

1. Introduction

Why Develop a Master Plan?

Santa Rosa is a vibrant city committed to improving the quality of life for residents and visitors by providing walking and bicycling as convenient, comfortable, and healthy modes of transportation and recreation. The largest city in Sonoma County, Santa Rosa is a gateway to the Redwood Empire and to Sonoma Valley wine country, drawing visitors from across the country and around the world.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update is a critical tool for guiding city staff and the development community in building a balanced transportation system that is pedestrian and bicycle friendly and encourages residents to use these modes of transportation. The ultimate goal is a shift from driving single occupancy vehicles to more walking and bicycling as a normal part of daily life.



Purpose of the Plan Update

This Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update establishes a long term vision for improving walking and bicycling in Santa Rosa by updating the previous plan adopted by the City Council in 2010.

The Plan Update provides a strategy to develop a comprehensive bicycling and walking network to provide access to transit, schools, and downtown alongside support facilities like bicycle parking and pedestrian amenities. These network improvements are paired with education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation programs. This document also identifies a plan to implement these projects and programs through prioritization and phasing to ensure implementation is manageable and fundable. This Plan Update represents a long-term, aspirational vision for walking and bicycling in Santa Rosa, and recognizes that limited funding and resources will require phased implementation of the proposed improvements over many years.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update process provided opportunities for elected and appointed members of the City's Boards, Commissions, and the public to participate in the development process of the Plan Update by evaluating, commenting, and suggesting ideas for walking and bicycling, and then using the Plan Update as a guide for future input on specific projects. Updates to the Plan are necessary as a progressive city is rarely static and the needs of a viable city are dynamic. Ideally, the Plan Update should be reviewed every two years to update maps, project lists, and priorities as facilities are completed and to keep pace with the development landscape.

Benefits of Bicycling and Walking

Public Health

In *A Portrait of Sonoma County (2014)*, the Sonoma County Department of Health Services found the Sheppard neighborhood near downtown Santa Rosa to have one of the lowest life expectancies in the county at 76.6 years – nearly a decade less than Central Bennett Valley in eastern Santa Rosa, where the average life expectancy is 85.7 years. This wide variation between tracts in the same city suggests neighborhood amenities and characteristics can have a striking impact on health. Central Bennett Valley is adjacent to hundreds of acres of state parkland and includes Strawberry Park, with nearly six acres of open space and sports facilities. Sheppard is between two state highways and has only one acre of developed park within the neighborhood—and while the park provides walking areas, it lacks sports facilities or other active recreation opportunities. Among the 99 Sonoma County tracts evaluated, 13 of the bottom 20 are located in Santa Rosa.

Physical inactivity is now widely understood to play a significant role in the most common chronic diseases in the United States, including heart disease, stroke, and diabetes and each year approximately 280,000 adults in the United States die prematurely due to obesity-related illnesses. A 2004 study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* by Frank et al. reported that for each additional 60 minutes spent in a car daily, there is a six percent increase in the chances of being obese. Creating a physical environment that encourages bicycling and walking, and improves access to parks and active recreation opportunities in other neighborhoods, is a key strategy to fight obesity and inactivity and has been shown to have substantial impacts on health with a relatively small public investment. *A Portrait of Sonoma County* identifies interventions that support safe walking, bicycling, and recreation opportunities as effective strategies to address public health concerns in the County and Santa Rosa, including a focus on sidewalks, street lights, and access to parks.

Collision Reduction

Conflicts between people walking, bicycling, and driving result from poor behavior as well as insufficient or ineffective design. Encouraging development and redevelopment in which bicycling and walking are supported can enhance safety and comfort levels for all users. Designated bicycling and walking facilities, in addition to well-designed crossings, reduce the risk of crashes and injuries.

Equity

Bicycling and walking are inexpensive and broadly accessible forms of transportation. The average annual operating cost of a bicycle is \$308, compared to \$8,220 for the average car. Bicycling and walking are affordable means of transportation for low-income and disadvantaged residents. Access to active transportation provides added freedom and independence for youth and parents (who may otherwise be transporting their children) as well as for some people who cannot drive and those who have chosen not to drive.

Quality of Life

Creating conditions where walking and bicycling are accepted and encouraged increases a community's livability in ways that are difficult to measure but should not be overlooked. The design, land use patterns, and transportation systems that comprise the built environment have a profound impact on quality of life issues. The aesthetic quality of a community improves when visual and noise pollution caused by automobiles is reduced and when green space is reserved for facilities that allow people of all ages to recreate and travel in pleasant settings.

Economy

Active transportation programs and projects encourage more bicycling and walking, which leads to a better quality of life. This higher quality of life can attract more diverse and creative people, leading to higher economic growth for a city and region.¹ Additionally, people who commute using active modes of transportation save money on annual automobile operating costs, and may see additional savings in health care costs. On a community-wide scale, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects are generally far less expensive than automobile-related infrastructure.

Environmental

Replacing driving trips with bicycling or walking trips has a measurable impact on reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that contribute to climate change. Fewer vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled translate into fewer pollutants released into the air, including carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and hydrocarbons. This not only reduces our contribution to climate change, but also improves the health and quality of life for residents who are vulnerable to asthma or other chronic respiratory diseases.



¹ Florida, Richard. *Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004.

Relationship to Other Documents

Santa Rosa's General Plan 2035 guides the physical development of the City and sets out a vision for Santa Rosa where:

Complete streets provide safe access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit users of all ages and abilities. Neighborhood-scale retail and service uses, schools, and recreational facilities are connected by bicycle and pedestrian paths and transportation management programs and bicycle/pedestrian improvements have reduced the number of single-occupancy cars on regional/arterial streets.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update helps the City realize this ambitious vision along with implementing goals, policies, and recommendations adopted through complementary City planning efforts such as the City's Creek Master Plan, Climate Action Plan, Downtown Station Area Specific Plan, North Santa Rosa Specific Plan, Roseland/Sebastopol Avenue Specific Plan, and corridor plans for Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa Avenue, and Sebastopol Avenue.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update also helps the City do its part to achieve larger regional and state goals embraced in Sonoma County's General Plan 2040, Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Plan Bay Area 2040, Caltrans District 4 Bicycle Plan, and Toward an Active California: State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

This Plan Update will help Santa Rosa continue to meet the following goals.

Santa Rosa

General Plan 2035

- Provide attractive and safe streets for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Develop a citywide system of designated bikeways that serves both experienced and casual bicyclists, and which maximizes bicycle use for commuting, recreation, and local transport
- Develop a safe, convenient, and continuous network of pedestrian sidewalks and pathways that link neighborhoods with schools, parks, shopping areas, and employment centers
- Reduce traffic volumes and speeds in neighborhoods

Climate Action Plan

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020

Sonoma County

General Plan 2040

- Reduce Sonoma County's greenhouse gas emissions by achieving a non-motorized trips mode share of five percent for all trips and ten percent for trips under five miles long by 2020

Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive countywide bicycle and pedestrian transportation system, which includes projects, programs, and policies that work together to provide safe and efficient transportation opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians

Comprehensive Transportation Plan

- Shift transportation mode four percent from single occupant vehicle trips to bicycle and pedestrian trips due to changing attitudes, improved safety, improved non-auto infrastructure, pedestrian/bike/transit friendly land use changes

Toward an Active California: State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

- Triple bicycling trips and double walking and transit trips statewide by 2020 (relative to 2010).

Plan Update Organization

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** outlines the Plan Update's purpose and explains its place in the context of other planning efforts and initiatives.
- **Chapter 2: Vision & Goals** captures the vision and policy framework for Santa Rosa's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update. The chapter includes performance metrics.
- **Chapter 3: Santa Rosa Today** provides an inventory of present-day walking and bicycling in Santa Rosa, including physical conditions of facilities as well as education, enforcement, and encouragement programs.
- **Chapter 4: Outreach** chronicles how stakeholders and thousands of residents shaped the Plan Update through a comprehensive engagement process.
- **Chapter 5: Projects, Programs & Policies** describes and maps the specific projects, programs, and policy changes recommended to meet the active transportation needs of Santa Rosa's residents and visitors.
- **Chapter 6: Implementation Plan** presents a strategy to evaluate and prioritize projects and provides details on funding opportunities to advance the Plan Update through phased implementation.

Summary

Santa Rosa is well poised to increase walking and bicycling for transportation. It has a mild climate most of the year, is relatively flat, and has a large network of existing sidewalks and growing network of on-street bikeways and off-street shared-use paths. The City has installed bicycle parking in much of the downtown and transit services connect destinations in the region and beyond.

These investments and natural assets provide a foundation upon which the City can continue to build a high-quality citywide network for bicycling and walking—one that is accessible and comfortable for everyday use by residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

