

# General Plan Scope Report

## *General Plan Sonoma Community Vision Phase*

*Sonoma County*  
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## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

In 2024, Sonoma County launched an update to the existing Sonoma County General Plan 2020, which has served the county since 2008. The update began with about a yearlong Community Vision Phase (June 2024 - August 2025). Visioning included a robust engagement effort designed to identify and confirm issues to address in the Policy Development Phase, and to craft a community-identified vision for the future of Sonoma County to carry through the process. The purpose of this report is to present scope options for the Policy Development Phase, which will be focused on updating the General Plan goals, objectives, policies, and implementation programs to reflect the community's vision, align with State law, and reflect current conditions in the county.

This report is intended to assist Permit Sonoma staff and the Board of Supervisors in the development of a scope of work to facilitate the Policy Development Phase of the update. These options provide a foundation for the County's decision making in shaping an RFP and advancing the update process but are not intended to be prescriptive or overly rigid.

The recommendations in this report are based on input gathered during extensive community engagement over the last year. A summary of outreach activities, key themes, and related data is provided in Attachment 1: Outreach Summary. Attachment 2: Draft Vision and Guiding Principles outlines the draft vision and guiding principles developed from that input. This document outlines three approaches to policy development, summarized below, along with an overview of next steps in the process.



*General Plan Sonoma Community Workshop in Forestville*

- Option 1: Minimal updates to comply with legal requirements.
- Option 2: A targeted update based on community priorities (staff recommendation)
- Option 3: A full-scale, ground-up rewrite of the General Plan



# COMMUNITY VISION PHASE

The Community Vision Phase began in June 2024 and was a yearlong process to gather feedback and report on significant issues that affect all residents in the county, such as accessibility and circulation, agriculture and food, growth management and development, resource protection, preservation of open space and scenic qualities, and other key issues. This included an extensive and robust community engagement effort that resulted in a shared community vision for the future, intended to inform the scope and approach for the Policy Development Phase.

As part of the Community Vision Phase, an audit of the existing General Plan was also completed. The [General Plan 2020 Audit](#) involved a detailed review of all goals, objectives, policies, and implementation programs from General Plan 2020 and provides preliminary recommendations for consideration based on State law and best practices. The audit was intended to provide an initial set of goals, objectives, policies, and implementation programs from General Plan 2020 to carry forward into the comprehensive General Plan update during the Policy Development Phase, along with direction for additional policy considerations during the update. Recommended changes were based on current State law requirements, the General Plan Guidelines prepared by the Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, best practices, and the experiences of Permit Sonoma and consultant staff in preparing and updating planning documents. It also includes a [matrix](#) that provides initial recommendations for each goal, objective, policy, and implementation program in General Plan 2020. The audit was reviewed by the Board of Supervisors on October 15, 2024, and the Planning Agency on December 19, 2024.

This section describes feedback received from the community about General Plan 2020 and recommendations and considerations for the Policy Development Phase that came out of the Community Vision Phase process. The Policy Development Phase will build from this work by preparing policy guidance to address the key issues that arose through the process and implement the shared community vision.



## Feedback Received About General Plan 2020

The General Plan 2020 Audit was shared with the public and decision makers for their review and feedback. Key themes from input received are summarized below.

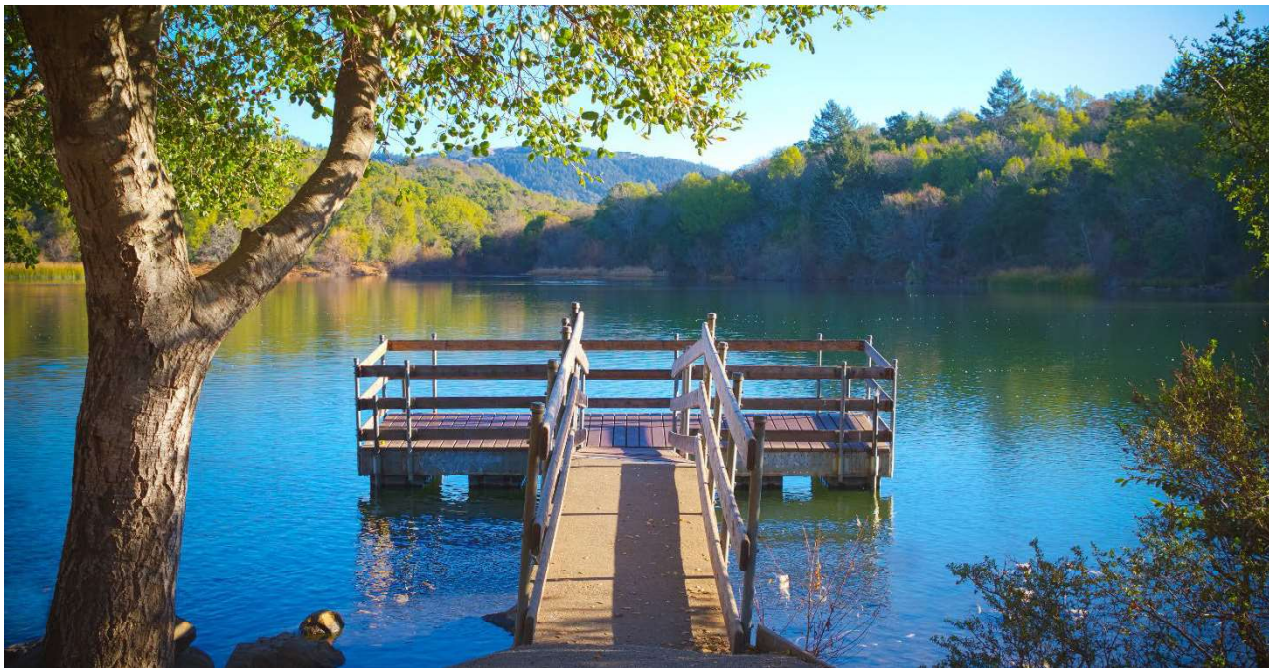
- **Maintaining City-Centered Growth.** Comments indicated strong support for continuing the County's focus on growth within cities and urban areas along with preserving community separators and Urban Service Area Boundaries, while noting any expansion should promote compact, efficient development to maintain open space.
- **Prioritizing Affordable and Diverse Housing Solutions.** Commentors want housing options that are affordable to all, including aging seniors and young families. Diverse housing solutions shared in the comments include increasing density in urbanized areas, applying a "Workforce Housing Combining Zone" across urbanized areas to create specific rules for below-market rate housing projects, implementing policies to reduce the number of vacation rentals and empty homes, and allowing a variety of housing types such as mobile homes, prefabricated homes, and tiny homes.
- **Strengthening Environmental Protection and Climate Resilience.** A number of comments focused on the need for additional policies to protect Sonoma County's natural environment and address climate-related challenges, including protecting watersheds and groundwater. To address the increase in climate events, commenters recommended maintenance of fire breaks, establishing safe zones along roads for evacuation, and implementing landowner responsibility for land stewardship in wildland areas. Commentors also suggested proactive vegetation management and limiting development within areas that have been previously evacuated or classified as having severe fire danger.
- **Supporting Local Agriculture.** Many comments view the General Plan update as an opportunity to increase support for small and locally owned farms, potentially by allowing farm-focused events, clustered housing, and innovative water, power, and sewer solutions. Similarly, there is a desire for the General Plan to allow more housing for existing farm and ranching families to accommodate growing families and employees without substantially increasing density in rural areas. Commentors also believe that the agricultural protections from General Plan 2020 have been successful and should largely be maintained.
- **Enhancing Quality of Life.** Commentors would like to maintain the rural feel in the county and have concerns about noise and light pollution, setbacks between farm animals and neighboring properties. Commentors mentioned the need for expanded internet and phone service while also voicing concerns about visual impacts from new infrastructure. Other ideas include strengthening protections for scenic corridors, improved traffic regulation,





confining industrial development to areas already zoned for this type of use, and improving safety and accessibility of roadways for pedestrians and cyclists.

- **Enhancing Public Participation and Addressing Social Equity.** Central to the General Plan update is an inclusive community engagement process. Significant emphasis in the comments is placed on improving outreach to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities, especially Latinx populations, by holding events in predominantly BIPOC areas with multilingual access. Lastly, a series of comments was related to the ongoing Environmental Justice Element update, such as advocating for the inclusion of Indigenous communities during the update, prioritizing climate-related improvements in low-income communities, and consideration of a Racial Equity Action Plan.



*Photo credit: Adrian Tamblin*



## Outreach Recommendations

The outreach process for the Community Vision Phase aimed to reach residents across the county's diverse communities and demographic groups. Engagement began included a range of activities to gather input from a diverse cross-section of the Sonoma County community, including in-person workshops, virtual workshops, online surveys, community events, focus group meetings in partnership with CBOs, a statistically significant survey, public and stakeholder meetings, and tribal consultation. Each activity was designed to provide accessible, inclusive opportunities for the Sonoma County community to share their vision and concerns for the future of the county. Workshops and community events were distributed around the large geography of the county so that voices throughout the county could be heard as part of this process.

A total of 4,023 people were engaged as part of the Community Vision Phase, and 5,413 individual comments were received. The separate Outreach Summary for the Community Vision Phase provides more details about this engagement process and outcomes, including a summary of outreach activities, how the public was notified, demographics of participants, feedback received on workshop formats, and major themes in the comments. The following outlines the overarching outreach recommendations for the Policy Development Phase. These recommendations are meant to serve as guidance for consideration during the next phase of General Plan Sonoma. As the County moves into the next phase of General Plan Sonoma, the foundation built through this engagement will continue to guide the process, ensuring that General Plan Sonoma remains grounded in community priorities and shaped by those it is intended to serve.

- **Develop a community engagement plan and outreach goals.** The first step in the outreach process for the Community Vision Phase was to develop a Community Engagement Plan that identified strategies and tools to engage the Sonoma County community through this initial phase. The Community Engagement Plan laid a strong foundation for outreach grounded in equity, inclusion, and reducing barriers to participation.
- **Policy development will be a multi-year process that requires a flexible, evolving approach to community engagement.** Rather than setting fixed timelines or overly specific commitments, the County should develop a new Community Engagement Framework that builds on the foundational principles of the Community Vision Phase. This Framework should reaffirm ethical commitments—such as transparency, accessibility, and inclusion—and outline broad strategic approaches to outreach. It will serve as a guiding structure to ensure that community engagement continues to center all voices, especially those historically excluded from planning processes, while allowing adaptability throughout the project's duration.



- **Continue to engage underserved populations through collaborations with CBOs and by hosting focus group meetings.** The General Plan team collaborated with six CBOs to host focus group meetings with underserved communities to understand their vision for the county's future and identify issues that should be addressed by the updated General Plan. The CBOs helped connect the General Plan team with their respective communities through trusted networks, advised staff on effective outreach and engagement methods, and provided facilitation support during the meetings. Each CBO received a stipend that could be used for staff time and to provide compensation to participants for their time. Continuing these focus groups into the next phase is critical to maintaining inclusive engagement, building community trust, and ensuring the General Plan equitably addresses the voices and challenges of all Sonoma County residents. Maintaining and strengthening partnerships with Community Based Organizations (CBOs), with their support in engagement activities, will also help the County engage a broader audience. Continuing focus groups into the next phase is critical to maintaining inclusive engagement, building community trust, and ensuring the General Plan equitably addresses the voices and challenges of all Sonoma County residents.
- **Continue to engage with tribes.** Ongoing meaningful consultation with the tribes during the General Plan update will be essential to ensure the General Plan respects and celebrates tribal culture and history and reflects the needs of the original stewards of this land. Engagement with the tribes should follow the Brief on Intergovernmental Relations with Native Nations prepared by the County's Office of Equity.
- **Continue to use the County's Office of Equity tools, including the Racial Equity Toolkit, to engage target audiences.** The General Plan team made a particular effort during the Community Vision Phase to reach groups that are often under-represented in planning processes compared to their presence in the community. Continuing and expanding engagement to reach all of the demographic identities centered in the Sonoma County Office of Equity's Community Engagement Plan for targeted community engagement during the Policy Development Phase through a variety of methods will be essential to ensuring their voices are reflected in the General Plan.
- **Host and attend informal and accessible community events.** Community events provide an opportunity to engage community members who may be unable or unwilling to attend traditional workshops or public hearings, such as newcomers, non-English speakers, or those with busy schedules. Continuing to attend community events at familiar locations, cultural events, and neighborhood gatherings will ensure inclusive and community-centered engagement that reaches a broader and more diverse range of participants.





- **Engage the community through a wide variety of activities and interactive tools.** The Community Vision Phase used a variety of outreach activities to engage the community, including in-person workshops, virtual workshops, online surveys, community events, focus group meetings in partnership with CBOs, a statistically significant survey, and public and stakeholder meetings. The County should build on the successful engagement formats from the Vision Phase, including virtual tools, in-person events, interactive online platforms, and multilingual outreach. These methods support accessibility, transparency, and wider input.
- **Leverage technical expertise.** As policy questions become more detailed, there are opportunities to draw on the knowledge of County staff and subject-matter experts through focused consultations, public forums, or advisory discussions. These opportunities can support informed policy development while helping to share information and maintain transparency with the broader community.
- **Expand stakeholder engagement.** During all phases of General Plan Sonoma, it will be critical to reach out to individuals and organizations who are directly affected by the implementation of the General Plan. Stakeholders like nonprofit organizations, local advisory councils, chambers of commerce, homeowners' associations, realtors, major employers, and others represent many different perspectives in the county, so targeted engagement with stakeholders will be an important strategy in pursuit of this goal. It is also important to collaborate with other governmental agencies, including cities, school districts, and special districts, to coordinate the General Plan with other local planning. The County should host stakeholder meetings and other direct engagement with stakeholders to ensure these perspectives are meaningfully reflected in the General Plan.
- **Continue to spread the word about General Plan Sonoma.** A key goal of the Community Vision Phase was ensuring that all Sonoma County residents are aware the General Plan is being updated and that their voice matters in the process. Continuing to maintain and expand outreach strategies like newsletters, social media, the website, and CBO partnerships will be critical to keep the public informed and engaged throughout the process.
- **Collect voluntary demographic data and report back.** Establishing a method for evaluating the effectiveness of reaching the Sonoma County community is important for measuring the success of the outreach and identifying any refinements needed along the way. An outreach dashboard was prepared for the Community Vision Phase to share the engagement activities and input received, which could be maintained during the Policy Development Phase in support of this goal.



## Draft Vision and Guiding Principles

Based on the input gathered during the Community Vision Phase, the General Plan team prepared a Draft Vision and Guiding Principles (Attachment 2) to guide the Policy Development Phase of General Plan Sonoma. These express the community's aspirations for the county's future and will be the foundation for the policy guidance in the updated General Plan. They reflect common themes, priorities, and concerns shared by community members throughout the engagement process.

### Draft Vision

Sonoma County is home to small towns and rural communities united by a deep appreciation for its natural beauty, native ecosystems, and iconic agricultural and open space lands, including farms, ranches, and forests. We share a commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and resilient community. We embrace thoughtful development that expands housing and economic opportunity, with a focus on city-centered growth, conservation of natural resources, protection of agricultural and open space lands, and celebration of our unique unincorporated communities. Our future is grounded in responsible growth, climate resilience, resource stewardship, and sustainable infrastructure to support a high quality of life for generations to come.

### Guiding Principles

- Equity, Inclusion, and Community Identity
- Sustainable Land Use and Resource Stewardship
- Resilient and Diverse Economy
- Robust and Adaptable Agriculture and Local Food Systems
- Complete, Connected, and Healthy Communities
- Climate Action and Long-Term Resilience
- Tribal Partnership and Cultural Stewardship





## Key Policy Considerations

The following presents key policy considerations for the Policy Development Phase based on community input and the recommendations from the General Plan 2020 Audit. They are organized by the Draft Guiding Principles referenced above.

### Equity, Inclusion, and Community Identity

- **Equity in access and outcomes.** Community input emphasized the need to improve access to essential services like healthcare (including mental and maternal health), affordable housing, education, youth programs, and job opportunities. The General Plan can prioritize equitable distribution of resources and coordination among service providers.
- **Celebrating diverse identities and cultures.** Residents called for public art, cultural institutions, and programming that reflect Sonoma County's diverse heritage, particularly Latinx and Native American communities. Planning can support the preservation and celebration of place-based identities across rural and urban areas.
- **Inclusive community participation.** Feedback called for intentional engagement with underserved populations and the creation of inclusive social spaces, especially for LGBTQIA2S+ residents and others historically left out of planning processes.
- **Recognizing and preserving community identities.** This includes the desire to retain the existing rural character of the county and the unique qualities of individual communities. Maintaining Urban Service Boundaries and preserving distinct community areas will support this objective, along with policies to preserve dark skies, minimize the impacts of new development on established communities, and celebrate each community's unique history and culture.

### Sustainable Land Use and Resource Stewardship

- **City-centered and infill development.** Community members strongly supported concentrating growth in cities and urbanized areas with existing infrastructure, while protecting rural character and avoiding hazard-prone lands.
- **Agricultural protection and diversification.** There is a desire to support diverse agricultural uses and scales, expand access to local markets, reduce barriers for new and small farmers, and promote sustainable practices (e.g., regenerative and organic farming).
- **Natural resource conservation.** The General Plan can advance stewardship of water, biodiversity, open space, and working lands. Community members emphasized the importance of protecting creeks, forests, trees, and critical habitats.



- **Compliance with Assembly Bill 1889 (2024).** New and revised policy guidance should be considered to meet the requirements of Assembly Bill 1889 (2024), which requires open space elements to address wildlife and habitat connectivity.

### Resilient and Diverse Economy

- **Economic diversification and local resilience.** Residents stressed the need to reduce reliance on tourism and focus on sectors like agriculture, clean energy, and small business development.
- **Workforce development and job creation.** Community input called for job training programs and policies to expand access to living-wage jobs that align with local needs and support a just transition.
- **Aligning economic growth with community values.** The General Plan can promote tourism, agriculture, and industry in ways that respect community character and protect housing access for local residents.

### Robust and Adaptable Agriculture and Local Food Systems

- **Protecting agricultural viability and adaptability.** Community input emphasized the importance of preserving agricultural lands and supporting producers facing changing climate and market conditions. The General Plan can promote flexible land use policies, regenerative practices, and access to infrastructure to keep agriculture viable across diverse operations.
- **Supporting local food systems.** Residents expressed strong support for expanding access to healthy, local food through stronger supply chains, farmers markets, food hubs, and community-supported agriculture. Policies can reduce barriers for small and emerging producers and improve food access in underserved areas.
- **Promoting agricultural equity and opportunity.** Input highlighted the need to improve conditions for farmworkers and ensure that agricultural families have safe, stable housing and pathways to opportunity.
- **Balancing stewardship and innovation.** The update presents an opportunity to align agricultural preservation with climate action, biodiversity protection, and sustainable land use. Policies can encourage innovation and diversification while maintaining the ecological and cultural value of working lands.



## Complete, Connected, and Healthy Communities

- **Housing diversity and affordability.** Availability and affordability of housing was a top concern. Feedback emphasized expanding affordable housing options, including for seniors, while managing the impacts of short-term rentals and vacation homes.
- **Mobility and access.** Residents expressed strong support for expanding transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure, especially in areas where car ownership is a barrier. Policies can reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and improve connectivity between homes, services, and jobs.
- **Infrastructure and services equity.** There is a need for more equitable investments in infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas, where outdated systems limit development and safety.

## Climate Action and Long-Term Resilience

- **Wildfire, flood, and hazard preparedness.** Community input emphasized protecting homes and communities through improved evacuation planning, vegetation management, and resilient infrastructure like microgrids.
- **Reducing greenhouse gas emissions.** The General Plan can integrate emissions reduction into all elements—transportation, energy, land use, and natural systems—while also investing in carbon sequestration through nature-based solutions.
- **Planning for a changing climate.** Residents supported prioritizing development in low-risk areas, designing infrastructure for extreme weather, and proactively addressing future risks.
- **Compliance with Senate Bill 743, Senate Bill 932, and Assembly Bill 98.** New policies should incorporate requirements to reduce vehicle miles traveled, eliminate traffic fatalities, and identify key freight corridors.

## Tribal Partnership and Cultural Stewardship

- **Government-to-government collaboration.** The General Plan should foster long-term partnerships and respectful engagement with tribal governments.
- **Protection of tribal cultural resources and ancestral lands.** Policy guidance can ensure tribal consultation on development and land use decisions that impact sacred sites and cultural heritage.





- **Integration of Indigenous knowledge.** The update offers an opportunity to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into land stewardship, conservation, and planning practices.



*Photo credit: Adrian Tamblin*



## POLICY DEVELOPMENT PHASE

The next phase of the General Plan update will be focused on updating the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation programs in the General Plan to reflect the community's vision, align with State law, and reflect current conditions in the county. The flow chart below shows the basic steps for the Policy Development Phase—initiate the work, review existing conditions, prepare and evaluate land use and circulation alternatives to select a preferred land use and circulation map, develop the policies and draft the General Plan, conduct environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and adopt and implement the Plan. Community engagement will continue to be integral to the General Plan update process and will be a part of every step.

### Basic Steps for Policy Development





Below is a description of each step:

- 1. Policy Development Initiation.** The Policy Development Phase will begin after receiving direction from the Board of Supervisors and hiring a consultant. To initiate the project, the County will work with the consultant team to prepare for the upcoming steps, including identifying and reviewing relevant data and other planning documents and meeting with internal staff-level stakeholders for the update. It is anticipated that Phase 2 will start in the Fall or Winter of 2025.
- 2. Existing Conditions.** The first substantive step of the Policy Development Phase will be to analyze existing conditions to understand the environmental setting and baseline conditions in the county. The existing conditions analysis process typically results in the preparation of reports or technical memoranda that provide background data and a technical framework for the General Plan update to help the County and community understand its context. Once prepared, the reports help inform the development of the land use and circulation alternatives, policy guidance, and environmental review. They also serve as a reference and resource for community members, policymakers, staff, and the consultant team throughout the development of the General Plan. They can address topics such as land use, community health, demographics, economics and market trends, climate change and resilience, historic and cultural resources, environmental resources and hazards, transportation, public services and infrastructure, and other topics of interest to the County and community.
- 3. Land Use and Circulation Alternatives.** Another key step during the Policy Development Phase is the land use and circulation alternatives process. The land use and circulation alternatives will explore different ways the County could meet State housing requirements and accommodate future growth of population and transportation needs. The land use alternatives typically show a vision for the different types and ranges of development that could occur in the future, while the circulation alternatives show transportation approaches to support each land use plan. The alternatives process begins by identifying the areas of the county that could change, preparing land use and circulation alternatives for those areas, and then evaluating the alternatives for their potential impacts and benefits to a set of topics that are of interest to the County and community. The results of the evaluation will inform the community process to select a preferred alternative that will be used as the foundation for the updated land use and circulation maps for the General Plan, ultimately guiding the future pattern, intensity, and location of growth, development, transportation improvement, and conservation efforts across the county.



4. **Policy Development and Draft General Plan.** The next step in the process is to prepare draft goals, policies, and actions for the updated General Plan. The goals and policies will be updated based on a combination of guidance from the existing General Plan, input from community members and decision-makers throughout the process, State and local laws, and best practices in the planning profession. They will also build from the land use and circulation alternatives analysis and provide guidance to support the preferred alternative. If there is a need for localized community planning that is focused on specific communities in the county, this step could also include preparation of community-specific policy guidance or making updates to the County's Area Plans.
5. **Environmental Review.** State law requires jurisdictions to identify the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects, including a General Plan update. For most General Plans, this is typically done through preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). However, if proposed changes to the General Plan are minor and would not result in new or significantly greater impacts than analyzed by the prior General Plan EIR, other documents, such as an Addendum, Negative Declaration, or Supplemental EIR, may be used.
6. **Adoption and Implementation.** State law requires General Plan elements to include feasible implementation measures. Upon adoption of the updated General Plan, the next step is the implementation of General Plan policies and programs. To help implement the General Plan, some jurisdictions prepare an implementation plan that specifies who is responsible for implementing each action item in the General Plan and the timeframe in which it would be implemented. The implementation plan could include established performance metrics to track the County's progress in achieving the goals of the Plan over time.
7. **Community Engagement.** As shown by the flow chart above, community engagement will be woven into every step of the process during the Policy Development Phase to ensure the updated General Plan reflects the community's vision and needs. The Policy Development Phase will include an interactive and participatory outreach and engagement process that solicits feedback from the community and informs the policy directions of the General Plan update. This process will build from the outreach completed during the Community Vision Phase and could involve community events, stakeholder interviews, interactive engagement tools, focus group meetings, tribal consultation and partnerships, meetings with the Community/Municipal Advisory Councils, regular check-ins with the Board of Supervisors and Planning Agency, and an optional Technical Advisory Committee.



A General Plan update process, including the policy development phase, can be a big undertaking for any jurisdiction. In general, after the visioning work is complete, it can take anywhere from one to four years to complete the General Plan update, depending on the extent of changes and community involvement and review. The level of analysis and extent of changes can vary depending on the complexity of the issues and challenges the jurisdiction faces.

The following sections outline three scope options for Phase 2 of the General Plan update that build from the work completed during the Community Vision Phase. Each option reflects a different level of effort and investment, ranging from a legally compliant update with minimal engagement to a full overhaul of the General Plan with robust community planning and outreach. The estimated costs for the scope options range between \$500,000 to \$5 million, inclusive of consultant and County staff costs. The options are intended to inform Board direction on the desired level of update and associated resource allocation. The final scope of work for Phase 2 could vary from what is presented below depending on the strategies chosen by the County in coordination with the selected consultant.

The table below shows the elements covered by the existing Sonoma County General Plan 2020. State law requires General Plans to address the following elements: land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety, noise, and environmental justice. These elements can be combined or presented in any order that best fits the community. Additional optional elements can be included in the General Plan depending on local needs and goals. During the Phase 2 process, the County will evaluate the current set of elements and structure to determine whether changes are needed. At a minimum, all mandatory elements will be covered, incorporating the Public Safety and Environmental Justice Elements that are currently underway. Based on prior Board direction, it is anticipated that the updated General Plan will also dress tribal resources and climate resiliency.

Element or Topic	Required or Optional
Land Use	Required by State Law
Circulation	Required by State Law
Housing	Required by State Law; Separate process
Open Space and Conservation	Required by State Law
Safety	Required by State Law; In Progress
Noise	Required by State Law
Environmental Justice	Required by State Law; In Progress
Agricultural Resources	Optional





Element or Topic	Required or Optional
Water	Optional
Public Facilities and Services	Optional
Air Transportation	Optional

## Scope Option 1: Statutory Compliance Update (Low Tier)

### Description

A limited update with a primary focus of bringing the plan into compliance with current State laws. No significant policy development and engagement beyond what is required.

### Scope Approach

- **General Plan Format.** Keep existing format.
- **Existing Conditions.** Minimal review; limited to technical memos needed for CEQA.
- **Outreach and Engagement.** Basic public engagement including a few workshops, online surveys, limited stakeholder input, tribal consultation, and updates to advisory bodies.
- **Land Use and Circulation Alternatives.** No alternatives process; current maps remain largely unchanged.
- **Policy Development and Draft General Plan.** Only updates required for legal compliance, plus integration of two new elements: Tribal Resources and Climate Resiliency.
- **Environmental Review.** Likely an EIR addendum; full EIR may be needed depending on changes.
- **Adoption and Implementation.** No implementation plan included.

### Cost Estimate and Schedule

Cost estimate range: \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Timeline to complete: 1.5 to 2 years (assuming only an addendum is needed to the EIR).



## Scope Option 2: Comprehensive Update (Medium Tier) Staff Recommendation

### Description

This option builds on the existing General Plan framework and responds directly to public input gathered in the Community Visioning phase. It provides significant policy updates and meaningful community engagement, while remaining realistic in terms of budget and timeline.

### Scope Approach

- **General Plan Format.** Updated and published as an interactive website with a summary version for accessibility along multilingual support.
- **Existing Conditions.** Targeted updates with topic-specific analysis and issue papers to guide policy direction.
- **Outreach and Engagement.** Broader and more inclusive engagement than Option 1, with a focus on equity and underrepresented voices, including:
  - In-person and virtual workshops
  - Targeted focus group and stakeholder interviews
  - Tribal consultation and partnerships
  - Coordination with Community/Municipal Advisory Councils and Commissions
  - Coordination with technical experts
  - Paid partnerships with community-based organizations
  - Arts and youth based engagement
  - Digital tools, paid ads, and a robust outreach dashboard
- **Land Use and Circulation Alternatives.** The scope includes analysis of focused alternatives in priority areas, using both traditional and emerging tools. Alternatives would consider climate risks, infrastructure capacity, housing needs, and community character. Updated land use designations and circulation maps would reflect a balance of community input, growth needs, and environmental constraints.
- **Policy Development and Draft General Plan.** Policies would be significantly updated and restructured, with a focus on clarity, usability, and long-term resilience.
  - Tribal resources and climate resiliency would be addressed.
  - Community-specific policies would be updated based on local input.
  - Outdated parcel-specific policies would be streamlined.



- The plan would be designed for incremental five-year updates, ensuring long-term flexibility and relevance.
- **Environmental Review.** A full EIR would be prepared, including a public review period and response to comments.
- **Adoption and Implementation.** Includes an actionable plan with performance metrics, progress tracking, zoning updates, and guidance for future updates.

## Cost Estimate and Schedule

Cost estimate range: \$3 to \$3.5 million.

Timeline to complete: 3 to 3.5 years.

## Scope Option 3: Replace with New (High Tier)

### Description

A full overhaul of the General Plan, replacing the existing framework with a visionary and community-driven plan. This option rethinks land use, governance, climate resilience, and equity at a foundational level through deep public involvement and new planning tools.

### Scope Approach

- **General Plan Format.** Fully redesigned digital platform with interactive tools, mobile access, multilingual support, and dynamic dashboards.
- **Existing Conditions.** Comprehensive baseline study with advanced modeling and expanded topic areas (e.g., digital access, public health).
- **Outreach and Engagement.** The most extensive effort including artist residencies, youth-led initiatives, co-design labs, paid ambassadors, and community-led pilot projects.
- **Land Use and Circulation Alternatives.** Countywide and local alternatives using spatial modeling, real-time data, and community-driven scenarios.
- **Policy Development and Draft General Plan.** Entirely new elements and land use framework; deep integration with cities, Tribal governments, and best practices nationwide.
- **Environmental Review.** A programmatic EIR supported by open-access modeling tools and a public-facing environmental data dashboard.



- **Adoption and Implementation.** Advanced framework with dashboards, funding strategies, zoning code updates, and a shared leadership model.

### Cost Estimate and Schedule

Cost estimate range: \$4.5 to \$5 million

Timeline to complete: 5 to 6 years.

## NEXT STEPS

Based on the direction received from the Board of Supervisors on August 12 regarding the recommended approach for the Policy Development Phase, the County will move forward with issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to hire a consultant team to support this work. After a consultant is selected, Permit Sonoma staff will return to the Board of Supervisors and Planning Agency to present the full proposed scope of work that will outline specific tasks, deliverables, and timelines for completing the General Plan Update.

The policy development work will focus on developing updated policies, goals, and implementation strategies that reflect and advance the Draft Vision and Guiding Principles developed during the Community Vision Phase. Public engagement will continue to play a central role throughout this phase to ensure the updated General Plan reflects the needs and priorities of Sonoma County residents.