



County of Sonoma
State of California

Date: December 3, 2024

Item Number: _____

Resolution Number: _____

4/5 Vote Required

**Resolution Of The Board Of Supervisors Of The County Of Sonoma, State Of California,
Approving Amendments To The Sonoma County General Plan To Implement Housing Element
Program 15K And Address Internal Inconsistencies Created By Adoption Of The 2023-2031
Housing Element Update Project**

Whereas, on August 22, 2023 the Board of Supervisors took the following actions in adopting the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update:

- a. Adopted Resolution No. 23-0248, certifying the Final Environmental Impact Report for the 2023-2031 Sonoma County Housing Element Update Project (the “Housing Element EIR” or EIR), making findings of fact pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), adopting a statement of overriding considerations, and approving a mitigation monitoring and reporting program for the Housing Element Update Project; and
- b. Adopted Resolution No. 23-0249 amending the General Plan to repeal the 2015-2023 Housing Element, adopt the 2023-2031 Sonoma County Housing Element (Housing Element), and amend the General Plan Land Use Map to change the land use and density of certain parcels identified to be added to the Housing Element Site Inventory of adequate sites to accommodate the County’s 2023-2031 Regional Housing Need Allocation (“RHNA”) of 3,824 units, and particularly its RHNA for the lower-income and moderate-income levels; and
- c. Adopted Ordinances No. 6445, making corresponding zoning changes to parcels identified in Res. No. 23-0249 to accommodate the County’s RHNA, and No. 6444, amending Sonoma County Code Chapter 26 (Zoning) to correct errors and repeal provisions that conflicted with state housing laws; and

Whereas, on October 26, 2023, the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) certified the Housing Element as in substantial compliance with State law; and

Whereas, on December 5, 2023, the Board took the following actions to implement Programs 4 and 15 of the County's newly certified Housing Element.

a. Adopted Resolution No. 23-1387 and Ordinance No. 6457, carrying out actions required under Housing Element Program 4, subprograms 4a and 4b. Together, these actions amended the General Plan land use and zoning of parcels identified in the Housing Element as additional sites to be rezoned to accommodate RHNA.

b. Adopted Ordinance 6548 amending Sonoma County Code Chapter 26 (Zoning) to implement portions of Housing Element Program 15 and to adopt development standards for the rezoned parcels in Santa Rosa. Ordinance No. 6458 completed the actions required by Housing Element Subprogram 15b (Review and Update Zoning Code and General Plan), by amending the Zoning Regulations to ensure compliance with the State Density Bonus Law and other state laws related to transitional housing, supportive housing, group homes, residential community care facilities, low barrier navigation centers, emergency shelters, accessory dwelling units, and employee housing; and

Whereas, in Resolution No. 23-0429 adopting the Housing Element and amending the General Plan Land Use Map to change land use and density for identified Housing Element inventory sites, the Board of Supervisors acknowledged that "adoption of the Housing Element and associated General Plan land use amendments will create some internal inconsistency within the General Plan, particularly with objectives and policies in the Land Use Element" based on population projections through 2020 and designed to avoid exceeding those projections. The Board further acknowledged that while adoption of the Housing Element will cause the buildout potential in the unincorporated County to exceed the projections in General Plan 2020, the County is nevertheless mandated under State law to plan for and provide adequate sites to accommodate its 3,826-unit RHNA for the 2023-2031 period; and

Whereas, the Board's Resolution No. 23-0429 states that, "as provided in Government Code Section 65583(c)(8), the Housing Elements Law contemplates that adoption of a Housing Element may create internal inconsistency within the General Plan and requires that those inconsistencies be resolved during implementation" of the Housing Element; and

Whereas, Program 15k of the adopted Housing Element requires that said General Plan consistency amendments be brought forward by December 2024; and

Whereas, the General Plan amendments identified to comply with Program 15k, set forth in the attached Exhibit A and incorporated in this resolution by reference, are considered in light of the broader General Plan Update that is currently underway. The proposed amendments address clear and direct inconsistencies between elements, to ensure consistency with State housing law as contemplated by the Housing Element, and also clarify the Board's

authority and direction regarding the County's authority to interpret and make consistency determinations regarding the Sonoma County General Plan; and

Whereas, none of the proposed General Plan amendments are to objectives, policies or other provisions identified as CEQA mitigating policies for the General Plan; and

Whereas, the proposed amendments do not make any changes in land use, density or intensity of use of any parcel; and

Whereas, pursuant to Government Code Section 65358, the County may normally amend mandatory elements of the General Plan up to four times per year, but each amendment may include multiple changes to the General Plan. The Land Use Element is a mandatory element. As of the date of this resolution, the County has not reached the limit for 2024; and

Whereas, on October 17, 2024, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed General Plan Amendments, and adopted a resolution recommending that the Board of Supervisors adopt the proposed General Plan amendments as recommended by staff; and

Whereas, on December 3, 2024, the Board of Supervisors conducted a duly noticed public hearing on the General Plan amendments and associated environmental determinations under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Board reviewed and considered all oral and written public comments, the record of proceedings for the Housing Element Update Project and EIR, and all materials referenced and discussed in Exhibits to this resolution;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that, based on substantial evidence in the record, the Board finds and determines that:

1. The Board has had an opportunity to review this Resolution and its Exhibit, and finds that it accurately sets forth the intentions of the Board regarding the Project.
2. The proposed amendments to the General Plan text, attached as Exhibit A and incorporated by reference, are necessary for consistency within the General Plan, to implement and comply with Program 15k of the Housing Element, and to ensure that the County maintains consistency with State housing and land use laws.
3. The proposed General Plan amendments meet the Housing Element Program 15k purpose of addressing material inconsistencies created by adoption of the Housing Element Update and achieving substantial consistency and compatibility within the General Plan. The amendments are consistent and compatible with the overall goals and intent of the General Plan. With respect to the General Plan as it would be

amended by the attached Exhibit A, the Board makes the further and specific finding that the Housing Element Update, including the site-specific land use amendments and corresponding rezoning actions adopted in August and December 2023, is compatible and consistent with Goal LU-2 of the Land Use Element (*Accommodate the major share of future growth within the nine existing cities and their expansion areas and within selected unincorporated communities, which are planned to have adequate water and sewer capacities*). Goal LU-2 has two primary focuses: ensuring that population growth by the year 2020 did not exceed the General Plan's projections, and maintaining a pattern of city- and community-centered growth. The Housing Element land use amendments and corresponding zoning changes previously adopted by this Board in August and December 2023, are fully consistent with and advance community-centered growth objectives, because all Rezoned Sites are located within existing, long-standing urban service areas. Moreover, the goals, objectives and policies of the Housing Element and the related site-specific does not directly conflict with or frustrate the population objectives under Goal LU-2 because Goal LU-2's population-based provisions are geared to the year 2020, while the state-mandated Housing Element cycle began in January 2023.

4. Based on the CEQA compliance analysis provided in the staff reports and presentations to the Board and to the Planning Commission and on the entire record of this proceeding, the Board finds and determines that the proposed project is within the scope of the Housing Element EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. Consistent with Guidelines Section 15162, no substantial changes are proposed in the project as described in the Housing Element Update EIR; no substantial changes have occurred with respect to the circumstances under which the Housing Element implementation is undertaken; and there is no new information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known at the time the EIR was certified. Accordingly, no further CEQA documentation is required.

Be It Further Resolved that the Board of Supervisors hereby amends the General Plan Introduction, Land Use Element, and Glossary as set forth in the attached Exhibit A.

Be It Further Resolved that the Board of Supervisors designates the Director of Permit Sonoma or designee as the custodian of the documents and other material which constitute the record of proceedings upon which the decision herein is based. These documents may be found at the County of Sonoma Permit and Resource Management Department, 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, California 95403.

The Foregoing Resolution was introduced by Supervisor _____ who

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Date:

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moved its adoption, seconded by Supervisor _____ and adopted on roll call by the following vote:

Supervisors:

Gorin:

Coursey:

Gore:

Hopkins:

Rabbitt:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

So Ordered.

Exhibits

Exhibit A – General Plan Text Amendments

Exhibit A

Text of Amendments to General Plan 2020

I. Introduction, Section 1.3, is amended as follows:

Sonoma County General Plan 2020 (GP 2020) is a revision of the previous General Plan which was adopted in 1989, and supersedes and replaces that document. This plan carries forward the major goals and policy framework of the 1989 Plan, and retains the overall format. The primary purpose of the revised plan was to conduct a policy review which focused upon specific issues that were of paramount importance to the community.

The broad purpose of GP 2020 is to express policies which will guide decisions on future growth, development, and conservation of resources through 2020 in a manner consistent with the goals and quality of life desired by the county's residents. Under State law all subsidiary land use plans and codes, many actions on private land development, such as Specific Plans, Area Plans, and zoning, as well as development project approvals such as for subdivisions and use permits, public agency projects and other decisions must be consistent with the General Plan. The Goals, Objectives, and Policies set forth in the plan will be applied in a manner to insure their constitutionality. Each policy of the plan shall be interpreted and applied in compliance with applicable governing law. For instance, policies in the Land Use Element and Circulation and Transit Element that describe or provide for discretionary review of development projects, are understood to apply only to the extent that applicable law allows the County to use its own judgment in reviewing and conditioning approval of a development project. This is true even if a policy that describes or otherwise relates to discretionary action does not expressly refer to discretionary projects.

The County, in its sole discretion and to the extent allowed by law, shall determine a proposal's consistency with the General Plan. In general, a proposal is consistent if, considering all its aspects, the proposal will further the overall objectives and policies of the General Plan and not obstruct their attainment. A proposal may be consistent with the overall objectives of the General Plan even if it is not consistent with every policy and objective. In making a consistency determination, the County may exercise discretion to weigh, balance and harmonize policies in a manner that it determines best achieves the County's overall goals.

II. Land Use Element, Policy LU-1a is amended as follows:

Policy LU-1a: *This plan has relied extensively upon policies and designations set forth in previous Specific Plans and Area Plans. The County shall continue to use the following selected Specific Plans and Area Plans to implement this plan. A Specific or Area Plan may establish more detailed policies affecting proposed development, but may not include policies that are in conflict with the General Plan. In any case where the County determines, in its discretion, that there appears to be a Specific or Area Plan conflicts with or is incompatible with conflict between the General Plan, the and any Specific or Area Plan provision shall not, the more restrictive policy or standard shall apply.*

- (1) Airport/Industrial Specific Plan
- (2) South Santa Rosa Area Plan
- (3) Bennett Valley Area Plan
- (4) Sonoma Mountain Area Plan

- (5) West Petaluma Area Plan
- (6) Petaluma Dairy Belt Area Plan
- (7) Penngrove Area Plan
- (8) Franz Valley Area Plan

The following plans shall be repealed, but development guidelines contained therein shall be reviewed and updated and considered for adoption as "Local Area Development Guidelines", provided that they are consistent with the General Plan. ~~Until such a time that these guidelines are adopted, any policies contained in these plans shall continue to apply provided they are consistent with the General Plan:~~

- (1) North Santa Rosa Plan
- (2) West Santa Rosa Plan
- (3) North Sonoma Valley Plan
- (4) South Sonoma Areas I and II
- (5) Lower River Plan
- (6) Hessel Plan
- (7) Russian River Plan
- (8) West Sebastopol Plan

The Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan is the policy document that guides land use and development in the Coastal Zone. The Local Coastal Plan is intended to be a standalone policy document that integrates the appropriate General Plan goals, objectives, and policies with those necessary to comply with the California Coastal Act.

III. Land Use Element, Policy LU-6b is amended as follows:

Policy LU-6b: Site specific environmental factors shall be considered in making discretionary decisions on development permits, to the extent that the County has discretion to consider these factors in its review of a particular project. Site specific factors which create health or safety problems or result in unmitigated significant environmental impacts may at times reduce densities that are allowed by the Land Use Map and zoning.

IV. Land Use Element, Policy LU-15a is amended as follows:

Policy LU-15a. ~~Phase residential and commercial and discretionary residential development within the Forestville Urban Service Boundary to allow the community facilities and services adequate time to absorb new growth, and to maintain the community character. For any project of 10 or more housing units, require a precise development plan or master plan that specifies the maximum number of new residential units to be built per year.~~ Land Use Element, Policy LU-15b is amended as follows:

V. Land Use Element, Policy LU-5b is amended as follows:

Policy LU-15b. Require design review for major subdivisions within the Forestville Urban Service Boundary, to the extent that the County has discretionary authority to conduct design review. Only objective design standards shall be applied to ~~apply to zoning-compliant housing development on a Housing Element Rezone Site.~~ When applicable, discretionary ~~d~~Design review approval shall assure that:

- (1) Project scale and design is consistent with existing rural village character,

- (2) Project design gives priority to natural landscape over development, and preserves and enhances significant natural features,
- (3) The project retains open space amenities associated with a rural lifestyle,
- (4) The project provides for a variety of housing types and costs,
- (5) Where appropriate to the natural terrain, houses are clustered to maximize open space. To the extent allowed by law, require a long term scenic easement for the undeveloped portion of the property, and
- (6) The project includes pedestrian access connecting new homes with nearby commercial area.

VI. Land Use Element, Objective LU-16.1 is amended as follows:

Objective LU-16.1: *Avoid urban development within the Urban Service Boundary of Santa Rosa until annexation, except where allowed by the General Plan, Specific or Area Plan as of 1986.*

VII. Land Use Element, Policy LU-16g is amended as follows:

Policy LU-16g. *Unless otherwise provided in the General Plan, or in existing Specific or Area Plans to the extent applicable pursuant to Policy LU-1a, designate lands within the Santa Rosa Urban Service Area as "Rural Residential" in order to hold them for future annexation by the City. Maintain densities in these areas at the lower end of the range for this category.*

VIII. Land Use Element, Policy LU-16h is amended as follows:

Policy LU-16h: *Except as otherwise designated by the General Plan, ~~D~~designate the Brooks-Ward area "Limited Industrial" to recognize the eventual urban development allowed in the South Santa Rosa Area Plan. Use zoning to prevent further subdivision and urban development until the conditions established in that plan for this development have been met. Except as otherwise designated by the General Plan, ~~R~~retain the land use designation "Light Industry/Planned Residential" in the plan but amend it to authorize interim uses consistent with the new zoning, such as single family dwellings on existing lots, provided water, septic and other standard conditions are met.*

IX. Land Use Element, Policy LU-16p is amended as follows:

Policy LU-16p: *In general, significant Rredevelopment and/or intensification of existing uses in the Santa Rosa Urban Service Area south of Todd Road is not desirable without the extension of sewer service. Development applications prior to annexation should generally be limited to uses that can be served by septic systems.*

X. Land Use Element, Policy LU-20b is amended as follows:

Policy LU-20b: *In general, encourage annexation by the city prior to urban development on parcels that are within the Sonoma Valley Sanitation District and within the city's primary Sphere of Influence. Require annexation for urban residential development in this area, except zoning-compliant development on a Housing Element Rezone Site. Parcels within the Sonoma Valley Redevelopment Area are exempt from these policies-*

XI. Glossary is amended as follows:

Agricultural Employee Housing: *See Farmworker Housing. Also refers to employee housing as defined in California Health and Safety Code Section 17008 that is located on a parcel with an agricultural land use designation, and consistent with Health and Safety Code Section 17021.6.*

...

Housing Element Rezone Site. *A parcel rezoned after January 31, 2023 and added to the Housing Element Site Inventory as an adequate site for lower-income housing units to accommodate the County's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for lower-income households. See Tables 15 and 16 of the Housing Element Site Inventory as of December 5, 2023, and any later rezoned sites that meet these criteria.*