



DOWNTOWN STATION AREA SPECIFIC PLAN

ZONING AND DESIGN GUIDELINES CONSISTENCY AMENDMENTS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

DATE: OCTOBER 2009

TO: PROPERTY AND BUSINESS OWNERS, COMMUNITY INTEREST GROUPS, AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

SUBJECT: ZONING AND DESIGN GUIDELINES CONSISTENCY AMENDMENTS
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

PROJECT SUMMARY

In October 2007 the Santa Rosa City Council adopted the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan), and directed staff to prepare Zoning Code and Design Guidelines amendments that would implement the Specific Plan. City Planning Staff is currently working on land use and Design Guideline amendments for this area, which generally includes the properties within approximately ½ mile radius of the proposed Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) station in Railroad Square.

The amendendments include, but are not limited to, creation of two new zoning districts and one new combining district, enhancement of the existing Historic Combining District, amendments to the parking and definition sections of the Zoning Code, and various amendments to the Santa Rosa Design Guidelines. In addition, numerous properties along the railroad, including the industrial areas and Railroad Square, will be rezoned to the new zoning districts, and most of the properties within existng Planned Development Districts will be rezoned to standard zoning districts such as R-1-6 (Single Family Residential). Those properties within a preservation district will continue to have the Historic Combining District added to the standard zoning district. Other properties throughout the Specific Plan may have the new combining district added to the standard zoning district.

BACKGROUND

On October 9, 2007 the City Council adopted the Specific Plan, which was the culmination of several years of hard work by numerous elected officials, City Staff, and the community at large, including many interested residents and neighborhood groups. A primary objective of this plan is to increase the number of residents and employees within walking distance (1/2 mile) of the SMART station through the intensification of land uses in the plan area.

The Specific Plan 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 Specific Plan 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.

Each of the seven sub-areas has unique characteristics that inform potential development and land uses. The land use framework sets development regulations for each of these sub-areas that include use, density and height. The regulations are intended to supplement the City of Santa Rosa's existing Zoning Code and Design Guidelines; any conditions not addressed are subject to Santa Rosa's existing policies. Existing land uses that are not consistent with the regulations are permitted to continue as legal nonconforming uses.

The Specific Plan created the following new policies: two new General Plan land use designations (Transit Village Medium and Transit Village Mixed Use), identified seven distinct Sub-Areas, many new land use goals and policies, and new Development Guidelines and Streetscape Standards. Adopted in 2007, these new Specific Plan policies are not consistent with the City's Zoning Code and Design Guidelines, which were adopted previously, in 2004 and 2002 respectfully.

Chapter 8, Section B-1 of the Specific Plan stipulates the need for amendments to the Zoning Code and Design Guidelines as follows:

Following adoption of the Specific Plan, the City will identify and coordinate changes to existing regulatory documents necessary to implement the vision and policies of the plan. These tasks are anticipated to be conducted by City staff with consultant assistance as necessary.