



ENVISION ROHNERT PARK 2040

Town Hall Meeting Summary

ROHNERT PARK GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

May 10, 2018



INTRODUCTION

During the Rohnert Park Town Hall Meeting on April 25, 2018, the City's General Plan Consultants gave a brief presentation on the General Plan Update process, and then led Town Hall attendees in an interactive exercise. The exercise asked participants to write down what they felt were issues in the community that they would like to see the General Plan address and opportunities that could be leveraged to improve their community. Each table then collectively decided on the top three issues and top three opportunities. At the very end, tables were invited to share one issue or opportunity they felt was most important. This document summarizes the issues and opportunities written down during this exercise. There were approximately 40 people in attendance, filling about seven tables. Each table had a City staff member who facilitated discussion during the exercise. See Table 1 for a full list of all comments collected from the Issues and Opportunities exercise.

OPPORTUNITY:

An "Opportunity" is a unique, favorable, or advantageous condition that the City can capitalize on through the General Plan.

ISSUE:

An "Issue" is an important unsettled matter, challenge, or problem that needs to be addressed through the General Plan.

NOTABLE THEMES

Housing & Homelessness

Participants expressed the need for more affordable housing and a desire for a wider range of housing options, especially for seniors and students. Some expressed concern over the apartments proposed for the State Farm property and are skeptical that they will be filled, although others saw opportunity in building higher densities around the SMART Station, which is adjacent to the State Farm property. Participants felt that more could be done for the homeless, such as providing a homeless shelter or building tiny homes for the homeless.

Retail Businesses

Many participants felt that Rohnert Park could have more non-chain shops, farm-to-table restaurants, boutiques, and neighborhood shopping centers, while others wanted a Trader Joe's and for the City to continue developing businesses west of Highway 101. Other comments expressed interest in helping shopping center owners come together and discuss their needs and visions. Some expressed concern over the empty rental buildings, as well as the need to keep stores affordable for everyone. Another comment suggested that the freeway billboard would be better used to promote the city and city events, rather than used for business advertising.



Bicycle, Pedestrian, & Transit Options

Town Hall participants expressed interest in more bicycle, pedestrian-friendly, and transit options, especially related to increased bus and SMART services and improved maintenance of pathways around the SMART Station and along the creeks.

City Operations

Many participants felt that City services need to be more unified and to consolidate all services in one building to give Rohnert Park residents better access. Others added that the City needs to find and ensure sustainable funding for City operations.

Services, Programs, & Sonoma State University Engagement

Participants expressed a need for more youth engagement activities for kids ages 8 to 12 and 12 to 16, as well as activities for seniors. They felt that the senior center could be updated as well as the arts and recreation center, and city pools. Comments also included the need for medical facilities other than urgent care centers, as well as the need for new schools to keep up with new development in the city. Town Hall participants also felt that there could be more engagement between schools and Sonoma State University.

Downtown Development

Some participants expressed that they would like to see the new downtown area bring new jobs and local businesses (that are not chains) to the city. They also wrote that downtown should be bikeable and walkable, with affordable housing and development to support families. Comments showed support for high-density development along the SMART corridor near the station.



Safety & Maintenance

Town Hall participants felt that street lighting, sidewalk repair, and landscaping were all important for the safety and maintenance of the city. Others pointed out that creek paths (e.g., paving, benches, trash cans, ivy around the trees) need attention. Another big concern was "casino fraud", which participants felt drew crime from other areas. Finally, some participants expressed concern over the need for more code enforcement on blighted properties.

Energy Efficiency & Environmental Issues

Community preparedness for future wildfires on the wildland-urban interface was listed as a top concern, as was preserving greenspace boundaries, especially to the north. Participants also expressed the need for climate action programs and groundwater management. Comments suggested opportunity areas in water efficiency through lawn removal and a cash for grass program, as well as a solar and green roof for the library.

Traffic & Parking

Long traffic lights along Rohnert Park Expressway, traffic at the city center, and a lack of enforcement around RV parking were highlighted as top traffic and parking concerns by Town Hall participants. Some comments also pointed out that there is not enough parking in the neighborhoods and that new development should consider adding extra parking.

City Identity

Town Hall participants appreciated the small town feeling of Rohnert Park, and feel that the City needs a museum and art center to honor and preserve the city's history. Participants also felt there are opportunities for Rohnert Park to host sports tournaments (e.g., pickleball, bocce ball).

Parks & Trees

One of the top opportunities that related to parks and trees suggested that Rohnert Park add a destination park to appeal to many generations; another comment suggested creating an arboretum. Other comments pointed out the need for more trees and to continue improving existing parks.

Healthy Eating & Food Choices

Participants felt that Rohnert Park could use an organic or specialty grocery store, such as Trader Joe's. Additionally, they hope that the Friday night market continues to provide produce, allow urban farming, and provide better parking options at the local farmers' market.



Table 1: All Comments from Town Hall Meeting

Red text indicates it was a top "Issue".

Green text indicates it was a top "Opportunity".

Black text indicates all other comments.

Note: All comments in the table were documented verbatim from the exercise worksheets.

Issues	Opportunities
Housing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing • Same old, same old tract housing – no choices • Will people want to live in apartments above stores on State Farm? Sebastopol road apartments are barely rented • Housing opportunities – apartments, condominiums, townhouses, modern housing • More accommodation for student housing • Housing choices – including active 55+, no more boring tracts • Affordable housing to accommodate X% of the population • No more houses in the \$500,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of empty part of former G section school site for pocket neighborhood • Opportunity for housing choices: cottages, pocket neighborhoods • Build flats like in SF
Homelessness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter shelter for homeless seniors • Homeless shelter • Homelessness / shelter • More ways to help the poor and homeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build "tiny houses" for homeless

Issues	Opportunities
Retail/Businesses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to get tenants for empty rental buildings • Keep stores available to everyone – affordable high-end stores • Better signage for the golf course coming off the freeway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring Trader Joes to Rohnert Park • Major retail on the edge of town • Continue to push business plan to west of union City along 101 • Facilitate neighborhood shopping center “cheerleaders” • Economic development – tourism, farm to table restaurants, farmer’s market, boutique / non-chain shops • Helping shopping center owners to create groups and discuss their needs and visions • More shopping, different than big box stores • Farm to table restaurants • Diversify local businesses foundation • Use the freeway sign to promote the city and its events rather than for advertising
Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Options	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor bike pedestrian path by SMART, and keep weeds down, keep it safer • Public transportation additional bus lines or stops needed • Bus shelter from train to stores • More bus services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More bike and pedestrian options, build walking paths to encourage alternative transport • promote more public transportation / use of SMART and bus service • Promotion / incentive for sustainable transportation alternatives • More transportation options can provide people without cars with more mobility in Rohnert Park • Opportunity for more bike and walking trails along creeks and train tracks
City Operations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City services should be unified • All city departments in one building • People struggle to make ends meet but do not know of places they can go for help • Sustainable city funding • Downtown City Hall 	
Services and Programs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth engagement activities for 8-12, and 12-16-year-olds • Senior activities including updating senior center, art and recreation center. Outside painting of Senior Center is outdated • Rohnert Park pools • Hospital other than urgent care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital in Rohnert Park • Any new school due to new development

Issues	Opportunities
Sonoma State University Engagement	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage SSU – help with neighborhoods Collaborate with SSU – increased commuter support Any plans to get more cooperation with SSU? Opportunity to engage Sonoma State students with our elementary and high schools Strong school district
Downtown Development	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a downtown area to bring new jobs and local businesses (not chains) to the city Biking / walkable downtown with affordable housing and development to support families High density development along SMART corridor near station Develop downtown Downtown could make Rohnert Park more student friendly
Safety	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casino fraud – draws crime from other areas, fraud, and drugs Policing and fire safety on the west side of the freeway? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe Upgrade current streetlighting and install traffic lights to increase safety (i.e. Adrian and Southwest) Replace old street lights with energy efficient lighting Work to develop community-wide emergency preparedness and have a designated emergency preparedness shelter Good opportunity for public safety to interact with citizens and youth Increase public safety
Maintenance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean up Copeland Creek, especially Country Club to Snyder Sidewalk and landscaping maintenance Need more code enforcement on blighted properties Residential code enforcement Update landscaping, plants growing out of control– spruce up Park benches, poop dispenser, trash cans around parks, creek trails Honeybee pool locker room updating Fix potholes (on Country Club Drive) Not level sidewalk Potholes SW Boulevard Repave the start of Copeland Creek where the condominiums are Our creek paths need serious attention (paving, benches, trash cans, ivy choking the trees) Road maintenance – less pot holes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire people (students at minimum wage) and encourage homeowners and renters to upgrade their areas – encourage small neighborhood groups to clean, landscape, etc.

Issues	Opportunities
Energy Efficiency and Environmental Issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community preparedness for future wildfires on wilderness – urban interface • Preserving greenspace boundaries, especially to the north • Climate change action programs • Who is monitoring the water table under Rohnert Park for future expansion? • Rohnert Park flooding issues – into sidewalk, mobile home areas. 3 inches of water deep • How to replenish groundwater if we develop too much of our own land? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water efficiency opportunities for lawn removal, cash for grass program • Solar and green roof for library – teaching opportunities! Add a second story to the library
Traffic	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long traffic lights at Rohnert park expressway (at Commerce, for example) • Traffic in the city center • Traffic problems at the new Tech High School (Waldo Rohnert School) • Traffic jams • Better traffic control at Commerce and Rohnert Park Intersection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen east Cotati between Bodeway and Pet Hill Road to four lanes • Traffic flow North to South
Parking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RV parking boats • Parking enforcement - parking, broke down cars, motor homes • Regulate RVs and big trucks parked in driveways • Parking of RVs on Street and private property • More code enforcement in older sections with RV parking, lawn parking, and property upkeep in neighborhoods • Parking at the farmer's market is no good • High occupancy housing / parking • Not enough parking in neighborhoods. New neighborhoods with less land – people will have even more difficult parking • Design new neighborhoods with extra parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased code enforcement for RVs and trucks parked on people's front lawns and corners of their streets

Issues	Opportunities
City Identity	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small town feeling • City doesn't host tournaments (i.e. pickleball or bocce ball tournaments) • museum and art center to honor Rohnert park's history • Need a historical society museum to preserve history of Rohnert Park; have people ready to do this, need support • "Welcome Wagon" idea for newcomers • Look at Rohnert park as a tourist destination place
Parks and Trees	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination park to appeal to many generations • Think big by using some of our land for an arboretum • More trees – doing well! Can do more • Continue sprucing up parks – already started • Parks – we have great parks! • Larger and more dog parks • Mature trees replaced with immature and tiny ones when areas redone • Allergy free plants
Healthy Eating and Food Choices	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic grocery store • Continue Friday night market with produce • Access to local food via farmer's market (current parking a problem) or farm stands and better parking • Allow urban farming
Other	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise abatement along commerce, especially at A-section. 101 highway is very loud with a lot of traffic • Oppose SB 54 • Owners not picking up after their dogs • Code enforcement of aggressive dogs on and off leash entering people's backyards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask community service club to paint fire curbs • Graffiti removal • Opportunities for teens to get summer jobs?