



City of Rohnert Park Planning Commission Report

DATE: February 11, 2016

ITEM NO: 8.2

SUBJECT: File No. PL2012-049. Central Rohnert Park, Priority Development Area Plan.

LOCATION: Approximately 330 acre triangular shaped area bordered by US Highway 101 to the west, the railroad tracks to the east and Avram Avenue/Santa Alicia Drive to the south.

REQUEST: Conduct a study session and public hearing on the Central Rohnert Park, Priority Development Area Plan, and related environmental impact report, proposed general plan and zoning ordinance amendments.

SUBJECT

Study session on the Central Rohnert Park, Priority Development Area (PDA) plan, related environmental impact report, proposed general plan and zoning ordinance amendments. This meeting was advertised as a public hearing, so comments may be heard. A second public hearing is scheduled for February 25, 2016 for additional consideration of the PDA plan documents.

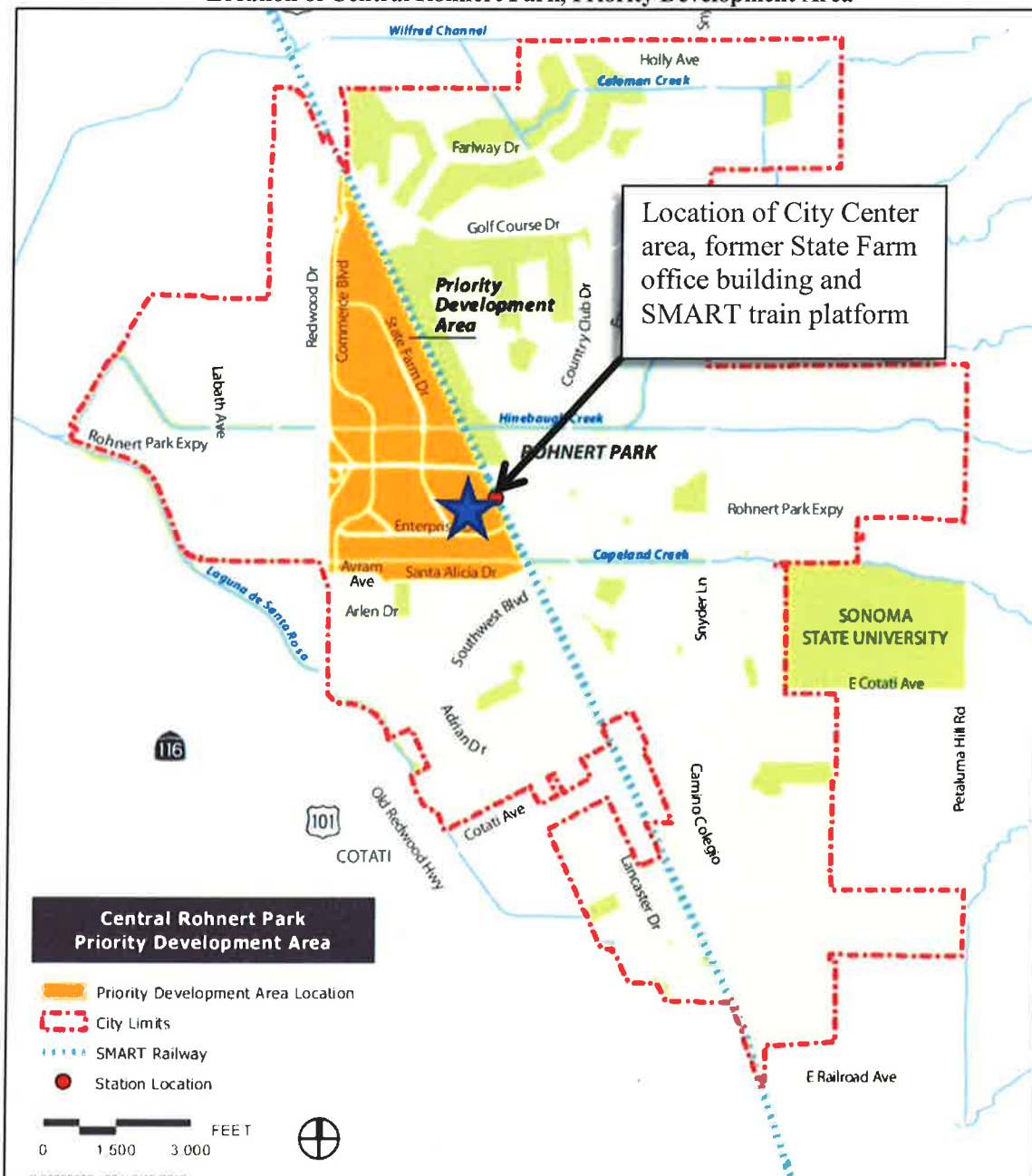
BACKGROUND

Development Services staff along with a consultant team has developed the Central Rohnert PDA, funded through a regional FOCUS planning grant. PDAs are local, infill development areas near transit facilities. The anticipated arrival of the SMART commuter train station adjacent to the former State Farm campus is a major impetus for the PDA plan and the plan will help the City foster development throughout the PDA area, build on investments occurring in the City Center area and utilize the former State Farm campus as a key catalyst site to revitalize the area.

As part of the PDA plan adoption and implementation process, an environmental impact report (EIR), general plan and zoning ordinance amendments are being finalized. The final documents will be prepared for planning commission consideration at the February 25, 2016 meeting.

The PDA is a 330 acre triangular shaped area (see Figure 1), formed by the boundaries of U.S. Highway 101 to the west, the railroad tracks (and SMART line) to the east, and Avram Avenue/Santa Alicia Drive to the south. The location of the City Center and former State Farm campus are indicated with a blue star on Figure 1. Special attention will be paid to this area since it is viewed as a key catalyst site for downtown formation.

Figure 1
Location of Central Rohnert Park, Priority Development Area



The PDA planning process has relied heavily on public input from the community in determining the priorities and vision for the future of the PDA. A variety of strategies were utilized to engage and solicit input from residents and community stakeholders. A Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) were formed from the onset to advise and provide input on the PDA plan at key points of its development. Stakeholder interviews and public outreach workshops were conducted. As the project has progressed additional forms of project input have been used, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 - Community Involvement Project Milestones		
Task	Date	Topics
2013		
Focus Group Held	October 1, 2013	Issue identification
Chamber of Commerce Presentation	October 2, 2013	Project overview, issue identification
Public Workshop #1	October 16, 2013	Project overview, issue identification, visioning
CAC/TAC Meeting #1	November 19, 2013	Project overview, issue identification, visioning
2014		
CAC/TAC Meeting #2	March 4, 2014	Site concepts, identify opportunity sites and locations for transportation enhancements
Walkability Workshop (Dan Burden)	May 7, 2014	Workshop and walking tour of PDA area
CAC/TAC Meeting #3	July 10, 2014	Development scenarios, circulation enhancements
City Council Workshop	August 12, 2014	Development scenarios, circulation enhancements
Public Workshop #2	October 21, 2014	Development scenarios, circulation enhancements
2015		
Planning Commission Discussion	July 23, 2015	Update on project to PC
Public Draft PDA available	September, 2015	Draft plan available to public for comment
Joint City Council / Planning Commission Workshop	September 8, 2015	Discussion of draft plan
City Town Hall Meeting	October 15, 2015	Among other topics downtown formation was discussed
PDA EIR Scoping Meeting	November 18, 2015	A scoping meeting was held as required by CEQA
PDA, EIR Comment Period and Final EIR Preparation	December – February, 2016	An EIR was prepared for PDA and a comment period was required

Table 1 - Community Involvement Project Milestones		
Task	Date	Topics
2016 – PDA Adoption		
PDA & EIR – Planning Commission	February 11, 2016	Review PDA and Final EIR
PDA – GP & Zoning Amendments	February 25, 2016	Consider adoption of GP and zoning admendments
PDA, EIR, GP & Zoning – City Council	March 15	Consider adoption of PDA, EIR, GP and Zoning Amendments
PDA, EIR, GP & Zoning – City Council	March 29	If needed for additional consideration

PROPOSED PROJECT ENTITLEMENTS

As part of the approval process and to fully implement the PDA plan, the city would need to do the following:

1. Adopt the PDA plan. This document will serve as the “master plan” for the entire 330 acre PDA area and is intended to supplement general plan goals, policies and programs within this area. General plan amendments are proposed to create links between the two documents.
2. Adopt the PDA plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The planning commission has been provided with a copy of the draft EIR document for review. The public review period on this document closed on February 1. The City received two comment letters, one from CalTrans and one from Sonoma County. Staff and the consultant team are in the process of reviewing comments received and will prepare a final EIR for planning commission consideration at the February 25 hearing.
3. General plan amendments. Updates to the general plan will be required to implement the PDA plan.
4. Zoning amendments. Certain targeted amendments to the zoning ordinance will be needed to implement portions of the PDA plan.

The purpose of this meeting (February 11) is to introduce and discuss all of the above documents and proposed amendments. A public hearing has been advertised for this meeting, so testimony may be heard by the planning commission. The February 25 meeting will be also advertised as a public hearing in the newspaper and mailed notices will be sent out to all PDA property owners, and to properties within 300 feet of the PDA area as required by state law. The following sections of this staff report describe each of the entitlements in more detail:

PDA PLAN

The purpose of the PDA plan is to establish the vision and policy for the plan area for land use, transportation and infrastructure. The plan also contains design guidelines that would apply to public sector and private sector development when it occurs with the plan area. The general plan

and zoning ordinance would be amended to implement the PDA document. Once adopted the PDA plan will be used to guide both private and public sector projects within the plan area. A theme that has emerged during the public workshops is that Rohnert Park needs a town center (or downtown). Downtown formation strategies have been incorporated into the PDA document, to accomplish the following:

- Create a policy and land use framework to support a downtown with unique shops and restaurants that are well connected with a network of roads and sidewalks – more “places to go” and “ways to get around”.
- The PDA plan allows for the creation of a unique destination that complements other parts of the City with localized retail, gathering places including restaurants, park lands, and a welcoming entry for SMART riders to attract more of these venues.
- The PDA plan has a good mix of land uses. The PDA plan is balanced in terms of residential housing and commercial development.
- State Farm site has been identified as a catalyst site. The site should be carefully developed to maximize its impact on the PDA area.
- The PDA plan calls for more connectivity. Walking and riding a bicycle are currently a challenge in central Rohnert Park. Streets are difficult to cross and many commercial properties lack internal pedestrian facilities. Existing development is designed more for vehicles than for pedestrians or bicyclists with missing sidewalk and lack of trail connections.
- Several methods of crossing Rohnert Park Expressway (RPX) are proposed. When the new SMART platform begins operation on the south side of RPX, more pedestrians are expected in the vicinity of the railroad tracks and safer crossings solutions are needed.

Crossing of RPX

Once the transit platform is complete, safe crossings of Rohnert Park Expressway in proximity to the railroad tracks will become necessary for bicycles and pedestrians. The multi-use path (MUP) will also need to cross RPX. State Farm Drive may need additional crossing opportunities. The following has been included in the PDA plan:

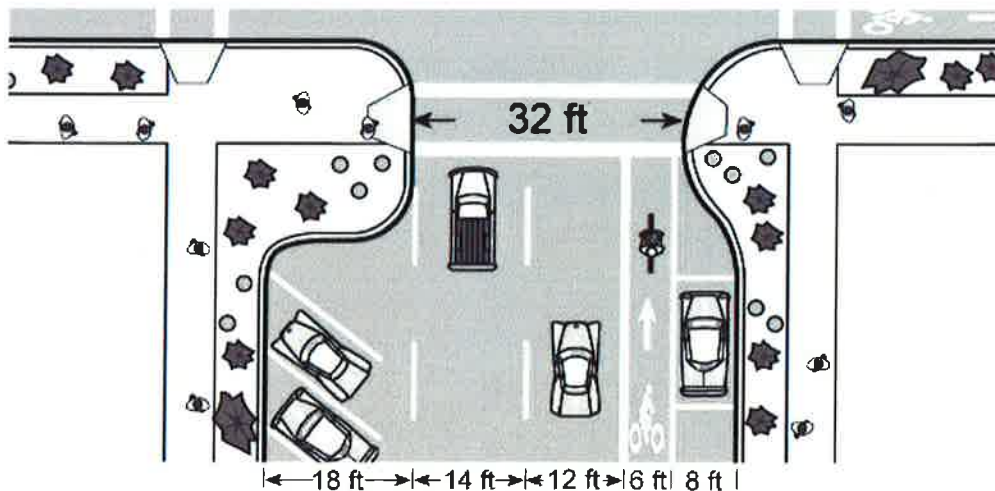
- Median islands to create a pedestrian (and bicycle) refuge area. This divides a longer crossing into two parts, so the entire street does not need to be crossed all at once.
- Potential use of signalized crossing system, such as a HAWK¹ signal (see Figure 2). A HAWK signal is a certain type of pedestrian signal that has been proven to be effective.
- The use of curb extensions at minor intersections, where turn lanes are not needed, to shorten crossing distances for pedestrians (see Figure 3).

¹ A High-Intensity Activated CrossWalk (HAWK) signal provides a protected pedestrian crossing as a way to increase safety. It is used only for pedestrian crossings. It does not control traffic on side streets. A video of HAWK signal in operation in Portland, Oregon can be found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHihP2t5mdQ>

Figure 2
Signalized Pedestrian Crossing



Figure 3
Curb Extension

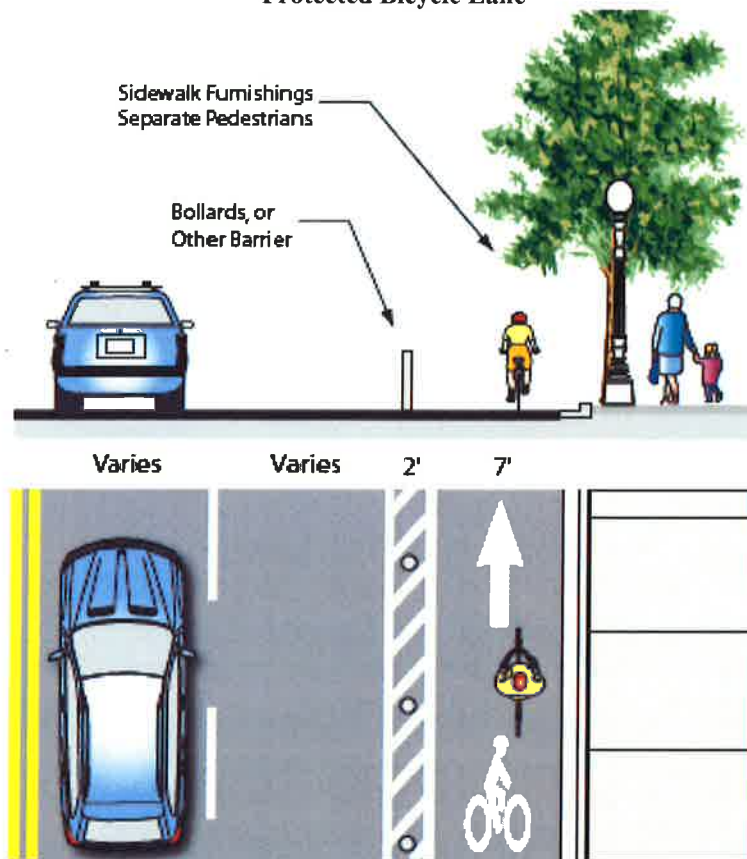


Protected Bicycle Lanes

The PDA plan identifies protected bicycle lanes, which have a physical separation between the bicycle lane and the closest automobile lane, can be used in place of a standard bicycle lane (see Figure 4). A minimum width of seven feet is a typically needed for a protected bicycle lane (two feet of separation plus a five foot wide bicycle lane), but more width can be added for additional separation. Figure 4 below shows how a two foot wide painted area can create the separation between a vehicle lane and bicycle lane. Vertical pylons, for example, can be used to separate the vehicle lane from the bicycle lane and can be driven over or removed for emergency vehicle use.

Landscaped strips can be added for additional protection between the vehicle lane and the bicycle lane.

Figure 4
Protected Bicycle Lane



Roundabouts

The PDA plan provides for the use of roundabouts, but locations have not been specified (see Figure 4). A roundabout could be used at certain intersections and/or provide access into development sites. Roundabouts have the following advantages:

- Roundabouts slow down traffic while allowing it to flow in high volumes.
- Since vehicular traffic is slowed, pedestrian crossings can be added to roundabouts.
- Roundabouts provide an iconic “place-making” element.

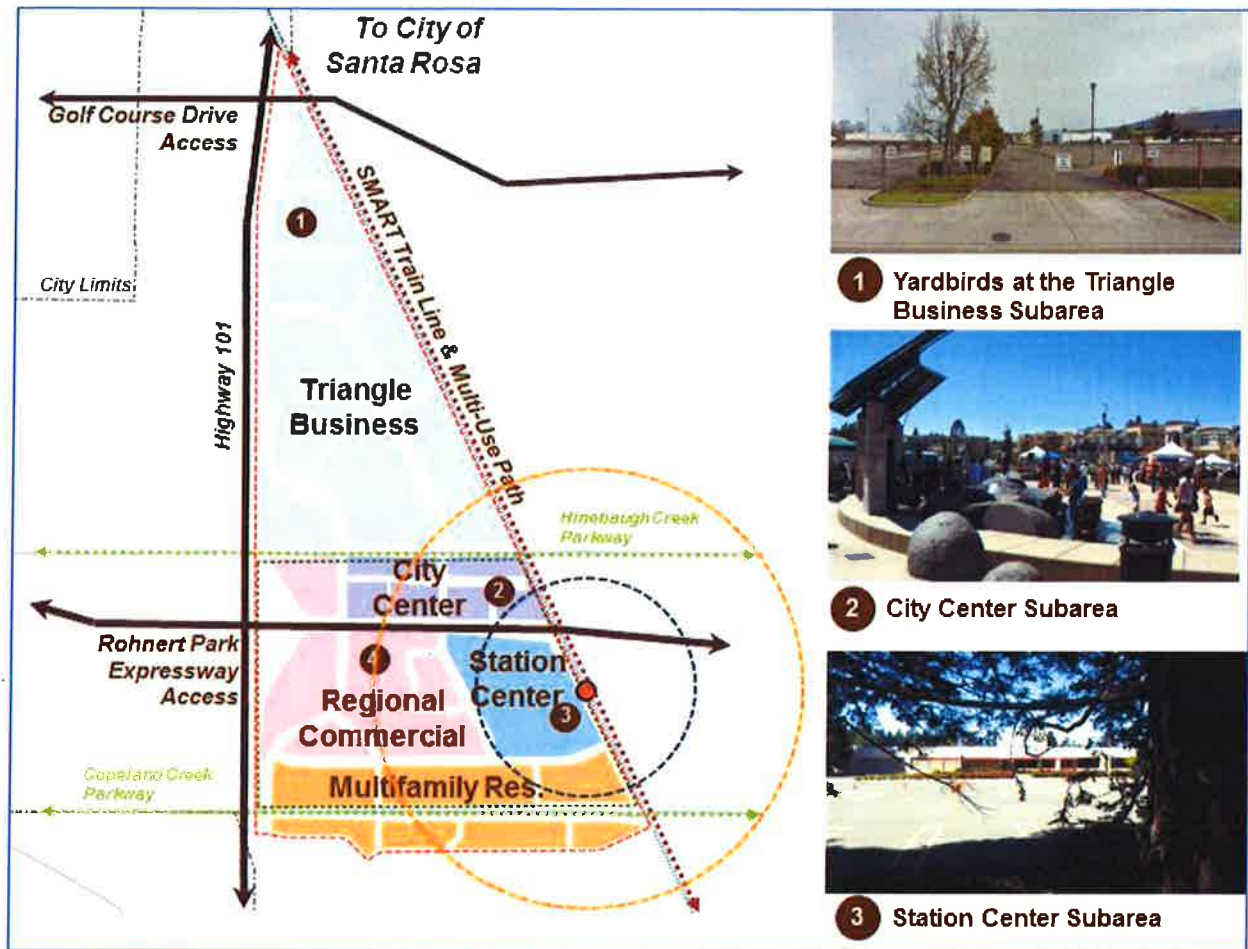
Figure 5
Roundabout Graphic



PDA Subareas and Development Concepts

The PDA has been divided into various subareas, shown in Figure 6, since future development within the PDA will vary based on location and the anticipated land use character and the development concepts vary based on the subarea. Each subarea is described in more detail in the following pages.

Figure 6
PDA Subareas



Triangle Business Subarea

The PDA includes a large area currently zoned primarily for industrial and office uses bounded by Hinebaugh Creek to the south, the railroad tracks (and future multi-use path) to the east and Highway 101 to the west (forming a triangle) (see Figure 7). The PDA plan explores how strategic sites within this area could be reused and how more connectivity could be created for all forms of transportation. The PDA plan determines the appropriate land use mix for this area. To help the City and developers envision the reuse of certain parcels within the Industrial Triangle, a conceptual lay-out of the “Yardbirds” site and adjacent parcels was completed.

Another consideration within the Triangle Business Subarea is to allow more commercial development. This area is currently zoned Industrial (I-L). The PDA plan proposed a “Regional Commercial Overlay” which would not change the underlying industrial zoning, but would allow for commercial uses to occur if the properties redevelop. A zoning ordinance amendment is proposed to implement this concept.

Figure 7
Development Concepts in Business Triangle Subarea



Figure 8
City Center Subarea



City Center Area

The Rohnert Park, City Center Concept Plan was adopted in 2002 and has helped guide development in the 32-acres north of Rohnert Park Expressway (RPX) and west of the railroad tracks. The PDA plan identifies where additional infill development could occur within the City Center Area (see Figure 8), strategies to strengthen east-west connectivity and ways to provide safe crossings of RPX. A concept plan was included in the PDA plan that identifies the following strategies:

- Infill of new buildings to create a more urban setting.
- A new parking structure (or structures) will be needed if a significant amount of new development occurs. A possible location is depicted adjacent to RPX. The idea is that buildings would front onto RPX to create a pleasant pedestrian environment along this important street with access to the parking structure from behind.
- The plaza that currently hosts the farmer's market will remain to will continue to support public events in the City Center area.
- East-west connectivity will be enhanced as development occurs with a connection out to State Farm Drive.
- Front buildings onto RPX, State Farm Drive and City Center Drive to create a pleasant environment for bicycling and walking.

Station Center Site (former State Farm campus)

This 32-acre site of the former State Farm campus is immediately adjacent to the SMART rail platform (Figure 9). The PDA plan proposes conceptual reuse plans for this site that create an interface and connect with the SMART station site and multi-use path. The plan identifies an appropriate land use mix for the site's reuse. The intent is to convey critical concepts that may be important to the community. The following components have been identified for this site:

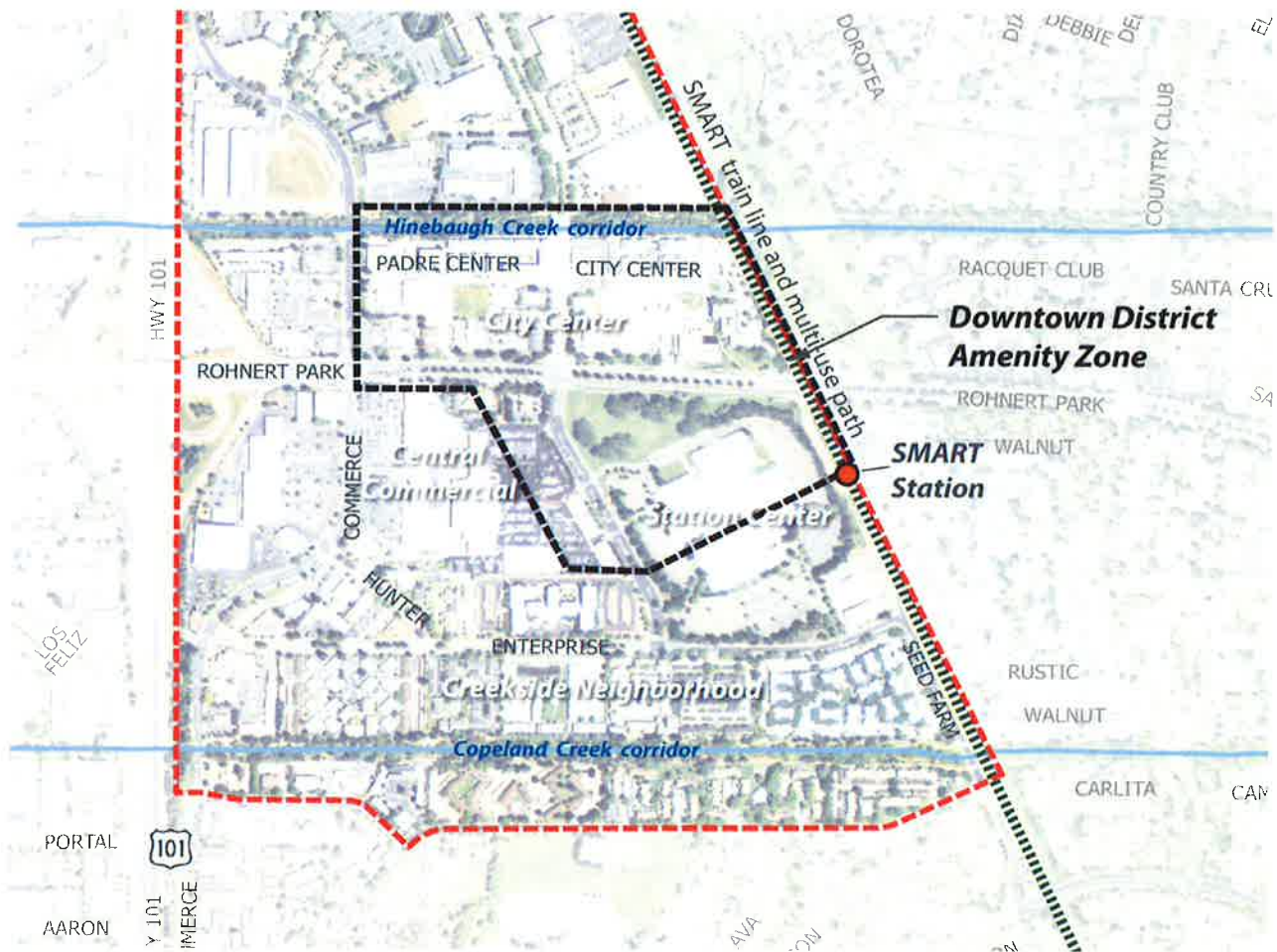
- Provide a grid network of streets. Pedestrian sidewalks should be built throughout to encourage walking. Development that creates indirect walking routes for pedestrians and discourages pedestrian activity should be avoided. Direct paths of travel should be provided – particularly to the SMART platform.
- Create a plaza adjacent to the SMART platform. A transit drop-off could occur at this location. This would be a critical focal point in the project.
- Linking the existing multi-use trail along RPX into the bicycle and pedestrian network of the project.
- Incorporating the crossings of RPX into the site. A mid-block pedestrian crossing could be used close to the railroad tracks or an overcrossing could be considered in the future.
- Relocating the City's corporation yard to create a larger development site.
- Locating a new Village Green along RPX where the large open space area is currently located. This could be designed as an exceptional community gathering place for the community.
- Designing retail buildings to face or "front" onto the local streets and/or the Village Green with parking internalized. This will create a pleasant pedestrian environment.

Downtown District Amenity Zone

The PDA identifies a Downtown District Amenity Zone (DDAZ) with the goal of focusing investment within the Downtown District and facilitating the development of a compact, walkable commercial district that is unique to Rohnert Park. The DDAZ encompasses the

SMART rail station and the existing of planned surrounding commercial areas. A zoning overlay will be added to the zoning ordinance which will include land use and development standards to support the creation of a walkable dining, entertainment, retail, and civic district within a unique, urban, mixed-use environment.

Figure 9
Location of Downtown District Amenity Zone



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The City prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the PDA plan to address the potentially significant adverse environmental impacts that may be associated with the planning, construction, and operations within the PDA plan area and to identify appropriate and feasible Mitigation Measures (MM) and alternatives that may be adopted to significantly reduce or avoid the impacts identified in the EIR. Other public agencies have been invited comment on the EIR and we did receive letters from Sonoma County and Caltrans that will be considered as part of the Final EIR.

Evaluation of Alternative

As part of the EIR, an alternatives evaluation was conducted (according to Section 15126.6(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines) to study others development options within the project area that

could accomplish most of the basic objectives of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen significant effects on the environment.

The following alternatives would be similar to or slightly lessen project impacts, including the significant and unavoidable impact related to transportation and traffic; with the exception of the No Project/No Development Alternative, the alternatives would not reduce these impacts to a less-than-significant level. The alternatives to the proposed plan analyzed in the EIR are:

- Alternative 1: No Project/No Development
- Alternative 2: No Regional Commercial Overlay Zone
- Alternative 3: Station Center Office and Residential Focus

Of the development alternatives, Alternative 3 would be the environmentally superior alternative, because it would result in lesser traffic, noise, and GHG emissions impacts compared to the proposed plan and Alternative 2. Alternative 3 would meet most of the plan's objectives (presented in detail in EIR Chapter 2.0, "Project Description"), but to a lesser extent than the proposed plan and Alternative 2. Alternative 3 would be less effective in supporting the community's desire or the plan's objective for a downtown retail environment, with substantial retail uses adjacent to the SMART rail station.

All of the alternatives have fewer of the downtown retail and entertainment benefits desired by the community from the proposed plan. The plan area has the potential for retail and employment infill opportunities near transit. Reduction of some of the retail and residential development in the alternatives would not support the plan's objectives or leverage the advantages of the coming SMART rail station to support the creation of a downtown for the city.

Areas of Known Controversy

The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15123) require that the summary of an EIR identify areas of controversy known to the lead agency, including issues raised by agencies and the public. The City has asked for input from federal, state, and local agencies; organizations; and members of the public regarding the issues that should be evaluated in the EIR. The City has received two letters, from the County of Sonoma Permit and Resource Management Department and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Responses to the letter will be prepared for review by the Planning Commission in the Final EIR document.

Mitigation Measures

The EIR provides a summary of potential impacts and proposed mitigation measures that would avoid, eliminate, minimize, or reduce potential impacts. The level of significance of the potential impact prior to and following implementation of each mitigation measure is also identified. For detailed descriptions of project impacts and mitigation measures, please see EIR Sections 3.1 through 3.9.

There is one post-mitigation significant impact related to level of service on US 101. With the implementation of the mitigation measures, all other impacts will be less than significant.

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENTS

The following is a summary of General Plan amendments that would occur along with PDA adoption. The primary purpose of these amendments is to bring the PDA plan into the General Plan so that future projects within the PDA are consistent with the General Plan:

- Update the description of the planning process. Updates to Section 1.6, “Planning Process,” would reference the Central Rohnert PDA with the bullet entitled “Neighborhood and Special Area Plans.” The City Center Concept Plan (City of Rohnert Park, 2002) is currently referenced in this location of the General Plan, so some text updates would be needed to describe the City Center as being part of the PDA Plan.
- Update the General Plan Map. The General Plan Map is incorporated into the General Plan as Figure 2.2-1, “General Plan Diagram”. This map would be updated as follows:
 - Replace the “Office” designation for the former State Farm campus property and the “Public/Institutional” designation for the City’s Corporation Yard with a “Mixed-Use” designation, similar to the designation currently in place for Sonoma Mountain Village.
 - Change the roadway designation of State Farm Drive to a minor arterial. State Farm Drive is currently considered a major collector, but minor arterial is more appropriate given the traffic volumes analyzed as part of the PDA Plan’s traffic impact study.
 - Update the map of specific plans and planned developments. Figure 2.4-1, “Specific Plan and Planned Development Areas,” would be amended to add the Station Center Planned Development to the map at the location of the former State Farm office campus. A description of this new planned development would be added in the General Plan.
- Add a description of the Central Rohnert Park PDA (Chapter 2 of the General Plan). The General Plan includes a section on Sonoma Mountain Village (page 2-40). A new section would be added immediately after this, entitled “Central Rohnert Park Priority Development Area.” Included in this new section would be a brief description of the Central Rohnert Park PDA Plan and a new Figure 4.1 entitled “Central Rohnert Park Plan Concept.” This new section of the document would include the following information:
 - Land use policies. All the land use policies related to the PDA would be added to this section.
 - A description of the Station Center Planned Development. As part of the section on the PDA, a subsection on the Station Center subarea would be added.
 - A relocated discussion of the City Center. The currently provided discussion of the City Center would be moved to become a subsection under the new “Central Rohnert Park Priority Development Area” heading.
 - A description of the regional commercial overlay. This overlay would allow more commercial (retail and services) uses within the industrial classification.

- A description of the downtown amenity zone. A more complete description of the downtown area would be included in Chapter 3, “Community Design.”
- Add community design goals and policies (Chapter 3 of the General Plan). A section entitled “Central Rohnert Park Priority Development Area Plan” would be added to Chapter 3 of the General Plan. The General Plan currently includes a description of the City Center that would be incorporated as a subset of the PDA discussion. All the goals and policies from the Community Design Guidelines chapter of the PDA would be added to the General Plan, including Figure 4.5 from the PDA as one of the General Plan’s illustrative diagrams. This chapter of the General Plan includes illustrative diagrams from other locations in the city.
- Add a new section entitled “Downtown District.” The current General Plan includes a section entitled “Commercial Centers” (Section 3.3). This section would be amended to include graphics and descriptions from the PDA Plan for the downtown district.
- Amend the master street plan. Chapter 4, “Transportation,” of the General Plan includes Figure 4.1-1, which categorizes State Farm Drive as a four-lane collector. This is inconsistent with the PDA Plan. The PDA Plan recommends a two-lane roadway that would include enhanced lanes for bicycles and on-street parking. Figure 4.1-1, “Master Street Plan,” would be amended to change State Farm Drive from a major collector to a minor arterial. The minor arterial classification would recognize State Farm Drive as a significant roadway, but the number of lanes could be reduced. This lane reduction is supported by information in the PDA’s traffic impact study, provided in Appendix E.
- Amend parking restrictions. Table 4.1-3, “Roadway Classifications,” in the General Plan, restricts on-street parking. This is inconsistent with the PDA Plan, which calls for adding on-street parking in certain locations—particularly in a future downtown area. Table 4.1-2 would be amended to allow on-street parking in the plan area.
- Add circulation and connectivity goals and policies. Chapter 4, “Transportation,” of the General Plan includes goals and policies related to the city’s roadway network. A new section entitled “Central Rohnert Park” would be added and the relevant goals and policies from the PDA Plan would be incorporated.
- Add goals and policies related to parks and utilities. The General Plan has a chapter entitled “Open Space, Parks, and Public Facilities” (Chapter 5). A section entitled “Central Rohnert Park” would be added to this chapter and would include the relevant goals and policies from the PDA Plan.

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

The Zoning Ordinance is one of the primary implementation documents of the City's General Plan. Updates to the ordinance would be needed to fully implement the PDA Plan. Both map and text amendments are proposed.

Property designations in the plan area would be rezoned as described below. These changes would be reflected on the City's official zoning map. Most of the map changes would require complementary text changes.

- **Station Center Property.** Two key properties in the plan area are the former State Farm office campus, which is currently zoned Office Commercial (C-O), and the adjacent City Corporation Yard, which is zoned Public Institutional (P-I)). Both of these zoning designations would be replaced with a Station Center Planned Development (SC-PD) designation. Text updates (as described in the following section) would be needed along with the map updates.
- **Regional Commercial Overlay.** The zoning map would be amended to add a Regional Commercial Overlay Zone (I-L/C) to the industrial properties located at the north end of the plan area. The PDA Plan envisions this area as an emerging commercial area because of the visibility and access afforded to it by U.S. 101 and Commerce Boulevard. The southern boundary of the new I-L/C overlay would be coterminous with the boundaries of the I-L/O overlay zone. The western and eastern boundaries would be U.S. 101 and the railroad tracks, respectively. The northern boundary would be coterminous with the boundary of the Regional Commercial (C-R) district north of Utility Court. Text updates (as described in the following section) would be needed along with the map updates.
- **Downtown District Overlay (DD).** The zoning map would include this overlay designation, which would modify the development standards.
- **Downtown High Density Residential (DTR-H).** The Downtown High Density Residential (DTR-H) zones in the plan area would be replaced by the DTR-H designation and would include modified development standards, including densities of up to 30 units per acre.
- **Downtown Mixed-Use (DTM-U).** The Downtown Mixed-Use (DTM-U) zones in the plan area would be replaced by the DTM-U designation and would include modified development standards and densities of up to 45 units per acre.

The PDA Plan includes some new zoning concepts that are not included in the existing Zoning Ordinance. This requires some minor reorganization of the existing Zoning Ordinance and the addition of some new chapters and sections. The following is a summary of the proposed changes:

- **Station Center Planned Development (SC-PD).** This new planned development would be created to incorporate both the former State Farm campus and the City's Corporation Yard, and would be added to the Zoning Ordinance as Article XV-B, "Station Center Planned

Development District.” The map and development standards for this planning district could be adapted from the PDA Plan. Some development standards may also be used or referenced from other parts of the code.

- **Industrial/Commercial Overlay (I-L/C).** This overlay would establish additional retail and service land use types that could be permitted. The overlay would be placed “over” the underlying industrial zoning designation, ensuring that all of the existing development rights of the industrial zone would be left intact, in addition to the range of uses permitted in the industrial district.
- **Downtown District Overlay (DDAZ).** A new overlay would be established for the area identified in the PDA Plan as the Downtown District Amenity Zone (DDAZ). This would include certain development standards (e.g., allowing buildings to be placed at the back of the sidewalk); street cross sections; on-street parking allowances for State Farm Drive; and requirements for internal streets as properties in the downtown district develop or redevelop.
- **Downtown Mixed-Use (DTM-U).** A new zoning district identified in the PDA Plan as Downtown Mixed-Use (DTM-U) would be introduced in the plan area. This zoning district would include updated development standards supporting the creation of a downtown environment.
- **Downtown High Density Residential (DTR-H).** A new zoning district identified in the PDA Plan as Downtown High Density Residential (DTR-H) would be introduced in the plan area. This zoning district would update the maximum density for high-density residential uses in the plan area to 30 dwelling units per acre.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission hold a public hearing, provide comments and direction to staff to allow for the finalization of the PDA plan, environmental impact report, general plan amendments, and zoning ordinance amendments for consideration by the Planning Commission at the February 25 meeting.

APPROVALS:


Jeffrey S. Beiswenger, AICP, Planning Manager


Date