“Long before Santa Rosa, California, lost 3,000 housing units — five percent of its housing — the city spent a year developing a comprehensive Housing Action Plan (HAP).

“The Plan, officially released [in October 2016], endeavors to build 5,000 units by 2023, half at market rate and half in the affordable to lower or moderate range. Additionally, the city seeks to preserve 4,000 affordable units.

“The city was moving forward with implementation [when] the Tubbs wildfire roared through, destroying 3,000 housing units. ‘Our Housing Action Plan has had to evolve,’ said Clare Hartman, AICP, deputy director for planning in Santa Rosa’s Planning & Economic Development Department.

“An urgency ordinance helped streamline the permitting process. The city is also encouraging the development of accessory dwelling units and downtown residential units.

“ADUs are a key part of Santa Rosa’s housing strategy because they meet a HAP goal (‘affordable by design’) and also fulfill the city’s requirements to provide moderate income units under the city’s state-mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation.

“A key step? Removing regulatory obstacles to ADUs, including one of the largest: fees.

“Prior to 2018, impact fees for a 750-square-foot ADU topped out at $22,000. Today, fees total just $4,000. The city also reduced setback and parking requirements. The results: [From] an average of six ADU permits issued per year, owners last year applied to add 118 small living spaces adjacent to traditional single-family residences.”

Read the full article here.