

1. **Introductions:** My name is _____. Thank you very much for the opportunity to tell you about SRT and to invite you to join our broad coalition of organizations and individuals. I live in...(a little personal intro_____).
2. **What is Santa Rosa Together?** We are a diverse non-partisan group of volunteer community leaders working to get more people engaged and organized, give everyone a voice and a role, and improve the way we work together in our city. We believe that our ability to meet our challenges and create a great city depends ultimately on our ability to engage and tap the talents of all of our residents, find common ground, and work together. We want to create a democracy here in Santa Rosa that can do that. Easy to say; a little harder to explain; much harder to implement.
3. **Why did we get started on this work?**
 - a. We got started with this work because we realized that too many of our community members feel alienated from our politics because they do not feel like they have a real voice and role in the city. We were concerned that our governments and community institutions were not doing enough to support and partner with residents and their organizations. We were concerned that not enough of us, as community members, are engaged and taking responsibility for our neighborhoods and city. We decided that it was time to try to rebuild our democracy to address these concerns and bring us together.
 - b. The deepening divisions and the gridlock in our national politics have only reinforced our commitment to this work. We believe that working our way out of this crisis will need to begin with efforts at the local level to repair our politics.
 - c. We are also deeply aware of the difficult lessons learned from the fires that devastated our neighborhoods. All of us witnessed the importance of neighbors helping neighbors and we learned that neighbors getting to know each other and learning how to work together will be the key to our survival in, and recovery from, an emergency like a fire or earthquake. We realized that Improving our local democracy and preparing for emergencies are really the same task.
4. **We decided that we needed to stop taking our current way of doing things as a given.** Our concerns and experiences brought us together starting about seven years ago to look for a better way to live and work together in Santa Rosa. We decided that we needed to stop taking our current way of doing things as a given. We formed Santa Rosa Together because we are convinced that we can and need to do better. We believe that we can find a way of working together in our city that comes closer to our nation's democratic ideals, a politics that brings people together and works to include everyone in the decisions and work of the city.
5. **Who are we really?** It may help to tell you just a little about the members of Santa Rosa Together. We really are a diverse organization working hard to include all parts of our city. We have republicans, democrats, independents, conservatives, liberals. We include

representatives from neighborhoods, churches, businesses, schools, governments, and not-for-profits. Despite our many differences, we have gotten to know and respect each other and we have learned how to work together to reach our common goals. In our own small way, we have demonstrated that a different kind of politics is possible and this experience and the friendships we have developed have kept us going.

6. **What would our politics and our public life look like if it did a better job of reflecting our basic democratic values?** That is the question we asked ourselves and it is the question we are asking you and everyone in our city to join us to answer.
7. **What are the democratic values we share?** When we got started with this work, we took some time to remind ourselves of the democratic traditions, values, and practices that we all hold in common. Here is what we came up with:
 - a. At its foundation, democracy is a way of life and a form of government that treats all of us as equals, that values the unique experience and important contribution that each of us can bring to public life. No matter what tribe, faith, race, neighborhood, or ethnicity we belong to, no matter what our background, our democratic values ensure that each of us is treated with respect as equals in our public lives. So, we set out to see what steps could we take right here in Santa Rosa to reinforce this democratic way of life that we all value.
 - b. Democracy is also a faith in our ability to set aside our tribes and differences, come together, learn from each other, and find the common ground we need to work together to meet our challenges and create a great city. So, we asked ourselves how we could create a politics that gives all of us a chance to meet face to face, learn from each other, and find common ground?
 - c. Democracy also is a commitment to get engaged, take responsibility and participate in the work needed to create a great city and to maintain a democracy. So, we asked ourselves how we could create organizations that have the capacity to engage all of us in the work of the city? And how could we create a politics that encourages people to participate and that empowers organized residents, gives them a meaningful role, power and responsibility?
8. **The real question for all of us: How could we make our democratic values relevant today in a city of 180,00 residents?** After several years of work and a lot of lesson learned, we are now focusing on five areas to move this work forward. As you will see, each of these five areas will require real change and volunteer commitment. Right now, our coalition is only capable of small steps in each of these areas. That is really why we are talking to you today. It will take many of us working together in our city to create a better way of working together.
 - Broadening the coalition of community leaders working to strengthen our local democracy
 - Creating strong neighborhood organizations across the city

- Developing a new process for engaging everyone in making the key decisions on the direction of our city
- Transforming our local governments so that it focuses on engaging and partnering with us rather than doing things for us
- Reaching out to our youth and school communities to encourage them to take civic education seriously and prepare our students to join us in this work to rebuild our democracy.

9. **Why do we need to broaden the coalition of community leaders?** Pretty obvious: we will never succeed in rebuilding our democracy without very broad involvement in this work. That is why we are meeting with you today and with others throughout the city over the next couple of months.
10. **Why build strong neighborhood organizations?** We are focusing on neighborhoods because they are the key to getting people engaged. Neighborhoods can engage people where they live and they are small enough to give everyone a chance to meet face to face, get to know each other and learn how to work together. Neighborhood organizations can also be the link to city wide issues by organizing discussions on key decisions facing the city and planning for the neighborhoods' role in addressing these issues. Strong, inclusive and organized neighborhoods are the key infrastructure we need to get more residents engaged and give them a voice and role in the city. They are foundation we need for creating a stronger city-wide democracy. How can we build strong neighborhood organizations across our city that can engage us all in the work of the city?
11. **Why develop a new and more inclusive ways to engage residents** in the making the key decisions that will shape the future of our city and in the work to implement these decisions? The institutions we have to give people a voice and role were created when we were a small town. Coming down to city hall to Council Chambers to speak at a Council meeting in neither practical or comfortable for the vast majority of us. We can and need to do better. We are now starting an exciting new initiative to get everyone's ideas for a charter amendment to institute a new way to make decisions that would start with discussions in neighborhoods, schools, and faith-based communities and bring ideas from those discussions together in a city-wide forum to find the common ground we need to move forward.
12. **Why are we working on transforming the role of our governments to support engagement and better local democracy?** Our government and the processes and institutions of our government are the main means we have for working together as a city. Right now, our government focuses primarily on doing things for us. If we could get our city staff to actively encourage and support engagement and partner with organized residents we could tap into the energy and resources of all of us. Many of our great government staff and managers understand this and would like to develop a partnership with residents, but the permission, support, and capacity to do this is still missing.

13. **Why are we trying to get our schools to focus on civic education and get our youth engaged in our communities?** This is also obvious to all of us. We need our youth to join the work to create a great city. Our schools' current focus on college and career is not giving our future leaders the skills and experience they need to join the important work to create a democratic community. And, think about it, if our schools help our youth to become a part of this important work, they will be more likely to stay in Santa Rosa.
14. **How can we work together to improve the way we live and work together in our city? What can we learn from your work? How can you get involved?** Your organization could be a part of the broad coalition working on this and decide how you could best contribute to this work; you could help get your neighborhood organized; you could work on the bottom-up planning for housing or work on improving civic education; or on the charter amendment to create a process to engage citizens in key decisions; or work on getting our government to prioritize and support engagement; or you could work on preparing the youth you are working with to be a part of this effort; or you could create your own initiative to improve our ability to engage and include everyone in the work of our city.
15. **What kind of effort will this take?** This will take time and commitment from all of us. It will require some changes in our lives and more participation in our community. But if we stick to it, it will, in the end, give us the ideas and energy to create a great city and it will give us a community and way of life that better reflects our deeper values.
16. **Why is this work so important?** Think about it: the work we can do here, not in Washington, Silicon Valley or Sacramento, but right here in our neighborhoods and city to strengthen and build a community that better reflects our democratic ideals may be some of the most important work we will ever have a chance to do. We have the opportunity and responsibility to figure out how to adapt our democracy to make it work in the 21st Century. We, us, the people who live right here in this small part of the world, are also quite possibly a key to finding a way out of our national political crisis. Are those enough reasons to convince us that it is time for us all to join together to create a way of working and living together that truly reflects our deepest values?
17. **Let's get ready to make some history:** If we succeed, we will join a long line of those before us who have worked and sacrificed to create and maintain a democratic way of life. We, us right here in Santa Rosa, will be able to legitimately claim a small role but important role in the history of our democratic nation.