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Urban Design, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Historic Preservation, and Art and Culture



4. Urban Design, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Historic Preservation, and Art and Culture

Santa Rosa is made up of diverse neighborhoods, corridors, and districts, each with their own distinct character and identity. These communities help make Santa Rosa a great place to be. Attractive buildings and civic spaces, historic preservation, and community art support Santa Rosa's beauty, livability, and appeal as a destination for visitors.

This chapter considers some of the key characteristics that contribute to Santa Rosa's sense of place. Goals, policies, and actions in this chapter implement the community vision by supporting the preservation of historic assets and tribal cultural resources, and by using design standards and public art to shape the form and feel of neighborhoods and gathering spaces. This chapter recognizes the power of art and cultural resources to connect people, promote cultural inclusion and diversity, create civic pride and a sense of community, stimulate the local economy, and inspire the creative spirit. Beyond its impact on the built environment, successful public art and historic preservation programs support an empowered, thriving, and inclusive Santa Rosa community.

In addition to visual character and image, the design of the city has important implications for adapting to climate change, reducing carbon emissions, improving public health, and promoting social equity. For example, community design policies can help Santa Rosa respond to risks from natural hazards such as wildfire with adaptations that increase public safety. Design-related policies can also support conservation through increased use of renewable energy and more efficient use of water, and by following sustainable building construction practices.

Some policies and actions in this chapter, as in others, prioritize the needs of Equity Priority Areas to support equitable outcomes. Similarly, some goals, policies, and actions prioritize implementation in Areas of Change to focus the City's resources and realize the community's vision for the General Plan.

Equity Priority Areas are areas in Santa Rosa where residents suffer most from economic, health, and environmental burdens. The General Plan prioritizes the environmental justice needs and health and equity considerations of Equity Priority Areas in the goals, policies, and actions of this and other chapters of the General Plan. Equity Priority Areas are depicted on **Figure 2-4** and discussed in more detail in **Chapter 2, Land Use and Economic Development**, and **Chapter 6, Health, Equity, Environmental Justice, and Parks**.

Areas of Change are places where the City will focus efforts to address housing, services, connectivity, and/or infrastructure needs to help make these complete neighborhoods. Goals, policies, and actions throughout the General Plan prioritize Areas of Change for implementing actions that promote complete neighborhoods, such as active transportation infrastructure, quality housing, healthy food options, opportunities for social connections, and access to parks and commercial services.

Areas of Change are depicted on **Figure 2-5** and discussed in more detail in **Chapter 2, Land Use and Economic Development**.

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This chapter focuses on key goals that work to implement the vision for Santa Rosa. These

goals and their associated policies and actions are especially pertinent to the following component of the Vision Statement (shown in full in Chapter 1, Introduction):

- **Cultural:** Art, cultural resources and activities, historic assets, and live music thrive in every neighborhood, are accessible to everyone, and work to celebrate our diverse community, bring people from all areas of the city together, and support the local economy.

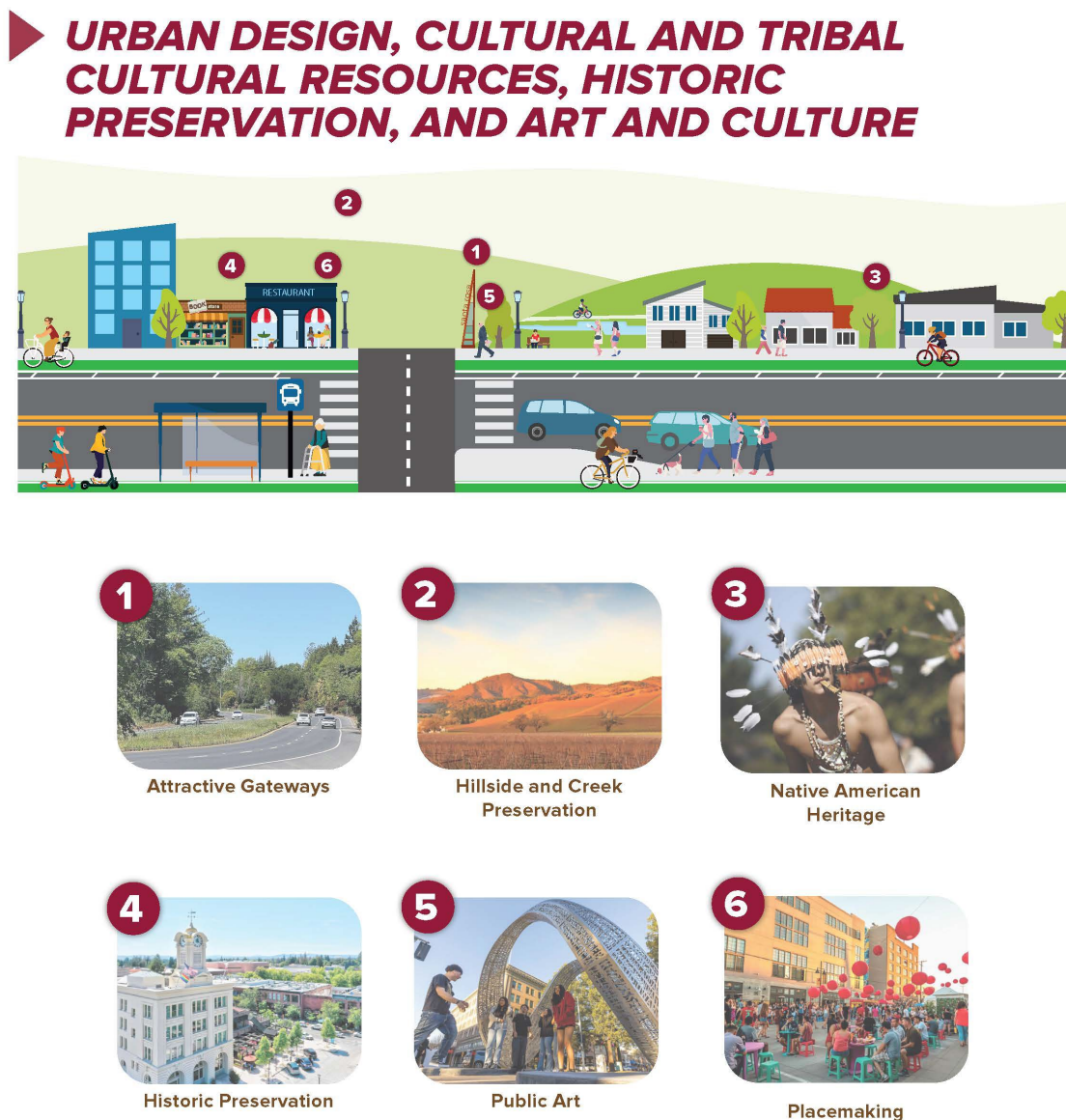
Figure 4-1 illustrates some of the key concepts addressed in this chapter.

Urban and Environmental Design

Santa Rosa is a vibrant, attractive city with a rich landscape of historic buildings, an active downtown, distinct and livable neighborhoods, and thoughtfully designed contemporary developments, set in an enviable natural environment. The physical form of each neighborhood, gathering place, shopping area, corridor, and district can contribute to livability, quality of life, and overall beauty of the city.

Appropriate urban design standards encourage development to highlight and not detract from the natural and historic features of established areas, create distinct architectural identities in emerging areas, and protect views of the natural, unbuilt areas surrounding Santa Rosa.

Figure 4-1 Visualizing the Concepts



Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal 4-1: Preserve and enhance Santa Rosa's community character through attractive urban and environmental design and intentional development.

Policy 4-1.1: Preserve and enhance the visual beauty and value of the city's natural waterways, hillsides, historic districts, buildings, structures, and landscapes.

Action 4-1.1: Maintain view corridors from public vantage points to natural ridgelines and natural landmarks, such as Taylor Mountain and Bennett Mountain.

Action 4-1.2: Maintain and restore the floodplain and riparian vegetation along the city's network of creeks and further develop paths along creeks to serve as an alternative transportation network.

Policy 4-1.2: Strengthen and emphasize community focal points, visual landmarks, and features that contribute to the identity of Santa Rosa by applying the design concepts and standards of the Zoning Code, Design Guidelines, Historic Combining Districts, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and the Citywide Creek Master Plan.

Action 4-1.3: Update the City's Design Guidelines, Objective Design Standards, and/or Zoning Code, as appropriate, to:

- Expand and refine objective design standards for residential development in compliance with State requirements and to create objective measures that relate to site context and promote livable environments.
- Require landscape design to relate to the natural setting. Minimize grading for new development and revegetate graded areas around structures with native plants, as fire resistance allows.
- Require structures in new developments to step with the slope of the site and its topography through use of split-level designs.

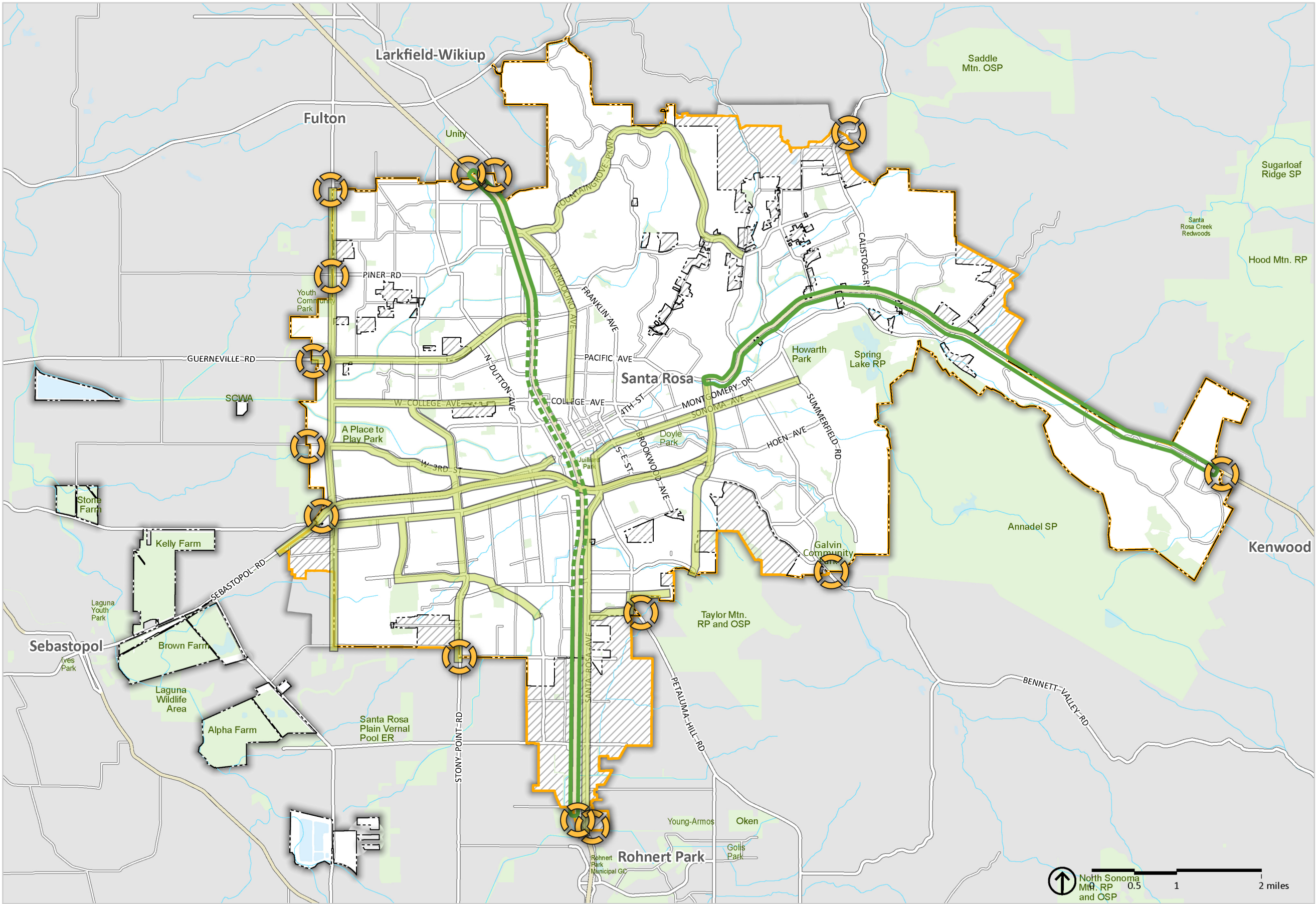
Policy 4-1.3: Enhance and strengthen the visual quality of major entry routes into the city and major corridors that link neighborhoods with downtown.

Action 4-1.4: Develop and implement a strategy for gateways, depicted in **Figure 4-2**, that enhances their visual quality and supports placemaking, economic development, active transportation, and other, complementary City goals.

Action 4-1.5: Explore the feasibility of adopting alternative zoning standards, such as a form-based code, focused on design.

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Figure 4-2
Gateways and
Corridors



Source: City of Santa Rosa 2023

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Action 4-1.6: *Encourage planting strips with large canopy trees between the road and sidewalk to buffer pedestrians from traffic and help define the street space along commercial streets, and install pedestrian amenities such as:*

- *Street lighting, including compatible street light designs in historic neighborhoods.*
- *Seating*
- *Bus stop shelters*
- *Bicycle racks*

Action 4-1.7: *Require landscape screening for all new development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of properties along Highway 101 to create a visual buffer between the highway and other uses.*

Policy 4-1.4: **Avoid strip patterns of commercial development and improve the appearance and operation of existing commercial strip corridors.**

Action 4-1.8: *Work with property owners to restructure existing strip developments to cluster commercial uses in neighborhood nodes, with higher-density housing included where possible and lower-density residential, office, or institutional uses that generate less traffic between the nodes.*

Policy 4-1.5: **Create public/civic spaces at the neighborhood, city, and regional scale to serve residents of all areas of the city, and particularly**

Equity Priority Areas where these spaces provide vital resources for vulnerable populations.

Action 4-1.9: *Provide new open space opportunities, including creek corridors, bicycle and pedestrian connections, and civic spaces, throughout the city, especially in neighborhoods that have less access to open spaces.*

Action 4-1.10: *Enhance pedestrian activity and safety by requiring that streets, buildings, and paths have lighting and wayfinding signage, and provide a visual connection with public spaces, such as parks and Santa Rosa Creek, where possible. Lighting should balance safety with minimizing light spillage onto adjacent natural resource areas.*

Tribal Cultural and Historic Resources

Native American Heritage

Native American habitation in the Santa Rosa region began about 7,000 years ago, and the city contains almost 200 recorded Native American resources, according to the California Historical Resources Information System. Remnants of Native American civilization have been discovered along Santa Rosa Creek and its tributaries; in the adjacent alluvial valleys, surrounding plains, hills, the Trione-Annadel State Park area, and the Laguna de Santa Rosa. The Santa Rosa Basin encompasses the Planning Area and includes six major drainages

(Santa Rosa, Matanzas, Piner, Rincon, Austin, and Brush Creeks), each of which may contain additional, undiscovered tribal cultural resources.

Trione-Annadel State Park in the southeast corner of the Santa Rosa Planning Area was an important obsidian source for Native American tools. Resources there include chert and obsidian flakes, projectile points, mortars, pestles, shell and bone debris, and human remains. The remains of entire settlements, including three former villages, have been found in northern Santa Rosa. Given the culturally rich nature of the Santa Rosa area, and the fact that about half of the Planning Area has not been surveyed for tribal cultural resources, there is a high potential for finding more sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to Native American tribes in Santa Rosa. The City conducts consultations with the federally recognized tribes in Sonoma County related to proposed policy and development projects to ensure significant resources are protected.

Historic Resources

Historic resources include sites, buildings, structures, districts, landmarks, or other physical evidence of past human activity generally more than 50 years old. Santa Rosa has a rich architectural heritage spanning many periods—Mexican adobes, nineteenth-century Gothic structures, Greek Revival and Italianate houses, turn of the century Stick/Eastlake homes, early twentieth-century Craftsman and California bungalows, 1920s Spanish Revival houses, and 1930s Art Deco buildings.

Numerous well-preserved buildings represent the eclectic styles and periods that contribute to

the city's character and identity. Some of the more notable historic resources are the Luther Burbank Home and Gardens, Rosenberg Building, Flamingo Resort Sign Tower, DeTurk Round Barn, Church of the One Tree, Carrillo Adobe, and Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery.

Recognizing the value of Santa Rosa's cultural and historic resources, the City Council adopted a preservation ordinance in 1988 and created the Cultural Heritage Board to:

- Undertake and update historic inventories or surveys,
- Recommend designation of landmarks and preservation districts.
- Review proposed alterations to historic buildings.
- Promote public awareness of preservation issues.

With Cultural Heritage Board guidance, the City has prepared inventories to document historic buildings and neighborhoods. The resulting Cultural Heritage Survey, prepared by Architectural Historian Ann Bloomfield, is not just a list but also a narrative and pictorial summary of the city's past that documents the architectural style of each building and historic features by neighborhood. The Cultural Heritage Board has designated especially significant buildings and sites that have a specific historic, archaeological, cultural, or architectural value as Landmarks, and key historic neighborhoods as Preservation Districts. The district's designation officially recognizes these places as key components of the city's heritage. Preservation Districts are shown in **Figure 4-3**. Santa Rosa has 21 Landmarks and 8 designated historic Preservation Districts, which are Burbank

Gardens, Cherry Street, McDonald, Olive Park, Railroad Square, Ridgway, St. Rose, and West End.

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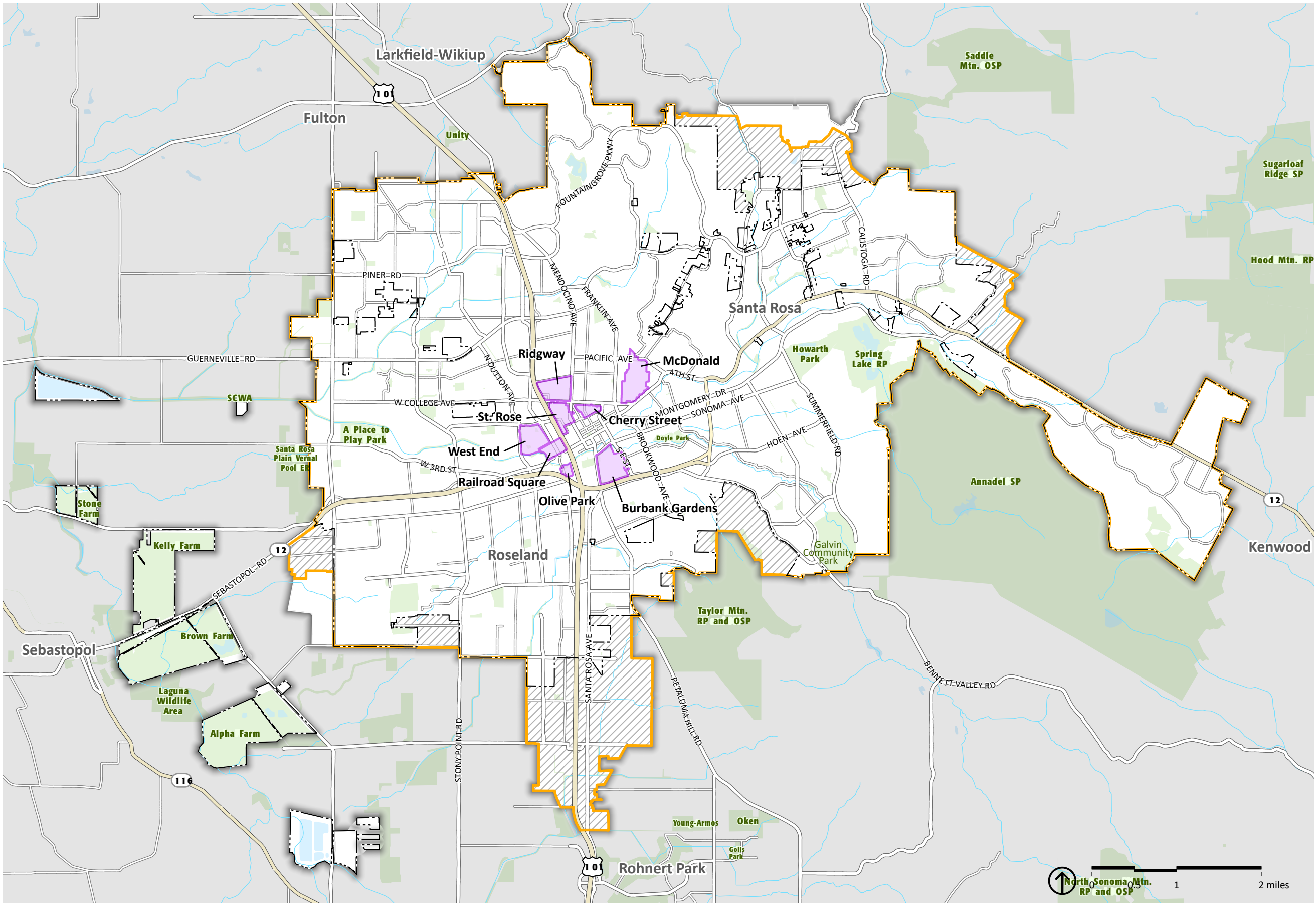


Figure 4-3
**Preservation
 Districts**

- City Limits
- Urban Growth Boundary
- City Sphere of Influence
- Planning Area
- Preservation Districts

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Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal 4-2: Protect tribal cultural resources in Santa Rosa and enrich the sense of place and understanding of the city's history and prehistory.

Policy 4-2.1: **Protect Native American heritage, honor the early stewards of this land, and treat Native American remains and resources with sensitivity.**

Action 4-2.1: *Continue to review proposed developments in conjunction with the California Historical Resources Information System, Northwest Information Center, at Sonoma State University to determine whether project areas contain known archaeological resources, both prehistoric and/or historic-era, and tribal cultural resources, or if they have the potential to hold such resources. (EIR)*

Action 4-2.2: *Work in good faith with interested communities to evaluate proposed development sites for the presence of subsurface historic, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources. These efforts may include:*

- *Consideration of existing reports and studies.*
- *Consultation with Native American tribes as required by State law.*

- *Appropriate site-specific investigative actions.*
- *On-site monitoring during excavation if appropriate. (EIR)*

Action 4-2.3: *Continue to require that project areas found to contain significant archaeological resources be examined by a qualified consulting archaeologist with recommendations for protection and preservation. (EIR)*

Policy 4-2.2: **Collaborate with the most likely descendants, as identified by the Native American Heritage Commission.**

Action 4-2.4: *If tribal cultural resources are encountered during development, halt work to avoid altering the materials and their context until a qualified consulting archaeologist and Native American representative (if appropriate) have evaluated the situation and recorded identified tribal cultural resources—which may include animals, structures, landscapes, or plants—and determined suitable mitigation measures. (EIR)*

Goal 4-3: Protect the historic and cultural resources of Santa Rosa and enrich the sense of place and understanding of the city's history and prehistory.

Policy 4-3.1: **Preserve Santa Rosa's historic sites, buildings, and neighborhoods.**

Action 4-3.1: *Identify funding sources and resources to pursue designating new landmarks and historic preservation districts.*

Action 4-3.2: *Follow the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction for the treatment of historic properties. (EIR)*

Action 4-3.3: *Provide owners of older and historic buildings, structures, and sites clear and cost-effective options to measurably enhance energy efficiency while maintaining the historic integrity to the greatest extent possible.*

Action 4-3.4: *Pursue designation as a Certified Local Government Program by the National Parks Service to assist in funding local historic preservation.*

Action 4-3.5: *Seek funding and establish mechanisms, such as social media and periodic flyers, to educate property owners in preservation districts about the steps required for changes to historic properties.*

Action 4-3.6: *Identify and minimize or remove obstacles for owners of historic properties to support preservation, including guides for repurposing facilities. Identify resources to:*

- *Keep cultural surveys relevant.*
- *Periodically update the City's Cultural Heritage Survey to ensure consistency with current guidelines and best practices, to reflect potential*

changes in status, and to include properties that have become age-eligible for listing.

- *Conduct cultural and/or historic inventories or surveys of areas of the city that have not been surveyed.*
- *Install plaques and/or educational signage at locations of cultural significance and significant events.*
- *Implement recommendations in the City's Cultural Heritage studies.*
- *Partner with the local tourism industry, property owners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other public agencies to develop and promote Heritage Tourism opportunities, integrating efforts with ongoing initiatives for economic development and the creative economy.*
- *Work with local schools and historic organizations to engage and interest residents of all ages in Santa Rosa's history and historic sites, structures, and neighborhoods. (EIR)*

Action 4-3.7: *Identify buildings that should be recognized for cultural significance and/or considered for landmark designation. (EIR)*

Action 4-3.8: *Strongly encourage and incentivize adaptive re-use of*

historic buildings and structures over demolition.

Action 4-3.9: *Preserve historic aspects of parks while integrating modern uses and amenities. (EIR)*

Action 4-3.10: *Ensure that historic surveys are available on a dedicated City webpage, easily accessible and promoted online.*

Policy 4-3.2: Promote conservation for efforts related to historic buildings, structures, or sites.

Action 4-3.11: *Explore programs, policies, or procedures that encourage the preservation of materials, such as historic windows, doors, siding, and trim, for potential reuse, as feasible when historic buildings are demolished or renovated.*

- Reviews projects, gifts, and loans proposed by others for City property.
- Reviews murals that are publicly funded or on City property.
- Facilitates community participation in the development of public art projects.
- Stimulates public awareness of public art.
- Reviews projects initiated by developers.
- Organizes exhibitions in City facilities.
- Manages the existing collection through assessment, maintenance, and conservation.

Public art and cultural facilities enhance the city's identity, pride, and image. Gathering places contribute to community bonding and pride, support a positive business climate, and provide a draw for tourism. Public art and arts districts can help revitalize underserved areas, fulfill the need for affordable live-work space for artists, and bring increased tax revenue to the City. Art in educational programs can foster skills, develop creative and critical thinking needed for the contemporary workforce, and provide a vital outlet for youth to express themselves. The City's art and culture programs celebrate and build on Santa Rosa's rich cultural diversity.

The mission of the Public Art Program is to champion artistic expression and amplify community voices through a diverse array of public art experiences to support an empowered, thriving, and inclusive Santa Rosa community connected through the power of art.

Art and Culture

For several decades, the City of Santa Rosa has collaborated with community partners to build a thriving Public Art Program, including the adoption of the 2021-2024 Public Art Program Strategic Plan. Recognizing the value of Santa Rosa's public art and cultural resources, the City Council adopted the Public Art Policy in 1996 and created the Art in Public Places Committee (APPC) to oversee the Public Art Program in Santa Rosa. The program:

- Develops projects that focus on issues and places that are important to Santa Rosa civic dialogue.
- Develops projects in collaboration with other public agencies, nonprofit cultural groups, and curators.

Public art is art—in any media—that is created for the benefit of the general public. Public art is inherently expansive, needing only to be visually and/or physically accessible to the public. Public art is placemaking, meaning-making, and community-building, made by art makers of any discipline, practice, background, and vision.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal 4-4: Empower a thriving and inclusive Santa Rosa community connected through the power of art.

Policy 4-4.1: Champion artistic expression and amplify community voices through a diverse array of public art experiences in collaboration with the Art in Public Places Committee, especially in Areas of Change.

Action 4-4.1: Continue to implement the Public Art Program Strategic Plan and update as needed.

Action 4-4.2: Represent, include, and celebrate diverse voices in the programming, process, outreach, and infrastructure of the Public Art Program.

Action 4-4.3: Partner and build strong relationships with culturally diverse local and regional community organizations and associations.

Action 4-4.4: Infuse all neighborhoods with art and empower community leaders across the city to champion arts programming.

Action 4-4.5: Consider publishing a resource identifying the location of City-sponsored art.

Policy 4-4.2: Support arts organizations in providing public art and programming in areas of the community that lack them.

Action 4-4.6: Integrate public art in capital improvement projects, especially in streetscape design on major corridors and arterials and at gateways, where feasible.

Action 4-4.7: Identify and seek funding sources to develop and maintain public art as a core component of placemaking and economic development, prioritizing public art in Equity Priority Areas and Areas of Change.

Action 4-4.8: Explore the use of art as a means of public outreach and engagement.

Action 4-4.9: Continue to develop strategic collaborations for public art.

Action 4-4.10: Improve outreach regarding the Art in Public Places Committee and Public Art Program processes.