General Plan 2020
Safety Element Update
&
New Environmental
Justice Element

Board of Supervisors

Workshop

permit
SONOMA

Presentation Overview

- Introduction to the General Plan 2020 Safety and Environmental Justice Updates
- Planning Process and Community Engagement
- Overview of the Policy Framework Approach
- Overview of Policy Topic Areas
- Board Discussion on Frameworks

Safety Element Update

- **Purpose**: Reduce the potential short- and long-term risks to people, property, and systems resulting from hazards
  - Wildfire
  - Flooding
  - Seismic and geologic hazards
  - Sea level rise and other climate-induced hazards
  - Drought
- **New requirements:**
  - Assessments of evacuation route capacity and residential egress
  - Assessment of climate change vulnerability and inclusion of adaptation and resilience policies and implementation measures

New Environmental Justice Element

- **Purpose:** To identify disadvantaged communities in Sonoma County and prioritize improvements in those areas to advance health
  - Pollution burden
  - Access to public facilities, services, and community amenities
  - Health and physical activity
  - Healthy food access
  - Safe and sanitary housing
  - Civic engagement in the public-decision making process

- **Definition of Environmental Justice:** "The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

  (Government Code § 65040.12(e))

Planning Process

Existing Conditions and Data Collection → Determination of EJ Communities → Strategy Development → Draft Elements → Review and Adoption

Community Engagement

Community Engagement – Equity Working Committee (EWC)

- Composed of 19 community members and led by County staff to help shape the General Plan updates.

- EWC members advise staff, review draft concepts, serve as community ambassadors to help publicize engagement events, and participate in the planning effort.

- Purpose of the EWC is to center the experiences of under-resourced and under-represented communities to develop equitable policy.

Community Engagement – Strategy

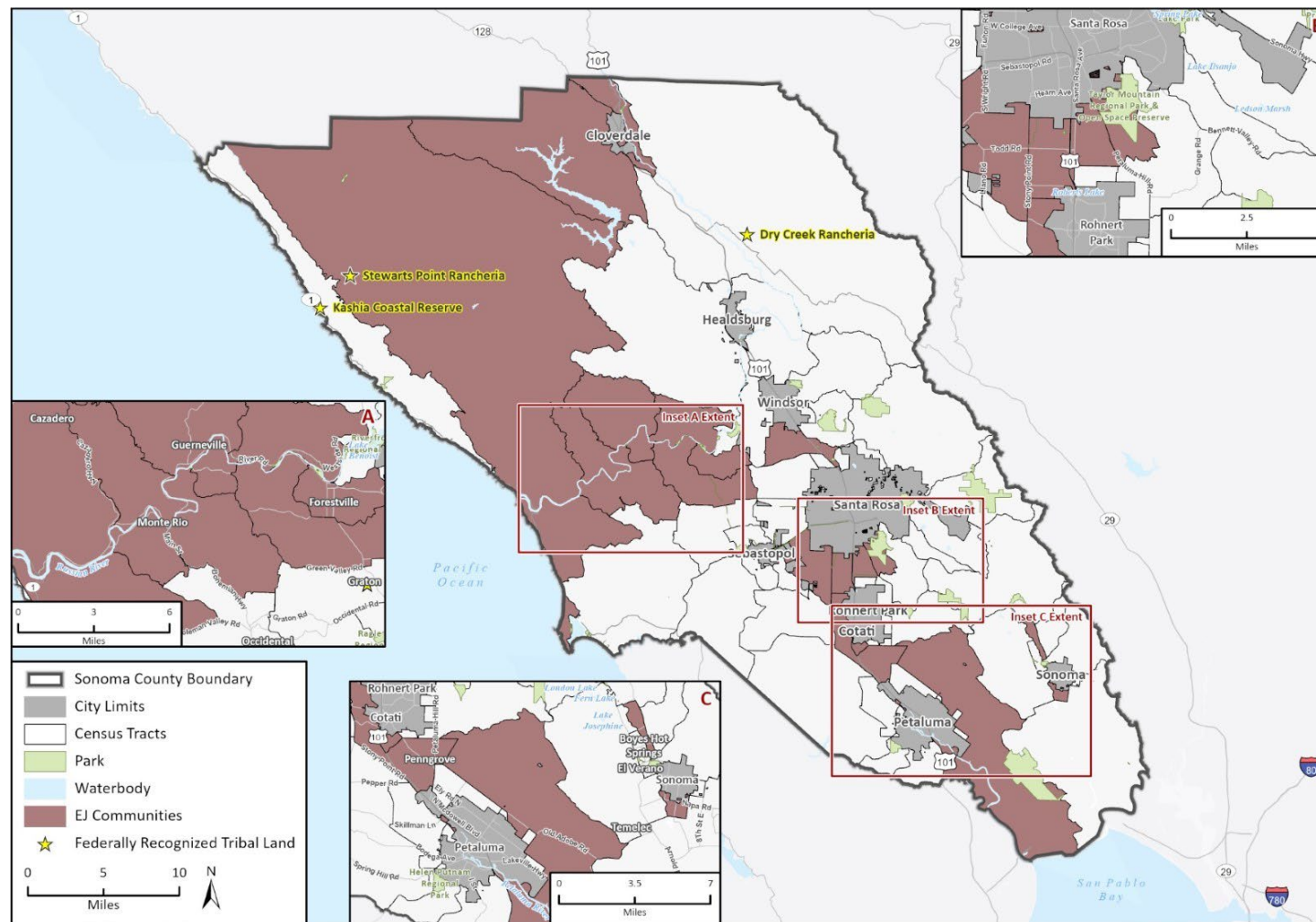| Completed |
|---|
| **5** Equity Working Committee meetings |
| **6** stakeholder focus groups with community organizations and County staff |
| **1** countywide online survey on climate adaptation |
| **7** pop-ups at events across the county and with interest groups |
| Upcoming |
| **1** countywide public workshop |
| **1** additional online survey |
| Municipal/citizen's advisory council/commission meetings |
| **1** Equity Working Committee reflection session |

Community Engagement – Key Themes

Key Themes and Highlights	
Community capacity-building and relationships	• Community-based organizations (CBOs) and community leaders perform critical work and are trusted sources of information. Find ways to resource them and improve partnerships (i.e. contracting).
Inclusive decision-making	• Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) should be strategically incorporated in all County decision-making on emergency management.
Coordinated planning, service provision, and engagement	• Improved coordination within the County organization and between the County and cities is critical to understand and address needs. • CBOs experience outreach fatigue while under-resourced.
Design to the margins	• All aspects of County operations (e.g. policy, engagement, service and infrastructure provision) should plan for and include communities at the margins.
Importance of good data	• Investments in data collection and analysis will make for better outcomes.

Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities

- Identified using the State's CalEnviroScreen tool with the EWC

Draft EJ Communities include:

- Low-income census tracts with either:
  - Elevated pollution burden overall
  - Elevated levels of individual pollutants (e.g. pesticides)
  - Elevated housing burden
- Federally recognized tribal lands

Background Analysis

- Environmental Justice Technical Report

- Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (SB 379)

- Evacuation Route Assessments*

    (AB 747, SB 99, AB 1409)

    *In Progress

Index Map of Climate-Sensitive Populations

Policy Framework Purpose and Structure

- **Purpose of the Frameworks:** Outline desired outcomes of the General Plan and potential policy strategies

  - **Issue Statement:** Summary of the key concerns related to the topic

  - **Key Existing Plans:** Existing Sonoma County documents and plans that may be leveraged and built upon for addressing the issue

  - **Desired Outcome:** A general statement that expresses the outcomes towards which planning efforts are directed

  - **Community Input:** A summary of input received through community engagement efforts

  - **Strategy Ideas:** Statements of intent or direction on how to achieve the desired outcome, which will inform future iterations of the policies that will be included in the General Plan

General Plan Structure

- Goal
  - Policy
    - Implementation Action

Safety Element – Policy Frameworks

Extreme Heat, Air Quality, and Drought	Emergency Preparedness and Response	All Hazards General Public Safety
Resilient Landscapes (Wildfire)	Sea Level Rise	Seismic and Flooding Hazards

EJ Element – Policy Frameworks

Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure	Healthy Environments (Pollution Burden)	Healthy Public Facilities and Physical Activity
Healthy Food Access	Safe and Sanitary Housing	Community Engagement and Language Access

General Plan Policy Relationships

Select General Plan Elements – Topics	Land Use*	Circulation & Transit*	Housing*	Open Space & Conservation*	Safety*	Environmental Justice*	Public Facilities	Water Resources
Pollution & Air Quality							-	-
Active Transportation								-
Climate Change Adaptation								
Fire								
Flooding							-	-
Food Access				-			-	-
Health							-	
Housing							-	-
Recreation								-
Public Facilities & Services								
Water Quality		-					-	
Water Supply		-						
Evacuation & Transportation Routes							-	-
Infrastructure				-				-

Required General Plan Element* — Statutory Requirement / Related

Desired Feedback Today

- Do the frameworks capture your **Board's priorities** for the General Plan 2020 Safety & EJ Elements?

- Consider:

  1. Ways to prioritize improvements in Environmental Justice Communities

  2. The degree of specificity of climate policy that belongs in the General Plan vs. external plans

  3. Evacuation-related policy and actions

Prioritizing EJ Communities

Approaches
Capital improvement planning or prioritization
Public funding prioritization
Policies applicable to all EJ Communities
Policies specific to unique EJ Communities

Considerations:

- Unintended consequences
- Changing community conditions

Climate Action, Adaptation, & Resilience in the County

Existing Plans	Core Role or Function	Implementing Depts/Agencies
County Strategic Plan	Mitigation/reduction Adaptation and resilience	Climate Action and Resiliency Division (CARD)
Climate Resilient Lands Strategy	Mitigation/reduction	
Regional Parks' Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan	Adaptation and resilience	Regional Parks
		Permit Sonoma
CARD's Climate Resilience Comprehensive Action Plan	Mitigation/reduction Adaptation and resilience	RCPA/SCTA
		General Services
RCPA's Climate Mobilization Strategy and Shift Sonoma County	Mitigation/reduction	Many others!
Local Coastal Plan (LCP)	Adaptation and resilience (sea level rise)	
Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP)	Adaptation and resilience	

Incorporating Climate Adaptation & Resilience into the General Plan

Considerations:

- Keeping the General Plan *general*

- The importance of creating a living, adaptable document

Evacuation – Policy Approaches from Similar Jurisdictions

Public Outreach and Agency Coordination	Planning and Analysis	Route Improvements	Standards
Public evacuation education* *(Most jurisdictions)*	Evacuation transportation needs assessments *(Marin County)*	Prioritize improvements on deficient evacuation routes *(Most jurisdictions)*	Requirements for new land uses or subdivisions* *(Marin, Santa Barbara, Humboldt Counties)*
Public mapping resources* *(Marin County)*	Redundant communications systems * *(Alameda County)*	Improvements/maintenance of existing evacuation routes* *(Marin, Napa, El Dorado, San Diego Counties)*	
Coordination across agencies/jurisdictions* *(Most jurisdictions)*	Traffic control plans for key evacuation routes *(Napa County)*	Mitigation measures for evacuation routes to reduce risks *(Napa, San Diego Counties)*	
Neighborhood/localized evacuation planning* *(San Diego, Placer Counties)*	Inventory/assessments of evacuation route conditions* *(Marin, San Diego, Napa Counties)*		
Joint use and access agreements with State/federal landowners *(San Diego County)*			

* Sonoma County is already taking these actions to varying degrees.

Incorporating Evacuation into the General Plan

Considerations:

- The level of information needed to make decisions on policymaking or actions to take
- What is needed immediately and what needs further evaluation before action (i.e. this GP update or the comprehensive update)

Next Step: Draft Elements

- Coordination with County departments/agencies on policy strategies
- Presentation to municipal and citizen's advisory councils/commissions
- Development of draft elements
- Public review draft elements
- Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors public hearings

Thank you!

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https://permitsonoma.org/
longrangeplans/proposedlong-rangeplans/
generalplanupdate/environmentaljustice
andsafetyelementupdate

Safety Policy Framework

Extreme Heat, Air Quality, and Drought

Policy Issues

Extreme Heat and Air Quality Protection
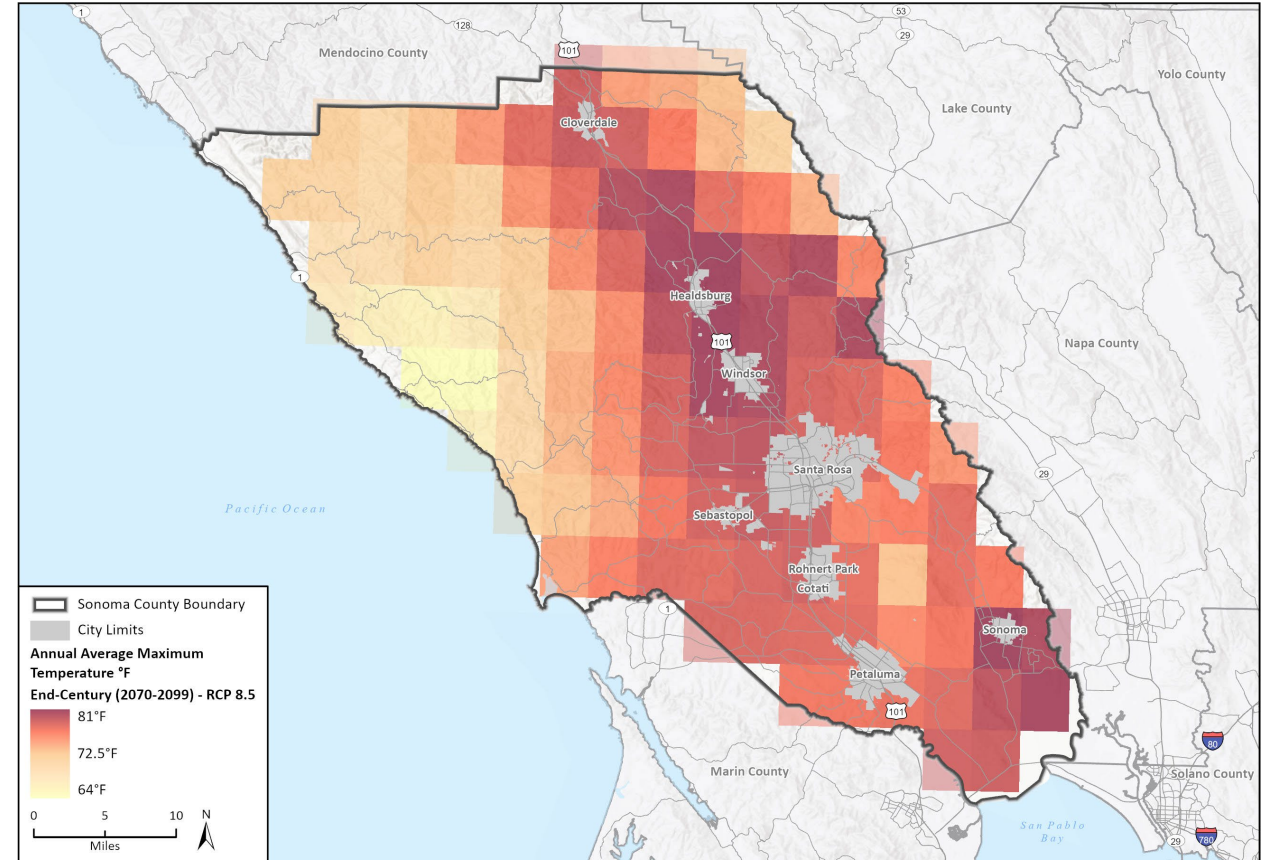
Water Reliability and Consumption

Issue 1: Extreme Heat and Air Quality Protection

Background

- Communities in the county are exposed to poor air quality, including from wildfire smoke and extreme heat events

- Increased demand for cooling centers, hospitals, and emergency personnel

- Emergency service may face challenges due to power interruptions, staffing shortages, and lack of systems and infrastructure

Input

- Improved weatherization

- Enhanced workforce support, hazard pay, worker safety

- Safety centers, emergency cooling or warming centers

- Culturally responsive assistance centers

Annual Average Maximum Temperature °F
End-Century (2070-2099) - RCP 8.5
81°F
72.5°F
64°F

Sonoma County Boundary
City Limits

0   5   10
Miles

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Additional data provided by Sonoma County, 2022; CalAdapt, 2022.

Safety Element.aprx
Fig 8.2 End-Century Average Maximum Temperature

Issue 1: Extreme Heat and Air Quality Protection

Desired Outcome

All community members in Sonoma County have access to clean air and protection from extreme heat by directing additional resources and investments towards community members and workers who are most vulnerable to poor air quality and extreme heat impacts.

Proposed Strategies

1. Incentivize Landlords to Improve Indoor Air Quality and Temperature Control
2. Broaden Functionality and Expand Access to Resilience Centers
3. Increase Green Spaces, Shading, and Water Access
4. Promote Clean Air Refuge Centers
5. Increase Enforcement and Trainings; Establish Work Stoppage Thresholds
6. Identify Hazard Pay Funding Streams
7. Improve Communication for Service Provision

Issue 2: Water Reliability and Consumption

Background

- Climate hazards can damage water supply infrastructure, impacting reliability
- Extended drought conditions exacerbate water supply problems leading to increased water costs and diminished water quality
- Groundwater levels have declined due to low rainfall and overdraft, resulting in availability and pollutant concentration concerns.

Input

- Improve transparency and information sharing regarding water supply and usage from different industries
- Strive for affordable water rates and fair pricing
- Explore opportunities to utilize greywater or recycled water systems

Issue 2: Water Reliability and Consumption

Desired Outcome

All community members and emergency service providers in Sonoma County have access to affordable, safe, and reliable water sources as a result of investing in populations and providers most at risk of water quality and quantity issues.

Proposed Strategies

1. Expand Water Supply Information Access
2. Incentivize Water Conservation
3. Improve Water Supply
4. Collaborate with Water Agencies on Rate Structure and Supply Deficiencies
5. Create a Well Testing and Remediation Assistance Program
6. Consider Expanding Use of Greywater and Recycled Water Systems
7. Update Design Guidelines
8. Create a Composting Toilet and Greywater System Incentive Program
9. Utilize Nature-based Solutions

Emergency Preparedness & Response

Policy Issue

Alerts and Evacuation

Issue 1: Alerts and Evacuation

Background

- Barriers to safe and timely evacuation include:
  - Deficiencies in the electrical grid
  - Gaps in the transportation system
  - Spotty telecommunication system
  - Differences in language
  - Lack of adequate emergency facilities and services
  - Lack of evacuation locations
  - Inequitable distribution of resources

Input

- Focus on emergency preparedness, not reactivity
- Explore alternative alert systems
- Encourage individual evacuation planning

Issue 1: Alerts and Evacuation

Desired Outcome

Community members, especially those that face systemic inequities, can evacuate safely and timely due to resilient infrastructure, accessible and effective emergency alerts, and improved access to financial resources before, during, and after disasters for recovery.

Proposed Strategies

1. Prepare Community for Evacuation
2. Retrofit Critical Communications Services
3. Address Accessibility Barriers to Emergency Alert Programs
4. Conduct An Evacuation Needs Assessment
5. Evaluate and Improve Ag Pass Program
6. Advance Worker Evacuation Programs
7. Build Relationships with CBOs to Assist with Evacuation Efforts

All Hazards General Public Safety

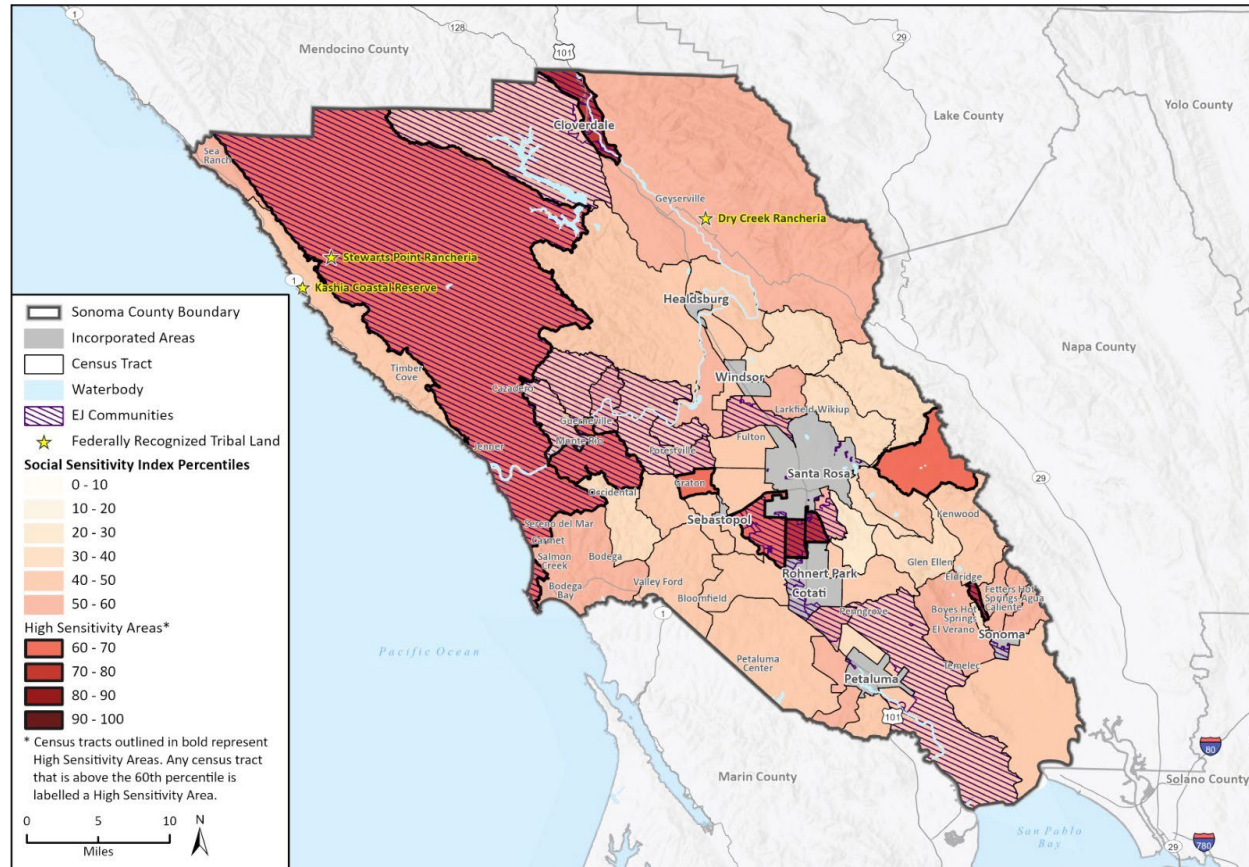**Policy Issue**

Equitable Community Safety

Issue 1: Equitable Community Safety

Background

- EJ Communities throughout the County, with the highest concentrations in the west, south, and central regions, are also at risk of disproportionate impacts from climate change

- Inequitable access and active barriers to resources, critical services, and resilient infrastructure hinders the ability of residents to prepare for, cope with, and recover from climate impacts

Input

- Barriers to community safety:
  - Financial constraints
  - Fear of rent increases
  - Physical limitations or disabilities
  - Social isolation
  - Language barriers

Legend:
- Sonoma County Boundary
- Incorporated Areas
- Census Tract
- Waterbody
- EJ Communities
- ☆ Federally Recognized Tribal Land

Social Sensitivity Index Percentiles
- 0 - 10
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 30
- 30 - 40
- 40 - 50
- 50 - 60

High Sensitivity Areas*
- 60 - 70
- 70 - 80
- 80 - 90
- 90 - 100

* Census tracts outlined in bold represent High Sensitivity Areas. Any census tract that is above the 60th percentile is labelled a High Sensitivity Area.

0   5   10   N
Miles

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Safety Element.aprx
Fig X Social Sensitivity Analysis

Issue 1: Equitable Community Safety

Desired Outcome

The County's resources, funds, infrastructure investments, and services are equitably allocated based on greatest sensitivity and need.

Proposed Strategies

1. Provide Resources for Hazard Prevention

2. Collaborate with Healthcare Providers

3. Integrate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) into EOC Operations

4. Increase Capacity and Redundancy Through Partnerships

5. Increase County Staffing Using DEIB Approach

Resilient Landscapes
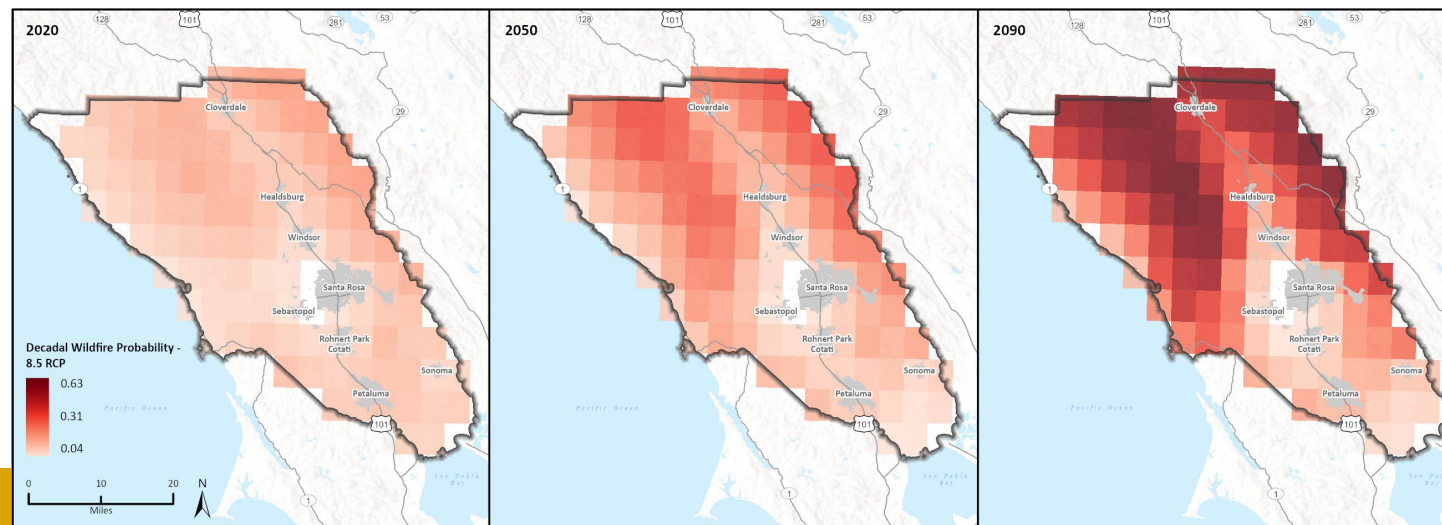
Policy Issue

Wildfire

Issue 1: Wildfire

Background

- Over 400,000 acres burned in Sonoma County since 2015

- Increasing wildfire frequency and severity will result in human and wildlife risk, loss of habitat and agriculture, and loss of available food sources and seed bank

- Habitat loss may not recover depending on the type of land cover that is destroyed in a wildfire and quick succession fires can prevent or delay the recovery of natural systems

Input

- High concern regarding air quality during fire season for both residents and workers

- Improve home hardening and buffers to protect properties

- County needs improved power and communications systems during emergencies

- Concerns regarding the financial burdens fires create

Decadal Wildfire Probability - 8.5 RCP
0.63
0.31
0.04

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Additional data provided by CalAdapt, 2022

Issue 1: Wildfire Impacting Landscapes

Desired Outcome

Prevent unnecessary exposure of people and property to risks from wildland and structural fires, with priority on outdoor workers, shelterless populations, and populations most at risk of exposure during fires

*Note: An "*****" indicates an existing Safety Element goal or objective.*

Proposed Strategies

1. *Use Complete Data
2. *Regulate New Development
3. *Utilize the Sonoma County Hazard Mitigation Plan
4. Improve Post-Fire Relocation and Other Housing Assistance Programs
5. Promote Community Preparation
6. Explore Alternative Fire Prevention Measures
7. Streamline CEQA Review for Fuel Reduction
8. Equitable Resilience Assistance
9. Safeguard Business Continuity

Other Natural Disasters

Policy Issues

Geologic and Seismic Hazards

Flood Resilience

Issue 1: Geologic and Seismic Hazards

Background

- There are four known faults in Sonoma County
    - San Andres Fault
    - Rodgers Creek Fault
    - Healdsburg Fault
    - Mayacamas Fault

- Can threaten life, homes, and hundreds of critical facilities including schools, hospitals, and airports.

Input

- Some concerns were raised regarding earthquakes during the stakeholder interviews. However, this topic was not explored in detail during engagement opportunities

Issue 1: Geologic and Seismic Hazards

Desired Outcome

All community members and emergency service providers in Sonoma County are protected from the impacts of earthquakes and other seismic events to the greatest extent feasible and the County has developed a comprehensive protocol for handling major seismic events.

Proposed Strategies

1. Seismically Retrofit County-owned Facilities
2. Seek Grant Funding for Critical Facility Retrofits
3. Assess Existing Critical Facility Construction
4. Promote Evaluation of Seismic Strengthening
5. Update Seismic Design Standards
6. Utility Line Seismic Strength Requirement
7. Public Education on Seismic Hazards

Issue 2: Flood Resilience

Background

- There is an expected 37% increase in rainfall by the end of the century

- Climate change may cause more intense and frequent flood events resulting in increased
  - Strain on emergency services
  - Stressed water drainage systems
  - Property damage
  - Habitat loss
  - Injuries to people
  - Spread of water-borne disease
  - Mental and behavioral stress
  - Loss of income

Input

- Increased frequency and intensity of floods are of major concern

- Residents have questions regarding the accuracy of FEMA flood maps

- Major hazard events have disproportional impacts on low-income and special needs populations

- Concern regarding the health impacts and trauma resulting from hazard events

- Need for urban areas to be better prepared to handle flooding

Issue 2: Flood Resilience

Desired Outcome

All community members and emergency service providers in Sonoma County are protected from the impacts of flooding to the greatest extent feasible and the County has developed a robust protocol for handling major flooding events.

Proposed Strategies

1. Critical Facility Siting
2. Pursue FEMA Grant Program Funding
3. Require NPDES and LID Standards
4. Utilize Open Space as Floodplains
5. Restore Natural Benefits of Floodplains
6. Explore Rewilding Opportunities
7. Public Education on Flood Resilience

Sea Level Rise (SLR)

Policy Issues

Sea Level Rise
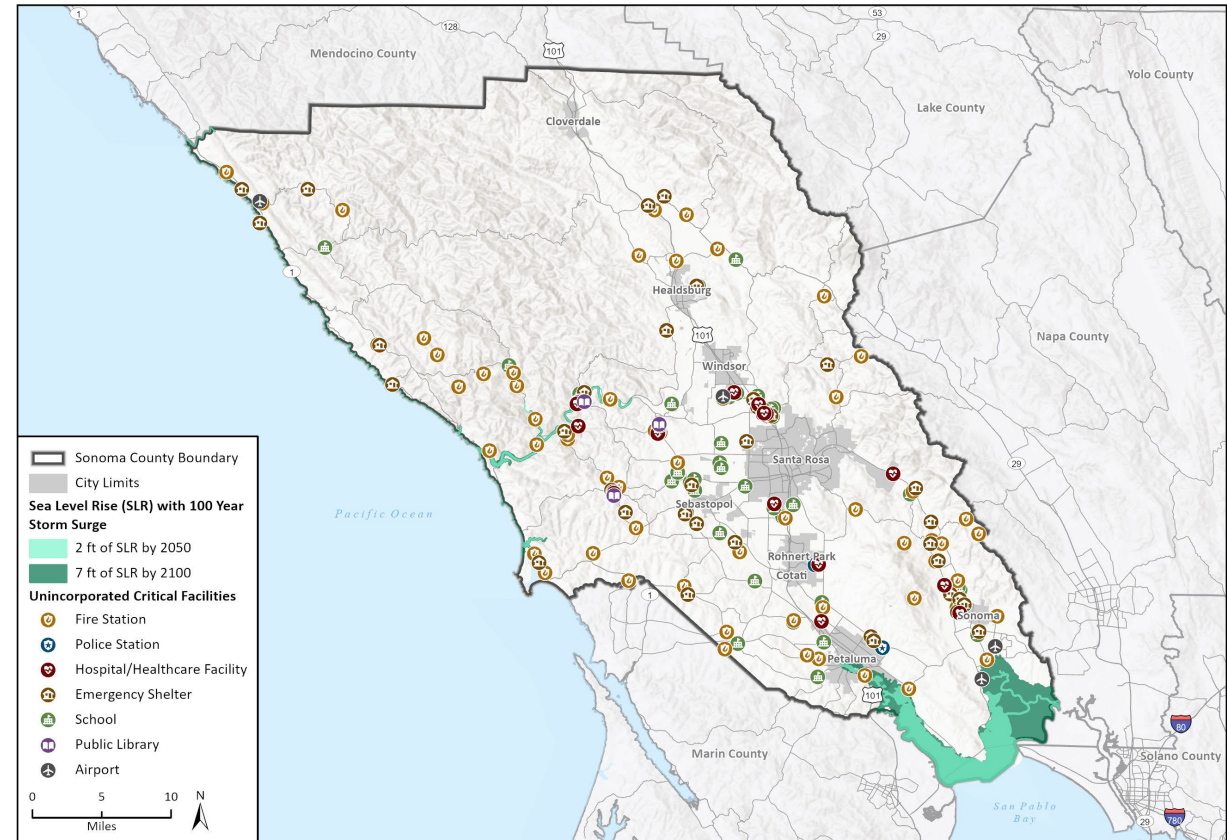
Saltwater Intrusion

Issue 1: SLR and Saltwater Intrusion

Background

- Sea level rise is a significant threat to the safety and well-being of various population groups in Sonoma County

- The direct effects of sea level rise threaten:
  - Natural resources and habitats
  - Housing
  - Beaches due to coastal erosion
  - Critical facilities from flooding
  - Agricultural lands and groundwater from saltwater intrusion

Input

- Climate change can exacerbate major hazards and hazardous conditions

- Concerns regarding the housing stock and SLRs impacts to homes

- Recommend protections for groundwater supplies

Legend:
- Sonoma County Boundary
- City Limits

Sea Level Rise (SLR) with 100 Year Storm Surge
- 2 ft of SLR by 2050
- 7 ft of SLR by 2100

Unincorporated Critical Facilities
- Fire Station
- Police Station
- Hospital/Healthcare Facility
- Emergency Shelter
- School
- Public Library
- Airport

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Additional data provided by Sonoma County, 2022; CoSMoS, 2022.

Safety Element.aprx
Fig 4 Sea Level Rise with Critical Facilities

Issue 1: SLR and Saltwater Intrusion

Desired Outcome

Communities and habitats are resilient to the impacts of sea level rise and losses of all kinds (life, property, economic, ecological, and recreational) are avoided as much as possible, while public safety is protected and resources are prioritized for populations most at risk.

Proposed Strategies

1. Use Web-Based Tools for SLR Projection and Conduct Assessments

2. Adopt Methods to Restore Groundwater Recharge

3. Regulate Groundwater Extraction

4. Implement Local Coastal Plan policies and programs

Environmental Justice Framework

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Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure

Policy Issues

Broadband and Telecommunication Access

Infrastructure & Utility Resilience

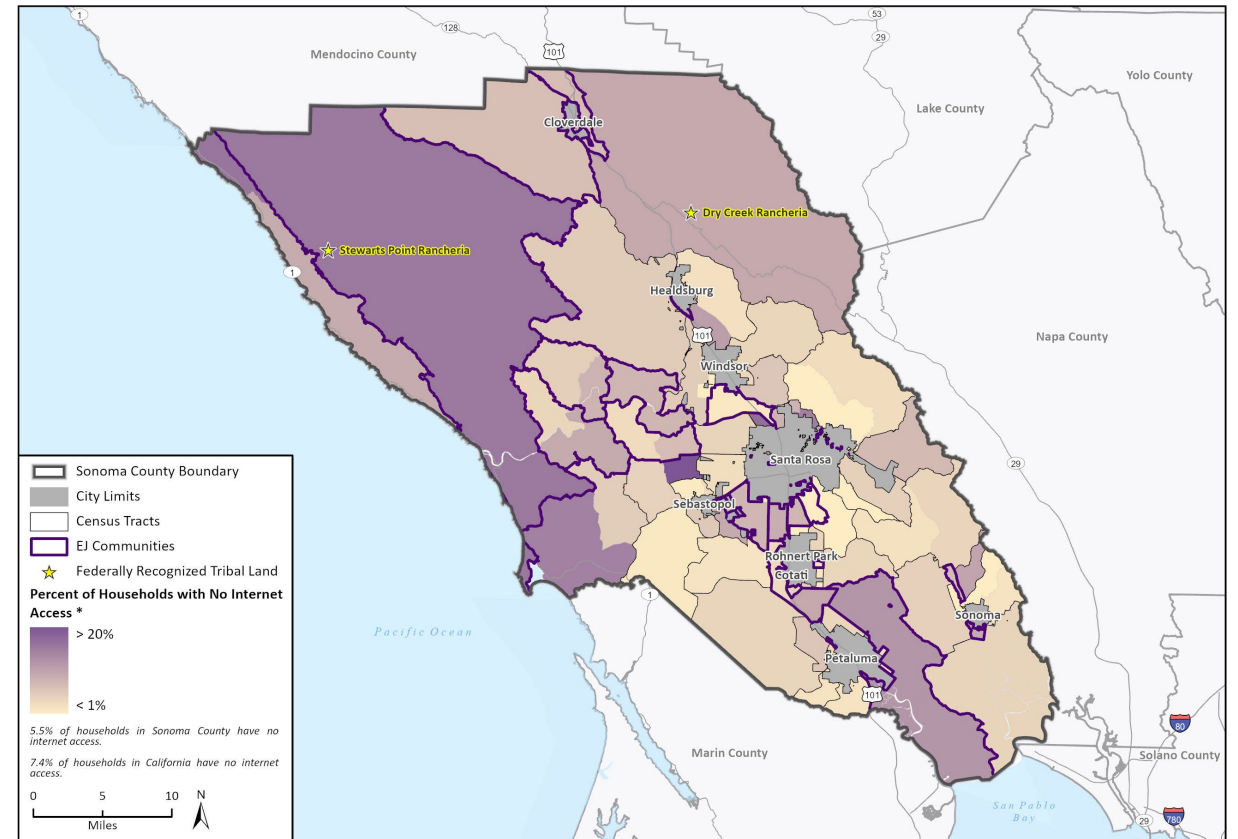Gaps in Active/Public Transportation Service

Issue 1: Broadband and Telecommunication Access

Background

- The County lacks a comprehensive, cohesive, and diverse broadband network

- Underserved communities are usually located in rural areas where wireline deployment can be cost prohibitive

- Damage to communication infrastructure can hinder emergency communications and impact the health and safety of residents

Input

- Many residents experience poor cell reception, loss of power and internet access, lack of access to news during an evacuation, and do not know where to find information

- Need improved systems, namely broadband and electricity

Legend:
- Sonoma County Boundary
- City Limits
- Census Tracts
- EJ Communities
- ☆ Federally Recognized Tribal Land

Percent of Households with No Internet Access *
- \> 20%
- \< 1%

5.5% of households in Sonoma County have no internet access.

7.4% of households in California have no internet access.

0   5   10 Miles

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* This figure was developed using the most recent ACS Census Data. For the purpose of the EJ - Internet Connectivity analysis, 2010 census tract boundaries have been transposed onto the 2020 ACS Census Data.

22-12991 EPS Sonoma Co EJ Tech Report.aprx
Fig 9 Sonoma County Broadband Access

Issue 1: Broadband and Telecommunication Access

Desired Outcome

Improve broadband and telecommunication systems with an emphasis on providing service to low-income communities, those with special needs (elderly, those with mobility issues, etc.), and residents in the rural portions of the county.

Potential Strategies

1. Provide Alternative Channels of Communication

2. Provide Backup Power to infrastructure

3. Identify and Direct Funding to Areas of Greatest Need

Issue 2: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience (Sewer, Roadways, Bridges, etc.)

Background

- County's infrastructure will face significant challenges due to climate change
  - Increased emergency response needs could strain systems
  - Electrical infrastructure could be overwhelmed by peaks in demand
  - Hazard events pose a risk of direct structural damage and evacuation

Input

- Explore alternative power systems such as microgrids

- Increase emergency services, as existing services are understaffed and unable to consistently and appropriately respond to hazards

- Concern regarding utility reliability, particularly water reliability, during and after hazard events

Issue 2: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience (Sewer, Roadways, Bridges, etc.)

Desired Outcome

Transportation and utility systems adequately meet the needs of, and protect the wellbeing of, all community members and emergency personnel in the face of climate change, especially community members most impacted by transportation and utility systems in the face of climate change.

Potential Strategies

1. Assess, Harden, Weatherize, and Track Weatherization of Critical Facilities
2. Address Gaps in Backup Power Generation
3. Maintain Defensible Space Around Critical Infrastructure
4. Prioritize Resilient Road Design
5. Engage and Empower Rural Communities through Self-Sufficiency
6. Identify Funding for Flooding Infrastructure Improvements
7. Prioritize Equity in Capital Improvement Process

Issue 3: Gaps in Service (Active and Public Transportation)

Background

- Sonoma County Vision Zero Action Plan reported that rural areas, equity priority communities, and areas of concentrated poverty are disproportionately impacted by traffic safety concerns
- The county has low rates of commute via active transportation
- As of 2018, approximately 2.1 percent of Sonoma County residents use public transit and 9.7 percent use carpool and rideshare programs

Input

- Residents are particularly concerned about road and intersection safety
- A quarter of General Plan Engagement respondents reported having poor access to transportation
- Transportation goals should align with the County's Vision Zero Action Plan

Issue 3: Gaps in Service (Active and Public Transportation)

Desired Outcome

All residents, especially equity priority communities, rural communities, and areas disproportionately affected by traffic safety concerns, are able to enjoy safe and affordable active and public transportation opportunities through an expansion of in-county and inter-county services in Sonoma County.

Potential Strategies

1. Connect with SCTA to Expand Transit Services
2. Improve Safety and Connectivity of Transportation Networks
3. Encourage Residents to Utilize Existing Transportation Services and Facilities
4. Improve Active Transportation Safety Education
5. Implement SCTA's Vision Zero Action Plan Goals

Healthy Environments (Pollution Burden)

Policy Issues

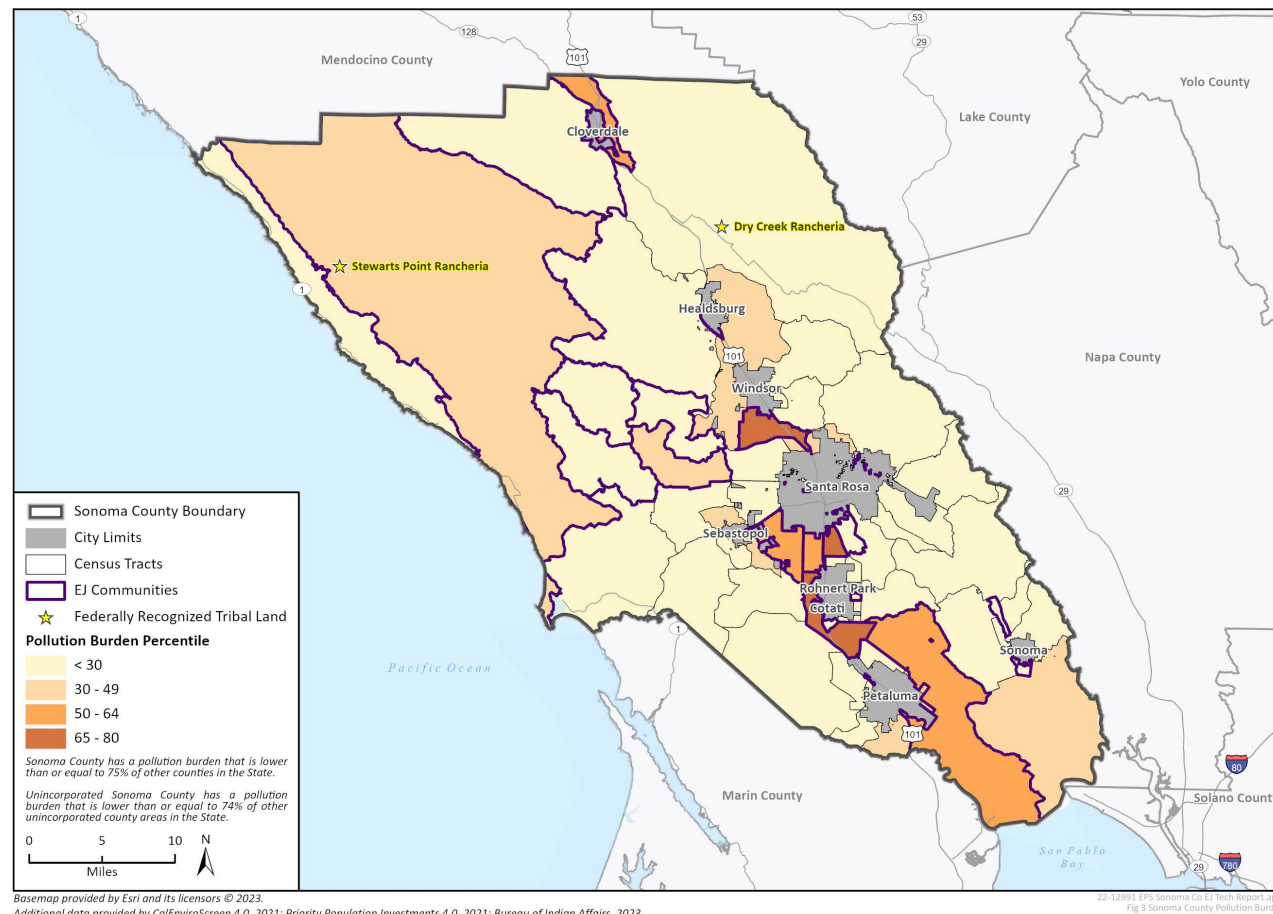Pollution Exposure

Clean Water and Water Stewardship

Issue 1: Pollution Exposure

Background

- 13 EJ Communities score notably high (75th percentile or higher) relative to all other census tracts

- Areas impacted most by solid waste are in the central and southern portions of the county

- Taylor Mountain EJ Community has significant levels of Diesel Particulate Matter

- Russian River Valley, Shiloh South, and Sonoma City South/Vineburg have moderately elevated levels of pesticides

Input

- Protect farmworkers from pollution and provide disaster pay (air quality from wildfires, pesticide exposure, impaired water)

- Include protection of groundwater resources from fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides

- Provide free lead tests to households and remediation if discovered

Legend:
- Sonoma County Boundary
- City Limits
- Census Tracts
- EJ Communities
- ☆ Federally Recognized Tribal Land

Pollution Burden Percentile
- < 30
- 30 - 49
- 50 - 64
- 65 - 80

Sonoma County has a pollution burden that is lower than or equal to 75% of other counties in the State.

Unincorporated Sonoma County has a pollution burden that is lower than or equal to 74% of other unincorporated county areas in the State.

0   5   10   N
Miles

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Additional data provided by CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; Priority Population Investments 4.0, 2021; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.

22-12991 EPS Sonoma Co EJ Tech Report.aprx
Fig 3 Sonoma County Pollution Burden

Issue 1: Pollution Exposure

Desired Outcome

All residents of Sonoma County, especially EJ Communities, are safe from pollution exposure and its effects.

Potential Strategies

1. Site Polluting Sources Away from Communities
2. Require Buffer Zones
3. Green Highways with Native Plants and Trees
4. Develop a County-wide Food Recovery Program to reduce food waste in landfills
5. Partner with Local Agricultural Community Members to Reduce Pesticide Pollution
6. Work with Agricultural Producers to Implement Organic Growing Practices
7. Work with CalTrans to Reduce or Eliminate Pesticide Use Along Roadways
8. Work with Cal/OSHA to Enforce Health and Safety Standards
9. Reduce Pesticide Use on County-owned Properties

Issue 2: Clean Water and Water Stewardship

Background

- EJ Communities in Sonoma County have moderate impacts from impaired water bodies
- Drinking water contamination is not considered impacted
- Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park EJ Community has the highest score for groundwater threats heavily impacted by leaking underground storage tanks (USTs)

Input

- All people should have safe access to drinking water
- Promote and develop a groundwater and well testing and remediation program
- Partner with local organizations to create water stewardship programs

Issue 2: Clean Water and Water Stewardship

Desired Outcome

Achieve safe groundwater and surface water standards in EJ Communities

Potential Strategies

1. Host Cleanup Events
2. Develop a Multi-Lingual Watershed Education Campaign
3. Explore Partnerships for Water Stewardship Programs
4. Minimize Agricultural Spray and Runoff
5. Minimize Roadway Runoff
6. Identify Funding Sources for a Well Testing Program
7. Seek Funding for Water Toxin Removal
8. Develop a Displacement Reduction Program to Incentivize Landlords to Address On-Site Water Issues
9. Identify Strategies to Enforce Water Protection
10. Encourage Residents to Apply for the State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) Replacing, Removing, or Upgrading Storage Tanks (RUST) Program

Healthy Public Facilities and Physical Activity
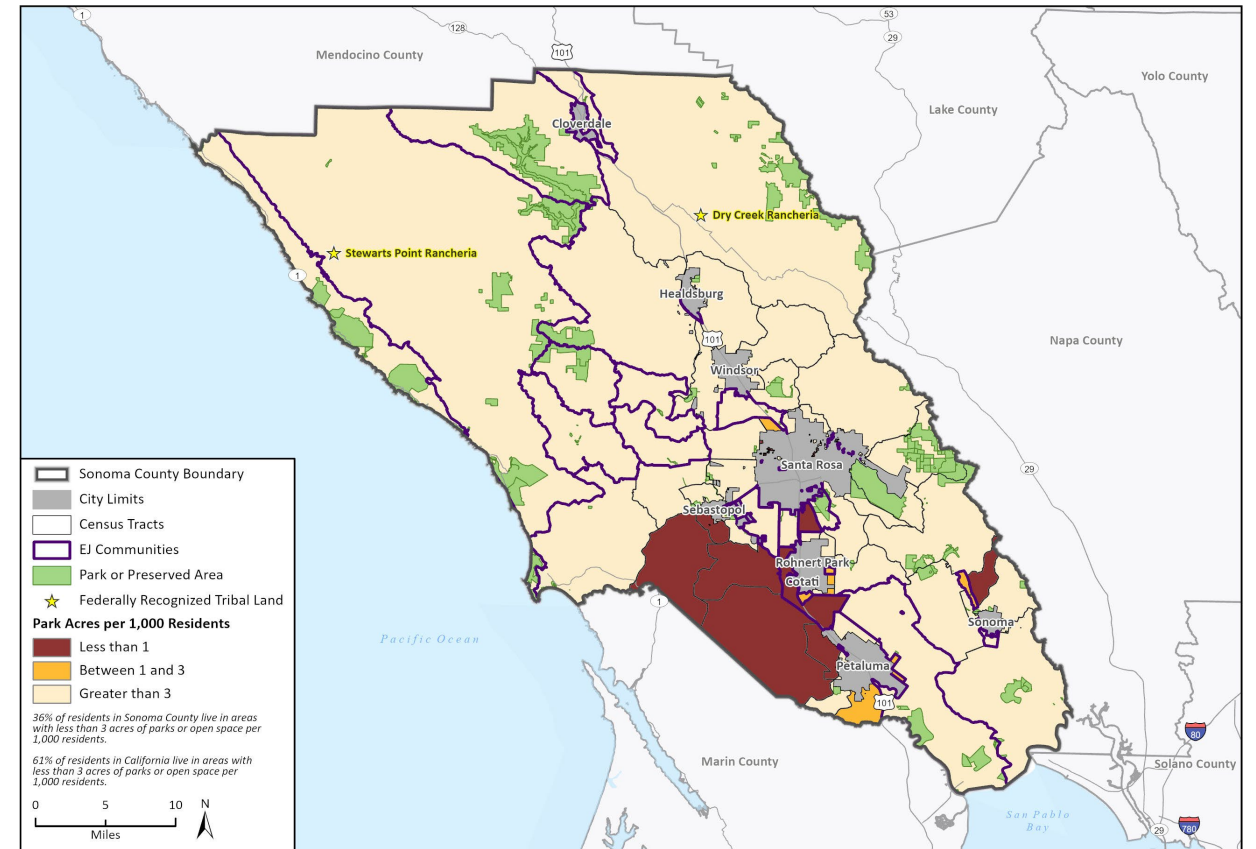
Policy Issue

Parks and Open Space

Issue 1: Parks and Open Space

Background

- Some portions of the County are deficient in recreational open space

- Privately owned land restricts access to these surrounding open space areas

- Lack of developed open space areas may create parking, trail access, and safety challenges

Input

- Make parks more financially accessible

- Improve safety to increase use and enjoyment of parks

- Make parks more physically accessible through improved transportation and accessibility features

Issue 1: Parks and Open Space Access

Desired Outcome

Ensure all residents of Sonoma County have access to safe and affordable parks and open space by prioritizing increased access to safe parks and open space in Sonoma County EJ Communities.

Potential Strategies

1. Evaluate Existing Gaps in Complete Streets system
2. Assess Existing Accessibility Features
3. Identify Areas and Funding for Increasing Tree Canopy
4. Assess and Address Park Safety Concerns
5. Identify Financial Barriers to Park Access
6. Encourage Community Use of Parks
7. Streamline Internal Permitting Process for Park use
8. Offer Permitting Information in Multiple Languages
9. Identify and Convert Underused Rights-of-Way
10. Identify Landowning Partners for Joint Use Agreements

Community Health

Policy Issue

Physical Health

Issue 1: Physical Health

Background

- Areas with poor air quality may increase the risk of respiratory diseases such as asthma

- It is also crucial to address indoor air quality where many people spend most of their time indoors

- The Wright and Bellevue EJ Communities near Santa Rosa have the highest rates of asthma and cardiovascular disease in the County

Input

- Need for consistent health-related resources across jurisdictions to support fair health outcomes

- Conduct outreach, particularly with the working class, to understand the extent of health issues

- Provide accessible green space in high-density areas

Issue 1: Physical Health

Desired Outcome

Improve the public health outcomes, particularly related to air quality, for residents of EJ Communities.

Potential Strategies

1. Raise Awareness through Countywide Programs
2. Seek Funding for At-Home Air Mitigation
3. Create a County-led Home Safety Education Program
4. Develop an Early Detection Asthma Program
5. Broaden Availability of Public Recreation Programs

Healthy Food Access

Policy Issue

Food Insecurity and Food Deserts

Issue 1: Food Insecurity and Food Deserts

Background

- The food insecurity rate in Sonoma County is 8.3%, slightly below California's overall rate of 10.5%

- Between 2011 and 2018, the number of missed meals in Sonoma County was lowest in 2018

- However, there was still a shortfall of 14 million meals in 2018

Input

- There needs to be a greater focus on developing the local food supply

- Smaller local markets are needed

- A clear pipeline of emergency food services needs to be established

- Senior and low-income populations are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity

- Food waste is a large issue

Issue 1: Food Insecurity and Food Deserts

Desired Outcome

Community members have adequate access to nutritional and affordable food options in Sonoma County, and the County has redundancy built into the local food network to provide food under varied circumstances.

Potential Strategies

1. Implement Sonoma County Healthy and Sustainable Food Action Plan
2. Use State Income for Food Hunger Index
3. Bi-Annually Track and Report Meals Missed
4. Streamline Permits for Food-Providing Facilities
5. Establish Partnerships for Community Gardens
6. Develop an "Edible School Yard" Program
7. Create MOUs for Emergency Food Supply
8. Provide Information on Supportive Services
9. Assist with SNAP Application Process
10. Develop a Food Resource Page
11. Prioritize Locally-sourced Food

Safe and Sanitary Housing

Policy Issues

Housing Quality

Household Toxins

Overcrowding

Unique Housing Needs & Homelessness

Issue 1: Housing Quality

Background

- Less than one percent of owner households and just over two percent of renter households lack kitchens or have plumbing deficiencies

- HUD has identified 13 key aspects of quality:
  - Space and security
  - Thermal environment
  - Illumination and electricity
  - Structure and materials
  - Interior air quality
  - Water supply
  - Lead-based paint
  - Access
  - Site and neighborhood
  - Smoke detectors

Input

- Stakeholders stated that farmworkers are particularly impacted by wildfire season and high housing costs in Sonoma County

- Rental and other financial housing assistance is only successful when people are able to locate housing

- Issues of affordability and housing stock are primarily included in the Housing Element

Issue 1: Housing Quality

Desired Outcome

Improve housing quality throughout the County by prioritizing resources in EJ Communities to improve residents' quality of life and ensure that every home has reliable necessities.

Potential Strategies

1. Ensure Homes are Sound and Comfortable
2. Identify Funding for Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors
3. Equip Residents with Repair Information
4. Establish Renter Protections from Retaliation for Requesting Repairs
5. Partner with Legal Aid Groups

Issue 2: Household Toxins

Background

- On average, Sonoma County has lower impacts of children's lead risk from housing than other parts of California

- However, several EJ Communities within the county scored above the threshold (75th percentile or higher according to CalEnviroScreen)

Input

- There is some free legal council available to community members who need advocacy for safe, clean, and comfortable housing

- Pursue grants and other funding to create a program to help landlords pay for water safety upgrades

- Provide more education and engagement about how recycling works to make it more effective

- Policies addressing lead and pesticides are most important

Issue 2: Household Toxins

Desired Outcome

Ensure that community members in Sonoma County, especially EJ community members, can live in safe, toxins free homes for the betterment of their health and happiness.

Potential Strategies

1. Improve Public Education on Household Toxins
2. Provide Information on Safe Products
3. Promote Programs for Home Remediation
4. Pursue Grants for Water Testing
5. Pursue Funding to Assist Landlord and Homeowners with Water Safety Upgrades
6. Identify Partners and Funding for a Home Remediation Program
7. Enforce Code
8. Establish Renter Protections from Retaliation and Displacement

Issue 3: Overcrowding

Background

- The presence of overcrowding may be a significant factor for poor health outcomes
- The Springs neighborhood near the Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West EJ Community has the highest rate of overcrowding, with approximately 29 percent of households deemed to be overcrowded
- The EJ Community in the Jenner/Cazadero area has 16 percent of homes recorded as being overcrowded.

Input

- Participants in the EJ Stakeholder Interviews generally felt that rising housing costs are a barrier to many community members. Some lower-income homes have unsafe conditions and are overcrowded

Issue 3: Overcrowding

Desired Outcome

Aim to address overcrowding by alleviating the stressors that lead towards overcrowded homes such as financial burdens and the lack of a wider variety of housing options particularly for lower-income households.

Potential Strategies

1. Provide Information and Guidance for Rental and Homebuying Assistance

2. Address the Health Impacts of Overcrowding

3. Implement Housing Element

Issue 4: Unique Housing Needs and Homelessness

Background

- The last Point-In-Time Count in Sonoma County, conducted in 2022, was 2,893 people experiencing homelessness

- The most common type of households experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County are those without children

- Among households experiencing homelessness that do not have children, 71.2% are unsheltered

- Individuals experiencing homelessness are commonly challenged by chronic substance abuse, with 1,015 unhoused residents reporting this condition

Input

- Several respondents in the EJ Stakeholder Interviews stated that housing for unsheltered individuals is most successful when paired with other supportive services

Issue 4: Unique Housing Needs and Homelessness

Desired Outcome

Prevent homelessness through a variety of supportive measures and ensure access to supportive programs for existing homeless individuals.

Potential Strategies

1. Prevent Homelessness Through Fair Housing and Eviction Practices and Rent Stabilization Measures
2. Connect Unhoused Families and Individuals with Supportive Services
3. Implement Housing Element

Community Engagement and Language Access

Policy Issues

Systemically Marginalized Communities

County Connections with Community Organizations

Varying Age Demographics

Limited or Non-English Speakers

Intergovernmental relations

Issue 1: Systemically Marginalized Communities

Background

- Historically marginalized groups have, and continue to be, underrepresented in public decision-making processes
- Governmental and institutional systems often do not account for diverse and intersectional identities and lived experiences
- Sonoma County is home to many communities whose identity markers put them on the margins of public decision-making

Input

- Important to reward people for their efforts and provide stipends to nonprofit organizations who are working directly with impacted communities
- EJ Stakeholders expressed concerns about the underrepresentation of BIPOC individuals among elected officials and the perceived treatment of BIPOC residents by some officials and community leaders

Issue 1: Systemically Marginalized Communities

Desired Outcome

Equitable engagement opportunities for people from all systemically marginalized communities within Sonoma County.

Potential Strategies

1. Consider Various Scheduling and Location Options for Engagement
2. Implement the Racial Equity Acton Plan
3. Identify and Provide Stipends for Participants
4. Be Considerate in Police and Emergency Service Officer Presence

Issue 2: County Connections with Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

Background

- Residents in EJ Communities face a variety of systemic challenges when it comes to participating in civic engagement and the government decision-making process

- CBOs can help bridge the gaps in communication, build trust with residents, and remove systemic barriers to increase participation

Input

- Embed CBOs in the County decision-making process

- Improve capacity for CBOs to partner with the County

- Streamline the County contracting system

- Compensate CBOs for partnering and staffing

Issue 2: County Connections with CBOs

Desired Outcome

Remove barriers to accessing local government decision-making processes, while establishing meaningful and long-lasting relationships with Community Based Organizations to increase engagement of EJ communities.

Potential Strategies

1. Establish Criteria Standard for CBO Participation
2. Establish Formal CBO Partnerships
3. Request Feedback from CBOs on CBO Program
4. Engage Other Community Leaders in Engagement

Issue 3: Varying Age Demographics

Background

- The largest age group in Sonoma County is the older adult aged population (55 to 59 years old). Roughly one in every five people is 65 or older.

- 12 EJ Communities have greater than 15% of their population at or above the age of 65, including all 4 EJ Communities within the central west region of the planning area

Input

- Ask for input from community groups and residents

- Age and access to technology, or understanding the use of technology, is a potential barrier

Issue 3: Varying Age Demographics

Desired Outcome

Ensure that residents of all ages and abilities are able to meaningfully participate in the public decision-making process.

Potential Strategies

1. Improve Accessibility for Elderly and Differently Abled Residents
2. Identify Alternative Engagement Activities

Issue 4: Limited or Non-English Speakers

Background

- 11.26% of the County are limited or non-English speakers

- The primary language spoken by persons with limited English proficiency was Spanish

- Numerous census tracts within the planning area also have significant portions of the population who speak "Asian and Pacific Islander Languages" as classified by the U.S. Census. This includes:

  - Mandarin

  - Vietnamese

  - Khmer

Input

- County translated documents aren't always accurate, and some community organizations retranslate documents

Issue 4: Limited or Non-English Speakers

Desired Outcome

Improve the public engagement process by ensuring that residents with varying English proficiency skills and non-English speaking residents are able to participate with the assistance of translated documents and non-English speaking engagement opportunities.

Potential Strategies

1. Provide Adequate Language Services

2. Utilize and Enforce Strategies in the County's Language Access Plan

Issue 5: Intergovernmental Relations

Background

- Federally recognized Tribes with ancestral lands in Sonoma County:
  - Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria
  - Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria
  - Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians
  - Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians
  - Lytton Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians
- The State of California designates all lands under the control of federally recognized Tribes as disadvantaged, which includes Stewarts Point Rancheria, Dry Creek Rancheria, and the Kashia Coastal Reserve within Sonoma County

Input

- Sonoma County has a rich Tribal history
- Significant engagement with Tribal communities, but engagement alone is not enough

Issue 5: Intergovernmental Relations

Desired Outcome

Ensure that the County continues to actively acknowledge, respect, and appreciate Tribal Nations within the County and strive to build lasting governmental relationships with Tribal Nations.

Potential Strategies

1. Publicly Acknowledge Mistreatment
2. Document and Train Staff on Tribal Inclusion
3. Provide Native-led Education
4. Involve Tribal Nations in Planning and Resource Allocation
5. Increase Investment in Intergovernmental Relationships