



2021 HISTORIC RAILROAD SQUARE COMMUNITY BENEFIT DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2021 - January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021

The Santa Rosa Community Benefit District (CBD) is approximately 18 square blocks consisting of 92 parcels owned by 58 property owners. The CBD is administered by the Historic Railroad Square Association. The Association is governed by a thirteen-member Board of Directors, (a majority of which are property owners assessed by the CBD), including a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Ad Hoc committees include Street Maintenance, Tree Trimming & replacement, Wayfinding, Security, Projects, and Lighting.

The levy of assessments on real property within the proposed District is chiefly to fund security and physical improvements to the district. The assessments help fund overall maintenance and capital improvement over and above what the City already provides. Other special benefits within the district to revitalize the Railroad Square area include beautification efforts, signage, general maintenance and especially security. These efforts combine to attract and retain businesses and help to reduce crime. Drawing visitors to Railroad Square via marketing and social media is also a goal, as are special events which are generally underwritten by sponsorships, donations, or grant.

2021 Project Budget for Historic Railroad Square Community Benefit District:

<i>Special Benefit Category</i>	<i>Amount Budgeted</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Budget</i>
Civil Sidewalks	\$145,000	63%
District Identity and Placemaking	41,000	18%
Administration	42,000	18%
Contingency	2,120	1%
Total	\$230,120	100%

Impacts of COVID – as we began to “open up” last year with parklets for outdoor dining and to promote safety, there was hope and optimism of returning day to day business to a near normal. Now with increased COVID cases and mask mandates back in place, it is a challenge to find ways to support our businesses, especially restaurants who have finally been able to open their indoor dining spaces and relinquish their parklets. There are only 5 parklets remaining in the district.

Our board identified priority projects to focus on and complete for this year:

- **Security:** Increased security was added to include dedicated all night patrol 5 nights per week with random drive by on 2 nights. We are in the process of implementing a new security camera pilot program.
- **Street cleaning:** We have contracted with a maintenance service to add to the City services and to help improve the look of our streets and landscaping.

- **Tree trimming:** A district wide tree trimming program has started on 4th Street and will be moving forward to complete throughout our district.
- **Wayfinding signage:** This was a priority item for 2021 which is in approval process with the City. Maps, sign design and signage have been created and the project is moving forward. Signage sales will be marketed to our businesses which will begin during the first quarter of 2022.
- **Tree Lighting** on Wilson Street along Depot Park: Working with the City, electrical work was done and trees along Wilson Street are now wrapped and lit. We plan to continue tree lighting to enhance the area and improve safety.
- **Streetscape beautification** projects included bollard and trash receptacle painting.

Improved communication with property & business owners:

- The “On the Right Track” Newsletter is sent on a regular basis, as well as updates to keep our property and business owners informed on issues that impact their properties.
- Correspondence to educate property owners about the Community Benefit District assessment fees. Working closely with the City of Santa Rosa staff a great deal of effort has been made to collect delinquent fees and keep property owners informed as the billing process transfers from the City to the County.
- Updating the website has been a long overdue and challenging project and will be completed in 2022. Merchants will continue to be featured every month.

Ongoing marketing:

- Focus on continued work to update our website
- Social media with postings to Facebook, Instagram
- SCTP ads and coop advertising with our merchants
- New restaurant guides

2021 Events

- **Summer Music Stroll:** Local Street music in Depot Park and 4th Street on Sunday afternoons to promote a family/community friendly activity within the district.
- **Holiday Carriage Rides & Music:** resumed our 33-year tradition of free carriage rides after being cancelled due to COVID in 2020. This was very well received with an average of 130 carriage rides every weekend from Thanksgiving through Christmas Eve. Local families, tourists and SMART train riders all enjoyed the experience.

Sponsorships: We secured sponsorships to help fund activities in RRSQ to bring welcome events to the community and increase the awareness of the district. We also secured a matching grant from the City of Santa Rosa to help with our Holiday Carriage Rides.

- Summer Music stroll sponsored by Mechanics Bank
- Holiday carriage rides sponsored by Thermador/TeeVax and Columbia Bank

Ongoing efforts: We continue our outreach to our non-profit neighbors to help mitigate homeless issues in our district. We work with city staff to find ways to collaborate on projects and enhance what the city is currently responsible for in RRSQ.

Ongoing communication with the SRPD to help clear out homeless encampments, and vagrancy on our streets. The encampments have had a huge impact on the businesses in RRSQ. The AC Hotel reported lost revenue due to guests cancelling bookings because of the encampments in the nearby underpasses adjacent to the hotel.

New Business:

The Branch Line Café has opened in the Western Hotel building and two vacant buildings have recently been leased for retail. Opening dates are pending, but it is a welcome sight to see this new activity.

Looking ahead: Our focus for last year was primarily on security and street/debris cleaning, which was essential, and now our goal is to add more visual improvements to the area. These projects include:

- New sidewalk planters
- Tree replacement
- More street banners
- Additional tree lighting throughout the district
- Sidewalk repair remains a challenge and we are looking for opportunities for funding assistance.
- Finding office space for the Executive Director of our Community Benefit District is a top priority and conversations are ongoing with the SRCVB for when they reopen this year.