

Outreach Summary

General Plan Sonoma Community Vision Phase

Sonoma County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Outreach Summary provides an overview of the engagement activities conducted during the Community Vision Phase of General Plan Sonoma, part of the County's effort to update Sonoma County General Plan 2020. From June 2024 through July 2025, outreach efforts engaged 4,023 people and generated 5,413 individual comments through workshops, surveys, focus groups, and community events.

To promote equitable participation, the County used bilingual materials and interpretation, family-friendly formats with meals, partnerships with community-based organizations, and stipends for focus group participants. This input helped shape a shared vision for Sonoma County's future and will inform policy priorities in the next step policy development.

The summary includes details on each outreach activity, how participation was promoted, participant demographics, workshop feedback, and key themes. Input was analyzed by topic to identify the most common and broadly supported community priorities and concerns including those reported in each of the surveys.

Major themes included:

- Preserving rural character and open spaces
- Equitable access to essential services, especially in underserved communities
- Support for diverse and sustainable agriculture and preserving farmland
- Water management, wildfire prevention, open space protection, and biodiversity
- Addressing rural infrastructure needs and minimizing development impacts
- Emphasis on city-centered growth in existing urban areas
- Celebrating cultural diversity and history
- Expanding transportation alternatives to reduce car dependence
- Planning for climate change adaptation

In addition to countywide priorities, residents shared place-specific concerns. The Major Themes section highlights both broad and community-specific input.

These themes informed the Draft Vision and Guiding Principles, which are included at the end of the report and will guide the upcoming Policy Development Phase.



INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

General Plan Sonoma is a project to update Sonoma County General Plan 2020, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2008. This update is needed to reflect major changes over the past two decades, including evolving challenges related to public health, climate change, equity, housing affordability, and land costs, and new State requirements for general plans.



Visioning workshop in Forestville

The process began with the development of a Community Engagement Plan (CEP) designed to ensure inclusive, transparent, and accountable outreach that listens and responds across cultures, languages, and barriers. The CEP set strategies, goals, and tools to engage residents, stakeholders, and decision-makers throughout the year long Community Vision Phase. Two public workshops, one with the

Board of Supervisors (October 15, 2024) and one with the Planning Agency (December 14, 2024), provided opportunities for feedback on the CEP, which was then revised, finalized, and implemented.

From January through June 2025 community engagement included in-person and virtual workshops, open houses, surveys, community events, stakeholder outreach, early tribal contact, and focus groups led in partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs) to reach underserved populations.

This report summarizes outreach activities, how participation was promoted, demographics of participants, feedback on event formats, and major themes that emerged. The County also developed an online outreach dashboard to share key data and outcomes from engagement.

Engagement focused on nine core topics, including accessibility and circulation, agriculture and food, growth management and development, resource protection, and preservation of open space and scenic qualities. Community input on these issues informed the draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, which lay the foundation for the upcoming multi-year Policy Development Phase. Policy development will continue to be shaped by community feedback, ensuring General Plan Sonoma remains grounded in the priorities of those it serves.



Methodology

Engagement efforts resulted in over 5,000 comments, all of which were reviewed to identify major themes. Each of these are organized and grouped to its relevant topic (e.g., growth management and development, open space and natural resources, utilities, etc.). Survey data was also reviewed and responses aligned with the comment themes from outreach events. The resulting major themes represent the most frequently cited and broadly supported key topics identified across all outreach events, providing a clear summary of community priorities and concerns. The compiled list of comments received during the workshops as well as survey summaries and reports are linked in Appendix A at the end of this document.

ENGAGEMENT GOALS

Outreach during the Community Vision Phase met the core goals of the Community Engagement Plan (CEP) and provided valuable lessons to inform and improve future efforts.

The County used a range of methods to raise awareness and encourage participation across its diverse communities, including maintaining the General Plan Sonoma website as a central information hub, mailing 51,799 postcards, posting updates on social media, sending newsletters via the County's listserv, and publishing public notices. A research firm was retained to conduct a statistically significant survey and reached nearly 1,900 residents. The County also partnered with CBOs to help reach underserved populations and organize focus groups with residents who may not participate in traditional engagement activities.

To meet people where they are, the County hosted workshops in an open house format, staffed booths at local events, and provided in-person and virtual engagement opportunities. Materials and interpretation were available in English and Spanish, and outreach efforts were distributed across the county's large geography to improve accessibility. Engagement efforts focused on encouraging participation from groups less likely to attend public meetings, such as young families, low-income households, and other marginalized groups.

Throughout the process, staff adapted activities based on lessons learned, making thoughtful adjustments to increase participation and reduce barriers. All events included clear information about the General Plan and why it matters. Notes from each workshop were made available on the General Plan website to support transparency and are referenced throughout this summary. Input from all outreach activities directly informed the Draft Vision and Guiding Principles, which will guide the upcoming Policy Development Phase.



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Engagement for the Community Vision Phase began in January 2025 and 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 early outreach to tribal representatives in advance of formal consultation which will occur during Policy Development. 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.

To support equitable participation and acknowledge the participants’ time and wisdom, all in-person workshops and meetings included meals and a family friendly activity. Workshops and meetings were conducted in both English and Spanish, with materials provided in both languages, and simultaneous interpretation offered. One workshop and two meetings were held entirely in Spanish. Compensation was also provided for participants at focus group meetings.

A total of 4,023 people were engaged as part of the Community Vision Phase, and 5,413 individual comments were received.

Figure 1, Locations of In-Person Engagement Activities, shows where all in-person engagement activities were held during the Community Vision Phase of General Plan Sonoma. Each engagement activity is further described after the figure. The table below lists each outreach activity with the total number of meetings, timing of the activity, and number of participants and comments. Each activity is also summarized below.

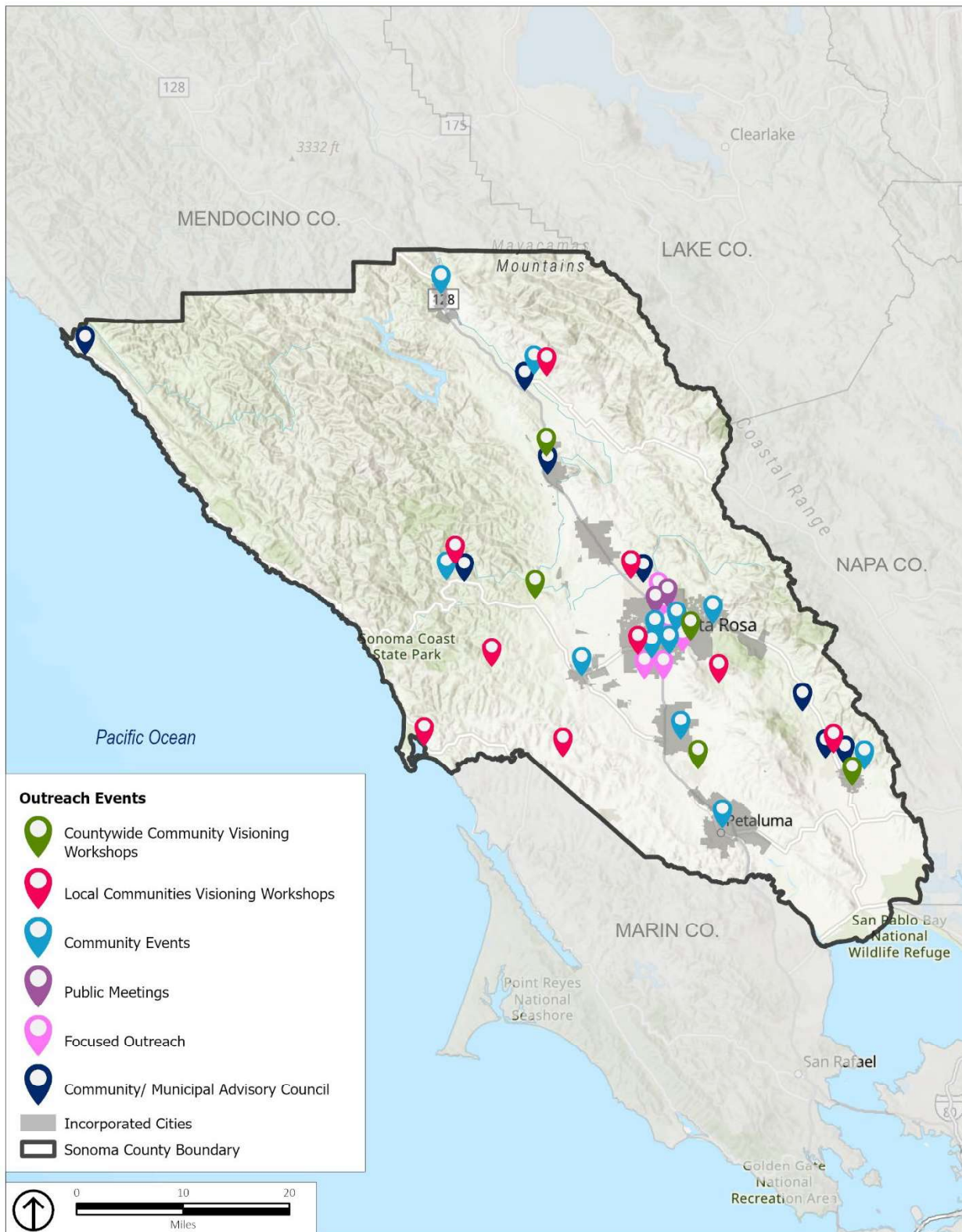


Outreach Details

OUTREACH ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF MEETINGS	TIMING	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS RECEIVED
Countywide Community Visioning Workshops	5 in person 2 virtual	January 2025 to June 2025	283	1,690
Local Communities Visioning Workshops	9 in person 2 virtual	March 2025 to April 2025	206	590
Online Vision Survey	n/a	January 2025 to May 2025	767	767
Mapped Survey	n/a	April 2025 to May 2025	107	107
Community Events	12 in person	March 2025 to May 2025	607	46
Focus Group Meetings	5 in person 1 virtual	May 2025 to May 2025	61	281
Communitywide Survey	n/a	May 2025 to June 2025	1,885	1,885
Public Meetings	10	October 2024 to July 2025	107	47
TOTAL			4,023	5,413



Figure 1 Locations of In-Person Engagement Activities





Countywide Community Visioning Workshops

The Countywide Community Visioning Workshops gathered community input on opportunities and challenges related to the focus topics identified in the Community Engagement Plan to help inform the vision and key policy issues to be considered in the Policy Development Phase. Seven Countywide Community Visioning Workshops were held—five in person and two virtual. Each workshop followed the same format, which included an informational presentation; Q&A period; and small group discussions facilitated by trained staff, with Spanish interpretation available. To support inclusive participation, the in-person workshops also offered dinner and family-friendly activities. The virtual workshops followed a similar format to the in-person workshops, with an informational presentation, Q&A period, and small group discussions in virtual breakout rooms. The virtual workshops were conducted using Zoom.

The small group discussions asked participants to answer the following questions for each of the focus topics:

- *What are important issues regarding the topics listed below in your community or other parts of the county?*
- *What would you like to see happen over the next 20 years regarding the topics listed below in your community or other parts of the county?*

The focus topics were growth management and development; accessibility and circulation; ecology, sustainability, and climate; utilities; economy and tourism; culture, history, and community; protection of natural resources; agriculture and food; and open space and scenic qualities. The General Plan team took notes to capture the feedback from the small group discussions; these meeting notes are available to view in the table below.

A total of 283 people participated in the Countywide Community Visioning Workshops, providing 1,690 comments. The table below lists each workshop with the date, location, and number of participants and comments. Workshop materials were provided in both English and Spanish and interpretation offered at each workshop if needed. Links to the meeting notes are available in Appendix A.

Key Themes

Key themes in the input received during the Countywide Community Visioning Workshops covered a variety of topics, including agriculture, conservation, growth management, mobility, resilience, and infrastructure. Community input related to agriculture centered on a desire to diversify agriculture, both in the type of crops produced and the size of operations (i.e., promoting small farms). Also mentioned was a desire for expanded sustainable agricultural practices, such as organic farming, regenerative practices, and water and soil conservation.



Community members are interested in changing land use designations to preserve agricultural lands, expanding and encouraging agricultural employee housing, and expanding the Williamson Act. Community input on conservation focused on the need for water resource management, wildfire prevention and forest management, open space preservation, and biodiversity protection. Input related to growth management noted the importance of balancing new development with maintaining the rural character of the county and promoting “city-centered growth,” which focuses development in existing urban centers. Input on mobility centered on promoting and expanding transportation methods that offer alternatives to a personal vehicle. Input on resiliency focused on the need to adequately plan for and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Considering evacuation routes during the planning process was often cited, including planning for livestock evacuation and ensuring adequate evacuation routes. Community input on infrastructure revolved around the affordability, accessibility, and reliability of utilities. More details about the major themes from the input received during the workshops are also summarized in the Major Themes section later in this report.

Workshops Details

LOCATION	DATE/TIME	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS
Virtual	January 23 6:00–8:00 pm	35	136
Sonoma Valley High School Library	January 29 6:00–8:00 p.m.	37	223
Forestville Community Library	January 30 6:00–8:00 p.m.	47	320
Healdsburg Community Center	February 3 6:00–8:00 p.m.	20	137
Penngrove Elementary School	February 4 6:00–8:00 p.m.	44	251
Virtual	February 19 12:00–2:00 p.m.	88	485
Santa Rosa La Plaza	June 17 5:00–8:00 p.m.	12	138
TOTAL		283	1,690



Countywide Community Visioning Workshops Photos





Local Communities Visioning Workshops

The Local Communities Visioning Workshops focused on learning about key opportunities and challenges in individual communities throughout the county to inform both the countywide Vision and Guiding Principles and the community-scale visioning that could be further developed in the Policy Development Phase. A total of 11 workshops were held—9 in person and 2 virtual. The in-person workshops were held in an open-house format; participants were welcome to drop in at any time and did not need to stay for the entire session, which opened opportunities for those who did not have time for a long workshop.

For the in-person open house events, participants moved through a series of stations at their own pace, offering feedback on local opportunities, challenges, and priorities to inform the development of General Plan Sonoma. Each station had a map of a different area of the county so that participants could provide localized feedback. One station was also reserved for countywide comments. At each station, participants were asked to identify:

- *What do you like most about your community? What would you like to see supported, preserved, or enhanced as part of this planning effort?*
- *What are the challenges facing your community? What would you like to see changed in the area in order to make it a better place to live and work?*

Participants placed a color-coded sticky note on the maps to denote where their comment applied; green sticky notes were for responses to the first question about likes, and pink was for the second question on challenges. To support inclusive and accessible participation, the workshop offered free dinner, family-friendly activities, and bilingual staff to assist Spanish speakers.

To allow convenient participation for those who might not be able to attend in-person events, the General Plan team held two virtual workshops. In addition, as described further in the Online Vision and Mapped Surveys section, below, the General Plan team prepared an interactive mapping tool that asked similar questions about likes and challenges so that community members could participate in this activity at any time. Users could zoom in to specific locations and drop a pin on where their comment applied. The interactive mapping tool was shared during the virtual workshops, published on the General Plan Sonoma website, and advertised through newsletters.

A total of 206 people participated in the workshops, and 590 individual comments were received. A total of 107 comments were also received on the interactive mapping tool. The table below lists each workshop and its date, location, and the number of participants and comments. Workshop materials provided in both English and Spanish and interpretation offered at each workshop if needed. Links to the meeting notes are available in Appendix A.



Key Themes

Input from these workshops focused on localized issues. Community input for the Bennett Valley area focused on the need to preserve its rural character and scenic value, preferring rural, low-density development that protects scenic landscapes and open spaces, with comments suggesting that development be limited to the area west of Petaluma Hill Road. Input from the Coastal Communities workshops highlighted the need to preserve the coastal communities' unique character, maintain free public access to the coast, keep camping fees affordable, and support the fishing community. Input for the Geyserville and northern 101 corridor centered around infrastructure improvement needs. This includes improving roads and drainage, expanding sidewalks, and enhancing the bus service schedule. Community input for the greater Petaluma, Penngrove, and Two Rock area focused on the need to preserve its rural character and vital resources, with a strong emphasis on protecting the Bloomfield Estero watershed, wetlands, greenbelts, and agricultural lands (including the Dairy Belt).

Community input for the greater Sebastopol, Graton, and Occidental area highlighted concerns with sewer, air traffic noise, and housing. Input for the lower Russian River, Forestville, Guerneville, Monte Rio, and Cazadero area centered on preserving the natural environment and rural character of these communities, with a focus on protecting and restoring creeks (such as the Green Valley and Fife Creeks), water and air quality, open spaces, and agricultural lands. Input for the north Santa Rosa area focused on protecting natural resources, including preserving wildlife corridors and oak woodlands, restoring Mark West Creek, and replanting redwoods along Highway 101. Input in the Sonoma Valley emphasized the need to preserve the area's rural character, agricultural identity, and open spaces; address housing affordability; improve wildfire safety; and ensure water availability. Input from the south Santa Rosa area highlighted the need for safe transportation infrastructure, including sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, public transit access, and traffic calming. More details about the major themes from the input received during the local workshops are also summarized in the Major Themes section later in this report.



Workshops Details

LOCAL AREA	DATE/TIME	LOCATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS
Lower Russian River, Forestville, Guerneville, Monte Rio, Cazadero Area	March 10 6:00–7:30 pm	Guerneville School	8	37
Geyserville, Northern 101 Corridor Area	March 11 6:00–7:30 pm	Geyserville New Tech Academy	19	56
Sonoma Valley Area	March 24 6:00–7:30 pm	Flowery Elementary School	22	36
South Santa Rosa Area	March 25 6:00–7:30 pm	Roseland Elementary School	12	34
North Santa Rosa Area	April 2 6:00–7:30 pm	Mark West Elementary School	13	56
Greater Petaluma, Penngrove, Two Rock Area	April 3 6:00–7:30 pm	Bloomfield Masonic Lodge	48	167
All Communities	April 7 6:00–7:30 pm	Virtual	13	4
All Communities	April 10 12:00–1:30 pm	Virtual	11	8
Coastal Communities, Bodega Bay, Bodega, Valley Ford Area	April 15 6:00–7:30 pm	The Bodega Harbour Yacht Club	12	30
Greater Sebastopol, Graton, Occidental Area	April 16 6:00–7:30 pm	Occidental Community Center	25	101
Bennett Valley Area	April 30 6:00–7:30 pm	Bennett Valley Grange	23	61
TOTAL			206	590



Local Communities Visioning Workshops Photos





Online Vision and Mapped Surveys

To help ensure equitable access to engagement activities, the General Plan team prepared an online vision survey and interactive mapped survey that complemented the in-person workshops. The online vision survey focused on gathering feedback about the community's vision for the future of the county as well as priorities and issues for the General Plan Update. The priorities and issues questions were based on the focus topics discussed during the Countywide Community Visioning Workshops, with questions on growth and development, transportation, climate change, economy, tourism, public utilities, culture, history, community, natural resources, agriculture, food, and open space and scenery. The online vision survey was available from January 22, 2025, through May 19, 2025. A total of 767 survey responses were received. The online vision survey was available in both English and Spanish. A report with the complete survey results from the Online Vision Survey can be found in Appendix A under Survey Summaries and Reports at the bottom of this document.

As described earlier, the General Plan team also created an online interactive mapping tool where users could place comments directly on a map of Sonoma County to identify likes and challenges for specific locations. Participants were encouraged to highlight places, traditions, or features they would like to see supported, preserved, or improved or mark areas they felt needed to change to improve quality of life. Users could label their comment by topic, which displayed in a different color on the map, creating a visual summary of the topics of most concern in certain areas. The topic options included community and culture, jobs and the local economy, housing and neighborhoods, agriculture and food, nature and outdoor spaces, getting around, and public services and utilities. The online mapped survey launched on April 7, 2025, and closed on May 19, 2025. A total of 107 comments were received, which can be found in Appendix A under Survey Summaries and Reports at the bottom of this document.

Community Priorities

The online vision survey included questions that asked participants to rank their top priority for the General Plan on different topics using a scale of 1 to 5, with the higher numbers indicating a higher priority. Participants ranked protecting natural lands, features, and resources highest (4.6), followed by preserving community character, supporting parks and open space, and improving access to healthy foods (each at 4.3). Preparing for hazards (4.2) and enhancing public services and infrastructure (4.1) also ranked highly. Moderate priorities included protecting cultural and historic resources (4.0), improving access to affordable housing and supporting the agriculture industry (both at 3.9), and improving transportation and job opportunities (both at 3.8). Lower priorities included encouraging new development (2.9) and expanding the tourism industry (2.7). Figure 2, *Online Mapped Survey*, shows the location of

Figure 2 Online Mapped Survey





Community Events

Hosting a booth at a community event is an alternate approach for connecting with community members who are not able to or interested in attending a workshop, hearing, or meeting, such as those who are unfamiliar with the planning process, non-English speakers, or people who are too busy with work and/or families to participate. The General Plan team hosted a booth at 12 community events in key locations around the county. At the booth, people were asked to sign up for the County's General Plan mailing list and participate in a vision board dot exercise to identify their top values and challenges; they were also directed to the online vision and interactive mapped surveys. Other activities and materials included the visioning postcard and General Plan Sonoma banner created for the Local Communities Visioning Workshops. The General Plan team also brought youth activities and materials to these events since they tend to draw young families. These included drawing sheets for kids to draw their ideal neighborhood, plus coloring sheets and stickers with the General Plan logo characters. Spanish-speaking staff attended the events where Spanish speakers were expected.

A total of 607 people were engaged during the community events and 46 visioning postcards were completed. The table below lists each community event, its location, and the number of people who stopped by the booth.

Community Priorities

Top choices selected in the vision board dot exercise related to what people value most include preserving open space and scenic areas, supporting local businesses and jobs, keeping the county rural, and supporting farmworkers and the agriculture industry. Top choices selected in the vision board dot exercise related to what issues are most important include expanding housing opportunities; improving trail, bicycle, and transit connections; diversifying agriculture and growing food locally; adapting to the impacts of climate change; providing reliable access to safe drinking water; and sustainability managing water resources. Major themes from the input received during the community events are also summarized in the Major Themes section later in this report.



Vision Board Dot Exercise

Share Your Vision for the Future!

GENERAL PLAN

Sonoma

Envisioning Our Future Together

What do you value most?

Keeping the county rural Vote here	Supporting farmworkers and the agriculture industry Vote here	Focusing growth in cities and urban areas Vote here
Maintaining essential services such as water and sewer in communities Vote here	Supporting local businesses and jobs Vote here	Supporting and preserving local art, culture, and history Vote here
Conserving natural resources, such as trees, wildlife, and plants Vote here	Preserving open space and scenic areas Vote here	Other Vote here

Which issues are most important to you?

Diversifying agriculture and growing food locally Vote here	Expanding housing opportunities Vote here	Improving trail, bicycle, and transit connections Vote here
Providing reliable access to safe drinking water Vote here	Sustainably managing water resources Vote here	Addressing impacts from tourism Vote here
Reducing air, noise, light, and other environmental pollution Vote here	Adapting to the impacts of climate change Vote here	Other Vote here



Community Events Locations and Participation

COMMUNITY EVENT	DATE/TIME	LOCATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Climate Ready Cotati Fair	March 29 10:00–2:00 pm	Cotati SMART Depot	117
Cloverdale Farmers Market	April 13 9:00–1:30 pm	Cloverdale Farmers Market	38
Sonoma Valley Farmers Market	April 18 9:00–12:00 pm	Arnold Field Parking Lot	25
Butter and Eggs Festival Petaluma	April 19 10:00–2:00 pm	Downtown Petaluma	60
Geyserville Town Hall	April 23 6:00–8:00 pm	Geyserville Oriental Community Hall	25
Lola's Market	April 24 10:00–1:00 pm	Lola's Market	8
Apple Blossom Festival Sebastopol	April 26 11:00–6:00 pm	Ives Park	45
Spring Lake Regional Park Tabling	April 29 11:00–2:00 pm	Spring Lake Regional Park	30
Día de los Niños	April 30 2:00–7:00 pm	Old Courthouse Square	50
Roseland Cinco de Mayo Festival	May 5 4:00–9:00 pm	771 Sebastopol Rd, Santa Rosa	84
Safeway Guerneville and D5 office	May 13 10:00–2:00 pm	Safeway Guerneville	25
Sonoma County Pride Festival	May 31 11:00–5:00 pm	Old Courthouse Square	100
Total			607



Community Events Photos





Focus Group Meetings

One of the engagement goals for the Community Vision Phase is to ensure General Plan Sonoma reflects the needs of people who represent the full range of demographic groups, perspectives, and experiences in Sonoma County. This includes engaging with traditionally underrepresented and marginalized communities, including racial and ethnic groups and low-income communities for whom barriers such as language and cultural differences, lack of access to technology and transportation, time constraints, and lack of trust in government may impact participation. To help support this goal, 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 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. The CBOs that assisted with the focus group meetings are:

- California Human Development
- Latino Service Providers
- Sonoma County Vet Connect
- Catholic Charities
- Sonoma County Black Forum
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers

The focus group meetings and demographics of participants are listed in the table below. As participants arrived, they were asked to participate in the visioning board dot exercise used at community events as an icebreaker. Each focus group meeting began with a brief presentation or verbal description of General Plan Sonoma based on the CBO's recommended approach. The meetings centered around the questions below, which were modified as needed based on the CBO's recommendation:

- *What do you love most about your community?*
- *If you could change one thing about your community, what would it be?*
- *What are your hopes for the future of your community, and what role would you like the County to play in making that happen?*
- *What are the key challenges your community faces? What actions can Sonoma County take to better support your community?*
- *How can Sonoma County ensure that all community members have access to essential services, like housing, healthcare, education, and transportation?*



- *What are the best ways to engage your community in the General Plan Update process, and what would make it easier for folks in your community to participate in the process?*

Five in-person and one virtual focus group meetings were held in collaboration with the CBO partners. A total of 61 participants attended, providing a total of 281 comments. The table below lists the details for each meeting, including its CBO partner, participant demographics, meeting date and location, number of participants and comments, and a link to meeting notes. Links and details for meeting materials are also provided below in Appendix A. Meetings were held in convenient, accessible locations for each group. Two sessions were conducted in Spanish based on the language needs of the community to ensure inclusive participation.

Key Themes

In our discussions with underserved populations during the Focus Group Meetings, some community members feel unseen, unheard, and unwelcome; these communities want the County to celebrate its diversity, lift their voices, and provide the resources they need to thrive. Equitable access to essential services was among the most prominent themes in these discussions, with an emphasis on removing disparities and improving access to healthcare, including mental health care and maternal care, as well as access to affordable housing. Community members feel that more resources and services in general are needed to support low-income residents, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, people with developmental disabilities, and people of color, and these resources and services should be coordinated and simplified to improve access.

Community members would also like to ensure equitable access to quality transportation options, education and youth programming, and jobs and economic opportunities, including re-entry programs for formerly incarcerated people. Participants cited the need for improved communication from the County government, including improvements to emergency notifications, announcing Public Works projects with sufficient notice, and holding community meetings at convenient and accessible times of day. Ensuring equity in investments in capital improvement projects and other public infrastructure was also identified as a top concern. Finally, to build trust in the planning process, community members need to see real outcomes and results from these processes. See Appendix A for detailed meeting notes from each focus group meeting for a comprehensive list of comments received. Major themes from the input received during the Focus Group Meetings are also summarized in the Major Themes section later in this report.



Focus Group Meetings Details

ORGANIZATION	DEMOGRAPHICS	DATE AND LOCATION	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS
California Human Development	Farmworkers Day laborers Low-income Residents Age range between 32 and 58	May 8 4:30–6:00 pm California Human Development	16	47
Latino Service Providers	Latine/a/o residents Spanish speaking Age range between 25 and 80	May 13 5:30–7:00 pm The Bridge Community Church	11	52
Sonoma County Vet Connect	Veterans	May 15 11:00–12:30 pm Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building	6	42
Catholic Charities	People with a lived experience of homelessness People with developmental disabilities Low-income residents Low-income seniors	May 16 1:00–2:30 pm The Palms Inn Santa Rosa	10	36
Sonoma County Black Forum	Black residents	May 16 5:30–7:00 pm coLAB	14	51
Community Alliance with Family Farmers	Farmers	May 22 4:00–5:30 pm Virtual	4	53
TOTAL			61	281



Focus Group Meetings Photos





Communitywide Survey

A communitywide survey was conducted as part of the outreach activities for the Community Vision Phase of General Plan Sonoma to gather an objective, statistically significant measure of residents' opinions on key issues to be addressed in the Policy Development Phase. A total of 1,885 people residing in Sonoma County, including unincorporated areas and incorporated cities within the county, responded to the survey. Of the total participants who completed the survey, 73 percent live in incorporated cities and 27 percent live in unincorporated areas in the county. The survey was administered in English and Spanish between May 29 and June 16, 2025. Of the total participants, 92 percent completed the survey in English and 8 percent completed the survey in Spanish.

The survey used a mixed-method design to solicit responses, including email, text, and telephone outreach. Data collection was conducted via telephone and online. To ensure statistically reliable results for both the county overall and unincorporated areas, the study oversampled unincorporated residents and then weighed the data to reflect actual population proportions based on the latest Census estimates. The section below identifies some of the key themes from the communitywide survey but is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all the key findings and survey results. A detailed Communitywide Survey Summary summarizes key findings from the survey responses, questions asked, and graphs and tables that show the survey responses for each question. That report can be found in Appendix A under Survey Summaries and Reports at the bottom of this document .

Key Themes

Per the communitywide survey, residents in the county value preserving the character of Sonoma County, with a majority rating overall quality of life as excellent or good (77 percent). In addition, residents view the county favorably as a place to shop and dine, recreate, and raise a family (72 percent, 70 percent, and 62 percent, respectively). Residents also have favorable opinions regarding natural features – open green space, mountains, nature, parks and recreation areas, and agricultural/rural areas – within the county.

Of the aspects that Sonoma County residents would seek to change, providing more affordable housing was the most common response (16 percent). In addition, residents also noted aspects such as reducing the cost of living, improving streets, roads, and infrastructure (11 percent), addressing homeless issues and poverty (11 percent), limiting growth and development and preserving the small-town feeling (9 percent), improving public transportation (8 percent), and reducing taxes and fees (6 percent) as areas for improvement.



When asked to prioritize 18 potential General Plan goals or objectives, residents gave top priority to repairing and maintaining public utilities and infrastructure and preparing for wildfires, flooding, drought, and other natural disasters (both 95 percent), followed closely by preserving open space, habitat, creeks, and natural resources (93 percent), improving the local economy and job opportunities (91 percent), protecting farmland and agricultural lands from being developed (89 percent), reducing traffic congestion and improving transportation options including biking, walking, and transit (87 percent), and improving sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian safety, signs, and infrastructure to encourage more walking (79 percent).

For other key findings and to view the survey response data, please refer to the communitywide survey summary report.

Public Meetings

The General Plan team attended a public meeting with the Board of Supervisors on October 15, 2024, to gather feedback on the Community Engagement Plan, including the focus topics for discussion highlighted in the plan. The team also presented the Draft General Plan 2020 Audit Memorandum, which reviewed General Plan 2020 and the County’s area and specific plans, design guidelines, and Local Coastal Plan, and recommended changes to the General Plan to ensure compliance with State law, consistency across all planning documents, elimination of redundancies, and that it reflects current conditions. The General Plan team also attended a public meeting with the Sonoma County Planning Agency on December 19, 2024, to gather feedback on the same materials. Materials prepared for both meetings included a presentation, staff report, public notice, and the Community Engagement Plan and General Plan Audit. All materials, except for the General Plan Audit, were available in English and Spanish. A total of 47 public comments were submitted before or since the Board and Planning Agency meetings which are summarized in the General Plan Scope Report as they relate to the General Plan and the audit that was conducted.

In addition to the Board of Supervisors and Planning Agency meetings, the General Plan team attended public meetings with community/municipal advisory councils and commissions to spread the word about General Plan Sonoma, share what was heard from their local communities, and welcome additional feedback. A customized presentation was prepared for each meeting that included a brief overview of the project and examples of feedback received so far from each community. The presentation slides were available in both English and Spanish. The table below includes the meeting details and number of participants. Links to the meeting agenda’s and those with available meeting minutes are available in Appendix A.



Public Meetings Details

PUBLIC MEETING	DATE/TIME	LOCATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Board of Supervisors	October 15, 2024 1:45 pm	Board of Supervisors Chambers	5
Planning Agency	December 19, 2025 12:00 p.m.	Permit Sonoma	9
Mark West Citizens Advisory Council	May 14, 2025 6:00 p.m.	Mark West School District Office, The Learning Center	7
Sonoma Valley Community Advisory Commission	May 28, 2025 6:30 p.m.	City of Sonoma Council Chambers	27
Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council	June 12, 2025 5:30 p.m.	West County Services Center	16
North Sonoma Valley Advisory Council	June 17, 2025 5:30 p.m.	Mayflower Hall	10
Dry Creek Valley Citizens Advisory Council	June 19, 2025 6:00 p.m.	Healdsburg Fire Station Training Room	5
Springs Municipal Advisory Council	July 9, 2025 6:30 p.m.	Sonoma Valley Unified School District Office	9
Sonoma County Coast Municipal Advisory Council	July 17, 2025 5:30 p.m.	Del Mar Recreation Center	10
Geyserville/Alexander Valley Council	June 23, 2025 5:30 p.m.	Northern Sonoma County Fire Station	9
TOTAL			107



Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging individuals and organizations who are directly affected by the implementation of the General Plan is a key component of the community engagement process. The Community Engagement Plan identified a range of stakeholders for the General Plan Update, including community organizations, local advisory councils, chambers of commerce, homeowners' associations, realtors, major employers, school districts, special districts, and other key partners. On March 13, 2025, the General Plan team held a virtual stakeholder meeting. The team reached out directly to stakeholders to invite them to the meeting. Though only three stakeholders attended the meeting, the General Plan team followed up with other stakeholders to inform them about upcoming engagement opportunities.

To support stakeholder engagement efforts, the General Plan team developed and distributed an outreach toolkit, which is described in detail in Appendix A. The toolkit materials provided information about General Plan Sonoma and encouraged stakeholders to share them within their community networks. The materials were available in both English and Spanish. It will be important to expand stakeholder engagement efforts during the Policy Development Phase of General Plan Sonoma to ensure these important voices and connections to community networks are incorporated. Links to the outreach toolkit materials are provided in Appendix A.

Tribal Outreach

There are five federally recognized Tribes in what is now known as Sonoma County: the 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, and Lytton Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians. There is also one tribal community who is not currently federally recognized: the Mishewal Wappo. Consultation with tribes during General Plan Sonoma is an important part of the update process. During the Community Vision Phase, Permit Sonoma Staff conducted initial outreach to tribal representatives to share information and invite participation early on in the process in advance of the formal consultation process, which will proceed in the Policy Development portion of the update. Engagement with the Tribes will follow the Brief on Intergovernmental Relations with Native Nations prepared by the County's Office of Equity.



GETTING THE WORD OUT

The General Plan team used the following materials, channels, and avenues to inform the public about engagement activities and distribute information during the Community Vision Phase of General Plan Sonoma.

- General Plan Sonoma Website.** The General Plan team created and maintained a [website](#) to serve as the central hub for all information related to the General Plan Update. The website provides background information on what a general plan is as well as the General Plan topics, planning process, community engagement activities, project schedule, and frequently asked questions. All major resources developed for the project are available on the website, such as the Community Engagement Plan, outreach toolkit, and a sign-up form for the project email list. The online survey and interactive mapping tool were published on the website when they were open. All content was made available in both English and Spanish.
- Mailers.** Distributed to 51,799 recipients, the mailers provided information about General Plan Sonoma, announced upcoming workshop dates, and encouraged residents to sign up for the mailing list to receive ongoing updates about the General Plan process. The mailers were distributed in January 2025, ahead of the countywide community visioning workshops.
- County Newsletters.** The General Plan team sent out email newsletters through the County's email list to inform the community about upcoming engagement activities and encourage them to participate. The County's email list has 2,660 people registered as of June 24, 2025. A total of 13 newsletters were sent throughout the Community Vision Phase. The newsletter was available in English and Spanish to help maximize access.



General Plan Mailer



- **Social Media.** The County used its Instagram and Facebook social media accounts to connect and engage with community members online. The General Plan team made regular posts on these accounts in English and Spanish to update the public about upcoming opportunities to participate. The General Plan team made 22 social media posts during the process.
- **Community Organizations.** The General Plan team collaborated with CBO partners to support participation from underserved populations during the focus group meetings. CBOs also helped to spread the word about other engagement activities and encourage participation.



Social Media Post

- **Public Notices.** Permit Sonoma Staff issued notices in English and Spanish to inform the public about the Board of Supervisors and Planning Agency meetings.

DEMOGRAPHICS

To monitor how effectively the General Plan team reached target audiences identified in the Community Engagement Plan, the team collected voluntary demographic information from participants of the online vision survey and communitywide statistically significant survey. This helped to help measure the representation of target audiences and demographic groups from both surveys. Demographic data was not collected during the workshops due to sensitivity concerns over sharing this data; however, this approach could be considered further during the Policy Development Phase.

The following describes the demographic results from the online vision survey and communitywide statistically significant survey and compares it to the countywide demographics. For the full demographic data from each survey, please see Appendix A at the bottom of this document.

Ensuring General Plan Sonoma reflects the needs of people who represent the full range of demographics and voices of all Sonoma County residents will continue to be an important part of the update process.



Residency and Homeownership

According to 2020 U.S. Census data, approximately 60 percent of the occupied housing units in the county were owner-occupied and 40 percent were renter-occupied. Of the 98 percent of the participants who responded to the question in the online vision survey that asks them to describe what type of stakeholder they are, approximately 86 percent were Sonoma County residents, and 68 percent were homeowners. This indicates a need for outreach to renters. Of the 99.6 percent of participants in the communitywide survey who responded to the question about the number of years they have lived in the county, approximately 68 percent have lived in the county for 15 years or longer. Of the 97.2 percent of participants in the communitywide survey who responded to the question about homeownership status, approximately 60 percent were homeowners.

Age

According to 2020 U.S. Census data, 35 percent of the county population is 55 years or older. Of the 96 percent of participants in the online vision survey who responded to the question about their age group, 63 percent were over 55 years old which indicates a need to engage other age groups in the county. Of the 96.5 percent of participants in the communitywide survey who responded to the question about their age group, approximately 40 percent were 55 years or older.

Race and Ethnicity

According to 2020 U.S. Census data, approximately 63 percent of the county population is White, 15 percent is Some Other Race, and 14 percent is Two or More Races. A smaller percentage of the population is Asian (5 percent), American Indian and Alaska Native (2 percent), Black or African American (2 percent), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.4 percent). Of the total county population included in the U.S. Census data, approximately 29 percent is Hispanic or Latino and 71 percent is Not Hispanic or Latino.

Of the 88 percent of participants in the online vision survey who responded to the question about their race and ethnicity, approximately 78 percent were White or Caucasian, with a smaller percentage of participants that identified as Hispanic or Latino (6 percent), biracial or multiracial (5 percent), Asian (2 percent), Black or African American (1 percent), Middle Eastern or North African (0.7 percent), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.3 percent), and American Indian or Alaska Native (0.3 percent).



Of the 96.9 percent of communitywide survey participants who responded to the ethnicity question, approximately 59 were Caucasian/White and 29 percent were Latino/ Hispanic, with smaller percentage of participants identifying as Asian American (4 percent), African American/Black (2 percent), and Mixed/Other (3 percent).

Household Income

According to 2023 American Community Survey 5-year estimate data, 52 percent of households in the county have an income of \$100,000 or more. Of the 82 percent of participants in the online vision survey who responded to the question that asks about annual family or household income, 56 percent have an annual income of more than \$100,000. Of the 83.8 percent of participants in the communitywide survey who responded to the question about income, approximately 44 percent have an annual income of \$100,000 or more. It is important to continue to engage the low-income population as part of General Plan Sonoma.

Focused Outreach to Underserved Populations

As described throughout this report, the General Plan team strategically targeted areas and events throughout the county with the goal of reaching underserved populations. During the focus group meetings, the team partnered with CBOs that serve people from diverse backgrounds, including farmworkers, day laborers, low-income residents, Latine/a/o residents, Spanish-speaking residents, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, people with developmental disabilities, Black residents, low-income seniors, and farmers. A total of 61 attended the focus group meetings. A Spanish-language workshop was held in partnership with La Plaza on June 17, 2025, and 12 people attended. The General Plan team also attended cultural and celebratory community events, including Cinco de Mayo, Dia de los Niños, and Pride. The General Plan team engaged with 234 participants at these three community events. During the in-person and virtual workshops, all workshop materials—informational materials, presentations, and surveys—were available in both English and Spanish, and Spanish interpretation was provided. In-person workshops also provided family-friendly activities and dinners to help support equitable participation and attendance by underserved populations. The online vision survey and interactive mapping tool were also available in Spanish.



WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

During the in-person and virtual workshops, participants received a voluntary survey to provide feedback on the workshop format and suggest improvements to consider for future events. The General Plan team received 125 completed surveys. The results of the survey can be viewed [in](#) Appendix A under Survey Summaries and Reports. Most respondents expressed a preference for in-person workshops, but some prefer virtual meetings, and others did not have a preference. Respondents learned about the workshops through the County's email, newsletter, and/or mailer. Some people heard about the workshop through a friend or family member, posts on social media, or the County's website. Many respondents found the workshops to be great or good overall. Facilitators were praised for doing a good job and being organized. Small breakout discussions were appreciated by some of the respondents. Suggestions for improvements for future engagement activities included sharing the materials for the workshop ahead of the meetings, ensuring the sound quality at the venue makes it easy for people to hear, posting signs outside and near the venues so people can find the meetings, and encouraging participation by underserved populations at these meetings to ensure their voices are heard. There was some uncertainty about the format of the open house events, with some people preferring a traditional workshop format. Also, participants expressed a strong desire to know how their feedback will be used as part of the General Plan Update process.

OUTREACH DASHBOARD

The General Plan team developed and published an [outreach dashboard](#) to visually summarize the engagement activities that were completed as part of the Community Vision Phase. The dashboard includes maps that show the locations of the activities, the number of people engaged and individual comments received, major themes in the input, and links to the workshop materials. It breaks down the information by the type of engagement activity: Countywide Community Visioning Workshops, Local Communities Visioning Workshops, community events, focused outreach, online vision survey, and mapped survey. The outreach dashboard is available in English and Spanish. When a specific event or location is clicked on the map, a pop-up window appears with data, such as event attendance and number of comments received, and direct links to workshop materials, such as presentations, summaries, and handouts. The dashboard is not meant to be static; rather, it includes regular updates to reflect the latest engagement data. It is meant to be a centralized tool to keep the community informed and demonstrate how public input is documented and considered throughout the planning process.



MAJOR THEMES

Following is a summary of the major themes and feedback provided by the community throughout all engagement events, including the Countywide Community Visioning Workshops, Local Communities Visioning Workshops, online vision survey and mapped survey, community events, focus group meetings, communitywide survey, and other meetings. This section summarizes the major themes in two sections: 1) **Key Themes**, which describes the major themes heard in the input that apply countywide, and 2) **Local Themes**, which highlights local themes from input received during the Local Communities Visioning Workshops as well as any other input that focused on local communities. The summary in this section captures major themes in the comments but is not an exhaustive list of all input received. For a complete list of the individual comments received, see the meeting notes links provided under the outreach activities.

Key Themes

- **Vision.** Most input related to the vision for the county's future focused on preserving the county's core identity by maintaining its rural character and open spaces. Participants noted that development should be near existing urban areas and incorporated cities, where infrastructure is best suited to accommodate growth. The need for infrastructure improvements is also a major concern, for both public utilities and roads. Preparing for the impacts of climate change and climate events is a frequent suggestion, and resiliency planning spans multiple themes. There is also a desire for the General Plan to be inclusive and community-centric, to focus on improving the quality of life for existing residents and increasing opportunities for future generations to remain in the county, with a strong emphasis on providing more affordable housing. Diversifying economic sectors, preserving agricultural lands, and access to essential services are also noted as priorities. A majority of communitywide survey respondents seek to preserve Sonoma County as an area with a high overall quality of life. In particular, respondents highlighted natural spaces such as open green spaces, mountains, parks, recreational facilities, agricultural and rural areas as what they enjoy most about the County. In noting this, however, respondents also noted the need to make the County more affordable and accessible through more affordable housing and by reducing the cost of living.
- **Equity.** In our discussions with underserved populations, some community members feel unseen, unheard, and unwelcome; these communities want the County to celebrate its diversity, lift their voices, and provide the resources they need to thrive. Equitable access to essential services was among the most prominent themes in these discussions, with an emphasis on removing disparities and improving access to healthcare, including mental



health care and maternal care, as well as access to affordable housing. Community members feel that more resources and services in general are needed to support low-income residents, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, people with developmental disabilities, and people of color, and these resources and services should be coordinated and simplified to improve access. Community members would also like to ensure equitable access to quality transportation options, education and youth programming, and jobs and economic opportunities, including re-entry programs for formerly incarcerated people. Participants cited the need for improved communication from the County government, including improvements to emergency notifications, announcing Public Works projects with sufficient notice, and holding community meetings at convenient and accessible times of day. Ensuring equity in investments in capital improvement projects and other public infrastructure was also identified as a top concern. Finally, to build trust in the planning process, community members need to see real outcomes and results from these processes. These sentiments were also noted in the communitywide survey, with a majority of respondents noting the General Plan Update should prioritize access to fresh and healthy foods, provide a transparent and equitable planning process, and improve the local economy and job opportunities.

- **Agriculture.** Over 63 percent of the online vision survey respondents selected “supporting and expanding the agricultural industry” as a top priority for the General Plan Update. Community input related to this topic centered on a desire to diversify agriculture, both in the type of crops produced and the size of operations (i.e., promoting small farms). Also mentioned was a desire for expanded sustainable agricultural practices, such as organic farming, regenerative practices, and water and soil conservation. Community members are interested in changing land use designations to preserve agricultural lands, expanding and encouraging agricultural employee housing, and expanding the Williamson Act. Providing additional opportunities to monetize agriculture and promote food sufficiency were also mentioned, including additional support for farmers markets, farm stands, and community events. In our focus group meetings with farmers, they spoke of the need to incentivize local agriculture and ease the entry into farming, including through subsidies; policies that reduce the cost of agricultural land; streamlined permitting processes; increasing opportunities for agriculture-supportive industries; incentivizing businesses to buy local agricultural products; and policies that allow farmers to quickly and easily adapt to changing climate, economic, and social conditions. Communitywide survey respondents also expressed similar views on protecting farmland and agricultural lands from being developed, with 88 percent of respondents stating the General Plan should prioritize protecting these areas.



- **Conservation.** Community input on conservation focused on the need for water resource management, wildfire prevention and forest management, open space preservation, and biodiversity protection. Promoting water recycling and rain capture, expanding groundwater monitoring, and balancing water usage across all sectors were noted as potential water resource management strategies. Prescribed burns, creating firebreaks, and promoting fire safe practices on privately owned land were among the more prominent wildfire prevention and forest management suggestions. Expanding conservation easements was a popular method to preserve open spaces and agricultural lands throughout the county. To that end, many comments noted a desire to balance development and minimize its impact on natural resources. Among respondents of the online vision survey, there was significant support for protecting natural lands, features, and resources, such as creeks and trees, with over 73 percent of respondents ranking resource conservation as a top priority for the General Plan Update. Likewise, 93 percent of communitywide survey respondents noted the preservation of open spaces, habitat, creeks and natural resources as a “high priority” or “medium priority”.
- **Rural Character.** This key theme captures input about rural communities and preserving rural lands. The word “rural” came up often during the engagement activities. The community would like to retain the rural character of the county, address infrastructure and service deficiencies within rural communities, and minimize the impacts of new development on established communities. The need for improvements to roads and utilities infrastructure to improve the quality of life for residents was often mentioned. Residents are also eager to retain dark skies in rural areas and concerned about how tourism, including short-term rentals and vacation homes, are affecting their communities. Approximately 80 percent of the online vision survey respondents stated that “preserving the character of my community” was a top priority for the General Plan Update. Additionally, respondents from the communitywide survey noted open green space, mountains, and nature as the top selection for preservation in the future.
- **Development.** Community input related to development noted the importance of balancing new development with maintaining the rural character of the county. Growth should be focused on areas that are best able to handle development, such as those near established urban centers and incorporated cities, where there is adequate infrastructure. There is strong support for infill development. Amongst the types of development sought by the community, housing was the most requested land use during the community events, as demonstrated by the stickers on the vision boards. Residents would like the County to address the housing shortage, including by providing affordable diverse housing types and addressing the impacts of vacation rentals. Managing development through building design, housing types, and concurrent improvements to public infrastructure were also



highlighted by the community. Participants would like the County to ensure that development is placed and designed to be sensitive to the environment and natural hazards, such as by planning around fire zones and preserving greenbelts. Comments also noted that the senior population is increasing faster than other demographic groups, which reflects a need for increased access to senior housing services and support. A majority of communitywide survey respondents noted there is “too little” affordable housing in the County, specifically noting a lack of housing affordable to middle-income families, low-income families, and seniors.

- **Community.** Input related to community priorities centered on celebrating and preserving the county’s diverse culture and history. Public art installations, cultural institutions, and additional social spaces were ideas identified by the community, who seek additional support for art in the county in general. In sharing the history of each community, several respondents noted a desire to showcase different cultures that have contributed to the history, such as highlighting the influence of Latine/a/o and Native American communities, supporting the LGBTQ+ community and spaces, and providing additional opportunities for multilingual engagement. There is a desire to foster community connections and inclusivity while prioritizing the social well-being of residents and addressing community challenges. This is also reflected with the results of the communitywide survey, where 39 percent of respondents stated there are “too little” spaces where the community can gather and socialize, 33 percent stated there are “too little” recreation facilities and public art, and 28 percent stated there are “too little” cultural centers currently in Sonoma County.
- **Economy.** Community input related to the economy focused on the need to diversify industries in the county. Additional support to expand economic diversification would improve the county’s economic outlook so that it does not rely on a single, dominant industry. Participants suggested that the County undertake a targeted outreach campaign to highlight different sectors of the county economy, including cross-sector activities and locations. Balancing tourism with the needs of local communities and protecting and supporting local agriculture were also key themes in the input related to the economy. Supporting small local businesses, job creation and workforce development, and being able to adapt to economic changes were also noted. Online vision survey results were mixed; 43 percent of respondents noted that “expanding the tourism industry” should not be a priority of the General Plan Update, while over 63 percent of respondents were in favor of “supporting and expanding the agricultural industry.” Similarly, 91 percent of communitywide survey respondents stated the General Plan should prioritize improving the local economy and job opportunities, while only 42 percent stated the General Plan should prioritize expanding the tourism industry. The implementation of policies to diversify sectors



of the county economy will be critical to the General Plan Update based on this community input.

- **Mobility.** Community input on mobility centered on promoting and expanding transportation methods that offer alternatives to a personal vehicle. These suggestions also touched on the changing mobility needs of an aging population, roadway safety, traffic, noise, pollution and accessible transportation options for all residents. Expanding transit services is a prominent suggestion, including the number of stops on existing routes and the areas served by transit. This included requests to expand the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) train routes, add new train stops, and improve mobility connections to and from the train. Enhancing active transportation options throughout the county, such as expanded bikeways, protected bike lanes, and pedestrian safety improvements, came up often in the comments. Another idea to improve mobility includes coupling transportation with land use through hubs that have services, parks, and restaurants all in proximity. Community input also centered on the need for road improvements and additional traffic management strategies. Over two-thirds of respondents to the online vision survey indicated “improving our transportation system and making it easier to get around” as a priority for the General Plan Update. Furthermore, only 14 percent of the survey respondents were satisfied with the current transportation system; the remaining respondents stated that some level of sidewalk, road, bike lane, and/or transit improvement is necessary. Over 85 percent of communitywide survey respondents signaled reducing traffic congestion and improving transportation options such as biking, walking, and transit infrastructure as a “high priority” or “medium priority”.
- **Resilience.** Community input on resiliency focused on the need to adequately plan for and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Considering evacuation routes during the planning process was often cited, including planning for livestock evacuation and ensuring adequate evacuation routes. Community members suggested that the County mitigate the impacts of wildfires, flooding, and other hazards through communitywide preparedness efforts, including hardening homes, supporting fuel and vegetation management strategies, and considering fire zones when developing. Support for decentralizing power supplies and supporting micro-grids were also noted as ideas for mitigating the impacts of climate events. Over three-quarters of respondents to the online vision survey noted that the General Plan Update should “prepare communities for hazards and emergencies, including potential impacts from climate change.” Communitywide survey respondents showed similar support for planning for and adapting to the impacts of climate change, with nearly 95 percent of respondents noting preparing for wildfires, flooding, drought and other natural disasters as a “high priority” or “medium priority”.



- **Infrastructure.** Community input on infrastructure revolved around the affordability, accessibility, and reliability of utilities. Aging infrastructure, especially in smaller communities, presents a challenge for residents while also limiting potential future development. This includes concerns with sewer, communications, and energy infrastructure. Residents are concerned that electricity and communication infrastructure could be compromised during climate events, creating uncertainty about when services might come back online. The need for water management and conservation was also noted in discussions about infrastructure, including concerns about water scarcity and water quality, with residents noting the need for groundwater protection policies and overall water conservation. There are also concerns about the ability of local service districts to expand their service areas given the costs of infrastructure development. Among respondents of the online vision survey there was significant support for improving public services and infrastructure, with over 74 percent voting for it as a top priority for the General Plan Update. Similarly, 95 percent of respondents to the communitywide survey noted repairing and maintaining public utilities and infrastructure as either a “high priority” or “medium priority”, highlighting the need to address these issues. Furthermore, 70 percent of communitywide survey respondents supported the expansion of water and sewer infrastructure into existing developed areas currently lacking these services.

Local Themes

The communities listed in this section are not meant to delineate a planning or community boundary. Instead, they describe the areas where the Local Communities Visioning Workshops were held.

- **Bennett Valley Area.** Community input for the Bennett Valley area focused on the need to preserve its rural character and scenic value, with a preference for rural, low-density development that protects scenic landscapes and open spaces, with comments suggesting that development be limited to the area west of Petaluma Hill Road. There is a desire to retain the Bennett Valley Area Plan and establish a commercial cannabis cultivation exclusion zone. Major concerns for residents in the area are traffic and road safety, including the speed and number of vehicles on Bennett Valley Road and Sonoma Mountain Road, as well as the need to improve conditions on roadways like Peracca Road. Comments also suggested that the County address fire hazards, protect Galvin Park, and work with the local land trust to expand wildlife corridors. Appendix A includes a full list of comments received for each workshop, including the April 30th Bennett Valley Area Local Communities Visioning Workshop and the online mapped survey comments.
- **Coastal Communities / Bodega Bay / Bodega / Valley Ford.** Input for this area highlighted the need to preserve the coastal communities’ unique character, maintain free



public access to the coast, keep camping fees affordable, and support the fishing community. There is an interest in making Bodega Harbor more accessible for mariculture and protecting Spud Point. Road infrastructure and traffic safety are major concerns, particularly the Old Bay Flat Road closure, which limits transportation access and evacuation options for local residents and creates traffic congestion. Slowing traffic, addressing steep road grades, widening roads for bicycle lanes, and stopping the diversion of Highway 1 traffic onto local roads were all listed as ideas for transportation improvements. Participants also cited a need for improved community amenities, including a library, community center, and more pedestrian infrastructure and bicycle lanes. Appendix A includes a full list of comments received for each workshop, including those from the April 15th Coastal Communities Local Communities Visioning Workshop and the online mapped survey comments.

- **Geyserville / Northern 101 Corridor.** Community input for the Geyserville and northern 101 corridor centered around infrastructure improvement needs. This includes improving roads and drainage, expanding sidewalks, and enhancing the bus service schedule. There is also a desire for the SMART train to extend to Cloverdale with a new Cloverdale station. Participants also cited traffic issues and a lack of dedicated bicycle lanes as concerns. Residents here also see a need for affordable housing that is designed for local residents and for limits on vacation rentals. Other feedback highlights the lack of essential services in the area and the need for a grocery store, community center, medical offices, and affordable restaurants. There is also a desire to limit development to areas within urban boundaries to prevent sprawl and preserve the area's agricultural land, natural spaces, and dark skies. Flood control, high insurance costs, and runoff from agriculture were also highlighted as concerns. Appendix A includes a full list of comments received for each workshop, including those from the March 11th Geyserville and Northern 101 Corridor Local Communities Visioning Workshop and the online mapped survey comments. A Countywide Community Visioning Workshop was also held in this local area at the Healdsburg Community Center on February 3rd, notes from this workshop are also located in Appendix A.
- **Greater Petaluma / Penngrove / Two Rock.** Community input for the greater Petaluma, Penngrove, and Two Rock area focused on the need to preserve its rural character and vital resources, with a strong emphasis on protecting the Bloomfield Estero watershed, wetlands, greenbelts, and agricultural lands (including the Dairy Belt). There is interest in retaining the Petaluma Dairy Belt Area Plan to continue to protect agricultural lands. Protecting groundwater, wildlife corridors, and dark skies were also noted. Participants would like more affordable and "missing middle" housing for locals and young people while acknowledging that growth should be focused within existing urban boundaries to prevent



sprawl. Transportation infrastructure deficiencies, such as poor road conditions, traffic, lack of pedestrian infrastructure, and the need for traffic-calming measures in areas like Penngrove and Freestone are a concern. Transportation comments also covered the need to improve public transportation options, including expanding the SMART train and its connections, providing more protected bike lanes, and offering more frequent transit service. Finally, participants cited a need for essential services, such as a grocery store, playgrounds, community center, and opening Lafferty Park for public access. Appendix A includes a full list of comments received for each workshop, including those from the April 3rd Local Communities Visioning Workshop and the online mapped survey comments. A Countywide Community Visioning Workshop was also in this local area at the Penngrove Elementary School on February 4th, notes from this workshop are also located in Appendix A.

- **Greater Sebastopol / Graton / Occidental.** Community input for the greater Sebastopol, Graton, and Occidental area highlighted concerns with sewer, air traffic noise, and housing. Residents are concerned about a housing shortage and called for diverse and affordable housing options, with support for infill development. There is an emphasis on creating an opportunity for young people to live here with adequate housing and job options. There is also support for an arts and culture scene in addition to providing public spaces where people can gather. Fuel reduction, wildfire mitigation, vegetation management, home hardening, and expanding evacuation routes were noted as critical to participants. There is also a desire to protect forestlands, wildlands, oak woodlands, and watersheds. Traffic and roadway conditions were also noted as concerns, including speeding and poor road conditions. Transit connections via bikes, commuter vans, airport shuttles, public buses, and a last-mile connection to the SMART train were also suggested. F Appendix A includes a full list of comments received for each workshop, including those from the April 16th Local Communities Visioning Workshop and the online mapped survey comments.
- **Lower Russian River / Forestville / Guerneville / Monte Rio / Cazadero.** Community input for the lower Russian River, Forestville, Guerneville, Monte Rio, and Cazadero area centered on preserving the natural environment and rural character of these communities, with a focus on protecting and restoring creeks (such as the Green Valley and Fife Creeks), water and air quality, open spaces, and agricultural lands. The community is also concerned about sewer issues and high utility costs. They cited a need for repaving and other projects to improve road conditions, speed calming, more crosswalks, better signage, and separated bike lanes to enhance transportation safety. Fire safety and wildfire mitigation by requiring fuel reduction, home hardening, and evacuation routes were noted as critical in this area. Community members are also concerned about noise from vacation rentals and air traffic and impacts to housing supply from vacation rentals. Participants



seek expanded community amenities, including public pools, arts and cultural spaces, a community center, and improved library services, along with more frequent public transportation options. This includes SMART train connections and small electric buses to serve an aging population and improve accessibility in general. Appendix A includes a full list of comments received for each workshop, including those from the March 10th Local Communities Visioning Workshop and the online mapped survey comments. A Countywide Community Visioning Workshop was also held in this local area at the Forestville Community Library on January 30th, notes from this workshop can also be found in Appendix A,

- **North Santa Rosa.** Community input for the north Santa Rosa area focused on protecting natural resources, including preserving wildlife corridors and oak woodlands, restoring Mark West Creek, and replanting redwoods along Highway 101. Maintaining the urban growth boundary and community separators were priorities expressed in many comments. There is support for planting shade trees along Mark West Springs Road, along highways, and at interchanges to provide relief from the heat for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, as well as to provide a wind break. Participants are concerned about wildfires and new development within the wildland-urban interface. In addition, participants cited a need for a new SMART train station, improved public transit, more bike lanes and trails, and public spaces for the community such as kid-friendly parks and community gardens. Residents are concerned about traffic impacts with increased density. Other comments expressed a desire to protect dark skies, preserve agricultural lands, and promote infill development and greenbelts. Also mentioned were strengthening the “Right-to-Farm” ordinance, increasing the flexibility for building farmworker housing, supporting local food access, and supporting marketing efforts for agricultural events such as farm events and ag-tourism. For a full list of the comments received on the north Santa Rosa area, see Appendix A.
- **Sonoma Valley.** Community input in the Sonoma Valley emphasized the need to preserve the area’s rural character, agricultural identity, and open spaces; address housing affordability; improve wildfire safety; and ensure water availability. Community members want more diversity in local agricultural products and sustainable land management, in part to support resilience to the impacts of climate change on agriculture. Residents would like the County to focus on affordable and diverse housing in infill areas of existing cities and urban areas and avoid expansion into areas with fire hazards, open spaces, or rural lands. Improved evacuation planning, evacuation routes, and fuel management strategies were highlighted as needed, as were transportation infrastructure improvements, including better public transit; expanded SMART train service; improved bike and pedestrian safety; and mitigation of traffic congestion, particularly on Highway 12. There is a desire for equitable and inclusive spaces for all ages, ensured access to parks and community services, and



less reliance on tourism while supporting local businesses and diversifying the economy. Appendix A includes comments received on Sonoma Valley, from the March 24th Local Communities Visioning Workshop and the online mapped survey comments. A Countywide Community Visioning Workshop was also held in this local area at the Sonoma Valley High School Library on January 29th, notes from this workshop can also be found in Appendix A.

- **South Santa Rosa.** Community input in the south Santa Rosa area highlighted the need for safe transportation infrastructure, including sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, public transit access, and traffic calming. There are concerns about community safety near some of the parks and some roads are unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists. There is a desire for expanded community amenities, such as community gardens, grocery stores, walking trails, and community events. Residents expressed concerns about safety in some of the parks within Moorland, along with wildfires. They are also concerned about increasing density in the area given limited school capacity after school closures and the burden on roads and water supply. Participants expressed support for preserving agricultural lands, greenbelts, and wildlife corridors. Appendix A includes a full list of comments received for each workshop, including those from the March 25th Local Communities Visioning Workshop and the online mapped survey comments.

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 to guide the Policy Development Phase of General Plan Sonoma. The Draft Vision and Guiding Principles 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, as summarized in the Major Themes section above. The Draft Vision and Guiding Principles are presented as a separate attachment.



NEXT STEPS

The Outreach Summary Report will be presented to the Board of Supervisors on August 12, 2025. The Board will review the input from the Community Vision Phase and confirm the Draft Vision and Guiding Principles to guide the Policy Development Phase of the General Plan Update. The next phase will focus on developing policy guidance that reflects and advances the Draft Vision and Guiding Principles. Outreach and engagement will continue to be a fundamental part of the General Plan Update throughout the Policy Development Phase.



APPENDIX A – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUPPORTING MATERIALS AND RESULTS

A description of each outreach material prepared and links to the meeting notes are provided below. The outreach materials were available in both English and Spanish.

Final Community Engagement Plan

[Final Community Engagement Plan](#)

Countywide Community Visioning Workshops

Meeting Notes

- [Meeting Notes \(1/23/25 - Virtual\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(1/29/25 - Sonoma Valley High School\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(1/30/25 - Forestville Community Library\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(2/3/25 - Healdsburg Community Center\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(2/4/25 - Penngrove Elementary School\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(2/19/25 - Virtual\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(6/17/25 – Spanish Language Workshop La Plaza\)](#)

Local Communities Visioning Workshops

Meeting Notes

- [Meeting Notes \(3/10/25 - Lower Russian River, Forestville, Guerneville, Monte Rio, Cazadero Area\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(3/11/25 - Geyserville, Northern 101 Corridor Area\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(3/24/25 - Sonoma Valley Area\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(3/25/25 - South Santa Rosa Area\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(4/2/25 - North Santa Rosa Area\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(4/3/25 - Greater Petaluma, Penngrove, Two Rock Area\)](#)
- [Meeting Recording \(4/7/2025 - Virtual\)](#)
- [Meeting Recording \(4/10/2025 - Virtual\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(4/15/25 - Coastal Communities, Bodega Bay, Bodega, Valley Ford Area\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(4/16/25 - Greater Sebastopol, Graton, Occidental Area\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(4/30/25 - Bennett Valley Area\)](#)



Focus Group Meetings

Meeting Notes

- [Meeting Notes \(5/8/25 - California Human Development\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(5/13/25 - Latino Service Providers\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(5/15/25 - Sonoma County Vet Connect\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(5/16/25 - Catholic Charities\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(5/16/25 - Sonoma County Black Forum\)](#)
- [Meeting Notes \(5/22/25 - Community Alliance with Family Farmers\)](#)

Public Meetings

Meeting Materials

- [Board of Supervisors October 15 Meeting Materials](#)
- [Planning Agency December 19 Meeting Materials](#)
- [Mark West Area Municipal Advisory Council](#) May 14, 2025 | [Agenda](#) | [Minutes](#)
- [Sonoma Valley Community Advisory Commission](#) May 28, 2025 | [Agenda](#) | [Minutes](#)
- [Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council](#) June 12, 2025 | [Agenda](#) | [Minutes](#)
- [North Sonoma Valley Municipal Advisory Council](#) June 17, 2025 | [Agenda](#) | [Minutes](#)
- [Dry Creek Valley Citizens Advisory Council](#) June 19, 2025 | [Agenda](#) | Minutes (not available at time of publication)
- [Springs Municipal Advisory Council](#) July 9, 2025 | [Agenda](#) | Minutes (not available at time of publication)
- [Sonoma Coast Municipal Advisory Council](#) July 17, 2025 (no quorum, Town Hall) | [Agenda](#) | Minutes
- [Geyserville Alexander Valley Municipal Advisory Council](#) July 23, 2025 | [Agenda](#) | Minutes (not available at time of publication)

Stakeholder Engagement

Outreach Toolkit

- [General Plan Sonoma Outreach Toolkit](#)
 - Outreach toolkit designed to empower stakeholders to raise awareness about General Plan Sonoma and encourage their networks to participate. It includes background information about the update, communication resources, and engagement opportunities.



- [Stakeholder Letter](#)
 - Letter inviting stakeholders to participate in the General Plan Update and share information and engagement opportunities with their networks. The letter encourages participation in the online visioning survey, promotion of upcoming community workshops, and sign-ups for email updates.
- [General Plan Info Sheet](#)
 - A two-page handout that highlights the importance of the General Plan Update, outlines the schedule for the Community Vision Phase, and provides details about local community workshops.
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 - Handout that includes frequently asked questions about the General Plan Update and explains why the General Plan is important.
- [Presentation](#)
 - Presentation that explains what a General Plan is and why it matters, provides an overview of the Community Vision Phase, outlines the vision and guiding principles, highlights key focus topics, and shares ways to spread the word and participate in the update.
- [Educational Videos](#)
 - Videos contain a short presentation on General Plan Sonoma and why it is important. They provide an overview of the Community Vision Phase, outline the vision and guiding principles, highlight key focus areas, and share ways to help spread the word and participate in the update.

Survey Summaries and Reports

[Communitywide survey summary report](#)

[Online vision survey summary report](#)

[Online mapped survey comments](#)

[Workshop Feedback Survey](#)