Many Thanks
Austin, Texas

Santa Rosa
Downtown

Figure 2.1.1
Santa Rosa circa. 1885
Courtesy of Burger and Evans
Lithograph

DOWNTOWN AREA

The City of Santa Rosa wishes to thank the City of Austin Texas, Design Commission, and particularly Michael Knox, Development Services Process Coordinator, for allowing us to model our Downtown Area Guidelines after theirs. We appreciate the many hours that these dedicated members and staff spent crafting their document. As a result, the time we spent creating the following Downtown Guidelines was significantly shortened. Thank you City of Austin!

With the establishment of the voter approved 20 year Urban Growth Boundary in 1996, Santa Rosa began to consider ways in which growth could advantageously be encouraged in the Downtown area. Since its beginnings, the Downtown area has been the focus of cultural, commercial, financial and administrative activity for Santa Rosa as well as for the greater Sonoma County region.

Santa Rosa’s Downtown area presently benefits from a diverse central business district, including County and State administrative services, combining to form a rich downtown nucleus bounded by Santa Rosa Creek, historic residential and commercial districts and interwoven with a pattern of parks. Refer to Section 4.7-Historic Districts, for more detail on the historic districts Cherry Street, Olive Park, Railroad Square, St. Rose and the West End districts within and adjacent to the Downtown Area.

With appropriate guidance, the development of uses and activities can be encouraged and made to grow into an energized environment. Similarly, residential densities can be developed and will help to create variety and vitality in Santa Rosa’s downtown thereby enhancing safety by reducing unpopulated and unused areas.

Additionally, it can result in a walkable, bicycle friendly downtown where our reliance on cars is reduced and where we can live, work and shop in town without getting on a freeway. For those who don’t live downtown, a dense core can produce the kind of pressure necessary to support mass transit, further reducing Santa Rosa’s reliance on cars.

Downtown Area Boundaries:

The Downtown Area is bound by College Avenue to the north, Brookwood Avenue/South E Street to the east, Santa Rosa Creek and Sonoma Avenue to the south, and the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) Road tracks on the west.
2.1 Downtown Area / Station Area

Introduction

STATION AREA

The Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan) was the result of a community based vision for the downtown area of Santa Rosa. Centered on a proposed Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) station site, the Specific Plan defines the framework for future development in the Plan Area.

The Specific Plan area (Station Area) encompasses approximately 1,560 parcels, totaling 650 acres, and contains a diverse mix of land uses, development intensities, building heights and circulation patterns. To preserve the character of these diverse neighborhoods while guiding appropriate development, the Station Area is divided into seven distinct sub-areas, which include Courthouse Square, Railroad Square, Railroad Corridor, Park and Gardens, Imwalle Gardens, Residential and Historic Residential sub-areas.

The citizens of Santa Rosa have a vision of the downtown area that includes bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and drivers sharing an attractive network of streets; it includes a mix of housing, shopping, entertainment and jobs in a compact area; and it includes preserving the history, character, and natural benefits of the existing environment while allowing for change. The Specific Plan was a result and an extension of that vision and it provides the regulatory framework for future development of Santa Rosa’s downtown area.

The purpose of the Specific Plan is to intensify land uses, improve connectivity and circulation, and create safe, attractive walkable environments. Implementation of the Specific Plan will provide opportunities for new development that respect the existing character of the area, improves connections for pedestrian, bicycle and transit riders, and celebrates the natural and historic amenities existing there. A primary objective of the Specific Plan is to increase the number of residents and employees within walking distance of the proposed SMART site through the intensification of land uses in the Station Area.

Design related policies from the Specific Plan have been incorporated into this Core Area section of the Design Guidelines. In addition, minor amendments have been made to the Core Section goals and guidelines, bringing this section into conformance with the Specific Plan.

Station Area Boundaries:

The Station Area is bound by College Avenue to the north, E Street to the east, Sebastopol Road and Highway 12 to the south, and Dutton Avenue and Imwalle Gardens to the west.
The overarching goal of these Guidelines is to encourage diverse uses which mutually reinforce each other and create a twenty-four hour, pedestrian friendly city center that exhibits “Superior Design.”

Santa Rosa is committed to ensuring that all new development and redevelopment is designed in such a way as to revitalize the Downtown Area and Station Area. New buildings should contribute to the richness of our community and interconnect with surrounding structures and breathe life into the city center environment.

“Here’s why I don’t like segregation into night things and day things: You don’t get the additional things that the workers and the people living there support jointly.”

Jane Jacobs – 1998

The following Guidelines apply to all proposed buildings in the Downtown Area and Station Area.

In the process of developing these guidelines, the Community Development staff and the Design Review Board consulted numerous city documents and other published literature. Many of the city documents involved extensive public input and many public workshops. The most useful and heavily referenced documents follow:
Introduction

2.1 Downtown Area / Station Area

Figure 2.1.4 Map of the Downtown Area and Station Area
# Supporting Documents

Documents from Santa Rosa:

* R/UDAT and R/UDAT Follow-up, Santa Rosa, 1998
* Downtown Linkages, Santa Rosa, CA
* Courthouse Square Reunification Study, April 2004
* Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan, June 18, 2002
* Downtown Station Area Specific Plan, October 9, 2007

Others:

* Downtown Austin Design Guidelines, Austin, TX May 2000
* Commercial Design Guidelines, Burlingame, CA - 2001
* Our Vision of Downtown San Rafael and Our Implementation Strategy - San Rafael Downtown Community Plan, San Rafael, CA - 1993
* Locust Street Extension, Walnut Creek, CA - August 1999
* East Mt. Diablo Boulevard Specific Plan, Walnut Creek, CA - August 1996
* Ralf Konietzko, Bill Mastick and Fred Flynn, City of Santa Rosa Design Review Board
* Scott Bartley and Shaun Faber, City of Santa Rosa Planning Commission
* Paul Eelkema and Stan Henrikson, City of Santa Rosa Cultural Heritage Board
* Kevin Kellogg and Associates, Architecture and Urban Design
* Maureen Rich, City of Santa Rosa Department of Community Development
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Goal 2.1.1

Encourage dense development in the downtown area and station area, redirecting the focus of current growth away from the periphery and concentrating uses in an area with existing infrastructure and services.

Guidelines

A. Allow buildings up to 10 stories within the downtown consistent with the Zoning Map of the City of Santa Rosa.
Goal 2.1.2

Encourage buildings that accommodate mixed uses in the downtown to promote synergy between uses and pedestrian activity that extends beyond the typical 9 to 5 workday and decrease the need for commuting.

Guidelines

A. Provide a variety of uses within proposed developments, including residential land uses. Low occupancy uses such as warehouses, storage and parking should not be counted as contributing to mixed-use development.
Goal 2.1.3
Consider existing residential neighborhoods when designing and planning adjacent commercial development.

Guidelines

A. Projects should be planned to minimize increased use of neighborhood streets. Where possible, parking, loading and other vehicular access should occur at mid-block or alley.

B. Commercial property with frontage on a neighborhood street should limit public access from that street, and limit business associated parking on that street, so as to avoid significant alterations of the residential character and scale of the existing street.
Goal 2.1.4

Encourage the inclusion of civic art to help define public spaces, provide detail and include the rich expressions of our Santa Rosa heritage.

Guidelines

A. Encourage developers of new projects to incorporate artists into the design team from the inception of planning in order to integrate works of art into their projects.

B. Civic art should:
   - Be incorporated into public infrastructure projects such as bridges, transit systems, highways and roadways;
   - Express local history and identity through functional and ornamental design elements and works of civic art;
   - Mark significant intersections;
   - Create a system of Historical/Cultural/Information points that could mark unique places in the urban context (plaques, walking maps, etc.).
Goal 2.1.5

Honor the authenticity and maintain the value of old buildings by directing additions, renovations and new construction to reflect the era in which they are constructed.

Figure 2.1.9
New residential that respects the integrity of existing residential.

Guidelines

A. Additions, renovations and new buildings should be designed in such a way that they don’t appear to have built significantly earlier than they were. This does not preclude the use of materials, scale or massing found in older buildings.

B. Buildings date the historical development of the City. It is important that any mimicry of past architectural styles not be exercised in such a way that the historical records become confused.
Goal 2.1.6

Encourage appropriate interfaces between old and new structures, thoughtfully considering scale, building articulation and mass.

Figure 2.1.10
Demonstrates the compatibility of existing and new vertical and horizontal elements.

Guidelines

A. Development in the Downtown should respond to adjacent historically zoned buildings and avoid creating awkward or incompatible design solutions.

B. Compatible design need not be created through historic replication, but should reflect a consideration of the materials, scale and massing of the adjacent historic buildings.
Goal 2.1.7

Enhance the experience of elevated views through the protection of important views of the surrounding hillsides and screening of undesirable views.

Guidelines

A. Roofs should be designed and constructed in such a way that they acknowledge their visibility from other buildings in the downtown and from the street. Mechanical equipment should be screened when visible from the street or from potential or existing buildings nearby.

B. Unused equipment should be removed from view. Screen rooftop equipment from visibility. The point of view for determining visibility shall be 5 feet above grade at a distance of 200 feet. When the roof top is visible from adjacent buildings, screen equipment to the height of the equipment, at a minimum. Screening material should be compatible with the building architecture.

C. Integrate attached structure and equipment such as solar collector panels, antennas, satellite dishes, and so on, into the project architecture or screen from view.
Goal 2.1.8

Control on-site surface parking.

A. When on site parking is required, locate it to the rear or side of the site.
B. Do not place on-site parking in front of the building.
C. Locate building entrance at street sidewalk and not adjacent to parking lot.
D. Parking lots are not as interesting to pedestrians as buildings and store fronts.
E. If parking is located behind the sidewalk, screen vehicles with low walls and/or landscaping. (See Figure 4.2.8 in Section 4.2)
F. Provide on-street parking whenever possible.
G. Refer to Section 4.2 (Off Street Parking), for additional parking guidelines.
H. For properties that are zoned with the Station Area Street Combining District, ground floor parking is not permitted within 20 feet of the street frontage or back of sidewalk, whichever is greater.
Goal 2.1.9

Treat Courthouse Square with special consideration.

Guidelines

A. Development facing the public square should receive special architectural consideration.

B. Buildings facing the public square should offer fairly consistent building heights and make efforts to establish the civic significance through unique architectural treatment.

C. Primary building entrances should face the public square.

D. Loading docks, utilities, and service areas should not face the public square unless otherwise required to be on the public square side of the building.

E. Activate the ground floor of surrounding Courthouse Square with pedestrian scaled amenities and outdoor dining areas.
Goal 2.1.10

Provide special treatment to gateway sites and terminated vistas.

Guidelines

A. Projects on visually prominent sites should clearly respond to the street and to the adjacent architecture.

B. Projects located on gateway sites should incorporate pedestrian amenities such as plazas or benches.

C. If the gateway site is located on a corner lot, the project should have a clear relationship with the projects on the opposite corners so that each building supports perception as a pair of buildings.

D. Projects on gateway sites should not be seen as opportunities for advertising. Buildings should not be designed as billboards for their particular tenants.

E. Signage on gateway sites should incorporate more subdued signage since the building already has a distinct advantage over other buildings in the area.
Section 2 – Core Area
2.1 Downtown Area / Station Area

Goal 2.1.11

Protect the intimate quality of Mendocino Avenue (between Seventh Street and Transit Mall) and Fourth Street (between B and E Streets).

Guidelines

A. Buildings should reflect a strong sense of human scale within the pedestrian realm.

B. The intimate pedestrian-oriented character along Fourth and Mendocino (as illustrated) should be retained in the design of the ground floor, reflecting small scale, development at the street level.

C. Architectural step backs above the third floor are encouraged along the street frontage. Consideration should be given to surrounding buildings and the step backs provided on those buildings. A “cookie-cutter” design, with numerous buildings along one frontage stepping back at exactly the same point should be avoided.
### Station Area Sub-Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 2.1.12</th>
<th>Preserve the distinct character of each Sub-Area within the Station Area by designing new development with the unique characteristics and vision for the seven diverse neighborhoods.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.</strong> The Courthouse Square Sub-Area is the City’s urban center and is envisioned to be a vibrant mixed use area with new housing added to the existing office and retail uses.</td>
<td><img src="image_url" alt="Juliard Park" />  <img src="image_url" alt="Courthouse Square" />  <img src="image_url" alt="Railroad Square Historic District" />  <img src="image_url" alt="West End Historic Residential District" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B.</strong> The Railroad Square Sub-Area is the historic transportation center of Santa Rosa and is envisioned to be a mixed use area with residential, hotel, office and retail uses.</td>
<td>Figure 2.1.16  Photographs illustrating four of the seven Station Area Sub-Areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.</strong> The Railroad Corridor Sub-Area is the area historically influenced by commercial railway operations, but is envisioned to be a diverse mix of multi-family housing, live-work housing and mixed use residential with neighborhood serving retail.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D.</strong> The Park and Gardens Sub-Area is currently characterized as a commercial strip, but is envisioned to be a mixed use area with housing and retail uses throughout and where new development provides a shared identity for the Julliard Park and Burbank Garden neighborhoods.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E.</strong> The Imwalle Gardens Sub-Area, once farmed by the Imwalle family, is envisioned to be a residential community with direct pedestrian and bicycle access to the downtown rail station via the Prince Memorial Greenway.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F.</strong> The Residential and Historic Residential Sub-Areas include eight distinct residential neighborhoods envisioned to maintain and enhance their existing residential characters.</td>
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