



KEY FINDINGS



INTRODUCTION

The Key Findings from the Existing Conditions Report summarize items identified as being especially important to consider in updating the General Plan. Findings are organized by subject and are presented in the order of the chapters that appear in the Existing Conditions Report.

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER FINDINGS

Current Land Uses

1. The City of Santa Rosa is relatively built out with well-established residential neighborhoods at lower densities than the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Low density, primarily single-family, residential is the predominant land use in the city. Single-family residential uses cover 52 percent of the city's 41 square miles.
2. Commercial uses are generally located in the heart of Santa Rosa and along US Highway 101 (Highway 101), with 15 unique commercial districts in addition to Downtown Santa Rosa, which operates as a mixed-use district. Over half of all commercial in the city is strip retail. Industrial uses are generally situated in the northern and southern outskirts of Santa Rosa, often near Highway 101, and occupy only about 3 percent of the city's land area (718 acres).
3. Santa Rosa has two Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) stations, which provide regional connections throughout the North Bay, and the Charles M. Schulz–Sonoma County Airport is approximately seven miles northwest of Downtown Santa Rosa. The General Plan Update can guide changes to the multimodal transit network to support these regional connections.

Urban Design and Character

4. Major gateways into Santa Rosa lie along Highway 101, Highway 12, and county roads that transition into urban corridors when they reach city limits. On the western, southern, and eastern edges of the city, these gateways demarcate the change from rural/agricultural lands to a more urban environment with sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and street trees.
5. Major corridors in the city are typically four-lane roadways that are fronted by commercial and civic uses, which are set back from the street with parking. Most of these roadways have bicycle lanes and full sidewalks; however, there are gaps in these facilities in less dense parts of the city and in unincorporated islands.

Historical and Cultural Resources

6. Santa Rosa has more than 20 State-designated landmarks, one federally recognized historic resource (Luther Burbank property), and eight designated historic preservation districts, established to officially recognize individual properties and whole neighborhoods as key components of the city's heritage. The General Plan Update will provide an opportunity to examine and support preservation of these important resources.

Current General Plan and Zoning

7. Santa Rosa's current General Plan Growth Management Element paces residential development. The General Plan Update will provide the opportunity to ensure that future development occurs at a rate appropriate for the city.
8. Pursuant to California law, the city's Housing Element, last updated in 2014, accommodates the construction of new dwelling units. More than 1,913 units have been constructed through 2019, including approximately 15 percent allocated to very-low-income and 25 percent to low-income households. Although new housing is being provided for all income levels, including to replace homes lost in the 2017 Tubbs fire, the City is expected to receive an increased requirement from the State in the next Housing Element, which is included in the General Plan Update.
9. The City of Santa Rosa Zoning Ordinance is the primary regulatory mechanism used to implement the General Plan. The zoning ordinance establishes 20 zoning districts and six combining zone districts. The zoning ordinance is expected to need to be amended to reflect changes initiated by the General Plan Update.

Environmental Justice and Equity

10. Areas in northwestern Santa Rosa, Downtown Station Area, and southwestern Santa Rosa are designated by CalEnviroScreen 3.0 as disadvantaged communities (DACs) that are currently facing environmental justice issues, such as living in housing that is near unhealthy uses (warehouses, industrial sites, freeways, waste management facilities), having limited or no access to high-quality and well-maintained public services and amenities (schools, parks, libraries, community centers), having limited access to fresh and healthy food, or having limited decision-making power. The geographic distribution of DACs is generally consistent with the city's distribution of non-White residents, and the life expectancy at birth.
11. Fifteen percent of residents feel they speak English "less than very well" and are considered "linguistically isolated." Of those, 80 percent are Spanish speakers, 13.5 percent speak Asian or Pacific Island languages, 5 percent speak Indo-European languages, and the remaining 1.5 percent speak other languages.

Other City Policies and Programs

12. The city's current Climate Action Plan establishes a baseline of greenhouse gas emissions and sets strategies to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 25 percent by 2015 and 80 percent by 2050, a prior State directive. The General Plan Update offers an opportunity to modify development procedures to meet new emission reduction goals set by the State over the past few years.
13. Santa Rosa has 5 of the 12 "Priority Development Areas" (PDAs) in Sonoma County: the Roseland Area PDA is designated a "transit neighborhood;" the Sebastopol Road Corridor is designated a "mixed use corridor;" the Downtown Station Area PDA, which encompasses the Downtown SMART station, is designated a "city center;" the North Santa Rosa Station PDA around the North Santa Rosa SMART station is designated a "suburban center;" and the Mendocino Avenue/Santa Rosa Avenue PDA stretches the length of the city along Mendocino

Avenue south to Santa Rosa Avenue as a “mixed-use corridor.” The General Plan Update provides an opportunity to define appropriate preservation or change in these key areas, recognized regionally as important places to support a wide range of community activities.

MARKET DEMAND AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Demographic Analysis

1. Santa Rosa is the largest city in Sonoma County, and grew at a significantly higher rate than Sonoma County since 2010. The city’s population continues to become more racially diverse, driven primarily by growth in Latinx residents, along with increases in Asian and Black residents.
2. Santa Rosa’s household growth has been composed mostly of senior households (consisting of residents at or above 65 years old) and families without children. Since 2010, growth occurred in median household income levels and in the number of residents with higher educational attainment levels, although incomes and educational attainment remain lower than in Sonoma County overall.

Employment Trends

3. Sonoma County’s economy (by number of jobs) includes a mix of health care, retail, food services, agricultural and related food manufacturing, tourism, and medical technology. In Sonoma County, jobs grew by 19 percent between 2009 and 2018. Note that the employment data analyses do not reflect the current economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, but instead illustrate longer-term trends and conditions that will be more relevant for the multi-decade period to be covered by the General Plan.
4. Santa Rosa constituted 37 percent of countywide jobs as of 2017. As the county seat and largest urban area in Sonoma County, Santa Rosa includes a concentration of jobs in many office-based industry sectors – such as professional services, public administration, and finance. Health care and retail trade jobs are also concentrated in the city, which contains two regional malls and several major hospitals.
5. In the long term, potential opportunities for job growth in Santa Rosa are in the dining and food/beverage-related businesses, and advanced research and development related to agriculture industries. Health care is also likely to continue driving substantial job growth. Government and other office-based industry sectors are likely to grow at a moderate pace. The city’s large concentration of retail jobs may grow slowly or even decline over time as part of an ongoing contraction nationwide in “brick-and-mortar” retail sales, as online shopping captures an increasing share of consumer spending.

Housing Market

6. Demand for housing is strong in Santa Rosa, as the city and region continue to experience a supply shortage. Demand is strongest for ownership housing products, with average sales prices for single-family homes and condominiums increasing dramatically and at a much higher rate than apartment rents in the last several years.
7. Financial feasibility challenges have constrained the development of higher density housing in Santa Rosa, as rents and sales prices are not yet sufficient to overcome the high cost of construction. Although developers are pursuing both single family homes and lower-density multifamily projects in Santa Rosa, the city has not been as successful in attracting higher-density multifamily infill projects, especially in Downtown Santa Rosa.
8. Santa Rosa is well-positioned to capture housing demand in the future, as the city is the largest job center in Sonoma County and has excellent accessibility to transit and Highway 101. Santa Rosa could potentially capture demand for between approximately 35,600 and 41,650 additional housing units between 2020 and 2050. However, the amount of housing that is actually built will depend on factors such as achievable rents/sales prices, the cost of construction, water and sewer infrastructure capacity, and the availability of suitable sites.

Retail Market

9. Santa Rosa offers a diversity of shopping options, including both of Sonoma County's regional malls, a lifestyle center, "big box" retail stores, car dealerships, and the Downtown Santa Rosa shopping district. The city is the region's primary retail destination, serving both local residents and visitors. As a result, total taxable sales per household in Santa Rosa were 17 percent higher than in Sonoma County overall as of 2018. Santa Rosa also includes grocery-anchored shopping centers that serve local neighborhoods throughout the city. Retail sales performance was strong prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the city attracting especially high sales per household in the categories of motor vehicle and parts dealers, home furnishings, clothing, and general merchandise stores such as Target.
10. National trends indicate that "brick-and-mortar" retail sales will continue to decline over time, as a higher share of retail sales will be captured online. Therefore, future demand for new retail space in Santa Rosa will be driven by convenience retail to serve new households in the city. According to the demand estimates, Santa Rosa can anticipate capturing approximately 27 square feet of additional retail space per new

household. If Santa Rosa were to capture all estimated growth in housing demand, the city could add between 946,000 and 1.1 million square feet of retail space between 2020 and 2050. Growth will primarily occur in the dining, entertainment, and food sectors, which are less likely to compete with online shopping. As older “big box” stores and regional malls become less viable, many of these spaces will also transition to other uses, or be re-tenanted by other types of retail and restaurants.

Office/R&D Market

11. Santa Rosa constitutes Sonoma County’s largest concentration of office space. Tenants in Santa Rosa primarily consist of small professional services, finance, insurance and real estate businesses, and some R&D related to advanced technologies. In the last decade, some of these sectors have experienced slight declines, while others have grown at a slow pace.
12. Recent office development activity in Sonoma County has been driven mostly by medical and government uses. There has been very limited development activity in Santa Rosa, with the city accounting for less than one percent of the 410,000 square feet of office/R&D space added in Sonoma County since 2010. This slow growth is attributable to limited employment growth in office-based industry sectors in Santa Rosa, competition for development with the Airport Industrial Area to the north, traffic congestion challenges along Highway 101, and limited housing growth within Santa Rosa itself. New SMART light rail service began recently, but it has not yet attracted new office development in the station areas.
13. Moving forward, the Marin-Sonoma Narrows project, which will widen Highway 101 to alleviate congestion and improve travel time to Santa Rosa from the core Bay Area, is likely to improve Santa Rosa’s competitiveness for future office development. Furthermore, the addition of more housing options in the city will also enhance its ability to attract office workers and companies.
14. Office demand in Santa Rosa is estimated to grow at a moderate rate over the next 30 years, with potential for the city to capture demand for between 1.1 million and 2.1 million square feet of additional space. Demand will likely be driven by office tenants in health care, government, finance/insurance/real estate, and other small professional service companies. Santa Rosa would need to compete with the Airport Industrial Area in unincorporated Sonoma County for new office development. This area has seen a large amount of the region’s office and industrial development activity in the last decade, and still has various projects in the pipeline.

Industrial Market

15. The industrial market is stronger than the office market in Sonoma County. The industrial market serves the food and wine industry, which requires production, storage, and distribution space. The cannabis industry has also created demand for new space. Distribution centers have not grown significantly in Sonoma County, despite the growth in e-commerce throughout the Bay Area. This can be attributed to the county's distance from the core of the Bay Area, and capacity constraints on Highway 101.
16. From 2020 to 2050, demand for industrial space will continue to modestly grow in Sonoma County. Santa Rosa is positioned to capture 570,000 square feet or potentially up to 1.5 million square feet of growth in demand for industrial space. As with office space, it is possible that some of the estimated demand for Santa Rosa would be captured by the Airport Industrial Area in unincorporated Sonoma County. The city's ability to capture growth in demand may also be constrained by the limited availability of large greenfield properties located near major highways and arterial streets.

Hotel Market

17. Santa Rosa's hotels serve a unique mix of visitors within Sonoma County, including both tourists visiting wine country and business travelers associated with companies located in Santa Rosa. Santa Rosa lost two of its hotels that offered larger meeting facilities in the Tubbs Fire, which has affected the visitor market locally. Prior to the pandemic, demand for hotel stays was strong in Sonoma County and Santa Rosa; an additional two hotels were under construction in Santa Rosa, with three others planned for development. It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic will slow future development of hotel rooms.
18. Santa Rosa is positioned to attract continued growth in hotel demand over the long term because of ongoing growth in employment and visitation. Long-term average annual hotel room absorption has been very stable in Sonoma County and Santa Rosa over time. Based on long-term trends, Santa Rosa is estimated to potentially capture growth in demand for between approximately 1,280 to 1,500 additional hotel rooms by 2050.

Remaining General Plan Buildout Capacity Versus Demand Estimates

19. The current General Plan does not appear to allow enough development to accommodate residential and office/R&D demand anticipated over the next 30 years. The exact quantity of any future shortfall will depend on how mixed-use residential properties are developed and whether some office/R&D demand is accommodated at sites that currently have industrial land use designations. The General Plan update is expected to consider accommodating growth both through development of vacant sites and allowing redevelopment or intensification of already developed properties.

TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS

Travel and Commute Patterns

1. Santa Rosa is the largest activity center in Sonoma County with over one-third of both the county's population and jobs.
2. A large number of Santa Rosa residents work locally. Approximately 60 percent of workers in Santa Rosa live within the city limits, and 37 percent of employed city residents both live and work in Santa Rosa.
3. Motor vehicle travel is the dominant mode of transportation for commute trips by Santa Rosa residents, with 89 percent of commuters driving to work, including 78 percent driving alone.
4. With the arrival of SMART commuter rail and the City's emphasis on high-quality transit corridors, in addition to the City's efforts in expanding its bicycle and pedestrian networks, a significant opportunity exists to shift travel mode shares to transit and non-auto modes.

Vehicle Miles Traveled

5. Approximately 30 percent of the County's 10.3 million daily vehicle miles traveled is associated with development in Santa Rosa. The city's average VMT per resident and average VMT per employee are lower than the countywide average, and in fact are the lowest of all incorporated cities in Sonoma County.
6. Existing and future development that is within one-half mile of a SMART station or high-frequency transit corridor can generally be presumed to have a less-than-significant VMT impact.
7. VMT generated by development increases with distance from the downtown core.
8. The land use and circulation pattern set forth in the General Plan update has a direct relationship with VMT.

Equity

9. Eleven Census tracts in central Santa Rosa were identified by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission as Communities of Concern, highlighting transportation challenges faced by residents in these areas.

Streets and Highways

10. The primary location of traffic congestion is along US 101, where drivers routinely experience delays during the morning and afternoon peak periods in both the northbound and southbound directions.
11. As of 2020, traffic conditions have been impacted by the 2017 Tubbs Fire and the COVID-19 pandemic. Ongoing monitoring of patterns will be important in understanding the long-term impacts of these events and how the City can best respond to achieve its mobility goals.

Bicycle Facilities

12. Between 2010 and 2018, Santa Rosa's network of bicycle facilities increased by 35 miles, an increase of 44 percent.
13. Eight key corridors have been identified for study to develop enhanced bicycle access to major destinations and improve connectivity throughout the city.
14. Six high-injury bicycle corridors have been identified as priorities for safety improvements.

Pedestrian Facilities

15. Most City streets have sidewalks on at least one side of the street. Areas where sidewalks do not currently exist are in more rural neighborhoods where sidewalks are not required and areas that have been annexed from Sonoma County.
16. Transportation infrastructure and natural features act as barriers to bicycling and walking. There are limited opportunities for crossing US 101, the SMART tracks, and several creeks.
17. Twelve pedestrian corridors have been identified as priorities for pedestrian enhancements.

Transit Service

18. SMART service has established the Downtown and North Santa Rosa station areas as targets for future development and transportation investments, especially projects that provide non-driving mobility options.
19. CityBus service has been restructured to provide frequent, high-quality transit service along key corridors, and plans to expand these corridors in the future as supported by new transit-oriented development.

Transportation Demand Management

20. Numerous programs are available to residents and workers in Santa Rosa to encourage the use of alternatives to motor vehicle travel.
21. Telework is anticipated to increase as technology continues to evolve and enable more people to work remotely.

Aviation

22. There is public transportation access to the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport via Sonoma County Transit Route 62 directly from Santa Rosa or from the Sonoma County Airport SMART station.
23. The Sonoma County Airport Express provides service from the airport to Santa Rosa as well as to Marin County and the Oakland and San Francisco airports.

RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE FINDINGS

Recreation and Parks

1. The City of Santa Rosa's current General Plan sets a goal of six acres of parkland for every 1,000 Santa Rosa residents—twice the State standard and national average. Santa Rosa has nearly achieved this goal, with 5.9 acres of park and open space land per 1,000 residents.
2. Parkland in Santa Rosa is well distributed geographically, and a majority of residents have access to parks or open space areas within a half mile of their homes. This include neighborhoods designated by the State as "Communities of Concern" (which in other cities often specifically lack easy access to parks or open space).
3. The City is committed to maintaining and improving the community's access to quality parks now and in the future by: (a) ensuring safe, walkable access to parks for all residents; (b) continuing to offer valuable programming, including youth enrichment programs; and (c) maintaining high-quality park amenities.

Regional Open Space and Trails

4. Open space areas of various sizes are integrated into many of the city's parks and contribute to the overall preservation of recreational land in the Planning Area. Open space areas purposely have minimal improvements to preserve the natural setting.

5. Larger open space areas in the Planning Area are generally developed in association with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the Sonoma County Water Agency under joint acquisition and maintenance agreements. These spaces are counted toward the standard of 1.1 acres of public-serving open space per 1,000 residents.

Fire Damage and Park Restoration

6. The 2017 Tubbs Fire damaged approximately 75 acres of parkland across 10 park sites in Santa Rosa. This included damage to community parks, neighborhood parks, and landscaped and natural open space areas. The City is currently (2020) in the process of restoring nine of the 10 parks, including the full rebuild of the Coffey Neighborhood Park.

COMMUNITY SERVICES FINDINGS

Police Services

1. Despite budgetary constraints, the Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD) continues to work toward improved levels of service.
2. In light of social justice unrest spurred by the 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, the police continue to evolve in their role and engagement with the community by increasing dialogue and strengthening ties with the black, indigenous, and Latinx communities, working with the community to revise policies on SRPD's use of force, and soliciting ongoing feedback from the community.
3. In response to community outcry, protests, and demands stemming from social and racial injustice and unrest in early 2020, the City of Santa Rosa (City) drafted the Santa Rosa Community Empowerment Plan (CEP). The Santa Rosa CEP is rooted in principles of community engagement, focused on engagement with the Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD).
4. SRPD continues to work toward improved levels of service and response times. SRPD's goal response time for Priority 1 calls, which require an immediate response because there may be an immediate threat to life, is less than six minutes, similar to the goals of the largest northern and southern California cities of 5.4 minutes and 5.7 minutes, respectively. In 2019, the average response time for Priority 1 calls was 6.48 minutes.

5. SRPD reports that the Public Safety Building is aging and in need of extensive repairs and required updates, and it no longer meets SRPD's needs. Based on current conditions and anticipated growth SRPD has stated its needs for:
 - a. A larger facility with an on-site training center within the next 10 years;
 - b. Two additional substations, one in east Santa Rosa and one in the Roseland neighborhood, to reach SRPD's goal to provide better coverage of the entire city; and
 - c. A new standalone communications center and emergency operations center.
6. The General Plan Update provides an opportunity for the City to coordinate with SRPD to identify how to best support SRPD in:
 - a. Encouraging implementation of the CEP to support inclusive collaboration with the entire Santa Rosa community.
 - b. Reaching adopted response times.
 - c. Providing adequate police services as Santa Rosa grows.

Fire Protection Services

7. The Santa Rosa Fire Department (SRFD) has 10 fire stations dispersed throughout the community. The City Council set a goal in 2016 for SRFD to respond to 80 percent of calls in 4 minutes or less, to 90 percent of all calls in 5 minutes or less, and to all calls in 6 minutes or less. The latest available reports indicate SRFD's response times are at 5 minutes and 55 seconds, 90 percent of the time.
8. As wildfire risks continue to grow due to climate change, regional fire protection services have continued to streamline the fire services network to provide a centralized, professional firefighting corps. Through close coordination with the districts, the General Plan Update can consider how to best support the SRFD, Sonoma County Fire District, and other local Fire Protection Districts in improving response times and providing the best possible fire protection as the city and wildfire risks grow.

Schools

9. There are eight public school districts, one community college, and 27 private schools in the Santa Rosa Planning Area. Schools are dispersed throughout the community so most students are within walking or biking distance of at least one school.

10. School districts are suffering from budgetary cuts due to family emigration following the 2017 Tubbs Fire and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Extracurricular programs, non-essential educational services, and facility maintenance and improvements may continue to be suspended for an unknown length of time.
11. The General Plan Update will provide the City with an opportunity to curb local school attrition rates by addressing effects of the 2017 Tubbs Fire and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Libraries

12. The Sonoma County Library (SCL) offers four library locations in the Santa Rosa Planning Area and works to continuously modernize library resources. However, the SCL anticipates funding shortages in the coming years from the COVID-19 pandemic.
13. SCL provides internet access for members of the public, including those who do not have internet access at home.
14. The Central Library facilities have aged and will need to be replaced or relocated in the future.

Health Services

15. Three major hospitals and a variety of smaller medical offices are located in the Santa Rosa Planning Area. In addition, various mental health services are available for residents seeking behavioral healthcare. However, the community performs sub-optimally with regard to several health-related metrics, such as stroke-related deaths, mental health disorders, substance-abuse disorders, and asthma, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.
16. Key considerations for the healthy communities-related components of the General Plan Update should include the following:
 - a. Medical data indicates that residents in Santa Rosa have a higher incidence of stroke-related deaths, mental health patients, substance-abuse disorder patients, and asthma patients than statewide.
 - b. The life expectancy for Santa Rosa residents (79 years) is lower than the state average (82 years).
 - c. The food environment index for Sonoma County falls below the state average, based on distance to a grocery store, and healthy food options, as well as cost barriers to healthy food.

17. The General Plan Update can consider actions to augment existing health services and resources, encourage healthy lifestyles and habits through City policies and programs, and promote land use patterns with the potential to create a healthier community.
18. Fire-impacted residents in Santa Rosa were displaced from their homes when three percent of the city's total housing stock was destroyed in 2017. The effects from the fire continue to be realized, and many people remain homeless or displaced both directly and indirectly by the fires. The General Plan Update will provide an opportunity to expand City services to meet increasing demands for housing and mental health resources until those displaced and now homeless are rehoused.

Solid Waste

19. The City is currently implementing a plan to decrease the waste diversion rate to less than 1.0 pound of waste per person, per day by 2040, compared to 2.8 pounds in 2018, by reducing the amount of waste created at the source or reusing materials already in the existing waste stream. The General Plan Update can provide the City with the opportunity to support initiatives for zero waste as set by the City and expand opportunities for waste diversion.

HAZARDS FINDINGS

Wildfire Hazards

1. Areas vulnerable to intense and uncontrollable wildfires are present throughout Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. And the city has warmed 2.1 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) since 1895, and climate models forecast a future that is hotter and drier, producing more favorable conditions for fire ignition and spread.
2. Santa Rosa's wildland-urban interface (WUI) encompasses approximately 30 percent of the city, which includes moderate, high, and very high wildfire hazard severity zones. The WUI boundary is anticipated to expand based on new mapping expected from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).
3. Wildfire conditions can impact areas of the city due to embercast and smoke, which can exacerbate health conditions and fire threats in more urbanized areas of the city. Additional wildfire mitigation requirements for construction outside of the WUI may help to reduce or eliminate wildfire threats.

4. Accounting for more frequent and intense wildfire conditions in the future construction of buildings, roadways, and infrastructure can further ensure that future losses are minimized and recovery efforts are easier on those affected.
5. The City of Santa Rosa took swift action that reduced the potential cascading community consequences of the 2017 fires, notably: establishing an expedited rebuilding permit process with nearly 2,400 building permits issued as of August 2020; streamlining the City's permitting process in prioritized areas to promote new housing development; undertaking a Downtown Station Area Specific Plan amendment process focused on adding density and housing in the downtown area; and obtaining voter approval of a 0.25-cent sales tax to support the rebuilding of City infrastructure. These measures are still in place and support ongoing efforts to rebuild fire losses.
6. An independent after-action review of the 2017 fires made 54 recommendations to improve the City's capabilities in wildfire preparedness, response, and recovery, centered on five areas of improvement: situational assessment and information sharing; organization, staffing, and training; water system; transition to recovery and long-term recovery; and fire safety. The City is actively addressing all the recommendations, including those that require collaborative region-wide agency approaches.
7. State law requires that the General Plan Safety Element address the fire risk in State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) and very high fire-hazard severity zones in Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs)—both of which exist in Santa Rosa—and propose risk-reduction implementation measures that reduce the risk of fire.
8. The City is currently completing a draft Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) that builds on the wildfire hazard analysis in the 2016 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) by providing a more detailed risk analysis and developing an action plan to address the wildfire threat to Santa Rosa. Broad stakeholder and community engagement in the planning effort included community workshops, a community survey with over 500 participants, and a robust schedule of agency/organization meetings. Once completed, the CWPP is intended to be added to the LHMP, making it integral to the City's Safety Element. The approved CWPP action plan will be reflected in the City's Safety Element and other relevant elements of the updated General Plan.

Seismic and Geologic Hazards

9. Earthquake and geologic hazards are an important consideration for all future development and redevelopment opportunities within the city, given the proximity to the Rodgers Creek Fault, and the potential expansion of the Alquist-Priolo Special Study Zone expected in 2021.

10. Although Santa Rosa has not experienced a damaging earthquake since 1969, there is a very high likelihood (72 percent probability) that Santa Rosa will experience damaging ground motions from an earthquake occurrence in the San Francisco Bay region during the period covered by the General Plan Update.
11. The underlying geology within the Santa Rosa Plain (beneath the flatland areas of the city) can trap and amplify seismic waves, intensifying ground shaking. Such amplification explains why Santa Rosa sustained heavy damage from both the great 1906 earthquake and two relatively moderate earthquakes in 1969, and it also means that Santa Rosa could experience very strong shaking in a future earthquake on the Rodgers Creek Fault.
12. Fires occur following all earthquakes that significantly shake the built environment, but they are generally only a significant problem in urban areas predominantly composed of densely developed wood-framed buildings. Major mitigating factors to reduce the risk of earthquake induced fires include ensuring older wood-framed structures are adequately secured to their foundations, automatic gas shutoff valves are installed, water supply systems are resilient to earthquake hazards, and an auxiliary water supply for firefighting is in place.
13. Liquefaction and earthquake-generated landslide risks exist throughout Santa Rosa even though the California Geological Survey has not yet mapped these state seismic hazard regulatory zones in Sonoma County.
14. Wildfires in areas of steep topography can exacerbate slope instability and increase the risk of landslides and mudflows that can have devastating impacts both in immediate areas and downslope. Mitigating measures, including downslope protections, can help reduce landslide and mudflow related risk, as part of future development and redevelopment in areas prone to wildfire hazards.
15. The city is vulnerable to both earthquake- and rainfall-induced landslides. Areas surrounding Santa Rosa and Spring Creeks, Santa Rosa Flood Control Channel, and areas on steeper hillslopes are vulnerable to earthquake-induced landslide and susceptible to liquefaction. Santa Rosa has experienced rainfall-induced landslides in the past, ranging from small, localized events to larger events that caused injury and substantial damage. Decreased vegetation from wildfires can combine with excessive ground moisture from heavy rains to cause landslides.
16. The interaction of wildfire events in areas of steep topography can exacerbate slope stability issues in areas already prone to landslides. Understanding existing landslide hazard areas and the intersection of fire conditions will support safe and sustainable future development/redevelopment in the city.

Flooding and Dam Inundation

17. Flooding in the low-lying areas of Santa Rosa (southwest of US Highway 101) can impact key critical facilities associated with sewer treatment. Development activities in the city that could increase runoff could increase flooding in this area, making these facilities more prone to flooding.
18. Drainage improvements and enhancements, that do not increase wildfire vulnerability, are needed along creeks in the city to increase drainage capacity and support habitat restoration.
19. The General Plan Update offers an opportunity for the City to explore a variety of measures that can minimize the risk of flooding and dam inundation, which could include the following.
 - a. Increase coordination and collaboration with dam owners/operators regarding dam maintenance and upgrades to ensure downstream impacts are better understood, and risks to properties susceptible to inundation are effectively managed.
 - b. Integrate additional capacity into future stormwater infrastructure upgrades to accommodate variability resulting from climate change.
 - c. Assess storm drain materials for vulnerability to hazards (wildfire, earthquake, etc.) and design upgrades/retrofits from materials that require less maintenance and upkeep wherever possible.
 - d. Increase the use of natural drainage strategies within areas identified for creek restoration, with the focus of minimizing development encroachment and reducing maintenance costs.
 - e. Develop flood-control measures that integrate with the reconstruction process in wildfire-impacted areas.

Drought

20. Water supplies in the region rely on surface water from the Russian River Watershed, which may experience drought conditions in the future. This strain on future water supplies can be mitigated through the development of new water supplies that are more resilient to drought conditions. The General Plan Update can identify opportunities to protect water sources through future developments and improvements within the city, including supporting groundwater recharge through impervious standards for development.
21. Future water supply constraints can be reduced through effective water demand management and improvements to monitoring activities of both the water system infrastructure and water supplies entering the system. Additionally, existing water supply constraints can be reduced through water reclamation.

22. Reduction of water usage/demand focused on landscaping and vegetation types that can adapt to changes in precipitation and temperature can yield significant water savings for landscaping uses, which often account for a majority of water demand in drier climates.

Hazardous Materials

23. A variety of locations within the city (e.g., dry cleaners and automotive repair shops) use, store, manufacture, and dispose of hazardous materials. The city also has a variety of industrial facilities that contain significant quantities of hazardous materials. Through the General Plan Update, the City can enhance safety measures surrounding hazardous materials by considering implementation of any of the following measures:
 - a. Monitoring and tracking hazardous materials within the city in correspondence with mapped hazard zones to gain a better understanding of which areas of the city may be impacted by releases as a secondary effect of a hazard event.
 - b. Prioritizing safe hazardous waste transport routes within the city and modifying critical facilities and infrastructure along these routes to reduce the threat of hazardous material spills.
 - c. Expanding the understanding of the use, handling, storage, generation, and disposal of hazardous materials through other City departments to ensure these locations are better understood and evaluated as part of City activities.
 - d. Considering retrofit incentives for structures that contain hazardous materials or are at risk of exposing hazardous materials.
 - e. Tracking new and emerging trends in hazardous materials and contamination to ensure future impacts do not create hardships—this is primarily a concern with groundwater resources and changing regulations.

Airport Hazards

24. As the largest airport facility within the North Bay Area, Sonoma County Airport is a significant asset to the regional emergency response and preparedness efforts.
25. Expansion of the airport may conflict with existing and future uses within the northern portions of the city.
26. The General Plan Update can seek opportunities to collaborate with Sonoma County Airport to support its sustainable future by focusing on increasing resilience and identifying changing flood and fire conditions that may impact airport facilities and operations.

Emergency Preparedness

27. Wildfire and earthquake hazards are the most prevalent hazards in and around Santa Rosa, making these the most important hazards to consider in emergency planning.
28. Evacuation routes are clearly defined; however, evacuation planning could be improved by an assessment of the hazards and constraints to these routes and consideration of evacuation routes as part of the Capital Improvement Program, allowing for prioritization of improvements along these roadways to enhance resilience.

INFRASTRUCTURE FINDINGS

Water Supply and Distribution

1. The City's Water Department provides water service to approximately 178,000 people through 53,000 service connections. The Sonoma County Water Agency supplies most of the water, and the City uses groundwater to supplement the water supply.
2. The City has identified projects needed to increase water delivery capacity. Under the guidance of the Water Master Plan Update, the City has completed the 17 highest-priority capital improvement projects and 55 more projects are currently in design, planned, or under construction.

Wastewater Collection and Treatment

3. The City maintains 590 miles of sewer system infrastructure. The sewer system discharges into the Laguna Wastewater Treatment Plant, which can treat up to 21.34 million gallons per day before releasing it into the Russian River.
4. The Sanitary Sewer System Master Plan identifies several trunk line replacements or improvements needed to reduce the flow of stormwater and groundwater into the aging sewer system.

Stormwater Drainage and Water Quality

5. Santa Rosa uses a combination of closed conduit and open channel systems to convey stormwater runoff from six primary drainage basins to the major creeks that run through the city. The city's creeks discharge into the Laguna de Santa Rosa, which eventually discharges surface waters into the Russian River.
6. The southern portion of the city has flooded historically along Colgan Creek and Roseland Creek. The General Plan can support improvements to stormwater drainage by identifying needed improvements to the storm drain system.

Dry Utilities

7. Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and Sonoma Clean Power provide gas and electricity services to the Santa Rosa community. The existing electricity supply system consists of both overhead and underground facilities.
8. The PG&E transmission system was the cause of some recent fires that devastated areas in Sonoma County, including parts of the city. PG&E has begun to service its transmission lines to help prevent future fires.