



Sonoma County

# Housing Element



**Public Review Draft  
November 3, 2022**



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# Section I: Introduction and Summary

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter of the Sonoma County General Plan presents goals, objectives, policies, and supporting information for the provision of housing for existing and future residents of the County. The purpose of the Housing Element is twofold: 1) to present specific policies and actions for housing development in the context of the Land Use Element of the County's General Plan; and 2) to meet regional standards and achieve State certification, pursuant to statutory requirements, which in turn allows the County to qualify for State and federal housing assistance and grants for multiple purposes including housing, infrastructure, and transportation.

## 1.2 DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

The Housing Element is a detailed statement of housing goals, objectives, policies, and programs for the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. The Element is based on a comprehensive technical assessment of existing housing policies and programs and community input, and includes current and projected housing needs, especially related to low-income households and special needs populations; an inventory of sites available for housing construction; an analysis of market, environmental, governmental, and other factors which constrain housing production; and an assessment of new programs and policies that can enhance housing production in the County.

The Housing Element is expected to guide decision-making by elected and appointed officials regarding housing. Specifically, the Housing Element sets forth how the County will address the need for housing, especially for low- and moderate-income families and special needs families and individuals. The Housing Element also provides housing related data and information to the public on housing in the County.

## 1.3 CONSISTENCY WITH STATE LAWS AND GENERAL PLAN

State law requires internal consistency among the various elements of the General Plan. Government Code § 65300.5 states the Legislature's intent that the General Plan's various elements shall provide an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policy. Upon adoption, this Housing Element becomes part of the County's General Plan and is found consistent with the other elements of the Sonoma County General Plan. Housing Element policies promote housing consistent with the various designations set forth in the Land Use Element. The provision of utilities to serve future housing development is consistent with the Public Facilities Element. Possibilities for farm family units, agricultural employee units and farmworker "bunkhouse" housing are also provided herein in accordance with the Agricultural Resources Element.

Government Code § 65589.7 requires that the County provide a copy of its Housing Element to water and sewer service providers immediately after adoption and requires water and sewer

providers to grant priority for service allocations to proposed developments that include housing units affordable to lower-income households. Water and sewer providers were consulted during the preparation of the Housing Element, and the County will provide the Housing Element immediately upon adoption. The Housing Element also includes Program 14 for ongoing outreach to service providers to ensure that they prioritize service allocations to residential projects with affordable units.

In Sonoma County, the Coastal Zone is regulated by the County's Local Coastal Plan (LCP), which serves as the General Plan for the entire coastal area. Other regulations include the Coastal Zoning Ordinance, Coastal Commission regulations, and building code. A new LCP has been completed and is expected to be adopted by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in early 2023, with Coastal Commission certifying consistency with the Coastal Act by July 2023.

Government Code § 65590 et seq. requires documentation of affordable housing in the Coastal Zone. In the period between January 1, 2015, and June 30, 2022, there was a gain of 180 residential units in the Coastal Zone, including 178 market-rate single family units and 2 moderate-income accessory dwelling units. There were no conversions or demolitions of housing units occupied by persons or families of low or moderate incomes within the coastal zone during this period and no known conversions or demolitions of low- or moderate-income units within 30 miles of coastal zone boundaries.

## **1.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Permit Sonoma's public participation effort centered equity and the experiences of those who are most familiar with housing in the communities of Sonoma County best: residents, renters, nonprofits, those vulnerable to housing instability, and builders. The County's Housing Element Public Participation Plan prioritized strategies to engage and learn from diverse communities, including a Housing Advisory Committee, focus groups with historically underserved communities, and multiple community-wide surveys.

Government Code § 65583(c)(9) mandates local governments to "make a diligent effort to achieve public participation of all economic segments of the community in the development of the housing element" and to describe their public participation efforts. The County of Sonoma engaged all economic segments of the public using various strategies. The information gathered from these efforts has been used to guide and inform the Housing Element update.

The County contracted with a community engagement consultant, Civic Edge Consulting, to help carry out its Housing Element Public Participation Plan.

### **1.4.1 Summary of Community Engagement and Outreach**

Preparation for the 2023 Housing Element started in 2018 by asking the public to nominate sites for housing. Once the nomination period closed in April 2019, County staff evaluated nominated sites using basic eligibility criteria including location within urban service areas and availability of urban services; location in relation to Urban Growth Boundaries and Community Separators; and proximity to jobs, transit, services, and schools.

Since December 2021, community input has been collected through virtual meetings with the Housing Advisory Committee (HAC), focus groups representing special needs populations, a regional Equity Working Group, stakeholder interviews, public workshops, and community and developer surveys. The details and results of these efforts and how the input was incorporated into the Housing Element is included in Appendix A.

### ***Engagement with Underrepresented Communities***

Permit Sonoma began by asking the public about community needs, value-based approaches to housing, and specific housing policies to gather insight to be incorporated throughout the Housing Element. The Housing Element surveys (conducted in January and March) each had a promotional strategy to engage a diverse audience of Sonoma County residents. Multiple efforts were taken to increase the participation of groups less likely to participate in government surveys. The surveys utilized targeted digital advertising to increase the number of Spanish-speaking and Latino participants. Stipends were provided to community-based organizations that work with under resourced groups to distribute the survey to their clients and email lists. Finally, social media was posted to Permit Sonoma's channels, and emails were sent to Permit Sonoma's lists.

From January to April 2022, Permit Sonoma, assisted by Civic Edge Consulting, partnered with eight Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and conducted a series of focus groups to learn people's lived housing experiences and their hopes for the future of housing in Sonoma County. Focus groups allowed Permit Sonoma to deepen engagement with groups less likely to participate in other public participation opportunities, including those with special needs and equity priority communities. Sponsoring CBOs were chosen to reach:

- People with a lived experience of homelessness
- People with developmental disabilities
- Farmworkers
- Day laborers
- Latino residents
- Black residents
- Low-income seniors
- Low-income farmers

Outreach was designed to move beyond basic questions and to hear and understand the underlying values and concerns that drove these groups' decision-making. Public participation was designed to integrate the findings into the formation of policies and programs.

### ***Efforts of the Housing Advisory Committee***

The Housing Advisory Committee (HAC) was a vehicle for deeper engagement with a diverse group of housing and community leaders throughout Sonoma County. HAC members included diverse community stakeholders and perspectives, including developers or builders, the agricultural community, local nonprofit housing service organizations, people with a lived experience of homelessness, farmworkers, developmental disability service providers, and more. Stipends were offered to make participation more accessible to a wide variety of stakeholders, including under-resourced communities.

The HAC served as a primary venue for collaboration with stakeholders. Meeting content was engineered to encourage nuanced small group discussions of tradeoffs and prioritization that could not be replicated effectively with other engagement tactics. After value and prioritization discussions, HAC members reviewed and provided input on the draft Housing Action Strategy.

Members of the HAC also served as ambassadors for the Housing Element. Sonoma County partnered with and compensated organizations represented in the HAC for equity focus groups, emailing their clients to ensure equitable participation in the community-wide surveys.

### ***Equity Working Group***

The subregional Napa Sonoma Housing Collaborative, an ABAG Subregional Housing Collaborative, convened the Equity Working Group (EWG) in early 2021 to engage community members and representatives in the Housing Element Update process within the Napa Sonoma region. The EWG also had the secondary purpose of exposing jurisdictions to community members outside the formal public participation process. The EWG consisted of nine members, seven from stakeholder organizations and two community stakeholders. The Napa Sonoma Collaborative members, including representatives from all 16 of the subregion's cities and counties, nominated the EWG members due to their work within the community. These included those who directly engage vulnerable populations, provide housing for vulnerable populations, or are a member of a vulnerable population. During six ninety-minute sessions, the EWG discussed barriers, obstacles, and constraints to providing affordable housing within the Napa Sonoma region and developed recommendations for addressing these issues. Stipends were provided to EWG members to ensure that no one was prevented from participating for economic reasons. The 2021 EWG Report is included in Appendix A.

### ***Surveys***

Three separate public surveys were conducted to gather community input on housing needs, opportunities, and programs throughout the Housing Element Update process. Each survey utilized a promotional strategy to engage a diverse audience of Sonoma County residents and encouraged participation in subsequent surveys. The County ran a digital advertising campaign targeted at equity priority populations and compensated housing service providers and other CBOs to solicit participation from their clients and members. The County received over 6,378 online survey responses. Demographics in the survey results indicate that the County achieved its goal of obtaining broad participation from all parts of the economic spectrum and from communities traditionally less likely to participate in government surveys. In addition to public surveys, a survey was conducted to solicit feedback from the local development community on constraints and opportunities related to housing development.

### ***Stakeholder Interviews***

Before the County began the bulk of its public participation program in 2022 and during preparation of the Element itself, interviews were conducted with individual developers, service providers, and non-profit organizations. Early stakeholder interviews helped the County scope the larger public participation process. During the Housing Element preparation process, stakeholder surveys and interviews were also held with for-profit and non-profit housing developers (see Appendix A). Stakeholders provided valuable insight on community needs, constraints to development, creative housing solutions, and housing priorities.

## 1.4.2 Summary of Community Input

Throughout this outreach, the community identified housing affordability and availability as the greatest needs. Other recurring themes include concerns about natural disasters, accessibility, lack of infrastructure, construction costs, permitting fees, second homes or vacation rentals, and awareness of tenants' rights. This input was integrated throughout the analysis of housing needs, constraints, and considered when developing the Housing Strategy and the Housing Action Plan. Appendix A contains a thorough description of how community input was integrated throughout the Housing Element.

## 1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE HOUSING ELEMENT

The Housing Element is organized into four main sections. **Section I** introduces the overall Housing Element update effort, a summary of key findings, and a review of the effectiveness of the 2014 Housing Element and the County's progress in its implementation. **Section II** sets forth the County's Housing Goals, Policies and Programs. The County's Quantified Objectives are also included in this section. **Section III** presents the housing site inventory, including a discussion of the availability of services, and compares this inventory to the County's projected housing needs. **Section IV**, the Technical Background Report, is provided as a separate document due to file size and includes statutorily required data including an assessment of housing needs & programs, an analysis of nongovernmental and governmental constraints to affordable housing provision, a discussion of special needs populations, and the Assessment of Fair Housing. The Technical Background Report also contains four appendices with additional information on outreach, housing needs, and housing sites.

## 1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Throughout the Housing Element, a variety of technical terms related to income levels and housing types are used in describing and quantifying conditions and objectives. The definitions of these terms follow:

- **Above Moderate-Income Households** – Households earning over 120 percent of the County AMI, adjusted for household size.
- **Acutely Low-Income Households** – Households earning not more than 15 percent of the County AMI, adjusted for household size.
- **Affordable Housing** – Housing which costs no more than 30 percent of a low-, very low-, or extremely low-income household's gross monthly income. For rental housing, the residents may pay up to 30 percent of gross income on rent plus tenant-paid utilities. For homeownership, residents can pay up to 30 percent on the combination of mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, and homeowners' association dues.
- **Area Median Income (AMI)** – The income figure representing the middle point of County household incomes, adjusted for household size. Fifty percent of households earn more than or equal to this figure and 50 percent earn less than or equal to this figure. The AMI varies according to the size of the household. For the year 2022, the AMI for a four-person household in County of Sonoma was \$112,800.

- **Extremely Low-Income Households (ELI)** – Households earning not more than 30 percent of the County AMI, adjusted for household size.
- **Federal Poverty Threshold** – Income threshold issued by the Census Bureau that varies by family size, number of children, and elderly status. There is no geographic variation. For 2021, the poverty threshold for a single person under age 65 was \$14,097 and was \$21,831 for a three-person family with two children.
- **Low-income Households** – Households earning between 51 and 80 percent of the County AMI, adjusted for household size.
- **Moderate-income Households** – Households earning 81 to 120 percent of the County AMI, adjusted for household size.
- **Low Barrier Navigation Center** – A Housing First,<sup>1</sup> low-barrier, service-enriched shelter focused on moving people into permanent housing that provides temporary living facilities while case managers connect individuals experiencing homelessness to income, public benefits, health services, shelter, and housing.<sup>2</sup>
- **Supportive Housing** - Permanent housing that is paired with comprehensive services and case management.
- **Transitional Housing** - Housing with supportive services for persons or families in transition from homelessness to permanent housing. The length of stay is typically six months to two years.
- **Very Low-Income Households (VLI)** – Households earning between 31 and 50 percent of the County AMI, adjusted for household size.

## 1.7 DATA SOURCES

- U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census; 2010, 2019, 2020
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data, 2015-2019
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Consolidated Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2013-2017 release
- United States Department of Agriculture, 2017 Census of Agriculture
- County of Sonoma Community Development Commission
- HUD Exchange, 2020 Consolidated Plan Public Review Draft
- Public Policy Institute of California, July 2021 Fact Sheet of Poverty in California
- The Press Democrat
- Zillow.com and Realtor.com
- Compass Real Estate
- Coldwell Banker
- HSH Associates
- California Housing Partnership, Sonoma County 2020 Affordable Housing Needs Report
- Sonoma Clean Power Authority
- Sonoma County Energy Independence Program
- No Place Like Home Plan, July 2019

<sup>1</sup> Housing First is defined in Welfare & Institutions Code § 8255.

<sup>2</sup> Government Code § 65660



## 1.8 COMMUNITY PROFILE

As one of the world's premier wine producing regions, Sonoma County is home to a dynamic and well-balanced economy, anchored by strengths in tourism, high-tech manufacturing, and retail. A gentle climate, rich agricultural valleys surrounded by tree-covered hills, a variety of recreational opportunities and a beautiful coastline make Sonoma County a very attractive place to live. By economic, fiscal, and quality of life measures, the County has been successful in attracting new businesses, residents, and skilled workers. Rising home values have led to substantial re-investment and improvement of the existing housing stock, new development including higher density housing, and revitalization of existing commercial and mixed-use buildings.

Unfortunately, all this success has come at a price as long-term residents, families with young children, teachers, and visitor-serving business workers have been increasingly displaced by those who can afford the high price of housing.

While Sonoma County continues to be an ideal place to live, the high costs of housing are driving increasing disparities. The recent publication of *A Portrait of Sonoma County 2021* delivers a mixed picture of health and well-being in the County. Taken as a whole, people in Sonoma County live longer, earn more money, stay in school, and earn college degrees at higher rates than in other counties across California and the United States. While many neighborhoods within the County have seen improvements since 2014, the new report also reveals growing disparities across gender, racial groups, ethnic groups, and individual communities. Key findings in the 2021 Report include the following:

- Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and immigrant and undocumented community members persistently scored lower on the Human Development Index (HDI).
- The Black community experienced the largest decline in HDI scores since 2014, while scores for Latino communities have increased.
- Latino, Native American, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island residents of Sonoma County have the lowest median personal earnings among the major racial and ethnic groups.
- Sixty-nine percent of Black youth are enrolled in school compared to 77.1 percent of Latinx youth and 87.8 percent of Asian youth.
- The percentage of students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) has increased in the Sonoma Valley Unified School District.
- While the gap between neighborhoods with highest and lowest life expectancy has narrowed since the 2014 report, people living in the highest-scoring neighborhoods still live more than 8.5 years longer than those in the lowest-scoring neighborhoods.

While the Housing Element cannot resolve a community's health and longevity disparities, the provision of safe and adequate housing for all residents plays an influential role. The following section summarizes some of the demographic and housing-related data applicable to Unincorporated Sonoma County. Complete demographic data and an Assessment of Fair Housing within the County are provided in Section IV (Technical Background Report).

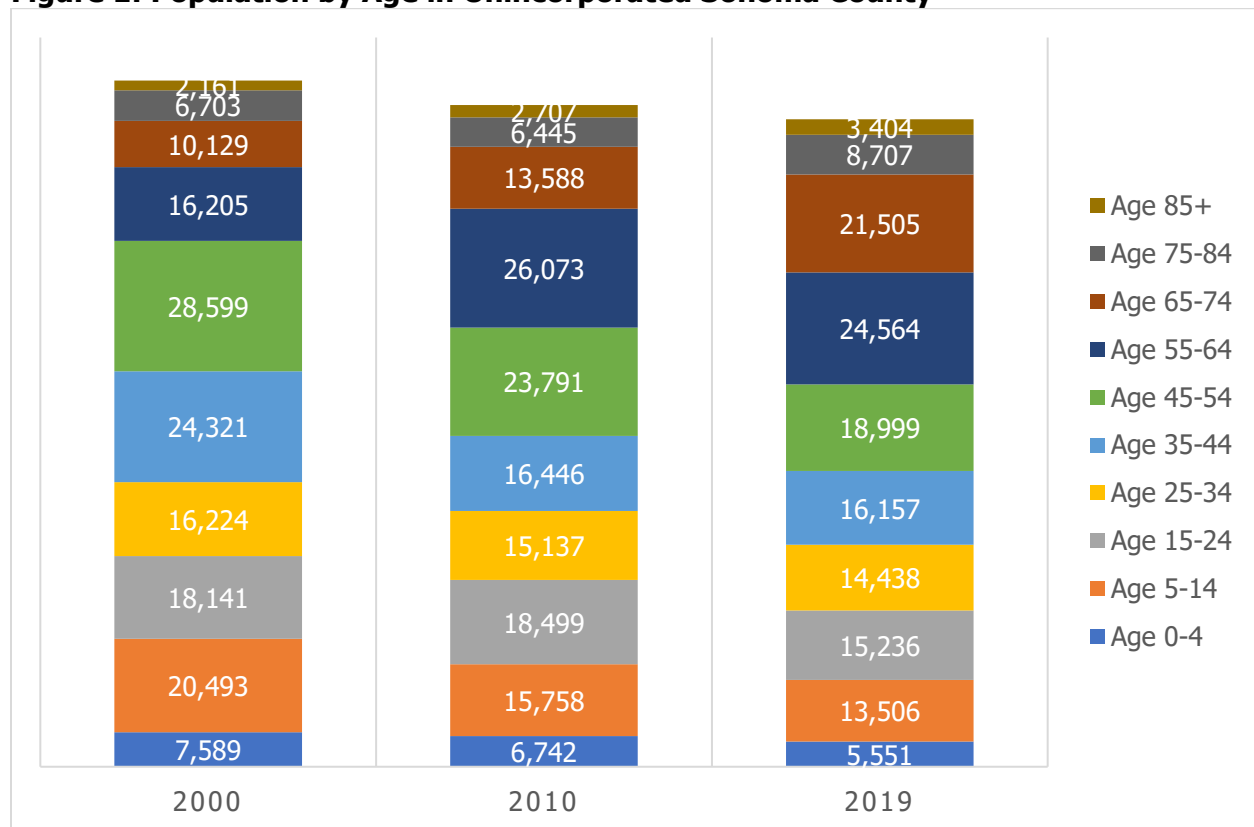
## 1.9 HOUSING NEEDS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The Housing Element serves to ensure adequate housing for all of Sonoma County’s present and future residents. Analysis of demographic, socioeconomic, and housing characteristics assists in identifying local housing needs and allows the County to effectively target its programs and resources toward households with the greatest need. This section summarizes the characteristics of the County’s population and housing stock. Section IV, The Technical Background Report, contains a complete analysis of housing needs and demographics.

### Population Characteristics and Trends

As of 2019, Sonoma County had a population of 449,772<sup>3</sup> with over a quarter of its residents (142,067) living in its unincorporated areas. Unincorporated Sonoma’s population is rapidly aging: from 2000 to 2019, the population age 65 or greater increased by 77%, while the population under age 25 decreased by 26%. As of 2019, almost a quarter of the Unincorporated County’s population was age 65 or greater (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Population by Age in Unincorporated Sonoma County**



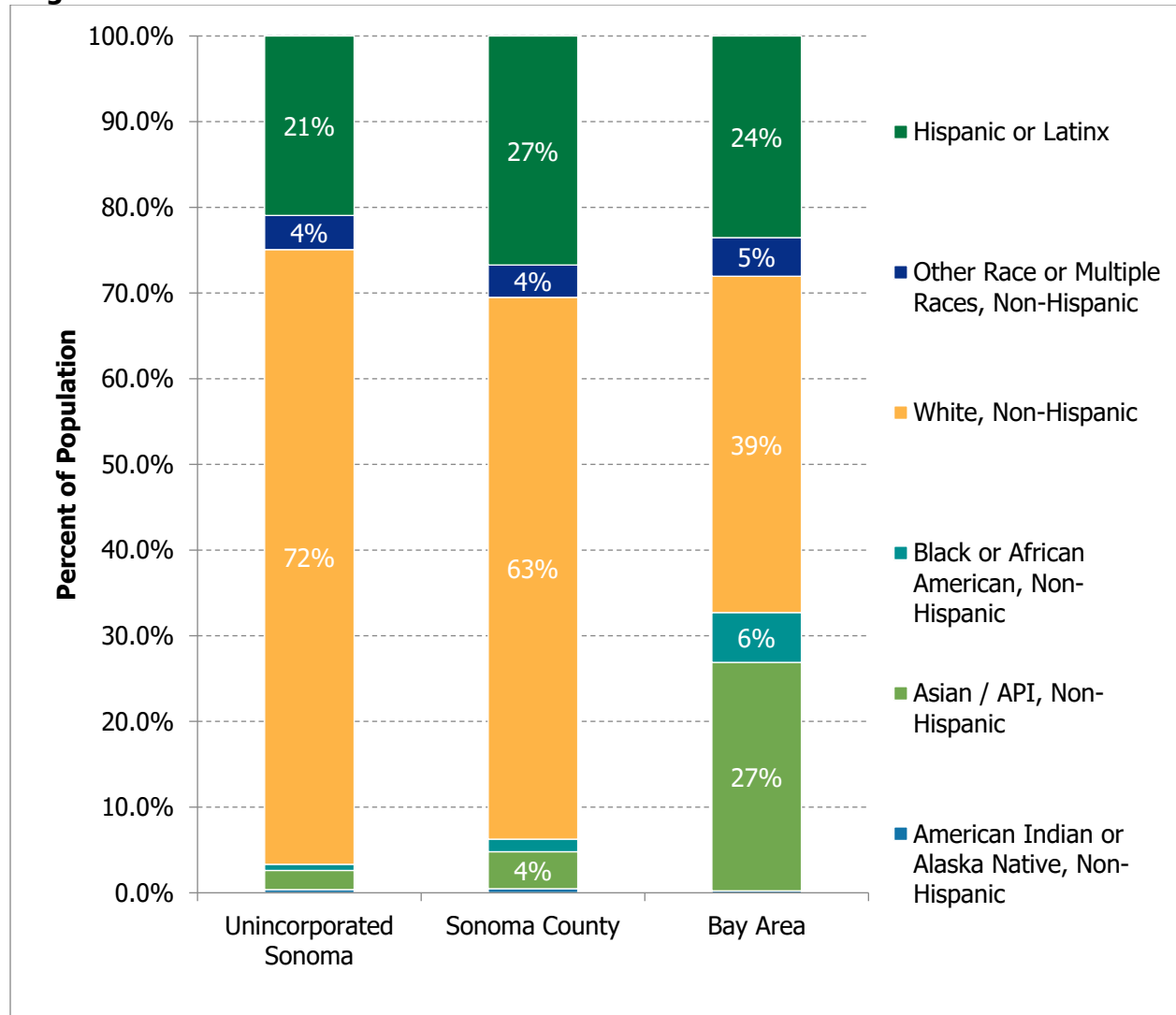
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000; Census 2010; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates

The population of Unincorporated Sonoma County is primarily white, and the Hispanic/Latinx population is the second largest racial/ethnic group. In terms of race and ethnicity, the population

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey 2019, 5-Year Estimates

of Unincorporated Sonoma County is slightly less diverse than the population of the entire County, and much less diverse than the Bay Area region (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Population by Race and Ethnicity, Unincorporated Sonoma County and the Region**



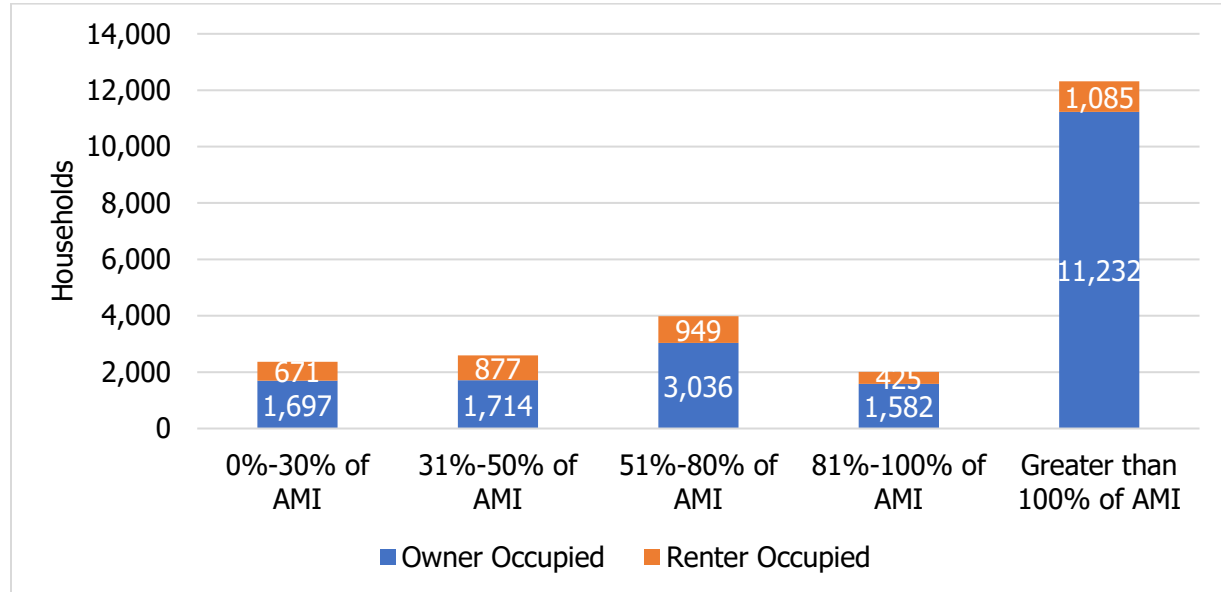
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates

### Seniors

Senior households (62 or older) make up almost 40 percent of the Unincorporated County. Of these, 17 percent rent their homes (Figure 3), and 36 percent are housing cost burdened, spending over 30% of household income used for housing costs.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> HUD, CHAS, 2017

**Figure 3: Unincorporated Sonoma County Senior Households by Income Group and Tenure**

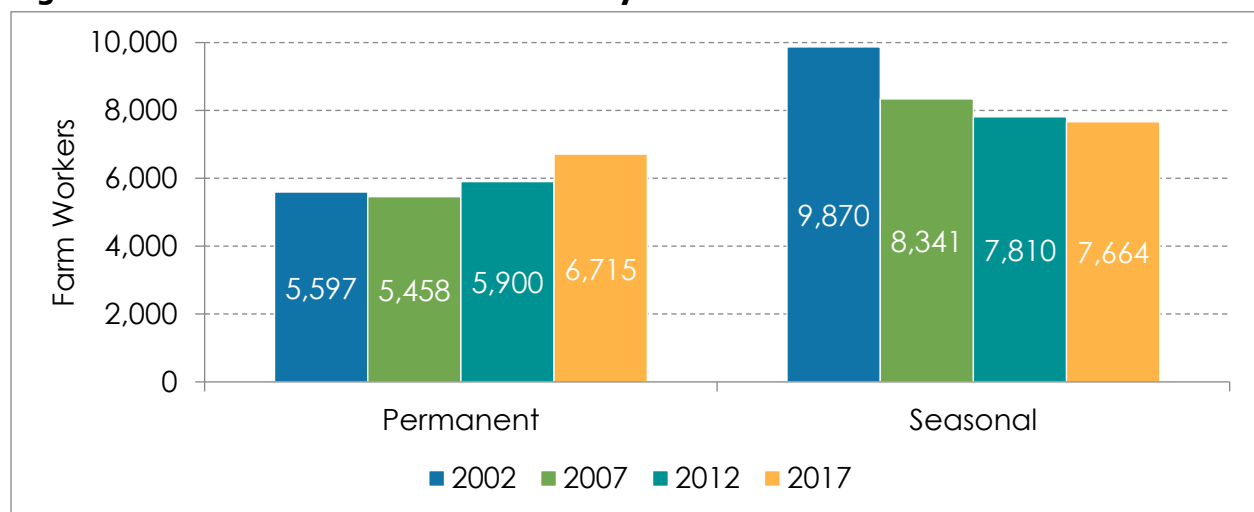


Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) ACS tabulation, 2013-2017 release

**Farmworkers**

Agriculture is a significant part of the Sonoma County economy, which depends on the labor of farm workers. In 2017 there were 6,715 permanent farmworkers and 7,664 seasonal farmworkers in Sonoma County as a whole. Most seasonal workers come for harvest season between August and October. While the percentage of workers who live permanently in the area has steadily increased as seasonal workers have decreased, by 2017 there were still more seasonal workers (hired for up to 150 days per year) than permanent year-round workers. Interviews with stakeholders and service providers indicated that the number of year-round workers has increased substantially between 2017 and 2022, which is not reflected in the data shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Farm Workers in Sonoma County**



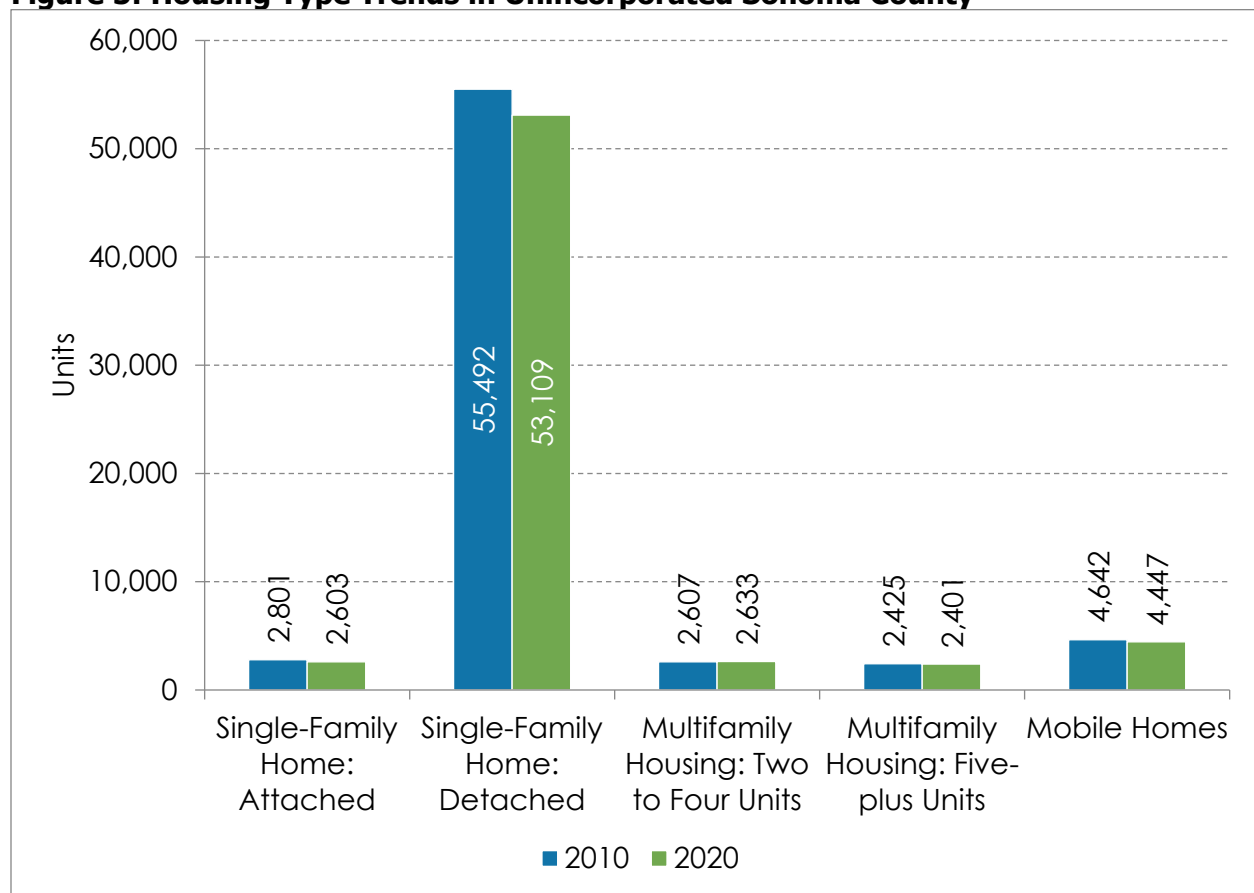
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Census of Farmworkers (2002, 2007, 2012, 2017), Table 7: Hired Farm Labor

## 1.10 CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSING STOCK

### Type

The amount of housing stock in Unincorporated Sonoma County declined 4.1 percent from 2010 (67,967 units) to 2020 (65,193 units), due to the annexation of Roseland (1,700 homes<sup>5</sup>) in 2017, and the over 2,500 homes lost to fires between 2017 and 2020 (of those, over 1,500 were either rebuilt or in the process of being rebuilt).<sup>6</sup> The ratios among the different types of housing were the same, with a slight uptick in multi-family units.

**Figure 5: Housing Type Trends in Unincorporated Sonoma County**



Source: California Department of Finance, E-5 series

Housing permit data provided by Permit Sonoma shows that 316 housing permits have received final approval (“Finaled”) in the past year; 74% of those are single-family dwellings.

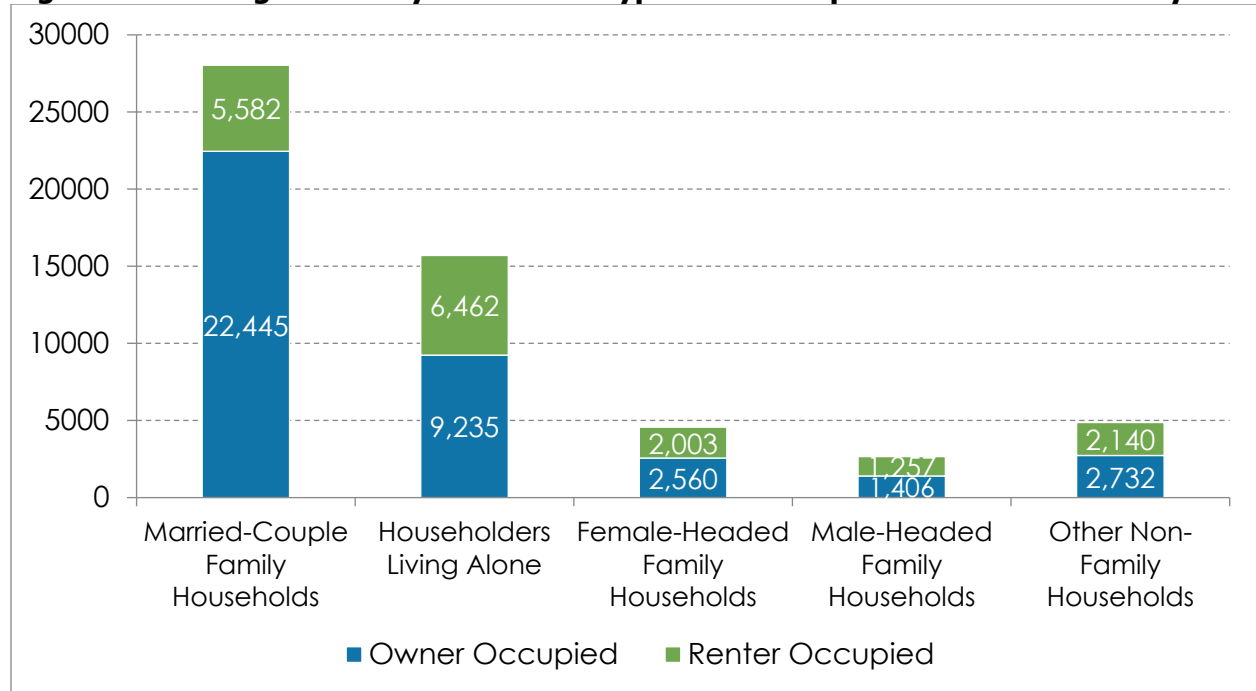
<sup>5</sup> 2017: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, S1101, Roseland CDP

<sup>6</sup> [Sonoma County Fire Rebuild Status](#), Permit Sonoma, accessed 8/3/2022

**Tenure**

Housing security can depend heavily on housing tenure (i.e., whether homes are owned or rented.) In Unincorporated Sonoma County, all household types are more likely to own than to rent.

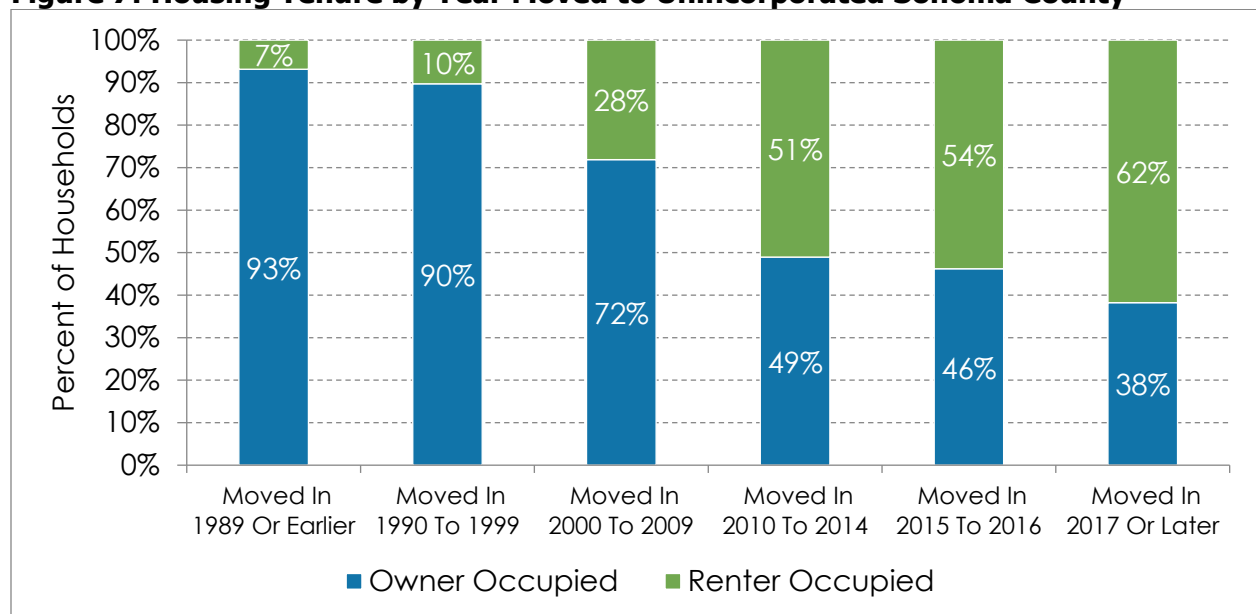
**Figure 6: Housing Tenure by Household Type in Unincorporated Sonoma County**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2015-2019), Table B25011

Over the last decade, there has been a trend toward more rentals than owner-occupied. Those who moved into homes in the Unincorporated County were more likely to rent than own.

**Figure 7: Housing Tenure by Year Moved to Unincorporated Sonoma County**

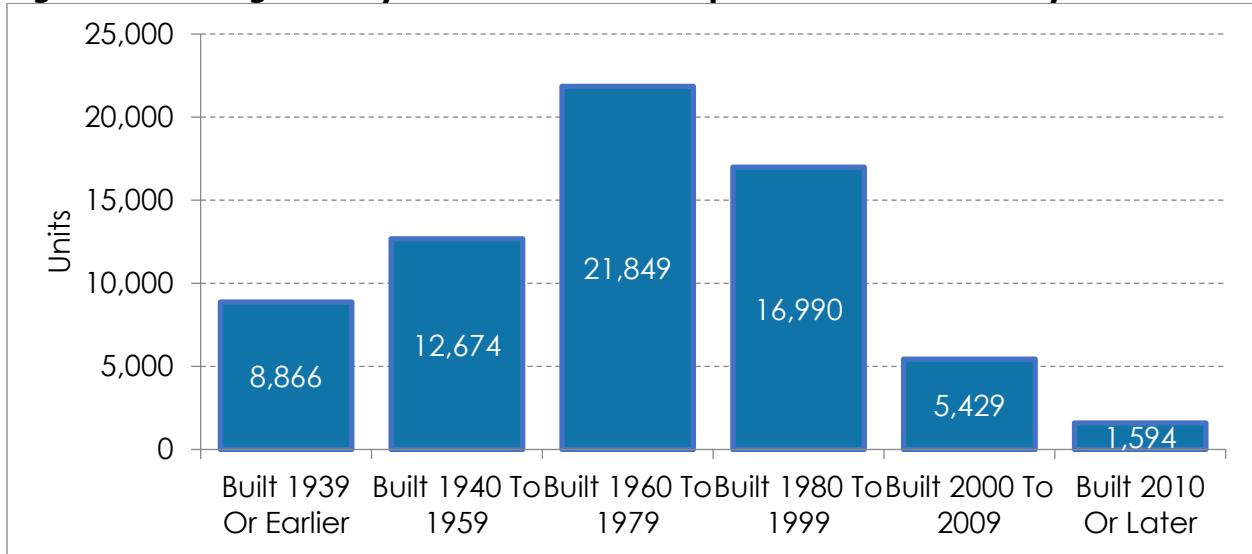


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2015-2019), Table B25038

**Age and Condition of Housing Stock**

More housing was built in Unincorporated Sonoma County before 1980 (43,389 units) than has been built since. Housing production has not kept pace with the rate of population growth.

**Figure 8: Housing Units by Year Built in Unincorporated Sonoma County**



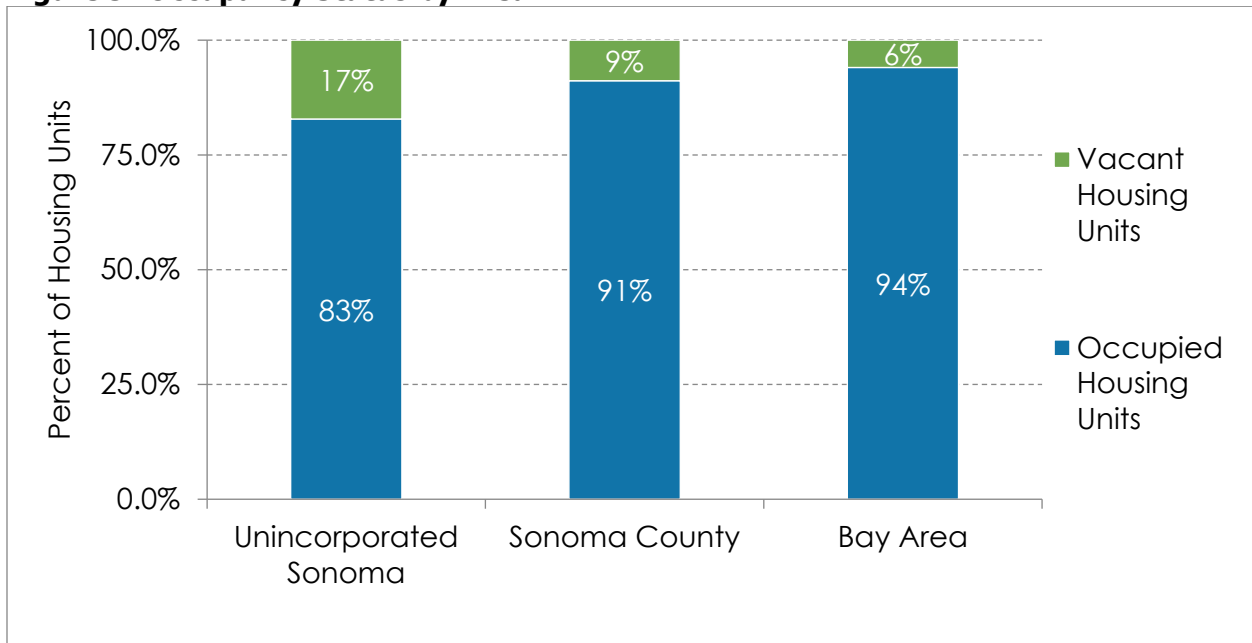
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2015-2019), Table B25034

Note: Estimates of urban and rural populations, housing units, and characteristics reflect boundaries of urban areas defined based on Census 2010 data. As a result, data for urban and rural areas from the ACS do not necessarily reflect the results of ongoing urbanization.

**Vacancy**

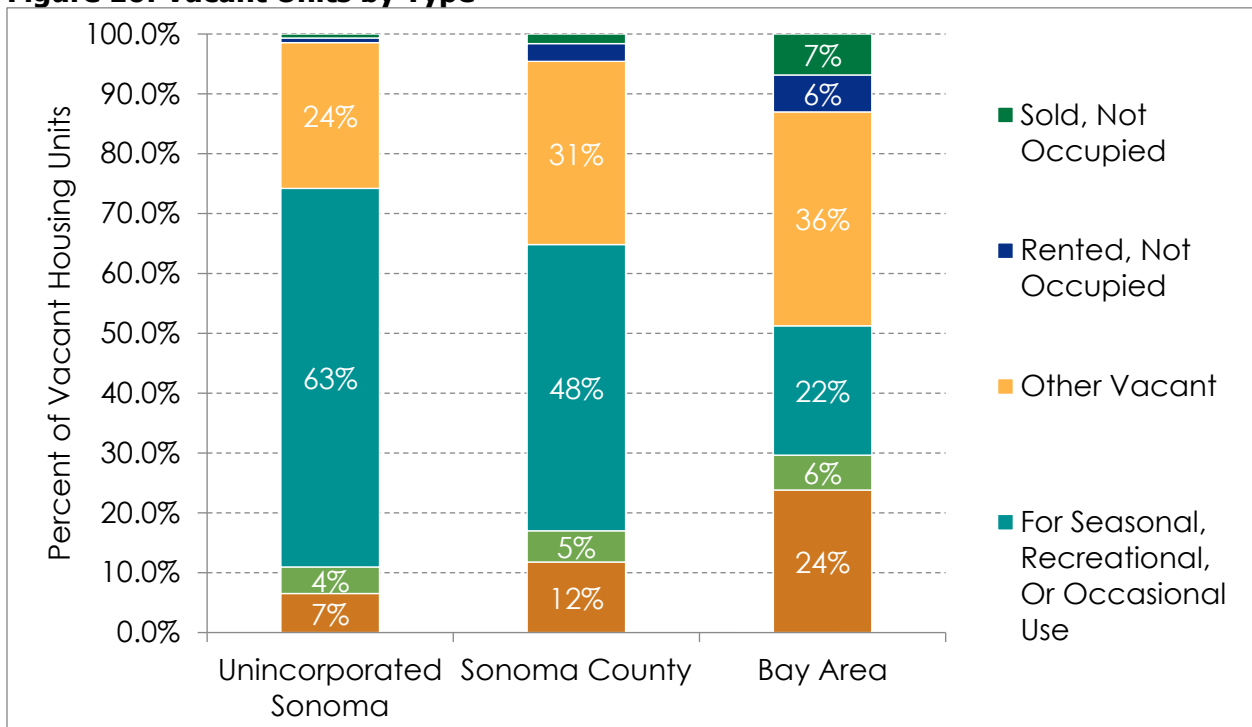
In 2019 there were 11,500 vacant units in Unincorporated Sonoma County, a significantly higher ratio of vacant units than in the County as a whole (including the 9 cities) or in the Bay Area region (see Figure 9). Of the Unincorporated County’s vacant units, 63% (7,300) were held for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. This is a significantly higher rate than the County as a whole or the Bay Area. Only 7% of the Unincorporated County’s vacant units were held for rent, and only 4% for sale. (Figure 10)

**Figure 9: Occupancy Status by Area**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2015-2019), Table B25002

**Figure 10: Vacant Units by Type**



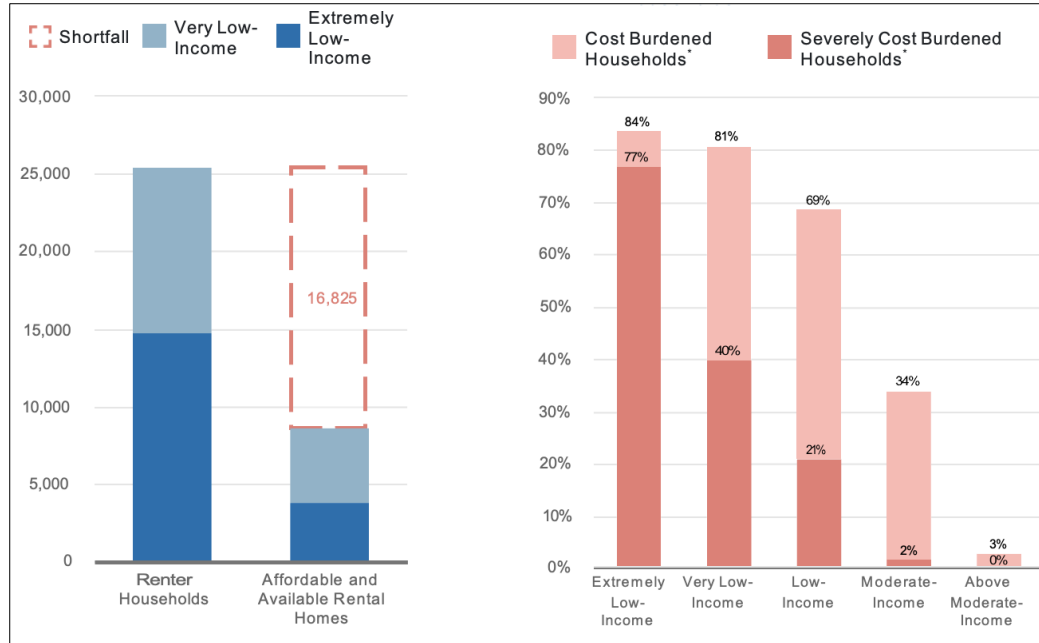
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2015-2019), Table B25004



## Household Income and Housing Affordability

Sonoma County as a whole lacks sufficient affordable rental housing to meet local needs. Many households are cost-burdened due to stagnant wages and increased housing costs.

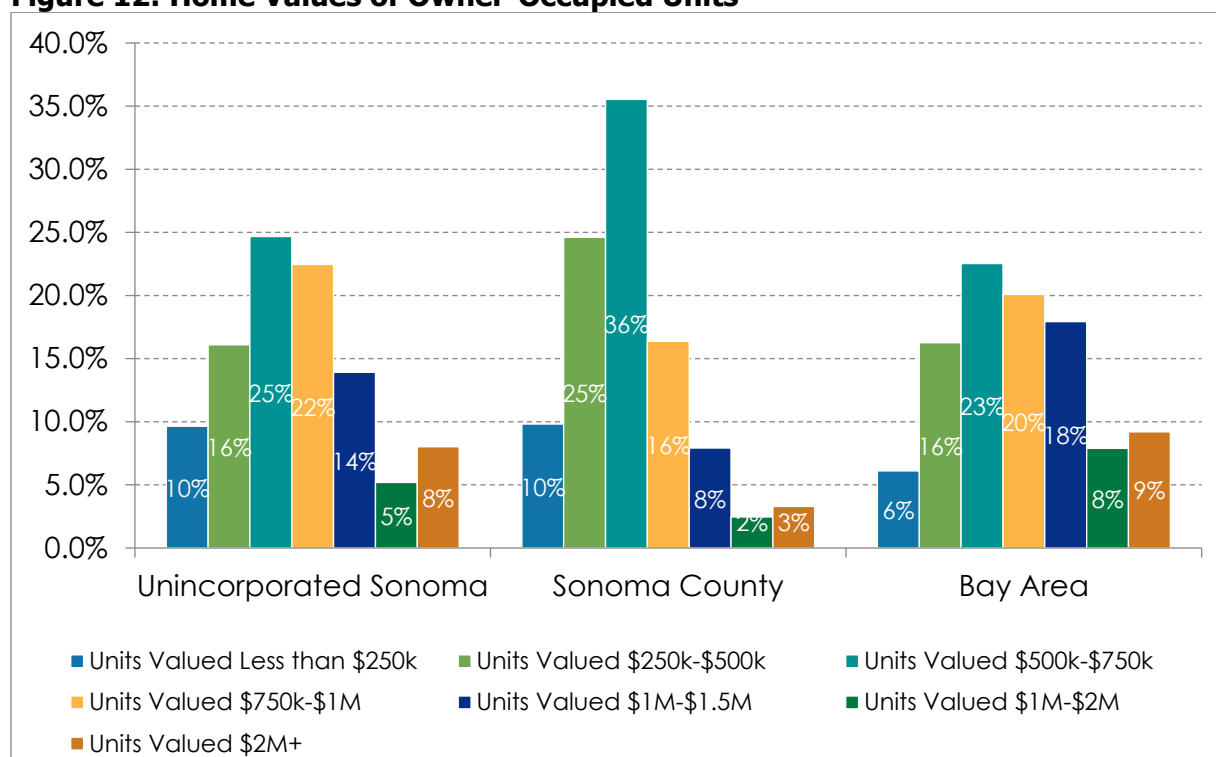
**Figure 11: Affordable Rental Housing Shortfall and Cost-Burdened Households in Sonoma County**



Source: California Housing Partnership, Sonoma County Housing Needs Report 2020

Home values in the unincorporated areas of the County tend to match those of the greater Bay Area. Over a quarter of the homes are valued at \$1 million or greater, partially explained by the large acreage necessary for on-site waste disposal in rural areas not served by public sewer.

**Figure 12: Home Values of Owner-Occupied Units**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2015-2019), Table B25075

## 1.11 SUMMARY OF CONSTRAINTS

Constraints to the development of housing in the Unincorporated County were determined through the collection and analysis of data related to County permitting processes, costs, and timelines. These data are then supplemented with input from developers, service providers, stakeholders, and community members to provide a clear picture of constraints to housing production within the County.

The greatest constraints identified within the County and the region are housing and land costs. The costs of land, plus the costs of materials and labor to produce housing, have reached their highest rates in 2021-2022. Many factors have contributed to increased prices, including supply chain issues, supply and labor shortages made worse by the rebuilding needs following the wildfires in 2017, 2019, and 2020, and the shortage of skilled trades in the North Bay as they are needed for rebuilding efforts across the state. There is little that the County can do to address supply and labor issues, but programs that can make more land available, more allowances for land trusts, and programs that allow increased densities on urban lands near transit and services can help to address the land supply issues. Programs to mitigate these nongovernmental constraints include the following:

- Rezone to meet RHNA (Program 4): Rezone sufficient sites to demonstrate an adequate inventory to meet RHNA. Sites shall meet the standards set forth in Government Code § 65583.2

- Density Bonus and Housing Opportunity Programs (Program 7): Continue County Programs and expand or modify programs as appropriate to create additional opportunities for housing
- Housing Sites and Development Opportunities (Program 11): Provide information about housing programs, housing opportunities and available housing sites, including information about site-specific development requirements and constraints
- Expand AH Combining District (Program 16): Add the AH Combining District to allow more affordable housing in appropriate zones.
- Incentivize and Promote ADU and JADU Development (Program 25): Provide resources and additional opportunities and allowances for the development of ADUs.

The next largest constraint in the Unincorporated County is the lack of available land with access to sewer service. Due to soil and drainage characteristics across much of the County, densities of more than about two units per acre cannot be achieved without public sewer. This means that all land zoned for higher-density affordable housing (defined by the California Department of Housing and Community Development [HCD] as allowing 20 units or more per acre) must be in areas where sewer is available, which are very limited in the Unincorporated County. The County and its cities have long-standing city-centered growth policies, and the extension of infrastructure beyond UGBs and urban service areas is restricted by voter-adopted Urban Growth Boundaries and Community Separators. In general, the cities' UGBs are the same as their spheres of influence; Community Separators are located outside adopted urban service areas and do not encircle any city or urban service area. While these ballot measures have the potential to restrict housing development in the Unincorporated County, both encourage increased densities within adopted Urban Growth Boundaries and urban service areas where services are available, thereby directing where growth can happen but not specifying how much can or should be built.

Other non-governmental constraints that impact housing development include environmental factors: high wildfire hazard areas, lack of groundwater availability, steep slopes, earthquake and landslide hazard zones, flood hazard zones, and environmental protection for special status species and habitats. Most of Sonoma County's rural lands are impacted by one or more of these environmental constraints.

The current Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program scoring system has also been identified by several non-profit developers as a significant constraint to the provision of affordable housing because the scoring system favors projects in higher resource areas, which are very few in the unincorporated urban areas of Sonoma County. Census tracts are designated as having "low" to "highest" resource levels based on education, poverty, proximity to jobs and economic opportunities, pollution levels, access to parks and schools, and other factors. Areas with the highest resource levels provide better opportunities and resources for their residents.

Regulations imposed by higher levels of government and not the local government, such as minimum requirements for septic systems and restrictions on building within floodways, limit the County's authority to approve new development. Local governments may also increase constraints on housing through the imposition of unnecessary or redundant processes, such as by requiring public hearings and extra levels of review for housing projects, a practice typically accompanied by excessive fees and longer processing timelines. The County recognizes the

importance of addressing governmental constraints and takes stakeholder input seriously. Over the last several years, Permit Sonoma has implemented an ongoing “process improvements” program with the benchmarks and milestones achieved reflected on a public-facing website dashboard that provides processing timelines for development permits, such as the time to issue permits for single-family and multi-family residences. A “Director’s Advisory Group” (DAG) was formed by the Director of Permit Sonoma; this group meets regularly with the Director to discuss any identified development constraints and to generate solutions. The County seeks to continue making process improvements and addressing constraints identified by staff, the community, and the DAG.

In Sonoma County, a review of impact and processing fees did not indicate that fees are higher within the County than in surrounding jurisdictions, and developers interviewed did not identify excess fees as a significant constraint to development. They did, however, identify extended review times (especially for septic review, which is not applicable to affordable housing projects) as a constraint because longer review times add costs and uncertainty to projects. Some of the County’s processes remain discretionary when a ministerial approach with objective standards could reduce permitting levels and costs. Both non-profit and for-profit developers also identified the County’s “siloed” permitting process as an additional constraint to development, with some developers providing specific examples of how post-approval requirements to solve what the developers saw as “regional” issues rendered their small infill projects infeasible.

Programs to mitigate potential governmental constraints include the following:

- Permitting Procedures and Priority Processing (Program 12): Continue priority processing and fast-tracking for ADUs and affordable housing developments, develop Objective Design and Development standards, and provide funding for adequate staffing to fast-track affordable projects across divisions.
- Review and Update Zoning Code (Program 15): Modify the Zoning Code to increase allowable uses and decrease the permitting level of certain residential uses.
- Expand AH Combining District (Program 16): Provide an “Enhanced Affordability” option within the AH Combining district that allows a higher density and more concessions to projects that meet additional affordable housing needs.
- Development Fees and Transparency Requirements (Program 17): Provide clear and transparent information.

## **1.12 SUMMARY OF RESOURCES**

This section describes administrative and financial resources available to Sonoma County. As described in the Housing Action Plan, the County will pursue process improvements or policy changes to increase and make more efficient use of resources during the planning period. The County uses local and federal funding to support community development and the development of new affordable housing. As described in the Housing Plan, the County will continue to pursue funding opportunities to increase financial resources to support housing development or preservation during the planning period.

## **County Fund for Housing (CFH)**

Sonoma County established the County Fund for Housing (CFH) in 2003. The CFH is administered by the Sonoma County Community Development Commission and provides financial assistance for the development and preservation of affordable housing located in Sonoma County. The purpose of the CFH is to develop, preserve, and accelerate the pace of development of below market-rate housing for low, very-low, and extremely low-income households. The CFH is primarily funded through in-lieu fees and workforce housing fees, with additional funding from Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), the County General Fund, County of Sonoma Reinvestment and Revitalization Funds, and CFH loan processing fees, interest, and loan repayments. Annually, the CFH generates between \$2 and \$2.5 million for affordable housing.

## **U.S. Department Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Funding**

The County of Sonoma, through a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the seven municipalities of Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Rohnert Park, Sebastopol, Sonoma, and Windsor, qualifies as a HUD “Urban County” entitlement jurisdiction that is eligible for formula funding allocations under the Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships programs. The County is the designed lead of the Urban County JPA and the Sonoma County Community Development Commission is the designated administrator of the Urban County funds on behalf of the County.

### ***HOME Investment Partnership Program***

Annually, the County receives about \$900,000 in HOME funding. The Sonoma County HOME Consortium funds can be used for activities that promote affordable rental housing and lower-income homeownership, including but not limited to building acquisition, new construction, reconstruction, moderate or substantial rehabilitation, first-time homebuyer assistance, and tenant-based rental assistance. One federal priority for use of these funds is the preservation of at-risk housing stock.

### ***Community Development Block Grant Funds***

Annually, the County receives approximately \$1.8 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Through the CDBG program, HUD provides funds to local governments for a range of community development activities. Eligible activities must meet one of three national objectives: benefit low-and moderate-income families; aid in the prevention of slums or blight; or meet other urgent community development needs. Sonoma County utilizes CDBG funds to stabilize neighborhoods, provide public services, and preserve and upgrade the existing housing stock.

## **Permit Sonoma**

Permit Sonoma is responsible for coordinating the development process throughout the Unincorporated County. Permit Sonoma was established more than 20 years ago to provide a “one stop shop” to applicants by including all necessary development services under one roof. Planning, Building, Code Enforcement, and Engineering Divisions, Fire Prevention & Hazardous Materials, and Natural Resources are all within Permit Sonoma.

### ***Planning Division***

The Planning Division is divided into Comprehensive Planning and Project Review Sections. Staff in the Project Review section review new development proposals for conformance with the County's General Plan and Zoning Code. They also evaluate environmental impacts of private development proposals and coordinate with other Permit Sonoma divisions to ensure that standards for building safety and water resources are incorporated into new development. The Comprehensive Planning team leads the County of Sonoma's long-range land use planning and policy efforts. The Planning Division also provides a dedicated ADU counter and services 2 days per week within the Permit Sonoma front lobby.

### ***Fire Prevention and Hazardous Materials***

Fire Prevention and Hazardous Materials is a division of Permit Sonoma primarily responsible for programs, procedures, and projects for preventing the outbreak of fires within the unincorporated areas of the County.

### ***Natural Resources***

The Natural Resources division (formerly Environmental Review) of the Planning Division evaluates the environmental impact of public projects, such as bridges, roads, and airport projects, to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other laws and regulations that protect water quality, biotic and cultural resources.

### ***Code Enforcement Division***

The Code Enforcement Division of Permit Sonoma deals with violations of the County's building, zoning, and health regulations. Through education and responsive enforcement, Code Enforcement works with private property owners, property managers, and residents to preserve and promote safe and healthy communities. Code Enforcement investigates and resolves instances of accessibility complaints, abandoned vehicles, cannabis violations, construction without permits, failing septic systems, grading violations, health and safety issues, housing code violations, and zoning violations/illegal uses of land within Unincorporated Sonoma County.

### ***Engineering Division***

The Engineering Division reviews permit application and construction plans, and conducts inspections for buildings, road improvements and encroachments, grading and storm water, and sanitation sewers. The Engineering Division is further identified by Sections according to their expertise:

#### **Building and Building Plan Check**

Building Plan Check reviews construction plans prior to issuance of a building permit to ensure the project will conform to the uniform construction codes (building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical). The Building Section reviews and inspects construction projects to ensure they are built according to the approved plans and building codes.

#### **Engineering and Survey**

The Engineering and Survey Section includes Survey and Land Development, which reviews all subdivision maps prior to recordation; Road Improvement and Plan Review, which reviews Improvement Plans for new developments; and Grading, Drainage and Stormwater, which ensures that construction and grading do not cause flooding.

### Well and Septic

The Well & Septic Section reviews all development proposals utilizing wells or septic systems, and reviews permit applications for septic system repair or upgrade. Their focus is on protecting health by ensuring that water wells are properly constructed, and septic systems protect surface and ground water quality.

### ***Policy Division***

The Policy Division coordinates cross-departmental policy and leads Permit Sonoma's public participation and communications programs. The Policy Division works to ensure that equity and public participation are key components of the policy making process for specific plans, long range plans, and other policy efforts that affect development.

## **Sonoma County Community Development Commission**

The Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) is dedicated to promoting decent and affordable housing, revitalizing communities, and supporting public services that increase economic stability for County residents. The CDC exists to open doors to permanent housing and opportunity through the following core services: rental assistance, development and preservation of affordable housing in both congregate and non-congregate settings, and community development investments. The CDC administers a variety of programs to support low- and moderate-income residents of Sonoma County. Using funds from the Federal CDBG and HOME programs, the post-redevelopment dissolution Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Asset Fund (LMIHAF), and local County Fund for Housing (CFH), as well as funds from other sources. The CDC is home to multiple divisions with responsibilities for multiple housing and funding programs:

### Sonoma County Housing Authority

The Sonoma County Housing Authority provides rental assistance through its administration of several programs: the Housing Choice Voucher Program, the Family Unification Program, the Family Self Sufficiency Program, and the Shelter Plus Care Program. The Housing Authority provides technical assistance including informational workshops to tenants, property owners, and developers about the various legislation and coordinates funding for and ensures that developers and property owners are compliant with income restrictions for affordable housing.

### Housing and Community Development Division

The Housing and Community Development Division aims to create homes for all in thriving and inclusive neighborhoods by making strategic investments in housing and capital projects to connect where people live to where they work, play, and experience the community. This Division operates the housing rehabilitation and flood mitigation programs, administers the mobile home stabilization ordinance, administers funding opportunities for developers and business partners, and manages the affordable housing properties owned by the CDC.

## 1.13 SUMMARY OF FAIR HOUSING ASSESSMENT

State law requires state and local agencies to take proactive measures to correct any housing inequalities related to race, national origin, color, ancestry, sex, marital status, disability, religion, familial status, or other protected characteristics. All Housing Elements due on or after January 1, 2021 must address these requirements. The County must also ensure that its laws and programs affirmatively further fair housing, and that they take no actions counter to that goal.

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) means “taking meaningful actions, in addition to combatting discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics.” (24 CFR § 5.152; Cal. Gov. Code § 8899.50.) In the context of a community’s housing needs, AFFH is not just about the number of housing units needed, but also about where the units are located and who has access to them.

Housing Element law now requires the County to prepare an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), identify factors that contribute to local fair housing issues, and include programs to address these findings as they relate to housing. The findings from the Assessment of Fair Housing must also be integrated into the housing sites analysis. Finally, public participation and outreach efforts for the Housing Element update must affirmatively further fair housing.

Per HCD guidance, the Assessment of Fair Housing addresses enforcement and outreach capacity, segregation and integration, disparities in access to opportunity, disproportionate housing needs including displacement, and concentrated areas of poverty and affluence across racial/ethnic groups. The AFH for the County is provided in full in Section IV.

Despite historical inequities, the County of Sonoma has made significant strides in affirmatively further fair housing by eliminating single-family zoning in most urban areas, facilitating the development of affordable housing and farmworker housing, establishing an Office of Equity to recognize and build upon the County’s powerful role in unseating racial inequity in its communities, and increasing its outreach efforts. The most persistent and pertinent issues related to fair housing, as outlined in the AFH, include displacement related to economic factors, racial and income segregation, and racial disparities in access to higher resourced areas include racially concentrated areas of affluence (RCAAs).

Based on data collected for the Assessment of Fair Housing, local knowledge, and analysis, the County and its public and stakeholder partners identified factors that contribute to local fair housing issues (“contributing factors”) and has outlined strategies to affirmatively further fair housing during the implementation of the Housing Element:



**Table 1: Contributing Factors and Meaningful Actions to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing**

<p><b>Prioritized Contributing Factors (CFs)</b></p>	<p><b>Meaningful Action</b></p>
<p><b>CF:</b> Displacement of residents due to economic pressures <b>Priority:</b> High</p>	<p>Protect existing residents from displacement through the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require replacement housing in targeted growth/Specific Plan/PDA areas and on sites identified to accommodate the housing needs of lower income households (Program 5 and 5b)</li> <li>• Utilize Specific Plans and master plans to target investment (Program 5c)</li> <li>• Utilize affirmative marketing strategies in marketing plans for subsidized housing projects (Program 5d)</li> <li>• Continue to implement the County’s density bonus ordinance and the Rental and Ownership Housing Opportunity Programs that expand on state programs and requirements (Program 7)</li> </ul>
<p><b>CF:</b> Lack of affordable, accessible housing in a range of unit sizes <b>Priority:</b> Moderate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand programs to increase housing choices and affordability in moderate and high opportunity areas (Program 12)</li> <li>• In coordination with the Napa Sonoma ADU Center, prepare and maintain a list of property owners developing and renting ADUs or JADUs suitable for people with disabilities and provide the list to individuals on housing waiting lists. (Program 25f)</li> <li>• Increase the number of ADUs allowed per site (Program 25g)</li> <li>• Modify permitting levels for cottage housing development projects to allow four cottages by right. (Program 15d)</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for housing land trusts (Program 18).</li> <li>• Develop additional by-right multifamily housing in unincorporated areas (Programs 15e, 15h)</li> </ul>
<p><b>CF:</b> Lack of public investments in specific neighborhoods, including services or amenities <b>Priority:</b> Moderate</p>	<p>Factor is not related to housing only and will be addressed in upcoming development of integrated Environmental Justice policies and General Plan update process. Constraints specifically related to housing will be addressed through the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize Specific Plans and master plans to target investment (Program 5c)</li> <li>• Increase intra-governmental coordination and create a Housing Equity and Action Plan (Program 31)</li> </ul>
<p><b>CF:</b> Lack of regional cooperation <b>Priority:</b> Moderate</p>	<p>Increase intergovernmental coordination and cooperation on housing matters by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of a subregion for the 7<sup>th</sup> RHNA (Program 6)</li> <li>• Participation in and provision of funding for the Napa-Sonoma Housing Collaborative (Programs 20, 25d)</li> <li>• Continuing participation in bimonthly meetings of the interjurisdictional housing coordinating committee (Program 27)</li> </ul>
<p><b>CF:</b> Lack of affected populations on boards and committees <b>Priority:</b> Low</p>	<p>Factor related to much more than housing and will need to be addressed in the upcoming Environmental Justice Element and General Plan update processes. Factors related to housing will be addressed through the following program:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase intra-governmental coordination and create a Housing Equity and Action Plan (Program 31)</li> </ul>
<p><b>CF:</b> Lack of funding for local fair housing outreach and enforcement <b>Priority:</b> Low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract with a fair housing resource provider (Program 29)</li> <li>• Provide budget for County staff to provide local outreach (Program 32)</li> <li>• Reinstate dedicated housing program implementation positions in the CDC and Permit Sonoma (Program 1d)</li> <li>• Through the Proactive Outreach Program (Program 32a), ensure developers are aware of existing funding programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CF:</b> Community opposition <b>Priority:</b> Low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop additional by-right multifamily housing in unincorporated areas (Programs 15e, 15h)</li> <li>• Partner with a qualified non-profit to develop and provide funding for a campaign to combat local opposition to affordable housing (Program 32d)</li> </ul>

## 1.14 REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION

The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) is a requirement of state housing law and is a determination of projected and existing housing needs for all jurisdictions in California. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) conducts the RHNA process for the Bay Area every eight years. Every jurisdiction must plan for its RHNA allocation in the Housing Element by identifying appropriately zoned land to accommodate existing and projected housing needs for all income levels for the entire 8-year planning period.

The RHNA methodology applies several factors to further the objectives of State law and meet the goals of ABAG’s regional Plan Bay Area 2050. To ensure that the RHNA methodology does not overburden low-income jurisdictions with more low-income households, a social equity adjustment is applied during the Income Group process. Higher income jurisdictions are required to plan for fewer market rate units and more affordable units, while lower income jurisdictions plan for more market rate units and fewer affordable units.

Unincorporated Sonoma County’s initial ABAG-assigned RHNA for the period between January 2023 – January 2031 was 3,881 units, divided between the income groups as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Unincorporated Sonoma County (Original Assigned) RHNA, 2023-2031**

Jurisdiction	Very Low Income (<50% AMI)	Low Income (50-80% AMI)	Moderate Income (80-120% AMI)	Above Moderate Income (>120% AMI)	Total
Unincorporated Sonoma County	1,036	596	627	1,622	3,881

Source: ABAG Final Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan: San Francisco Bay Area, 2023-2031

In previous Housing Element cycles, RHNA responsibility for unincorporated land within a City's Sphere of Influence (SOI) was assigned to the City, in anticipation of annexation. For the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle RHNA, responsibility for the unincorporated land within a City's SOI was instead assigned to the Unincorporated County. Under this methodology, the transfer of RHNA responsibility would take place between the City and County at the time of annexation. State law (Government Code § 65584.07) allows for a City to accept some of a County's RHNA responsibility in the time period between the assignment of RHNA numbers and the statutory due date of the Housing Element. In 2022, Sonoma County and Cloverdale reached an agreement to transfer the RHNA responsibility associated with recent annexations, and the County's RHNA was decreased by 57 units, distributed across income categories in compliance with Government Code § 65584.07(a). The transfer decreased the County's Lower-Income RHNA by 24 units and its Moderate- and Above Moderate-Income RHNA by 33 units, as shown in Table 3. The RHNA transfer was approved by the ABAG Executive Board on November 10, 2022. (ABAG APPROVAL PENDING)

**Table 3: Unincorporated Sonoma County Revised RHNA, 2023-2031**

	Very Low Income	Low Income	Moderate Income	Above Moderate Income	Total
Unincorporated Sonoma County Original RHNA Allocation	1,036	596	627	1,622	3,881
Transferred RHNA	12	12	0	33	57
Unincorporated Sonoma County Revised RHNA Allocation	1,024	584	627	1,589	3,824

While the RHNA is assigned based on the four income categories above, the law also requires that communities plan for the needs of extremely low-income households, defined as those making less than 30 percent of the County AMI. The housing need for the extremely low-income group is generally considered to be one-half of the very low-income need. **Section III** provides a summary of the sites available to meet the County's assigned RHNA, development trends, and constraints to development of the listed housing sites.

The Housing Sites Inventory was developed by identifying:

- The number of accessory dwelling units anticipated to be built during the planning period, using HCD's safe harbor assumptions;
- Projects in the planning process but not yet built; and
- Sites suitable for residential development.

## 1.15 REVIEW OF 2014 HOUSING ELEMENT

Sonoma County's 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element contained policies and programs to preserve and expand the supply of housing at all income levels. This section summarizes the County's many accomplishments during the 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element and evaluates the effectiveness of the programs in the 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element and their applicability to this 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element. A status report for each 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element implementation program is provided in Section 1.16.

Sonoma County has an excellent record of adopting and implementing creative housing programs to address its identified housing needs. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element planning period, the County completed the following actions to implement its 2014 Housing Element and more:

- Updated the County Fund for Housing Funding Policy to provide more flexibility, make assisted projects more competitive and feasible, and provide incentives for energy-efficient project features (2017).
- Adopted revisions to the Zoning Code that extended existing protections for residents of mobile home parks converted to another use, to also protect renters in mobile home parks converted from a rental park to an ownership park (2018).
- Adopted a condominium conversion ordinance (2018).
- Adopted revisions to the Zoning Code that established a new density standard allowing smaller units to count as a fraction of a unit toward a project's density (2018).
- Adopted revisions to the Zoning Code to allow Cottage Housing Developments in urban low- and medium-density zones—a new type of multifamily housing comparable in size and scale to single-family development (2018).
- Adopted multiple revisions to the Vacation Rental Ordinance to limit the use of homes as vacation rentals, and to protect urban residential lands for permanent residential uses (2016-2022).
- Established and codified policies to fast-track affordable housing projects through planning and building permit processes (2016-2020).
- Adopted multiple revisions to the Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance to be consistent with changes in state law, and established customer service hours dedicated to accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and Junior ADUs and over-the-counter planning approvals of ADUs as a part of the Building Permit review (2017, 2018, and 2021).
- Adopted a Workforce Housing (WH) Combining District which allows high-density residential development on commercial- or industrial-zoned land, in place of or accompanying commercial or industrial uses (2018). The WH is applied to sites in this Housing Element Sites Inventory to facilitate housing development near jobs and transit.
- Processed a zoning change to remove the "Z" Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion Combining District from 1,924 parcels countywide (2020).
- Adopted Zoning Code changes to reduce permitting requirements for large SRO facilities (2016).
- Facilitated and provided funding for a "tiny homes" pilot project, Veterans Village, on County-owned property (2019). Veterans Village houses 14 chronically homeless veterans and provides on-site supportive services.
- Established a tiny home project on a parking lot on the County's Los Guilicos campus in east Santa Rosa (2020). The Los Guilicos Village project houses up to 60 persons in separate small, manufactured housing units and includes a navigation center.
- Adopted a VR Visitor Residential Combining Zone, which allows mixed occupancies including long-term occupancy of RVs and travel trailers (2015). One request for a zoning change to add the VR combining zone was approved.
- Added the AH Affordable Housing Combining Zone to multiple sites countywide, which allows 24 units per acre for 100 percent affordable housing projects (2014-2018).

- Awarded CDBG, HOME, Low and Moderate-Income Housing Asset Funds (LMIHAF), and CFH funds to nine projects for predevelopment activities during the planning period.
- Provided financial assistance to County employees to purchase a home through the First Time Home Buyer Program, through a partnership with the County's largest labor union, Service Employees International Union (SEIU). During the planning period, 81 employees were assisted, with loans totaling \$2,348,829, and payoffs totaling \$1,116,216.
- Permitted 46 farm family and agricultural employee housing units.
- Permitted 6 farmworker bunkhouse projects with 183 beds.
- Adopted Zoning Code revisions classifying transitional housing and supportive housing (2018) as residential uses, in accordance with state law.
- The Community Development Commission (CDC) provided low-cost rehabilitation loans to owner-occupied and rental properties. Throughout the planning period, the CDC provided \$2,913,433 in rehabilitation assistance to 61 mobile homes and nine single-family homes.
- Provided checklists for residential developers for all housing types.

Other efforts undertaken during the last Housing Element period which will be continued during the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element include the following:

- Affordable Housing Information. Developed and maintained a public information center at Permit Sonoma to provide a wide range of affordable housing referrals, resources, and information. Established a Housing Team which allowed staff members to become fully trained and specialize in the County's housing regulations and liaise with the Community Development Commission.
- Housing Sites Information. The County has and will continue to provide information to prospective developers on the Urban Residential sites in the County's housing sites inventory. In partnership with the Napa-Sonoma Housing Collaborative, the County has joined the regional Let's Talk Housing program through website participation ([www.nsc-housing.org](http://www.nsc-housing.org)). The Rezoning Sites for Housing project has provided pertinent information on all its listed housing sites in an interactive web-based mapping tool.
- Staff Assistance to Developers. Permit Sonoma staff have and will continue to provide dedicated staff assistance to developers interested in developing housing on any of the County's Urban Residential parcels. Assistance includes meetings with interested parties, dissemination of site-specific parcel information for all Urban Residential parcels in the County's Sites Inventory, and referrals for possible funding for affordable projects.
- Fast-Tracking of Affordable Housing Projects. Permit Sonoma will continue to fast-track applications for development projects with an affordable housing component, achieving processing time reductions of up to one-half the normal processing time.
- Maintain County Fund for Housing. Between 2015 and 2021, the County deposited over \$30 million into the County Fund for Housing (CFH). CFH funds are used for site acquisition and development costs for projects all around the County. Examples of recent CFH-funded projects are:

- Ortiz Plaza, phase two of a farmworker housing project in unincorporated Larkfield
- Veterans Village tiny home pilot project on County-owned land
- Celestina Garden Apartments, 40 senior housing units in the Springs
- Altamira Apartments, a 48-unit project in the City of Sonoma on Community Development Commission-owned land
- Roseland Village, 75 units in the Roseland neighborhood of Santa Rosa on Community Development Commission-owned land
- Mill District Apartments, a 41-unit project in the City of Healdsburg
- Renewal Enterprise District. Co-founded a joint powers authority, the Renewal Enterprise District (“RED”), with the City of Santa Rosa to accelerate housing production following the 2017 wildfires (2019).
- RED Housing Fund. Provided a \$10 million forgivable loan (matched by a \$10 million non-forgivable loan from the City of Santa Rosa) to the newly formed 501(c)(3) public charity RED Housing Fund, to provide starting capital for a fund with the goal of accelerating higher density, multifamily housing production (2021).

### Progress in Achieving RHNA and Quantified Objectives

The County projected that the programs outlined in the 2014 Housing Element would result in the production of 936 new units, including 347 units affordable to lower-income households. These quantified objectives were consistent with the number of units needed to meet the County’s Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA). Since 2014, 2,289 housing units were permitted in the unincorporated areas of the County, including 466 units for lower-income households. While the County fell short of some of its quantified objectives for the construction of lower-income housing, it surpassed its RHNA in most income categories before the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle planning period (Table 4).

**Table 4: Progress in Achieving 2014 Quantified Objectives by Income Group**

Housing Types	Total	ELI (30%)	VLI (50%)	LI (80%)	Mod (120%)	Above Moderate
Rural Housing	878/395	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	878/395
Urban Housing Multi-Family	431/192	33/40	40/52	74/60	45/40	239/0
Urban Housing Single-Family	90/33	0/0	0/2	0/3	0/16	90/12
ADUs/JADUs	784/176	2/6	0/20	211/60	561/80	10/10
Ag Employee	44/55	27/27	17/26	0/2	0/0	0/0
Farm Family	2/10	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/10	0/0
Mixed Use, Work/Live	13/28	0/0	0/0	0/2	0/14	13/12

Single Room Occupancy Units	47/47	47/37	0/10	0/0	0/0	0/0
New Construction Subtotals	2,289/936	109/110	57/110	285/127	729/160	1,230/429
RHNA	2,289/515	109/63	57/63	285/37	729/160	1,230/192
Retained Affordable	0/77	0/10	0/60	0/7	N/A	N/A
Rehabilitated	70/53	13/13	40/40	17/0	N/A	N/A
Unit Totals	2359/1066	122/133	97/210	302/134	729/160	1230/429

*Note: Table shows Actual Production/ Quantified Objective*

The County also set quantified objectives for other types of housing that would not be considered units towards RHNA, including shelter beds, farmworker bunks, and transition/group housing. The County exceeded its objectives for farmworker bunks and transitional/group housing (Table 5). With the advent of Project Homekey, the County has focused on creating interim housing units rather than shelter beds. While the County did not achieve its quantified objectives for shelter beds, these needs were addressed through other interim housing projects that counted towards the RHNA and are included in the table above.

**Table 5: Progress in Achieving 2014 Non-Unit Quantified Objectives by Income Group**

Non-Unit Types	Total	ELI (30%)	VLI (50%)	LI (80%)	Mod (120%)	Above Moderate
Shelter Beds	0/70	0/70	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Farmworker Bunks	183/40	173/30	10/10	0/0	0/0	0/0
Transitional/Group	73/70	67/50	6/20	0/0	0/0	0/0
Non-unit Totals	266/180	240/150	16/30	0/0	0/0	0/0

*Note: Table shows Actual Production/ Quantified Objective*

Appendix C provides a programmatic summary of the County's progress, success, and lessons learned in implementing the programs of its 2014 Housing Element.

# Section II: Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy forms the housing policy roadmap for Unincorporated Sonoma County. The Housing Strategy integrates data, trends, community opinions, and input received from the Housing Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and the public. The Housing Strategy comprises the following components: 1) Housing Goals and Policies, 2) a programmatic Housing Action Plan, and 3) Quantified Objectives for housing. Policies and programs achieved since the 2014 Housing Element have been replaced with new policies and programs to address new statutory requirements, changing housing needs and community input. Additionally, the Housing Strategy sets forth quantified objectives for housing construction, rehabilitation, and conservation within the 2023-2031 planning period.

## 2.1 HOUSING GOALS AND POLICIES

Government Code § 65583(b)(1) requires that Housing Elements contain "a statement of the community's goals, quantified objectives, and policies relative to affirmatively furthering fair housing and the maintenance, preservation, improvement, and development of housing." This section provides the goals, objectives, and policies for Sonoma County. The policy framework sets forth six overarching housing goals. Subordinate to each of these goals are policies that express how the goals will be achieved. Policies and Programs that are new or have been substantially changed since the last Housing Element have been identified with the following symbol: ▲.

The collective programs and policies administered by Sonoma County and set forth in this Housing Element comply with and further the requirements and goals of Government Code § 8899.50(b). As demonstrated through its policies and programs, the County is committed to taking meaningful actions to fulfill its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing and will take no actions that would be materially inconsistent with that goal.

### **Goal 1: Sustain Existing Housing Programs and Housing Units**

**Discussion:** Most of the County's housing programs have been successful and will continue as the basis of the County's affordable housing programs. It is also important to retain existing housing units through the use of rehabilitation programs.

Sonoma County continues to experience an increase in the use of permanent residential units and lands for vacation uses, such as when single-family homes are removed from the housing stock to be utilized as short-term rentals. This trend has led to a loss of the County's scarce urban residential homes and lands to visitor-serving uses. Many vacation homes are purchased as second homes for later retirement and rented as furnished vacation rentals when not used by the owner. Census data show that the number of homes in the Unincorporated County that are used for seasonal or recreational use increased from 9.4% (of total housing stock) in 2010 to 10.9% in 2019, and from 4.05% to 4.22% within the incorporated cities. The County adopted a vacation rental ordinance in 2011 to regulate the use of homes as vacation rentals and recently amended the vacation rental ordinance to provide more effective enforcement measures. Continued restrictions on the conversion of housing stock and urban residential lands to visitor-serving uses



and investment uses will be needed to ensure that the existing housing stock is protected.

The Rental Housing Opportunity Area Program (formerly the “Type A” Program) has been highly successful and is utilized by both non-profit and for-profit developers to produce both affordable and market-rate rental housing units. The Rental Housing Opportunity Area Program provides by-right densities of between 12 and 30 units per acre subject to affordability levels being met; at least 40% of total units must be affordable to low- or very-low income households. Sites eligible for the Rental Housing Opportunity Area Program are located in urban areas only and are defined as those which have a medium or high density residential general plan land use designation (UR6 through UR15) and are zoned R2 (Medium Density Residential) or R3 (High Density Residential). Rental housing projects that meet the density and design standards are permitted uses in these zones, allowing projects to move quickly through the permitting process. Development standards used for rental housing projects allow increased height, reduced parking requirements, and less stringent setbacks so long as privacy is maintained. Incentives are also available pursuant to Government Code § 65915 (Density Bonus Law), but the Rental Housing Opportunity Program is not considered a density bonus program.

The Ownership Housing Opportunity Area Program (formerly the “Type C” Program) has decreased in popularity during the last two planning periods due to changed housing market conditions. Like the Rental Housing Opportunity Area Program, the Ownership Housing Opportunity Area Program allows a by-right density of 11 units per acre for ownership housing projects so long as affordability levels are met: 20% affordable to low-income households and 80% affordable to moderate-income households. The fact that the Ownership Housing Opportunity Area Program has not been used in the recent past indicates that the housing market has changed, and that the incentives offered no longer provide enough benefit to the developer to offset the required affordability levels.

The State Density Bonus Program has had limited success with for-profit developers of for-sale housing. Under this program, the County provides a density bonus of up to 35% and grants up to three (3) incentives for projects whose developer agrees to provide a designated percentage of project units as affordable. The County Supplemental Density Bonus Program builds on the state program but is better utilized because it provides a greater density bonus (up to 50%) if deeper levels of affordability are provided. The Supplemental Density Bonus Program also incentivizes projects utilizing renewable energy and those providing universally designed units. The County Density Bonus Program is found in Article 89 of the Zoning Code.

It will be important to continue existing Community Development Commission (CDC) efforts and programs, specified in the Sonoma County Consolidated Plan, to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other sources to provide comprehensive rehabilitation loans, to complete flood and earthquake hazard mitigation measures, to eliminate health hazards by connecting properties to public water and/or sewer systems, and to carry out access modifications for units occupied by persons with disabilities, when those units are owned and/or occupied by extremely-low, very low and low-income households. Funding may be provided for conventional single and multifamily housing, for mobile homes, and for special needs and/or accessible housing units.

➤ **The following policies shall be used to accomplish the above goal:**

**Policy HE-1a:** Continue all existing County and CDC sponsored funding programs, including

but not limited to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Asset Fund (LMIHAF), and County Fund for Housing (CFH) programs. Continue to require that all rental units assisted with CFH funds be affordable to very low-income households (up to 50% of area median income [AMI]), and 30% of all LMIHAF-assisted rental units be affordable to extremely low-income households (up to 30% AMI), with an additional 50% being affordable to households with incomes up to 60% AMI. Continue to use these funding sources for financing of predevelopment activities for affordable or special needs housing projects. Evaluate existing programs in view of changing housing needs and policies and seek opportunities for program expansion and more efficient use of limited resources. (Existing; revised to incorporate previous Policy HE-4h)

**Policy HE-1b:** Continue the County's existing housing programs, including its state and County Supplemental Density Bonus Programs as well as the Rental Housing Opportunity Area Program and the Ownership Housing Opportunity Area Program. Continue to evaluate these programs in view of changing housing needs and policies and expand or modify as needed to increase opportunities and further incentivize affordable housing. (Existing; modified to clarify distinction between Opportunity Area Programs and Density Bonus Programs)

**Policy HE-1c:** Continue to ensure that design review, development standards, and conditions of approval for affordable housing projects do not reduce allowable project density the number of affordable units. Where possible, reduce permitting levels and replace discretionary review processes with objective standards. (Existing; revised to address Housing Accountability Act [Gov. Code § 65589.5] ("HAA") and SB 35 [Gov. Code § 65913.4], as amended)

**▲ Policy HE-1d:** Include the acquisition and maintenance of affordable units, and the acquisition of market-rate units to convert to affordable units, as one of the funding priorities. In partnership with a joint powers authority (JPA) and nonprofit asset manager, consider utilizing tax exempt bonds to fund the acquisition of existing market-rate properties or affordable properties at-risk of conversion to market-rate uses where those units will be restricted to long-term occupancy by low-, very low- and extremely low-income households. (Existing; revised to incorporate use of new JPA program)

**Policy HE-1e:** Continue to protect mobilehome park residents, including administration of the County's Mobilehome Park Space Rent Stabilization Ordinance; enforcement of Zoning Code Section 26-92-090 (or successor ordinance) regarding the conversion, closure, or cessation of use of mobile home parks; and prevention of conversion of parks to other uses when such conversions are not supported by the residents. Assist nonprofit organizations in the purchase of existing mobile home parks, where desired by the residents, to maintain long term affordability of mobile homes. (Existing; combines previous Policies HE-1g, -1h, -1m, and -4e, and Objective HE-4.4)

**Policy HE-1f:** Continue existing County employee housing programs: the First Time Homebuyer Loan Program, the Rehabilitation Loan Program, and the Rental/Mortgage Assistance Program. (Existing)

## **Goal 2: Promote the Use of Urban Housing Sites**

Discussion: While the Housing Site Inventory effort identified an adequate number of sites to meet the (RHNA) housing sites identification requirement, policies are needed to enhance the opportunities for affordable housing production on these sites and to ensure that infrastructure is in place to support residential development. Policies are needed to enhance opportunities for affordable housing production on all suitable sites with adequate infrastructure and proximity to services.

In addition, state law (Gov. Code § 65863, the “No Net Loss” law) now requires jurisdictions to maintain adequate sites in site inventories with appropriate zoning to accommodate their share of the regional housing need throughout duration of the Housing Element period. Under this law, a jurisdiction may not approve a project at a density or level of affordability lower than that listed in the housing element inventory unless it makes written findings that the remaining sites identified in the housing element are adequate to accommodate the remaining RHNA. If a jurisdiction does approve a project at a density or affordability level of less than the site was listed for and it does not have enough other sites with appropriate zoning to accommodate the remaining RHNA, it must identify and rezone adequate sites within 6 months – a timeframe that is infeasible. HCD is authorized to notify the Attorney General if a jurisdiction fails to replace sites within 6 months (Government Code § 65585).

This Housing Element utilizes a new strategy that has been accepted by HCD in recent Southern California housing elements. Under this approach, the inventory is revisited each year during preparation of the Annual Progress Report (APR). Following the adoption of the Housing Element, County staff will prepare an administrative backup list of sites that are appropriately zoned for housing but that were not included in the Housing Element inventory. Upon each annual review, these additional sites can be added to the inventory list if required. The County would need to replace any inventory site that was identified as available for low-income housing if the site is developed with another use, with a lower affordability, or with fewer units than projected. If this program is included in a certified housing element, then the revised inventory would not trigger a new HCD review of the Housing Element.

### **➤ The following policies shall be used to accomplish the above goal:**

**Policy HE-2a:** Enhance opportunities for affordable housing production on all appropriate sites with adequate infrastructure and proximity to services by assisting developers and other interested parties in locating sites and accessing programs for the development of affordable and mixed-income housing, especially rental housing. (Existing; updated to reflect current technologies)

**Policy HE-2b:** Maintain a public information program regarding the County's housing programs. (Existing)

**▲ Policy HE-2c:** Prepare objective design and development standards and checklists for new residential and mixed-use development. (Existing; revised to address Housing Accountability Act (Gov. Code § 65589.5, [“HAA”] and SB 35 [Gov. Code § 65913.4], as

amended)

**Policy HE-2d:** Continue to provide priority permit processing for affordable housing projects and units. Expand the current policy utilized by Permit Sonoma to other County departments that participate in permit review. (Existing)

**Policy HE-2e:** Provide ongoing, dedicated Permit Sonoma and CDC funding and staff support to implement Housing Element programs and for coordination of all County departments involved in the permitting and review of affordable housing projects. Continue to assign dedicated staff to be responsible for planning functions associated with implementation of the Housing Element, including affordable housing project approvals. (Existing; combined previous Policies HE-2a and -2e, and Objective HE-2.2)

**Policy HE-2f:** Ensure that water and sewer service providers are aware of their obligation to plan for and maintain adequate infrastructure capacity for housing units affordable to moderate and lower-income households, pursuant to Government Code § 65589.7. (Existing; revised to include former Objective HE 2.4)

▲ **Policy HE-2g:** Curtail the loss of existing housing stock and urban housing sites to visitor-serving uses. Prohibit the use of residential land in urban land-use designations for vacation or time-share uses, continue to regulate the use of existing residences on residential lots for vacation rentals, and encourage owner- and long-term renter-occupied residential uses. Continue to prohibit the use of Accessory Dwelling Units as vacation rentals and consider extending this prohibition to primary residences on lots containing Accessory Dwelling Units. (Existing; combined existing Policies HE-1j, -1k, -1l, and -2j; adds extension of prohibition to all properties containing an ADU)

### **Goal 3: Increase Production of Affordable Housing Units**

Discussion: To increase the available opportunities for housing, it is essential that the County actively promote affordable housing production. Such promotion has occurred and will continue to occur primarily through implementation of the County's existing programs, as well as through changes in programs and zoning regulations as necessary to meet a full range of housing needs in a changing housing market. Included in this Goal is the elimination of unnecessary regulatory constraints on housing production and promotion of the availability of the County's housing programs and related incentives.

It is vitally important that the County's scarce urban lands be preserved for land uses that require urban services and locations. Additional urban lands are not available: each of the County's incorporated cities have adopted voter-approved Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) to direct future growth inside of cities and their UGBs. Sonoma County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) policy generally prohibit new extension of services outside of service districts and jurisdictional boundaries prior to annexation. Community Separators were adopted within the County's 1989 General Plan, and General Plan amendments to limit urban service extensions and land use changes within Community Separators were approved by the voters in 1996 and 1998, and then extended in 2016, when Measure K was approved with

over 81% of the vote in a countywide election. City and County voters also approved and extended a quarter-cent sales tax and created the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District in 1990, and in 2006 the tax was renewed by 76% of voters in a countywide vote to fund the acquisition of more than 122,000 acres of open space throughout the County.

The General Plan contains policies to preserve agricultural and open space lands in Sonoma County to maintain a viable agriculture-based economy, prevent urban sprawl, direct growth and development into existing cities, and promote infill and smart growth. Despite these concerted efforts to concentrate future growth in the County's urban centers, a large RHNA allocation to the Unincorporated County challenges the County's commitment to city-centered growth. Infill development in the County's urbanized areas is a necessary priority to reflect community intent, and it is important to remove constraints to such development. Community members also expressed interest in increasing infill development, avoiding sprawl, and preserving the natural character of the rural unincorporated area.

The County's previous growth management program was not carried forward in General Plan 2020 and is no longer in use by the County. However, the Zoning Code still includes two former growth management areas (Sonoma Valley and Planning Area 6) and the allocations to be made in each area. Even though the growth management program is no longer used, it has been identified as a potential constraint to development because its continued presence in the zoning code conflicts with current provisions to increase housing production and could disqualify the County from some funding sources. A program is needed to eliminate this obsolete language from the code in the first year of the 2023-2031 Housing Element cycle.

Public input received in 2022 during the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Update highlighted the need for increased housing supply at all income levels and to address the impact of constraints to housing, including cost of development, availability of infrastructure, and complications with permitting processes.

Stakeholder input from housing developers indicates that Unincorporated Sonoma County is more difficult to develop in than other surrounding jurisdictions, primarily because of the lack of sites with sewer availability. In focus groups with equity priority communities, surveys, and workshops, community members and stakeholders shared innovative ideas to help overcome constraints to the development of affordable housing. Developers also noted that the current "silo" approach to development permitting (planning entitlements as the first silo, then approvals needed by engineering/grading, stormwater, plan check and building inspections, etc.) was a development constraint that could be better coordinated to save time and money.

➤ **The following policies shall be used to accomplish the above goal:**

**Policy HE-3a:** Eliminate unnecessary regulatory constraints to the production of affordable housing, including infill housing. Repeal references to the Sonoma Valley and Planning Area 6 Growth Management Program areas in the Zoning Code. (Existing; updated to reflect current status)

**Policy HE-3b:** Continue to allow manufactured homes, factory-built homes and modular homes on any residential lot, in compliance with State law and subject to all other County

Codes. (Existing)

**Policy HE-3c:** Continue to review and revise the County’s density bonus program and Housing Opportunity Area programs in order to encourage builders and developers to take full advantage of such provisions. (Existing; language broadened)

▲ **Policy HE-3d:** Expand allowance for non-traditional housing and consider amending the zoning ordinance to allow long-term residential occupancy of travel trailers, recreational vehicles, and similar facilities such as tiny homes on wheels when public health, safety and welfare criteria are met. (Existing; modified to reflect HAC and public input related to tiny homes on wheels)

**Policy HE-3e:** Continue to encourage affordable infill projects on underutilized sites within Urban Service Areas by allowing flexibility in development standards pursuant to state density bonus law (Government Code § 65915). (Existing)

**Policy HE-3f:** Continue to apply the minimum residential density requirement to all Urban Residential parcels. (Existing)

▲ **Policy HE-3g:** Strive to focus affordable housing development in moderate and high-resource areas well-served by public transportation, schools, retail, and other services. Continue to consider developer requests to add the Affordable Housing (AH) and Workforce Housing (WH) combining districts to sites in light industrial and commercial zones and other appropriate urban zones when designation criteria are met. (Existing for AH; revised to add WH Combining district and to address Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) considerations)

**Policy HE-3h:** Review the noise standards for Urban Residential land uses in the next General Plan update and consider options to modify the standards to facilitate the development of housing in these areas while continuing to protect public health. In the meantime, continue to use indoor noise standards for mixed use and urban infill residential development, including but not limited to single room occupancy, mixed-use projects, and caretaker units in compliance with Noise Element Policy NE-1b. (Existing; revised for coordination with General Plan)

#### **Goal 4: Maintain Funding for Affordable Housing**

Discussion: Continuing production of affordable housing units requires ongoing sources of funding and subsidy programs, as well as cooperative efforts with other agencies and private entities. This goal includes decreasing the costs of providing affordable housing.

The County will focus on maintaining and, where feasible, increasing the revenue base that can be utilized to accomplish Housing Element programs. The County must continue to actively seek additional public/private partnerships to increase the funding available for building affordable housing. In addition, currently available federal and state funds received through the CDC have income limits and can only fund programs that provide direct assistance to income-eligible clients. Alternate funding sources are therefore needed to provide

expanded, proactive and equity-focused community outreach related to housing. One of these funding sources could be “boomerang” funds, which are new property tax revenues resulting from the elimination of Redevelopment.

The Prohousing Designation Program was recently created by state law to prioritize awards for housing and infrastructure to jurisdictions that facilitate housing development by adopting qualifying innovative policy measures. Achieving the prohousing designation would make the County more competitive for a growing list of funds, including Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC), Infill Infrastructure Grant (IIG), Transformative Climate Communities (TCC), and Transit and Intercity Rail Capital (TIRCP) programs. As the Prohousing Designation Program is new, only one jurisdiction in the state has received the designation to date. The Board of Supervisors adopted a Prohousing resolution in August 2022 and can qualify for the designation with a completed application that scores at least 30 points out of 69 available on the State’s checklist. Adoption of a certified Housing Element with continued and new housing programs and policies that align with the State’s checklist will assist the County in achieving and maintaining the Prohousing designation.

➤ **The following policies shall be used to accomplish the above goal:**

**Policy HE-4a:** Allocate funds annually to and from the County Fund for Housing (CFH). Use these funds to assist in the production, conversion, and rehabilitation of affordable housing units, or to support non-unit housing objectives including homeless and transitional housing beds. These units should be affordable to very low- and low-income individuals and households. (Existing; revised language)

**Policy HE-4b:** Continue using County Fund for Housing (CFH) monies to subsidize development fees for multifamily housing projects where the units are affordable to extremely low, very-low- and low-income households. Continue to allow fee deferrals for housing projects until issuance of the certificate of occupancy. Explore options for additional funding sources for proactive and equitable community outreach. (Existing; revised to reflect new State laws)

▲ **Policy HE-4c:** Consider fee waivers/subsidies for multifamily housing projects where the units are affordable to extremely low-, very low- and low-income households. Fee waivers or subsidies must be limited to a total amount that does not compromise the ability of the County or local special districts to provide adequate safety services and infrastructure for affected residents and businesses of the County. Ensure consistency with development fee and transparency requirements established by new provisions in the State Government Code (AB 602, 2021). (Existing, updated to refer to new State law)

**Policy HE-4d:** Give funding priority for affordable housing projects to nonprofit organizations in order to increase the likelihood that units will remain affordable for a longer period of time. (Existing)

▲ **Policy HE-4e:** Continue using the community land trust model and consider additional ways in which the County could use this model to assist in the creation of perpetually affordable housing. (Existing; clarified and expanded)

## **Goal 5: Promote and Expand Housing for Special Needs**

Discussion: While some special needs housing will be provided as a part of the affordable housing unit production targets, there are a number of special housing types that require specific effort to advance, especially housing for the elderly, developmentally or physically disabled persons, the mentally ill, farmworkers, and persons experiencing homelessness. Some non-unit types of housing for special needs populations may not be reflected in the RHNA but are reflected in the County's Quantified Objectives.

According to the Sonoma County Point-In-Time count there were 2,893 homeless individuals on February 25, 2022.<sup>7</sup> Of these individuals, only 155 represented family households. While 72% of Sonoma County's homeless population was unsheltered, only 3% of family households were unsheltered. This data indicates the existing housing need for non-family households including adult individuals and couples.

The Homelessness Services Division of the County Department of Health Services is the lead agency for the Continuum of Care (CoC), a federal program designed to address the issues of homelessness. Among other programs and resources, the CoC member agencies provide supportive services for the Sonoma County Housing Authority's Permanent Supportive Housing Rental Assistance Program that assisted in housing 121 households, including families, elderly residents, disabled residents, and residents with HIV/AIDS. Additionally, there are 775 shelter beds, 371 transitional housing beds, and 1,051 permanent supportive housing beds countywide. The programs and policies within this Housing Element support the development of additional units available to persons exiting homelessness, including transitional and supportive housing, and housing available to acutely low-income residents. The CoC is currently working on a new Strategic Plan via its Strategic Planning Committee. The plan includes a local Homeless Action Plan that will be finalized by December 31, 2022.

The Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC), located in Sonoma Valley, was a nationally recognized institution that provided services to persons with developmental disabilities for over 120 years. The State of California closed SDC in 2018 and moved the clients to smaller, community-based care facilities. Since before its closure, the County and locals have worked to develop a comprehensive plan for the site. The State of California owns the property and has a relationship with Sonoma County that allows the County, with the community, to determine the future of the SDC site.

The County is working with the community on creating a Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan, a three-year, four-phased project including community outreach and input, analysis of existing conditions, development of project alternatives and development of a Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR hearings have been scheduled and EIR certification, as well as Specific Plan adoption, are anticipated to occur prior to Housing Element adoption.

The SDC site provides an opportunity for new vibrant development that balances the

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<sup>7</sup> Applied Survey Research, County of Sonoma 2022 Point-in-Time Count Results, 2022



environment, employment, history, and housing. Community members have identified a need for affordable housing, housing that addresses the needs of the disabled, multi-generational housing, and housing opportunities for young people and existing residents. The redevelopment of this site is envisioned as inclusive, accessible, and inviting to the community. The Specific Plan is intended to meet the State's project-specific requirements, as set forth in Government Code § 14670.10.5. The Specific Plan will provide space for residents to thrive together while honoring the history of SDC, providing live/work opportunities, mixed use and affordable housing, and transportation infrastructure, while maintaining the rural character of the site and surrounding areas.

Public input during the preparation of the 2023 Housing Element Update included concern surrounding the lack of available, affordable, and accessible housing for the County's disabled and senior populations. Additionally, the public expressed concerns regarding lack of affordable options for single-person households and essential workers, and very limited housing resources for the unhoused populations. Community members expressed interest in housing solutions that increased small affordable units, alternative housing, and a variety of affordable housing options to address different needs. The demand for a variety of housing types for populations with special needs is expected to continue to increase. Universally Designed housing and the provision of units that are accessible or fully adaptable are necessary to support the growing special needs population.

Housing for the changing circumstances of farmworkers also continues to be an important need in Sonoma County. Increasingly, farmworkers do not leave California during the non-farm season, but instead stay in the area to perform other farm related work or construction and odd jobs. Farmworkers and their families are typically housing cost-burdened or extremely cost-burdened. The housing needs of farmworkers are best addressed by year-round housing units, including additional farmworker family units or affordable housing options. However additional migrant units or an extended season for existing seasonal farmworker units should also be explored. Based on the last County Farmworker Health survey, two-thirds of farmworkers lived in overcrowded dwellings in Sonoma County. Farmworkers who lived with their families were the most likely to live in overcrowded conditions. There are currently 238 permanent, affordable housing units in the County dedicated to farmworker families. This Housing Element includes strategies to increase the availability and variety of housing options available to farmworkers within the Unincorporated County.

➤ **The following policies shall be used to accomplish the above goal:**

**Policy HE-5a:** Review and revise zoning regulations for a variety of housing types, including special needs housing, programs, and facilities to encourage additional use of residences or construction of new facilities for these purposes and to ensure compliance with State law. (Existing; revised to address State law)

**Policy HE-5b:** Support an interjurisdictional affordable housing coordinating committee to facilitate affordable and special needs housing projects in both the County and cities. (Existing)

**Policy HE-5c:** Continue to provide reasonable accommodation through implementation of Sonoma Zoning Code Chapter 26, Article 93 (Reasonable Accommodations). (Existing Policy HE-5i)

▲ **Policy HE-5d:** Strive to provide for senior housing needs. Focus senior housing projects in areas well-served by transit, accessible sidewalks, and amenities. Consider adoption of a Senior Housing (SH) Combining district with additional incentives. Promote Universal Design principles in new residential construction. (Existing Policy HE-5o; expanded to include locational factors)

**Policy HE-5e:** Encourage construction of new ownership and rental farmworker housing, including housing for farmworker families, year-round housing for unaccompanied farmworkers and other migrant workers, and seasonal housing for unaccompanied farmworkers. Assist housing developers in seeking funding, including grants, loans, and Joe Serna funds, for various types of farmworker housing. (Existing Policies HE-5k, -5m, -5n)

▲ **Policy HE-5f:** Provide additional on-farm housing opportunities where appropriate, especially for small-scale farmers. (Existing Policy HE-5n; revised in response to public input; extended bunkhouse portion eliminated as this was achieved during 5<sup>th</sup> cycle)

**Policy HE-5g:** Continue to encourage the retention and further construction of small rental units such as accessory dwelling units, studios, and single-room occupancy (SRO) units. Encourage and facilitate the development of large rental units with more than 3 bedrooms to meet local housing needs for families. (Existing; modified to update term and reflect ongoing actions)

## **Goal 6: Encourage Equitable and Sustainable Housing**

Discussion: Developing equitable and sustainable housing opportunities and land use patterns is vital not only for the wellbeing of current residents, but for generations to come. The policies and programs implemented throughout this Housing Element consider safety, climate change, environmental justice, fair housing, and access to opportunity, and the relationship between these subjects and the development and preservation of housing for all residents.

Housing is a considerable source of demand for energy, water, and other natural resources. Existing regulations (e.g. Title 24, CalGreen) impose rigorous energy and water conservation measures on new housing, and additional resource savings may be attained with a concerted effort to fortify a more resilient existing housing stock. Prior Housing Element cycles have implemented State standards, and the County has additional opportunity to provide equitable access to building decarbonization resources, education, and funding.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) describes environmental justice as “ensuring equal protection from environmental and health hazards and providing equal and meaningful opportunity to participate in the decision-making process to achieve a healthy environment.” Environmental justice as addressed in the Housing Element includes minimizing the placement of affordable housing in areas impacted by fires, floods, extreme heat, and pollution. It also includes forming policy by centering the needs and input of

communities and individuals with the greatest need for fair and safe housing, including farmworkers, renters, low-income households, communities of color, and people with disabilities.

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) is a program intended to identify, reverse, and prevent housing segregation and discrimination and increase access to opportunity. AFFH was originally established as a federal program within HUD by the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and was codified by the State of California in 2018. This Housing Element cycle is the first to implement AB 686, and implementation is a new process for both the jurisdictions conducting AFFH analysis and state regulators approving local plans.

Requirements for AFFH within Housing Elements include completing an assessment of fair housing (AFH), identifying and prioritizing contributing factors, addressing those factors through meaningful actions. Fair housing considerations based on the findings of the AFH are integrated throughout the Housing Element, including the preparation of the Housing Sites Inventory.

The County Assessment of Fair Housing draws from several sources. The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law conducted an analysis within their Fair Housing Plan for the sixteen jurisdictions of Sonoma and Napa Counties, supported by the Napa-Sonoma Housing Collaborative with funding from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). Regional data from the ABAG Housing Data Workbook was pre-approved as a central data source for both the AFFH section and identification of housing needs and constraints. ABAG also prepared a Regional Segregation Report with jurisdiction-specific findings, and the California Department of Housing and Community Development's (HCD's) AFFH Data Viewer provides mapping resources illustrating various fair housing topics.

A key factor of AFFH is the designation of resource areas in the Opportunity Areas map by the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee (TCAC) and HCD. These resource areas are determined by using economic, educational, and environmental indicators. As of 2022, Sonoma County has census tracts ranging from Low Resource to Highest Resource, meaning some areas of the County have poor results on these indicators. AFFH requirements include an analysis of the location of sites identified to meet the lower-income RHNA. In order to increase access to opportunity, prevent segregation, and address environmental justice, lower-income sites should be focused as much as possible in High Resource areas and not concentrated heavily in Low Resource areas. The High Resource areas of the Unincorporated County with sewer access necessary to accommodate higher density housing development are Glen Ellen, Forestville, and Graton. However, these areas are encumbered by environmental constraints, including wildfire and flood risk, and by greater distance from jobs and services with minimal public transportation options available.

Nondiscrimination and legal protections are the most visible aspects of fair housing policy and have comprised most fair housing analyses in prior Housing Element cycles. The intent of this Housing Element is to also affirmatively further fair housing by facilitating deliberate actions to foster inclusive communities. The underlying concepts of fairness and equal protection are enshrined in protections for fair housing and nondiscrimination. Affirmatively furthering fair housing is a comprehensive commitment to reverse existing patterns of segregation and injustice and prevent taking any actions that exacerbate social inequities in housing and

community development. Throughout the development of this Housing Element, Sonoma County engaged equity priority communities to center their voices and needs in the County's policy proposals.

➤ **The following policies shall be used to accomplish the above goal:**

**Policy HE-6a:** Promote conservation of energy, water, and other natural resources as a cost-saving measure in existing residential development. (Existing; modified to broaden language and combine previous Policies HE-6a, 6b)

**Policy HE-6b:** Promote energy and water conservation and energy efficiency in new residential and mixed-use construction projects. (Existing; modified to broaden language and combine previous Policies HE-6c, 6d, 6e, 6h)

**Policy HE-6c:** Promote solid waste reduction, reuse, and recycling opportunities in new residential and mixed-use construction. (Existing; modified to broaden language and combine previous Policies HE-6f, 6g)

▲ **Policy HE-6d:** Ensure that affected residents have the opportunity to participate in decisions that impact their health and well-being. Include residents, businesses, and organizations in all aspects of the planning process. Utilize multilingual, culturally appropriate approaches to provide information, conduct outreach, and facilitate public participation, with reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities. (New; Fair Housing)

▲ **Policy HE-6e:** Provide housing opportunities throughout the County for all household income cohorts while avoiding or mitigating displacement of existing residents. (New; Fair Housing)

▲ **Policy HE-6f:** Provide high quality and equitable public services, including public transportation, fire and police safety, crime prevention, parks, sidewalks, street lighting, and recreational facilities and programs in lower-resource areas through the use of place-based strategies and master plans. (New; Fair Housing)

▲ **Policy HE-6g:** Ensure that the County's programs and policies continue to reduce or eliminate the unique or compounded health risks of its existing disadvantaged communities (low-income areas that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards). (New; Fair Housing)

**Policy HE-6h:** Ensure compliance with fair housing laws and prohibit discrimination in housing by providing fair housing services that include public information, engagement, counseling, and investigation, and by providing funding for these services. Continue to support efforts by local fair housing and housing justice agencies to enforce antidiscrimination laws through mediation of disputes and assisting residents in filing discrimination complaints. (Existing Policy HE-5j; broadened to address new requirements)

**Policy HE-6i:** Focus affordable and farmworker housing code enforcement activities on the abatement of unsafe conditions and to expedite, where practicable, the rehabilitation and continued availability of housing units. (Existing Policy HE-5l)

## 2.2 HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The following programs are designed to address the existing and projected housing needs of Sonoma County. Each program has one or more individuals, bodies, or agencies responsible for its implementation, along with a potential or committed funding source, and a schedule for its implementation during the 2023-2031 planning period.

### Housing Element Program 1: Continued Implementation of Housing Programs

**Program Description:** Currently the County and the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) provide funding assistance to affordable housing developments using CDBG, HOME, PLHA, CFH, and LMIHAF funds. These funding programs are administered by the CDC, which provides financing to developers who are then able to provide safe, affordable housing to households in a range of income groups. These funds can be used to construct new affordable housing as well as to rehabilitate existing units, which can be added to the permanent affordable stock through affordability restrictions.

**1a** The County will continue its support of the CDC's activities and strategies outlined in the Consolidated Plan, including provision of staff and funding resources, and will support the Dept. of Health Services' Continuum of Care work to ensure that existing production levels are maintained and will continue to require that all rental units assisted with County Fund for Housing (CFH) funds be affordable to very low-income households.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**1b** The County will continue providing loans from CFH funds to housing projects located within cities. However, given the 654% increase in the County's RHNA, the CDC will prioritize these funds to units within the Unincorporated County to help the County meet its RHNA unless transfer agreements have been negotiated with the cities.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**1c** The County currently dedicates a portion of its Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) and "boomerang" funds toward affordable housing on an annual basis. The County will continue using these funds for affordable housing and will consider establishing an annual minimum percentage of these funds.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**1d** Provide adequate staffing resources for the CDC and Permit Sonoma to allow full implementation of the Housing Element, especially within the first three years of the planning period.

**Timeline:** 2023

**Agency:** Community Development Commission, Permit Sonoma, County Administrator's Office

**Funding:** Departmental Budgets, TOT, RDA "Boomerang" Funds, CFH

**Housing Element Program 2: Retention of Affordable Units**

**Program Description:** Currently the Unincorporated County has 5 affordable units that may be lost from the affordable housing supply within the next ten years due to expiring affordability restrictions. There are no publicly assisted units at risk for conversion.

**2a** The Community Development Commission will continue to maintain an inventory of all units at risk of conversion to market-rate (“at-risk units”) in the next 10 years. This list will be updated annually as needed during the County’s Annual Progress Report (APR) process.

**Timeline:** Annual

**2b** Owners will be contacted at least three years before expiration of affordability covenants to inform them of State preservation notice law requirements (Gov. Code § 65863.10, 65863.11, 65863.13) and to gauge interest in continuing affordability restrictions. The County will work with tenants of at-risk units and provide them with education regarding tenant rights and conversion procedures. The County will continue to assist qualified entities and developers with the acquisition of these properties or the extension of affordability restrictions using CDBG, HOME, LMIHAF, and CFH funds. The County will strive to preserve as many “at-risk” units as feasible, subject to the availability of funds.

**Timeline:** Review annually. Contact at least three years before expiration of affordability covenants

**Agency:** Community Development Commission

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**Housing Element Program 3: Protections for Mobile Home Parks**

**Program Description:** The County will continue to protect its mobilehome parks and its mobilehome park residents by undertaking the following actions:

**3a** Continue to implement mobilehome rent stabilization ordinance.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**3b** Continue regulating closure or conversion of mobilehome parks to other uses by requiring a use permit and relocation (Zoning Code Section 26-92-090 or successor ordinance).

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**3c** Consider re-adoption of requirements for owner-initiated conversions of mobile home parks (MHPs) to resident ownership to ensure that residents are in favor of such conversions. Until such time that a new ordinance is adopted, continue to implement state law related to the conversion of MHPs to resident ownership imposed by SB 510 in 2013 (Gov. Code § 66427.5). Where conversions are initiated by residents, assist with the conversion process via (Gov. Code § 66428). (Existing; 2 previous programs combined, and a new action added to consider re-adoption of MHP conversion regulations).

**Timeline:** Consider ordinance by 2026

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma, Community Development Commission

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 4: Rezone to meet RHNA**

**Program Description:** As part of the Housing Element update, the County intends to rezone sufficient sites in order to demonstrate an adequate inventory of sites to meet its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) Allocations. These sites shall meet the standards set forth in Government Code § 65583.2.

**Timeline:** Rezone sites concurrent with adoption of the Housing Element, but not later than January 31, 2024

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 5: Displacement Avoidance**

**Program Description:** In order to protect against increasing susceptibility to displacement, the County will take the following actions:

**5a** The County will require replacement housing units, based on but not limited in applicability to the requirements in Government Code § 65915(c)(3), when any new development occurs on a site in the Sites Inventory if that site meets any of the following conditions:

- Currently has residential uses or within the past five years has had residential uses that have been vacated or demolished; or
- Was subject to a recorded covenant, ordinance, or law that restricts rents to levels affordable to persons and families of lower- or very-low income; or
- Is occupied by lower- or very low-income households.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**5b** The County will also require replacement housing units subject to the requirements of Government Code § 65915(c)(3) when any new development occurs on a site in a Priority Development Area (PDA)

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**5c** Utilize Specific Plans and master plans to target investment into areas of most need focused on improving community assets such as schools, recreational facilities and programs, social service programs, parks, streets, active transportation and infrastructure

**Timeline:** 2023 (Sonoma Developmental Center, Airport SMART Station Plan, Springs Specific Plan), ongoing as new plans are adopted

**Agency:** (Actions 5a through 5c) Permit Sonoma

**5d** Utilize affirmative marketing strategies in marketing plans for subsidized housing projects, prioritizing existing residents at risk of displacement.

**Timing:** Ongoing

**Agency:** (Action 5d) Community Development Commission

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

### ▲ Housing Element Program 6: Development of Subregion for 7th Cycle RHNA

**Program Description:** Instead of relying on ABAG to determine the regional fair share of housing for the County and its cities, the County will support and promote the formation of a subregion, as allowed by State law, for a more equitable RHNA allocation process in subsequent RHNA cycles.

**Timeline:** End of 2027  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

### Housing Element Program 7: Density Bonus and Housing Opportunity Programs

**Program Description:** The County currently administers two density bonus programs, including the State Density bonus program and the County Supplemental Density Bonus Program, and the Rental and Ownership Housing Opportunity Area Programs. These programs will be continued. Additionally, the County will evaluate the programs and determine if they could be expanded or modified to create additional opportunities for housing.

**Timeline:** Ongoing; evaluation by 2026  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

### Housing Element Program 8: Protect Residential Lands and Units

**Program Description:** Housing stock data and public input indicated a high proportion of local units being used as short-term rentals or used as second homes, vacation homes, or seasonal homes. These uses decrease the housing stock available to long-term renters and homeowners. In order to address this, the County will take the following actions:

- 8a** Address loss of housing stock to short-term and vacation rental uses in the update to the Vacation Rental Ordinance to address loss of housing stock to short-term and vacation rental uses.  
**Timeline:** End of 2024
- 8b** Evaluate options to mitigate the impacts of the loss of resident-occupied housing, including evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of a vacant home fee or tax that exempts owner and long-term renter-occupied units. Funding derived from such a program could/may be used to mitigate the impacts of loss of resident-occupied housing, such as subsidies to build and sustain low and moderate, income housing units.  
**Timeline:** End of 2025
- 8c** Evaluate options to incentivize rentals of 30 days or more for owners of short-term rental properties. For example, consider implementation of a program that provides grants to homeowners who convert a second home or short-term rental to a long-term lease.  
**Timeline:** End of 2025
- 8d** Modify Zoning Code to prohibit vacation rentals on any urban residential lot.



**Timeline:** End of 2023  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget, Transient Occupancy Tax

**▲ Housing Element Program 9: No Net Loss of Residential Capacity to Accommodate RHNA**

**Program Description:** In order to ensure sufficient residential capacity is maintained to accommodate the RHNA for each income category, County staff will prepare standards and procedures to monitor the status of sites on inventory and provide replacement sites as needed.

**9a** Staff will develop and implement a formal, ongoing (project-by-project) administrative evaluation procedure pursuant to Government Code § 65863 within six months of adoption of the Housing Element. The evaluation procedure will track the number of extremely low, very low, low, moderate, and above moderate-income units constructed to calculate the remaining unmet RHNA. The evaluation procedure will also track the number of units built on the identified sites to determine the remaining site capacity, by income category, and will be updated as developments are approved. The Sites Inventory may be updated every year as the Annual Progress Report (APR) is completed, and the APR with the updated inventory will be available on the County’s website.

**9b** **Timeline:** Develop procedure within 6 months of Housing Element adoption  
 No project approval or other action that reduces the density or development capacity of a site shall be undertaken unless sufficient remaining sites are available or additional adequate sites are identified to meet the County’s RHNA obligation prior to approval of the development and made available within 180 days of approval of the development, as required by SB 166 (Gov. Code § 65863, as amended). Identification of the replacement sites, and the necessary actions to make the site(s) available will be adopted prior to or concurrent with the approval of the development.

**Timeline:** Ongoing, as projects are proposed on sites in inventory  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 10: Administrative List of Additional Sites**

**Program Description:** The County shall create and maintain a list of additional sites with appropriate zoning that could be added to the County’s Site Inventory if and when an analysis provided through the Annual Progress Report indicates that sufficient sites may not exist to accommodate the County’s remaining RHNA, by income level, for the planning period.

**Timeline:** Create list by December 2023  
 Consider adding sites from list to inventory on an annual basis  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

### ▲ Housing Element Program 11: Housing Sites and Development Opportunities

**Program Description:** The County will provide current information about housing sites, development opportunities, and programs for the development of affordable housing.

**11a.** The County will continue to publish a summary of available housing sites, including sites for mixed-use projects, and will continue to provide and maintain informational materials about its affordable housing programs for developers. This information will be made available both in printed form and on the County's website, and will be reviewed and updated annually if necessary.

**Timeline:** Updated by end of 2023, then ongoing

**11b.** The County will also provide information about its inventory sites through a GIS-based mapping system on its website. This information will be updated annually as needed to reflect the current housing site inventory and parcel information, including site-specific development requirements and constraints, to reduce up-front housing development costs for potential developers.

**Timeline:** Updated by end of 2023, then ongoing

**11c.** The County will coordinate and provide mapping data and layers for the regional or subregional housing sites mapping program.

**Timeline:** Updated by end of 2023, then ongoing

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

### ▲ Housing Element Program 12: Permitting Procedures and Priority Processing

**Program Description:** The County will continue ongoing practices for priority processing and increase opportunities for streamlining the development process, including no-cost housing pre-application meetings with all relevant departments, and fast-tracked priority processing for ADUs and affordable housing developments. In addition, County will take the following actions:

**12a** Develop a written SB 35 (Gov. Code § 65913.4, as amended) application process, including the pre-application and the procedure that will be used. This process will provide a streamlined ministerial approval process to qualified residential and mixed-use development projects. The written procedures and checklists will be developed and made available on the County's website.

**Timeline:** End of 2024

**12b** Develop Objective Design and Development Standards for multi-family and mixed-use projects.

**Timeline:** End of 2025

**12c** Provide funding for adequate staffing needed to implement the programs outlined in this Housing Element, and to provide fast-tracking of affordable projects across divisions, from initial application for entitlements through engineering, plan check review, building inspections, and issuance of the final certificate of occupancy.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**12d** Continue staff training provided through Permit Sonoma's multidivisional monthly training module. Include relevant staff from Engineering and Public Works when training relates to ministerial processing and fast-tracking of housing projects.

**Timeline:** Monthly, as relevant  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma; other County permitting agencies  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget, LEAP Funding

**Housing Element Program 13: Continued Mitigation Opportunities for Housing Sites**

**Program Description:** The County will continue to participate in regional sensitive habitat and endangered species conservation efforts to ensure that mitigation opportunities are available to maintain adequate sites at appropriate densities to accommodate the County’s remaining share of the regional housing need.

**Timeline:** Ongoing  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**Housing Element Program 14: Utility Providers’ Responsibility to Prioritize Service**

**Program Description:** The County will notify all public sewer and water providers of their responsibility under State law to give affordable housing projects priority for existing service capacity. The General Plan Housing Element, and any amendments thereto, shall be distributed to providers within 60 days of its adoption. Providers will be encouraged to retain adequate water and/or sewer service capacities to serve developments which provide affordable units.

**Timeline:** Within 60 days of adoption, then annually  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 15: Review and Update Zoning Code**

**Program Description:** To ensure compliance with State law and reduce constraints to the development of housing, especially for residents with special housing needs, review and update the County’s Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 26 of the Sonoma County Code) and any applicable Specific Plans for consistency with State law. Permit Sonoma will draft and bring forward an ordinance or ordinances to the Board of Supervisors to accomplish the following:

- 15a** Eliminate references in the Zoning Code to Growth Management Plan areas
- 15b** Ensure compliance with State laws related to transitional housing, supportive housing, group homes, residential care facilities, and Low Barrier Navigation Centers.  
**Timeline:** End of 2023 (for actions 15a through 15b)
- 15c** Modify the Density Unit Equivalent program to better encourage the provision of units suitable for large families by eliminating the 1.25 unit calculation disincentive for four-bedroom units and allow both three- and four-bedroom units to count as 1.0 density unit.
- 15d** Revisit locational restrictions for cottage housing developments and modify

permitting levels to increase the number of allowable units from three to four cottages by right.

- 15e** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to clarify that Planned Communities that include at least 20% of units as affordable may be approved through the provision of incentives under Gov. Code § 65915 without the need to rezone to the PC designation.
- 15f** Modify the Ownership Housing Opportunity Area Program to change the required affordability levels based on input from nonprofit and mixed-income developers.
- 15g** Modify the Section 26-24-040(B)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance to reduce acreage and agricultural activity thresholds to qualify for agricultural employee housing units.
- 15h** Utilize SB10 (Gov. Code § 65913.5) to allow multifamily housing developments of up to 10 units by-right on qualifying urban residential properties.
- 15i** Adopt Universal Design requirements for new single-family subdivision projects.
- 15j** Modify the Zoning Ordinance to specify allowances for tiny homes within the existing Cottage Housing Development provisions.
- 15k** Amend Article 89 of the Zoning Ordinance to clarify that Housing Opportunity Area Programs are not density bonuses.
- 15l** The County will review its respective Local Guidelines to ensure consistency with State law by the end of 2025. If changes are needed, complete them by the end of the third year of the housing element period (2026).

**Timeline:** End of 2025 (for actions 15c through 15k)

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**Housing Element Program 16: Expand AH Combining District**

**Program Description:** Continue utilizing and expanding the Affordable Housing Combining District as a tool to incentivize the development of multifamily affordable housing in areas with resources and amenities and promote infill development.

- 16a** Continue to consider adding the Affordable Housing (AH) Combining District to additional sites in light industrial, commercial, or other appropriate zones as requested where the following conditions are met:
  - Site must be located within or adjacent to a designated Urban Service Area, and adequate public facilities must be provided, including sewer and water.
  - Sites must be located near transit; a neighborhood-serving commercial use, such as a market; and an elementary or secondary school.
  - Site must be located a safe distance from major roadways as determined by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District’s Highway Screening Analysis tool.
  - Development must be multifamily rental units with a density of 16 to 24 units per acre and must provide 100% of units as affordable to lower-income households, including at least 30% of units as affordable to extremely-low income households.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

- 16b** Provide an “Enhanced Affordability” option within the AH Combining district that allows a higher density of up to 30 units per acre and offer 2 additional concessions or incentives for developments within the AH Combining district that meet the base requirements for the AH and also provide one of more of the following:

- 15% of units available to individuals and families existing homelessness;
- 30% of units to special needs households; and
- Not less than 20% of units available to acutely (15% of AMI) low income individuals or households

**Timeline:** End of 2025  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 17: Development Fees and Transparency Requirements**

**Program Description:** County will meet the new transparency and development fees requirements of AB 602 (Gov. Code § 65940.1 and 66016.5, as amended) and SB 319 (Gov. Code § 66023, as amended) through the following actions

**17a** Post all required information about development standards and fees to an easily accessed location on the County’s website.

**Timeline:** End of 2023

**17b** Ensure that new development impact fee studies and resulting fees comply with the new requirements for fee studies prior to initiation of the next fee study.

**Timeline:** Upon next fee study  
**Agency:** Permit Sonoma  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 18: Housing Land Trust Model**

**Program Description:** The County will continue and expand its use of housing land trust programs to acquire, develop, and maintain affordable housing.

**18a** The County will amend its Affordable Ownership Housing Policies to allow for the use of housing land trusts. Affordability for lower and moderate-income households would be maintained in perpetuity.

**Timeline:** End of 2024

**18b** Collaborate with local housing land trust organizations to expand opportunities to use the Housing Land Trust model. Explore the feasibility of a senior community land trust model, where senior homeowners choose to enter into a retained life estate agreement, to allow aging in place. The homeowner receives a financial benefit, can stay in their home throughout their life, and the land trust acquires a property that can be provided as deed-restricted affordable ownership housing in the future.

**Timeline:** End of 2025  
**Agencies:** Permit Sonoma, Community Development Commission  
**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**Housing Element Program 19: Funding Sources for Affordable Housing**

**Program Description:** The County will continue to seek and apply affordable housing funding through the following actions:

**19a** The County will annually allocate funds to and from its County Fund for Housing (CFH), which shall include but not be limited to funding from Measure L (hotel bed tax in the unincorporated area), and similar discretionary sources. CFH funds will be distributed to projects under an annual Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to assist in the production of housing affordable to lower income households, including development of new permanent affordable units, and the rehabilitation of existing units to be added to the permanent affordable stock through affordability restrictions. The County’s Community Development Committee shall review and recommend funding in response to the NOFA. CFH funds, as well as the Construction Services programs in the Community Development Commission, may also be used to provide rehabilitation assistance to single-family and mobile homes that are owned and occupied by low- and moderate-income households to enable them to retain safe and affordable housing.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**19b** In the County’s experience, nonprofit owners usually extend their affordability contracts whereas for-profit owners convert to market rate at the end of their subsidy period. In order to promote unit affordability in perpetuity, the County will continue to give discretionary funding preference to nonprofit developers when it is practicable to do so.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**19c** The County will continue to use Community Development Block Grant and CFH funds for financing predevelopment activities for affordable and special needs housing projects.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Agency:** Board of Supervisors; Community Development Commission

**Funding:** County Fund for Housing, CDBG Funds, Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 20: Prohousing Designation**

**Program Description:** Through addressing constraints to development and fair housing opportunities, the County will strive to achieve and maintain recognition as a Prohousing jurisdiction throughout the 6th cycle. This designation will provide the County an advantage in applications for competitive funding sources, including the Infill Infrastructure Grant and funding from the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program.

In collaboration with the Napa Sonoma Collaborative and local nonprofit organizations, the County will analyze policies and programs needed to meet the threshold for the Prohousing Designation program and make application by January 2024.

**Timeline:** January 2024

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 21: Essential Housing Bond Financing Program**

**Program Description:** In partnership with a joint powers authority (JPA) and nonprofit

asset manager, utilize tax exempt bonds to fund: (1) the acquisition of existing market-rate apartment complexes and restricts future rents to be affordable to households that earn very low to moderate incomes, and/or (2) the construction of new deed-restricted affordable housing. In order for asset managers to access these types of bonds, the County must join or create a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) or authorize participation by an existing JPA and authorize the JPA to issue these bonds on behalf of the County. The asset manager then purchases the apartment complex, using only money from the bond financing, and sets the rents to be affordable to low to moderate income households.

**Timeline:** Join JPA by Summer 2023;  
Implement construction or acquisition projects through 2031

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma, Community Development Commission

**Funding:** Departmental Budget, Bond Financing

**Housing Element Program 22: Housing for Homebuyers**

**▲ Program Description:** The County will seek to provide opportunities for homebuyers through the following actions:

**22a** The Mortgage Credit Certification (MCC) Program offers first-time low- and moderate- income homebuyers a federal income tax credit. This credit reduces the amount of federal taxes the holder of the certificate would pay. It can also help first-time homebuyers qualify for a loan by allowing a lender to reduce the housing expense ratio by the amount of tax savings. The qualified homebuyer who is awarded an MCC may take an annual credit against the federal income taxes paid on the homebuyer’s mortgage. The credit is subtracted dollar-for-dollar from the federal income taxes. The qualified buyer is awarded a tax credit of up to 15%, and the remaining 85% is deducted normally.

During part of the previous planning period, the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) was the lead agency for a Cooperative Agreement group that includes the Unincorporated County and all nine incorporated jurisdictions within the County. The CDC was temporarily unable to administer this program as staff experienced suddenly expanded workloads responding to local emergencies while experiencing turnovers in leadership and departures of key staff. As staffing levels and capacity continue to rebound, the CDC will research the potential to restart participation in the MCC program by the end of 2023, and the program will be implemented through private lenders so that homebuyers in Sonoma County can continue to benefit from the federal Program.

**Timeline:** End of 2024

**22b** Consider establishing a homebuyer program for farmworkers. Joe Serna or other applicable funding sources should be explored.

**Timeline:** End of 2025

**22c** Continue and expand the use of the Community Land Trust model for homebuyers (See Program 18)

**Agency:** Community Development Commission

**Funding:** Departmental Budget, Joe Serna, MCCs, other grants as appropriate

**Housing Element Program 23: Accommodation of Alternative Housing Types, including Tiny Homes on Wheels**

**Program Description:** Evaluate potential changes that could be made to county regulations to accommodate long-term occupancy of Park Model homes, Tiny Homes on Wheels, and similar recreational vehicles, where adequate sewer or septic services are provided as well as safety services.

**Timeline:** End of 2024

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**Housing Element Program 24: County Employee Housing Assistance**

**Program Description:** The County currently offers its SEIU-represented employees loans for mortgage or rent payments; loans for first time homebuyers; and loans for housing rehabilitation. These programs are funded by a two-penny-per-hour employee contribution and matched by County general funds, to help reduce the cost of housing for County employees and serve as a significant benefit to attract and retain employees. The County will continue to offer these programs and increase them as opportunities permit.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Agency:** Community Development Commission

**Funding:** General Funds

**▲ Housing Element Program 25: Incentivize and Promote ADU and JADU Development**

**Program Description:** Incentivize and promote the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and junior accessory dwelling units (JADUs) by providing technical assistance and resources for their development and rental through the following actions:

**25a** Maintain ADU webpage with accessible information, simple application, and contact information for questions about and assistance with accessory dwelling units.

**Timeline:** Review and Update as needed to reflect new laws and resources, at least twice annually.

**25b** Partner with and/or fund regional organizations that provide ADU technical assistance to homeowners such as the Napa Sonoma ADU Center and other qualified nonprofit entity(ies). Services to be provided should include site evaluations for the development of ADUs and JADUs and landlord/tenant support. Share resources provided by these and similar organizations, including webinars and technical assistance programs, through the County webpage, newsletter, and social media. Share resources as they are available, at least twice annually. Publicize new ADU allowances to the public along with this outreach.

**Timeline:** Contact at least one regional organization by the end of 2023

**25c** In partnership with regional organizations, promote and publicize new allowances for ADUs and JADUs to the public, including place-based promotion for low resource



areas that have higher income eligibility limits for the CalHFA ADU grant program.

**Timeline:** End of 2024

**25d** Reduce penalties for existing unpermitted units. Promote and publicize penalty-reduction initiatives through the County’s website and social media to encourage property owners with unpermitted units to bring them up to code.

**Timeline:** End of 2024

**25e** Create or source pre-approved plans for ADUs, including plans that integrate Universal Design principles.

**Timeline:** December 2024

**25f** In coordination with the Napa Sonoma ADU Center or other qualified non-profit entity, prepare and maintain a list of property owners developing and renting ADUs or JADUs suitable for people with disabilities, including units developed using the Center’s accessible, adaptable, and universally designed plans. In coordination with disability service providers and regional centers, provide the list of suitable available unit to individuals on housing waiting lists.

**Timeline:** Prepare list by end of 2024, ongoing outreach and review

**25g** Develop a monitoring program to track ADU and JADU creation and affordability levels. Three years into the planning period, review ADU production and evaluate if production estimates are being achieved. If ADU production is not meeting projections, increase the number of ADUs allowed to two per single-family lot if adequate sewage disposal is demonstrated and one unit is provided and restricted as affordable to lower-income households for a minimum of 10 years.

**Timeline:** Review in December 2025  
If needed, implement changes in 2026

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**▲ Housing Element Program 26: Aging in Place**

**Program Description:** The County will seek to provide development incentives and allowances for housing suitable for seniors and increase the housing stock that will allow Sonoma County residents to remain in their homes throughout their entire lives.

**26a** Consider adoption of a Senior Housing (SH) Combining district that allows for increased densities, reduced parking requirements, incentives, and reduced fees for affordable senior housing development.

**Timeline:** End of 2025

**26b** Promote development principles of Universal Design through brochures and easily accessible information on the Permit Sonoma website. Include training on Universal Design in monthly training module. (See also Program 25e)

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**26c** As implemented through Program 18, explore the use of the housing land trust model to support current senior homeowners while supporting the needs of future first-time homebuyers.

**Timeline:** End of 2025, then ongoing

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** Departmental Budget

**Housing Element Program 27: Interjurisdictional Housing Committee**

**Program Description:** The County will continue to support and participate in the interjurisdictional housing coordinating committee. This effort facilitates affordable and special needs housing projects, including homeless shelters which serve both the County and city(ies), and other facilities that receive coordinated supportive services from other agencies.

- Timeline:** Ongoing
- Agency:** County Administrator's Office; Community Development Commission; Permit Sonoma
- Funding:** Departmental budgets

**Housing Element Program 28: Reasonable Accommodations and Code Enforcement**

**Program Description:** The County has adopted a Reasonable Accommodations Ordinance ("Article 93") and will continue implementation of this ordinance and ensure staff are aware of the allowances provided under this ordinance.

**28a** The County will continue to provide Reasonable Accommodations training to County staff on an annual basis, including staff from Permit Sonoma, Code Enforcement, and Building Departments.

**Timeline:** Annually

**28b** The County will continue to focus residential code enforcement activities on situations that pose an immediate threat to public health and safety. Such activities do not include minor alterations made to residences without benefit of permit when such alterations are made to accommodate a special need or disability of the resident(s), or for alterations made to allow or honor the residents' cultural needs or practices, unless those alterations pose an immediate threat to the safety of the residents or neighborhood. In conjunction with Reasonable Accommodations training, County will provide staff training on culturally sensitive implementation of Code Enforcement.

- Timeline:** Annually
- Agency:** Permit Sonoma, Code Enforcement, Building
- Funding:** Departmental budget

**Housing Element Program 29: Fair Housing Program and Information**

**Program Description:** The County will continue to fund the operation of a Fair Housing program, provide referrals to nonprofit Fair Housing programs, and to make information available to customers at a wide range of public locations throughout the County. The County will provide all informational documents, web-postings, and related services in English and Spanish and conduct all outreach multilingually, with reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.

- Timeline:** Ongoing
- Agency:** Community Development Commission, Permit Sonoma
- Funding:** Departmental budgets

### **Housing Element Program 30: Conservation and Sustainability in Housing**

**Program Description:** Energy and water conservation can be encouraged in existing and new residential development through weatherization and rehabilitation programs and through the prioritization of funding.

**30a** The County will continue successful programs including County-sponsored workshops, individual energy consultations provided free of charge, and providing loans, grants, and matching funds for rehabilitation and retrofitting, which can include energy efficient improvements, Weatherization, and rehabilitation loan programs that provide low interest financing for making improvements. In particular, these programs target renter-occupied units.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**30b** The County will continue its current practice of providing a variety of materials related to energy and water conservation, energy efficiency, green building, and recycling. The County will expand this practice as new programs and new educational and informational materials become available.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**30c** The County will continue to prioritize the award of CFH funds to include affordable housing projects which provide cost-effective energy efficiency measures that exceed State standards. Other criteria that reduce GHG, such as the use of recycled and green building materials, are also considered in establishing funding priorities.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Agency:** Permit Sonoma, Community Development Commission

**Funding:** Departmental Budget, CFH

### **▲ Housing Element Program 31: Housing Equity and Action Plan**

**Program Description:** Sonoma County will expand the responsibilities of its existing multidepartmental staff-level Housing Element Implementation Group (HEIG) to include evaluation and monitoring of program implementation and equitable outreach, assisting staff with annual progress reporting, and reviewing housing- and equity-related issues that arise during the planning period. The HEIG will provide recommendations to the Executive Director of CDC and Director of Permit Sonoma for additional actions that should be taken to address these issues. Specific actions include the following:

**31a** The Housing Element Implementation Group will develop a Housing Equity and Action Plan (HEAP) to ensure that program implementation effectively addresses the tenets of affirmatively furthering fair housing and makes a meaningful difference in the community. This plan will address ongoing public involvement, identification and prioritization of fair housing issues that arise during the planning period, and monitoring the success of Housing Element programs, especially related to special housing needs.

**Timeline:** 2023

**31b** Expansion of the existing "Housing Element Implementation Group" (HEIG) to include a representative from the County's Office of Equity, a member of the

Sonoma County Community Development Committee, and underserved members of the public or their representatives. The HEIG members will continue to be appointed by the Director of Permit Sonoma and Executive Director of the CDC and will meet a minimum of 2 times per year to advise the Directors and to assist in the ongoing work of the HEIG and in development of the annual report.

**Timeline:** 2023

- 31c** The HEIG will prepare an annual report in conjunction with the APR to assess the progress of programs, identify priorities for the upcoming year, and provide recommendations for any additional actions that may be necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the Housing Element.

**Timeline:** Annual, in conjunction with the APR, beginning 2023

**Agency:** County Administrator's Office; Office of Equity; Community Development Commission; Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** General Fund

### ▲ Housing Element Program 32: Proactive Outreach Program

**Program Description:** In order to affirmatively further fair housing, increase awareness about housing programs, and address local housing needs, the County will establish and implement a proactive outreach program. Strategies for ongoing outreach will include participation in an annual housing fair and establishing and maintaining connections with community-based organizations, as well as outreach to developers, utility providers, and members of the public. Outreach components include but are not limited to those shown below:

- 32a** The County will outreach to builders and developers, including developers of affordable housing, at least annually to ensure the local development community is aware of opportunities, incentives, and funding availability for housing development in the Unincorporated County. The County will develop the outreach email list by the end of 2023 and expand it throughout the planning period as new developers become known. Initial outreach will be in 2023 and updates will be sent out with each notice of funding availability (NOFA) and each related change to Code, but not less often than twice per year.
- 32b** The County will outreach to utility providers on a regular basis to ensure that they plan for and retain capacity for affordable housing units, in accordance with Government Code 65589.7. The initial outreach will be made upon delivery of the adopted Housing Element in 2023, with follow-up letters sent every 2 years thereafter.
- 32c** The County will continue to build and maintain its housing issues and interest email list and will provide an annual digital newsletter to subscribers, to include information about the County's housing programs, ADUs and JADUs, long-term residency of recreational vehicles and tiny homes, loan and funding opportunities, tenant rights and discrimination information, and opportunities for participation in upcoming events and policy decisions.
- 32d** The County will partner with a qualified non-profit organization by 2024 to develop a campaign to combat local opposition to affordable housing.
- 32e** The County will further increase its efforts to engage in meaningful public participation with vulnerable and hard to reach populations by ensuring that all new

long-range planning or policy projects related to housing and development include a line item for public participation including equity stakeholder identification, priority engagement tactics, timelines, and resource allocation. Staff training modules on public participation planning will be developed and made available to Department staff, either by recording or in person, by July of 2023.

**32f** The CDC's current funding sources, including federal and state funds, are required to be used to provide housing and specific qualified client services and are not available for the general public outreach and marketing uses, envisioned by this Proactive Community Outreach Program. The County will therefore explore other funding options to allow the CDC, its partners and consultants to engage in these important community outreach efforts, including but not limited to an annual funding commitment from TOT and/or redevelopment "boomerang" funds for this purpose.

**Timeline:** 2023 and as noted in each subprogram above

**Agency:** County Administrator's Office; Office of Equity; Community Development Commission; Permit Sonoma

**Funding:** General Fund

## 2.3 QUANTIFIED OBJECTIVES

State law requires Housing Elements to contain quantified objectives for the construction, preservation, and rehabilitation of housing. The quantified objectives set a goal for Unincorporated Sonoma County to achieve based on identified housing needs, resources, and constraints (Table 6). In addition to setting quantified objectives required by State law, the County has also set quantified objectives for special housing needs (Table 6) and for non-unit housing needs (Table 8).

Quantification in the tables is consistent with the following objectives:

- Continue existing housing policies and programs with the objective of producing at least 2,651 newly constructed affordable units [418 extremely low, 452 very low, 1,059 low, and 688 moderate income units] between 2023 and 2031. (Existing; modified to update objectives)
- Strive to maintain the affordable status of 5 existing subsidized housing units in the unincorporated area that are at risk of losing their affordable status between 2023 and 2031. (Existing; modified to update objectives)
- Strive to ensure that at least 15 percent of the affordable housing units produced are available to persons with special housing needs. (Existing)
- Increase the supply of housing for farmworkers and other migrant workers. (Existing)

### 2.3.1 Quantified Objectives Consistent with RHNA

The quantified objectives for the production of housing were prepared consistent with an assessment of the County's identified housing needs, an inventory of its available sites, and

a review of its existing and new housing policies and programs. Within the Housing Element planning period (January 31, 2023 – January 31, 2031), a total of 2,876 units affordable to extremely low, very low-, low-, and moderate-income households are expected to be produced through new construction and conversion to affordability. An additional 1,723 units priced for above moderate-income households are anticipated, based on available sites, resources, and development trends in the Unincorporated County. This anticipated production is consistent with the ABAG RHNA for this planning period.

**Table 6: Quantified Objectives for Construction, Conversion, Preservation, and Rehabilitation (2023-2031)**

Objectives	Extremely Low Income	Very Low Income	Low Income	Moderate Income	Above Moderate Income	Total
New Construction	452	452	1,059	688	1,723	4,374
Conversion to Affordability		75	75	75		225
Preservation of Affordability for At-Risk Units		1	4			5
Rehabilitation and Retrofit*	170	170	165			505
Total	622	698	1,303	763	1,723	5,109
RHNA	1,024		584	627	1,589	3,824

*\*Rehabilitation and Retrofit programs managed by the County CDC serve the Urban County jurisdictions as well as Unincorporated Sonoma County. Quantified Objectives refer to total households served within the jurisdiction of the CDC*

### 2.3.2 Quantified Objectives for Special Housing Needs

In addition to examining projected affordable housing needs, Government Code § 65583 et al requires that jurisdictions conduct an analysis of any existing special housing needs such as those of the elderly, disabled (including individuals with HIV/AIDS and developmental disabilities), large families, single parent households, and farmworkers. The quantitative analysis of these groups' current housing needs is in Section 4. The County also recognizes the housing needs of several subpopulations not specifically mentioned in State law such as the mentally ill, veterans returning from conflict overseas, and youth transitioning from foster care. Efforts have been made to highlight and address these special needs where possible.

Some of the special needs populations mentioned above do not require housing that is operationally different from that required by the general low-income population. Single parent households, large families, and able-bodied elderly households, for example, do not require significant operational intervention. While such households may benefit from housing that is proximate to schools, workplaces, or services (e.g., day care, after school activities, senior centers, etc.), they typically do not need to be in different types of developments than the general population. The use and promotion of Universal Design programs can be especially helpful in accommodating these households.

Supportive housing units can supply many of the County’s identified housing needs. Supportive housing is safe, affordable long term rental housing linked with flexible support services that are available when they are needed. By definition, "supportive housing" means housing with no limit on length of stay, that is linked to onsite or offsite services that assist the tenant to retain the housing, improve his or her health status, maximize their ability to live and, when possible, to work in the community.<sup>8</sup> Supportive housing may include apartments, single room occupancy residences, or single-family homes. Residents may include families with children, elderly persons, young adults aging out of the foster care system, individuals exiting from institutional settings, veterans, or people experiencing homelessness.

Like other affordable housing, supportive housing is designed to look like existing housing in the surrounding neighborhood. The difference between supportive housing and other affordable housing is the linkage to a services component. Integrating services with affordable housing also can help to provide formerly homeless individuals and families with the ongoing support they need to remain housed and live independently. The County strives to include this services component in units for extremely low income (ELI) and very low income (VLI) individuals and households, including SRO units.

**Table 7: Quantified Objectives for Special Housing Needs (2023-2031)**

Quantified Objectives	Extremely Low Income	Very Low Income	Low Income	Moderate Income
<b>Total New Construction</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>502</b>
Units for Special Housing Needs	68	63	72	76
Supportive Housing	136	125		
<b>Total Conversion to Affordability</b>		<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>
Supportive Housing		23		

In addition to the units anticipated above, the County will strive to produce sufficient shared or community housing types to address the identified needs of extremely low-income households, the elderly, the disabled, farmworkers, non-farm migrant workers, the homeless, and those making the transition from homelessness. These shared housing types are expected to include homeless shelters beds, transitional housing beds, beds within group homes and community care facilities, farmworker housing bunks, and SRO units with shared kitchen facilities. The County will strive to provide these housing solutions for acutely low-income (ALI), extremely low-income (ELI), and very low-income (VLI) individuals and households.

These tables present the quantified objective for housing units and non-unit housing beds or bunks in Sonoma County, by housing unit prototype and affordability category.

**Table 8: Quantified Objectives for Non-Unit Housing Needs (2023-2031)**

Quantified Objectives	Acutely Low Income	Extremely Low Income	Very Low Income	Total
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<sup>8</sup> CA Government Code § 65582 (g)

Interim Housing/Shelter Beds	60	30		90
Farmworker Bunks	75	75	50	200
SRO Beds	30	30		60
SRO Units: Supportive Housing	10	10		20



## Section III: Housing Sites

A critical part of the Housing Element is the Sites Inventory, which identifies sites that are suitable for future residential development. State law mandates that each jurisdiction ensure an adequate number of sites that have appropriate zoning, development standards, and infrastructure capacity to meet its fair share of the regional housing need at all income levels. The following section provides a summary of vacant and underutilized land available to accommodate future housing as well as an overview of the resources available to support continued development, preservation, and rehabilitation of housing in Sonoma County. The full Sites Inventory analysis is located in Appendix C.

Sonoma County's share of the regional housing need was allocated by the Association of Bay Area Governments through a process known as the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) and is based on recent growth trends, income distribution, and capacity for future growth. The transfer decreased the County's Lower-Income RHNA by 24 units and Above Moderate-Income RHNA by 33 units. The RHNA transfer was approved by the ABAG Executive Board on November 10, 2022 (pending).

The inventory of sites was developed by identifying:

- The number of accessory dwelling units assumed to be built during the planning period;
- Projects in the planning process but not yet built; and
- Sites suitable for residential development.

### 3.1 ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

The number of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and junior accessory dwelling units (JADUs) built in the County has increased since 2016 legislation that reduced barriers to the development of these accessory units. Annual ADU permits have averaged 74 units per year between 2018 and 2021. Given this average, the Housing Element anticipates 586 ADUs over the next 8 years and credits this number of units toward the County's share of the RHNA for the 6th Cycle planning period.

### 3.2 ENTITLED AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

Units in pipeline projects in the process of obtaining permits can be counted towards the County's share of the RHNA if it can be demonstrated that the units will be built by the end of the 6th Cycle planning period (between 2023 and 2031). The County has identified 1,253 units in 14 projects that have been planned, approved, or proposed but not yet completed. Of these projects, three are 100 percent affordable, 10 projects have some affordable units, and four consist solely of market-rate units (see Appendix D) These projects are generally located in Planning Areas 2 (Cloverdale / Northeast County), 4 (Russian River Area), 5 (Santa Rosa and Environs), and 9 (Sonoma Valley).

### **3.3 SITES SUITABLE FOR HOUSING**

The Housing Element employs a comprehensive and iterative methodology to identify vacant and underutilized sites and estimate dwelling unit capacity on each site. As required by state law, the methodology must include sites that have a high potential to be developed with housing in the planning period and the assumed capacity must reflect a reasonable estimate informed by past trends and substantial evidence. The County will adopt, with this Housing Element update, zoning changes for 54 sites that will allow residential development that meets the default density standards for Sonoma County. New residential development is expected to occur primarily in urban areas.

#### **3.1.1 Development Assumptions**

The Housing Element employs a comprehensive and iterative methodology to estimate dwelling unit capacity on a given parcel. As required by state law, the methodology must include sites that have a high potential to be developed with housing in the cycle and reflect a reasonable estimate of the dwelling unit capacity of eligible sites that is informed by past trends and substantial evidence. Housing Element law has established “default” density standards for the purpose of estimating the potential affordability of units by parcel characteristics. The default density for Sonoma County is 20 units per acre. In addition to default density standards, the California Legislature established size requirements for parcels intended to support the development of lower-income units. Government Code § 65583.2 establishes that sites between 0.5 and 10 acres in size which are zoned to allow residential development of 20 units per acre or more are suitable for lower-income projects.

The County has a demonstrated trend of approving affordable housing projects at a variety of densities. The Rental Housing Opportunity Area Program provides an automatic 100 percent increase in the mapped (minimum) density for rental projects that provide at least 40 percent of total units as affordable to low- or very low-income households. Changes to the program were made during the last housing element period to reduce the number of units required to participate in the program to three. Sites eligible for this program have a medium or high density residential general plan designation (UR6 through UR15) and are zoned R2 (Medium Density Residential) or R3 (High Density Residential) and located within a designed Urban Service Area (USA). Development standards used for these projects allow increased height, reduced parking, and less stringent setbacks.

Slopes, protected wetlands or watercourses, open space and parking requirements, and irregularly shaped parcels all impact the ability to achieve the maximum density allowed on a site. The County therefore assumes the realistic capacity of the Sites Inventory to be 85 percent of the maximum density under the applicable zoning or general plan designation. This is a conservative assumption, as projects routinely develop at levels higher than 90 percent of the maximum allowable density. Buildable area assumptions were adjusted on sites constrained by environmental factors.

### 3.1.2 Summary of Adequate Sites

After accounting for planned and approved units and projected ADU development, the County has satisfied approximately 52 percent of its total allocation for the 2023-2031 planning period. The County must demonstrate the availability of sites with appropriate zoning and development standards that allow and encourage the development of an additional 1,984 units. This total includes 820 Lower-Income, 421 Moderate-Income, and 743 Above Moderate-Income units.

Sonoma County can accommodate a total of 2,533 total units on vacant, nonvacant, and rezone opportunity sites. The results of the site assessment are presented in Table 9 below. A detailed analysis of the complete Housing Site Inventory is presented in Appendix D.

**Table 9: Adequate Sites to Meet RHNA**

	Very Low Income	Low Income	Moderate Income	Above Moderate Income	Total
<b>RHNA Allocation</b>	<b>1,024</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>3,825</b>
Planned and Approved Units	141	296	30	786	1,253
ADUs	176	176	176	60	588
Remaining RHNA After Credits	819		421	743	1984
Sites Used in Previous Planning Periods	59		24	189	272
Underutilized Sites (Vacant/Nonvacant Sites)	64		26	38	128
Rezoned Sites	1,051		433	650	2,133
<b>Total Units on Sites</b>	<b>1,174</b>		<b>482</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>2,533</b>
Unit Surplus	354		61	134	549
Total % Buffer above RHNA Allocation	43%		15%	18%	222%