.

New units (households)	786
Employed residents/household (ABAG)	1.36
New employed residents	1,068
Jobs/employed residents (650/1,068)	0.61

To see how this will affect the existing 1.36 jobs/housing ratio, the following factors are used.

Total units (66,110 in UGB + 786 new)	66,900
Employed residents/household (ABAG)	1.36
Total employed residents	90,984
Total jobs (122,370 + 650 new)	123,020
Jobs/employed residents	1.35

This year’s ratio slightly reduces the overall “imbalance” of jobs to employed residents in Santa Rosa. (Notes: No conversion made to households from units; units from Santa Rosa Existing Land Use Survey; employed residents and total jobs from ABAG for 2005).

Annexations

In 2003, 32.81 acres of land were added to the City of Santa Rosa through 7 annexations. Most of these annexations contained existing development, but some vacant land with development potential was also included. About 7 acres of retail land and nearly 8 acres of residential land were annexed. Using General Plan estimates, the retail land will generate about 100,000 square feet of development and 300 jobs. The residential land would allow 27 future units, assuming the midpoint of General Plan density ranges.

Housing Needs Information

The 786 units permitted in 2003 meet the following income categories: Very Low - 96; Low - 155; Moderate - 253; Above Moderate - 282. Very Low and Low income units are generally those under contract with the City and second dwelling units. This year, some multifamily projects are charging market rate rents which are affordable to Low Income households. Moderate income units are those which, according to assessor’s records and rental offices, sold or rented at prices affordable to moderate incomes. The following table compares the ABAG Regional Housing Needs Determination numbers for Santa Rosa with building permit issuance by income category to illustrate the remaining need.

Building Permit Issuance by Income Category 1999 - 2003					
Income Category	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Above Moderate	TOTAL
ABAG RHND - 1999 - 2006	1,539	970	2,120	3,025	7,654
Building Permits Issued 1999 - 2003	207	819	1,660	2,852	5,538
Remaining Need 2004 - 2006	1,332	151	460	173	2,116

General Plan Quantified Objectives

1. Help fund the development of 264 very low and 125 low income units annually.

In 2003, 96 permits were issued for very low income units and 155 permits were issued for low income units. Of these units, 120 were subsidized by the City; for the remaining units, market rents were affordable to low income households.

While the City did not fully meet this objective in terms of building permit issuance, it did subsidize the future development of 307 very low and 156 low income units in 6 projects as illustrated in the table below. The last two listings, with 24 low income units, are existing units which have been assisted to assure their affordability. It is important to note that the first two projects in the table have received funding in prior years and have been listed in prior reports on affordability to the Planning Commission and City Council.

	Very Low	Low	Total Units	In Lieu	Other Funds	Total 2003 Subsidy	Prior Subsidy
Marlow Road Apartments	76	50	128		\$2,950,000	\$2,950,000	\$2,025,000
Colgan Meadows Apartments	52	32	85	\$350,000		\$350,000	\$2,021,400
1080 Jennings	91	59	151		\$3,500,000	\$3,500,000	
1090 Jennings	81	9	90	\$1,082,283	\$777,717	\$1,860,000	
Kali Subdivision		6	6		\$240,000	\$240,000	
Hurley House	7		7		\$55,700	\$55,700	
Gentry Holdings		20	20		\$113,000	\$113,000	
Apple Valley		4	4		\$200,000	\$200,000	
TOTAL	307	180	491	\$1,432,283	\$7,836,417	\$9,268,700	\$4,046,400

2. Assist in the rehabilitation of 50 units annually (25 very low and 25 low income housing units).

In 2003, 317 units were rehabilitated through the City’s Housing Conservation/Preservation Program, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and Section 8 rental assistance programs.

Forty-six units were rehabilitated through the Housing Conservation/Preservation Program at a cost of \$421,230. These include 19 single family units and 27 multifamily units. Fifteen of the total units were modified for disabled occupants. Seven of the units rehabilitated are owner occupied, and 39 are renter occupied. Funding came from Redevelopment Low/Mod funds, which assisted 21 very low and 25 low income households.

One hundred fifty units were rehabilitated through the Neighborhood Revitalization Program as a result of building code enforcement measures which were cited and cleared in 2003. This includes 71 units in the Sunset neighborhood, 49 in the Aston neighborhood and 30 in Corby/Olive.

One hundred twenty one units were rehabilitated through the Section 8 rental assistance program as the result of staff inspections for code compliance. These improvements generally include upgraded electrical and plumbing, flooring, paint, new appliances and fixtures and removal of hazards and blight.

3. ***Promote development of 30 second units annually. These units are expected to be affordable to low income households.***

Significant second unit construction continued in 2003, with permits issued for 63 new second dwelling units, exceeding the objective. The majority of these second units are being developed concurrently with single family units in the Boas Village, Brennan Acres, Courtside Village, Village Square, Stonebriar, Branscombe Walk and Maple Village projects. There were 14 second units permitted with existing single family homes.

4. ***Preserve the existing 473 beds and 12 cribs located in emergency shelters and the 188 beds of transitional housing for homeless persons. Support development of 200 additional beds for homeless persons.***

No beds were lost in 2003. The City continued to work toward development of an 80 bed shelter at the Samuel Jones Hall at Finley Avenue and South Wright Road. A commitment of \$800,000 was made last year.

The County opened a 40 bed shelter near the County Administration Center in 2003. This shelter is within the City and will help to serve Santa Rosa's homeless population.

5. ***Preserve the existing inventory of federally and locally funded affordable units including the 432 very low and 107 low income units which may be subject to termination of federal mortgage or rent subsidies between 2001 and 2006.***

During 2003, 13 units were lost due to the expiration of restrictions. One low income unit which had been developed through the local Density Increase Program converted to market rate and 10 units with restricted rents converted due to the bond term expiring. Two additional low income units were lost due to the repayment of two rehabilitation loans.

6. ***Preserve the 2,500 existing mobile homes, which are largely occupied by lower income seniors.***

No mobile homes were lost during 2002.

Housing Policy Implementation

Housing Element policies are unique among General Plan policies in that implementation dates and responsible entities are included. There are 11 policies with 2003 completion dates or annual implementation. A table listing the policies and how implementation has progressed is included as Exhibit A to this report. Generally, implementation has been successful, with highlights including establishment of a Housing Trust Fund, pursuit of a new homeless shelter and an addition to the Zoning Code exempting some projects from rezoning, if affordable housing is provided.

Land Use/Design/Livability

General Plan policy promotes mixed use development in Community Shopping Centers, and along Sebastopol Road and Santa Rosa Avenue. An increasing number of projects are proposing a mix of residential and non-residential uses.

Five mixed use projects are approved and are ready for development. These projects include 86 multifamily units, 6 live/work units, 46,954 square feet of retail and 8,500 square feet of office. Another 4 mixed use projects are proposed and are proceeding through the planning process. These projects propose: 94 multifamily units, 64 senior units, 26 live/work units, 13 single family attached units, 110,347 square feet of retail and 99,391 square feet of office.

The General Plan also calls for preparation of a downtown plan. The City Council has discussed development of a “form based” code to meet this directive and will consider budgeting for such during the upcoming budget session.

Since adoption of more stringent hillside policies in *Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan*, project applicants have responded with projects designed to better protect natural features and avoid development on slopes greater than 25 percent.

Transportation

Traffic circulation remains one of the biggest issues for Santa Rosans. Based on General Plan modeling, it is recognized that continued growth will cause congestion and affect travel times, and some areas will not meet City Level of Service standards. The General Plan focuses on alternative transportation modes such as transit service and bicycling to reduce auto trips.

The General Plan calls for maintaining acceptable traffic flows, with a level of service of “D” or better along major corridors. While regular modeling is not utilized to analyze level of service, traffic signal timing, which affects levels of service, is evaluated on a regular basis. The Public Works Department gathers information on traffic flows at various times of day on major streets, and coordinates signals to improve traffic flow. New technology (global positioning systems) is allowing greater efficiencies in this work.

The General Plan also directs traffic calming on streets subject to high speed and/or cut-through traffic, to improve neighborhood livability. The Public Works Department operates a Neighborhood Traffic Calming program which assists up to three neighborhoods annually. In 2003, Public Works assisted the McDonald neighborhood, the West Junior College neighborhood and the neighborhood around Halyard Drive. Neighbors had requested assistance from the City to reduce speeding and cut-through traffic and various techniques will be utilized, including changing turning movements, adding stop signs, pavement markers and an asphalt pathway for pedestrian safety, depending on the neighborhood. This year, Public Works will be working with the Crest Drive neighborhood and the Fountaingrove Homeowners’ Association.

Additionally, traffic efficiency projects have been undertaken on Hoen Avenue, Summerfield Road and Calistoga Road. Hoen and Summerfield have been restriped from four lanes to three, with two travel lanes and a center turn lane. Bike lanes have also been included. On Calistoga Road, the same lane configuration has been in place, with two pedestrian flashers added in 2003 to aid in pedestrian safety.

Addressing the policy for a solution for regional traffic on north-south and east-west corridors, the Farmers Lane extension alignment was approved this year. The alignment includes a connection to Bellevue Avenue, which will carry regional through traffic as well as local trips.

Transit and Transportation Systems Management

The General Plan calls for expanding transit service and encouraging ridership through marketing and promotional efforts. During 2003, the Transit and Parking Department developed a Spanish outreach program to increase Hispanic ridership on CityBus and continued the *Seniors on the Go* program, which promotes senior ridership by offering free transit to seniors for one week in October.

The *Free Ride Program*, which provides incentives for commute alternatives, was expanded to include the Santa Rosa Marketplace last year.

Bicycles and Pedestrians

The General Plan directs attractive and safe streets for pedestrians and bicyclists. Last year, bike lanes were added on Santa Rosa Avenue, Hoen Avenue and Summerfield Road. An off street path was completed on the Prince Greenway from Pierson Street to Railroad Street.

Consistent with the Plan policy regarding provision of safe pedestrian access for students, paths accessing Jack London School were completed along Francisco and from Fulton to San Miguel and a flashing pedestrian signal was also installed. Grant funding has been received for construction of four more paths this year.

Rail Transit

The General Plan supports the development of rail service along the Northwest Pacific Railroad right-of-way. The Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) project is a proposed rail service line extending 70 miles from Larkspur to Cloverdale, along the NWP corridor. Two stations are planned in Santa Rosa. SMART is currently developing a rail implementation plan, preparing environmental studies, and undertaking other systems planning tasks.

Public Services and Facilities

Parks and Recreation

The General Plan directs the continuing acquisition and development of neighborhood and community park facilities, along with special use facilities, throughout the City. In 2003, the City added 31 acres of new park land with development of Trailhead Park (1 acre), Place to Play Phase 2 (30 acres) and Prince Greenway, Pierson Reach. Funding is ongoing in the City's Capital Improvement Program for an additional aquatic facility, as called for by the General Plan. No specific location is targeted at this time, but the Plan directs new swim centers in the southeast, southwest and Rincon Valley. Additional information regarding parks projects is in the Growth Management Ordinance Review section of this report.

Police and Fire Services

The General Plan calls for collaboration with other local jurisdictions in the provision of some police and fire services if it improves services levels and is cost effective. Both the Police and Fire Departments work collaboratively with other local agencies where efficiencies can be achieved.

The Fire Department is part of a Joint Powers Agreement for dispatch and communications services. Called the Redwood Empire Dispatch and Communications Authority (REDCOM), it includes all Sonoma County cities and fire districts, plus Sonoma County, and provides all fire/emergency medical dispatch services county-wide. The Department also has a joint response agreement with Rincon Valley Fire to provide engine coverage for some of its territory in return for Rincon Valley support in some areas of Santa Rosa.

The Police Department is part of a multi-agency Computer Aided Dispatch/Records Management System. It includes Sonoma County and most of its cities and features a common records data base and access to state and federal data bases. Other collaborations occur in establishing checkpoints for drunken drivers, preparing for events involving weapons of mass destruction and various joint training opportunities.

General Plan response time goals and information on 2003 incidents and responses are included in the Growth Management Ordinance review section of this report.

Water and Wastewater

The General Plan directs that an adequate supply of water be available to serve existing and future City needs. The City is currently under contract with the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) for the delivery of up to 56.6 million gallons of water per day (on average). In the long term, this entitlement will not be sufficient to meet the growth anticipated by the General Plan. Capital Improvement projects in recent years have allocated resources toward the improvement of seven existing wells and the development of new wells in the event of a disconnection from the SCWA system. With groundwater resources, recycled water supply and conservation efforts, water demand can be met through 2020.

The General Plan calls for adequate sewer capacity to serve existing and future City needs. Wastewater from Santa Rosa is treated at the Laguna Subregional Wastewater Treatment Plant (LTP). The Geysers project became operational in 2003, and this increased the capacity of the Laguna Plant from 18 million gallons per day to 21.34 mgd. Expansion of the LTP is planned to increase the capacity to 25 mgd, which will meet the City's wastewater need until 2012. An Incremental Recycled Water Environmental Impact Report is now studying options to expand wastewater treatment.

Open Space and Conservation

General Plan policy supports conservation of wetlands, vernal pools, wildlife ecosystems, rare plant habitat and waterways. The Plan thus supports the preservation of the Sonoma County California Tiger Salamander (CTS), listed as endangered in 2003, and its habitat. The City is embarking on a coordinated environmental study encompassing about 500 acres of potential CTS habitat in southwest Santa Rosa. Five Environmental Impact Reports will describe the impacts of development on the salamander and are expected to be completed around the end of 2004.

Consistent with General Plan policy, the City has embarked on a Citywide Creek Master Plan. The purpose of the plan is to preserve existing habitat and create new habitat as well as to acquire space along creeks for bicycling and walking. The Public Works Department has been heading up this program, working with a committee of other Departments and the Sonoma County Water Agency. Staff has hosted a number of community meetings and has analyzed water quality, flood capacity and restoration needs. A draft Creek Master Plan is anticipated in late 2004.

Economic Vitality

The City has emphasized economic development in the last year. The Business Visitation Program has continued, with 17 visits conducted during the last fiscal year with business owners and managers. This is consistent with General Plan direction to maintain close ties with business through this program. The economic development program also provides assistance to businesses looking to locate in Santa Rosa. This assistance has led to siting of Krispy Kreme donuts and ZAP Electric Vehicles.

The General Plan calls for provision of sufficient land for business expansion and attraction to utilize the local labor force. There are currently about 222 acres of vacant non-residential sites of 2 acres or more in Santa Rosa, with 160 additional acres in the Urban Growth Boundary. The breakdown by designation is as follows:

	In City	In UGB	TOTAL
Retail Business Service	54	67	121
Business Park	77	-	77
Industrial	64	93	157
Office	27	-	27
TOTAL ACRES	222	160	382

Note: There are an additional 200 acres of non-residential land of less than 2 acres.

Economic development staff finds that there is greatest demand for retail sites, but there are not sites of sufficient size for many businesses interested in Santa Rosa. While redesignation of properties is possible, staff does not recommend analyzing residential land for this purpose due to current housing goals. Redesignation of non-residential land to retail could be considered, along with identification of sites which are underutilized or have redevelopment potential.

Historic Preservation

A seventh preservation district was established in 2003, consistent with General Plan policy to preserve Santa Rosa's historic areas. The Burbank Gardens neighborhood, consisting of about 400 homes, is the City's newest district, containing small homes representing architectural styles important to the City's history. No other preservation districts are being considered at this time.

A Sonoma State University Geographic Information Systems study of Santa Rosa's preservation districts recently confirmed many assumed benefits of historic preservation: stabilization of neighborhoods in terms of reducing decline; increased home improvement; greater home ownership than other similar neighborhoods; and growth in property values.

Youth/Families and Art/Culture

The Department of Community Development continues to staff the Council-appointed Child Care Committee. The Committee is charged with implementing the Child Care Action Plan, which was adopted in 1996. The Department of Community Development continues to refund fees paid by applicants for child care facilities after these facilities become operational, consistent with General Plan policy.

The City continues to support and staff the Teen Council. During the last year, the Teen Council has focused on how to make the community a better and safer place. The Council learned about local gang activity and became involved in the City's strategic planning process regarding gangs. The group participated in various hands-on activities such as graffiti removal and tree planting at a low income senior housing development.

The City operates one Senior Center on Bennett Valley Road. The General Plan directs evaluating the feasibility of another Center. It has been determined that another senior center will be located at Finley Community Park. Preliminary design work for this facility has commenced, along with initial public meetings. No funding has been identified for construction.