

North Sonoma Valley Municipal Advisory Council

2025 Annual Report

Prepared by Mark Newhouser, Chair, and Martin Peña, Vice-Chair

Summary

The North Sonoma Valley Municipal Advisory Council (NSV MAC) continued serving as a bridge between the community and Sonoma County government throughout 2025. The Council focused on transportation safety, pedestrian access, emergency preparedness, land use planning, water sustainability, and community services.

In 2025, the NSV MAC held six regular meetings (March, April, June, July, September, and December; no meetings were held in January or October). No joint sessions were held this year.

Major areas of focus included the County's General Plan update, infrastructure funding mechanisms, immigrant services support, pedestrian improvements, groundwater sustainability, and continued oversight of local development projects including the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC).

The Council also reviewed and presented its 2024 Annual Report, received training on Brown Act compliance, and continued its role in facilitating informed public discussion on regional policy matters.

Leadership & Membership

Leadership

Mark Newhouser continued serving as Chair in 2025.

Martin Peña continued serving as Vice-Chair.

Membership Changes

The Council experienced several transitions during the year:

- **New Member:** John Meserve
- **Completed Terms:** Kate Eagles; Angela Nardo-Morgan
- **Resignation:** Cheryl Hergert

These changes reflect the Council’s continued renewal and community participation across North Sonoma Valley.

2025 Meeting Highlights

Governance and Council Operations

At the March meeting, County Counsel Petra Bruggisser delivered a Brown Act presentation to ensure compliance with California’s open meeting laws.

The Council also reviewed and formally presented its 2024 Annual Report.

Members participated in a Countywide All-MAC meeting and discussed coordination across advisory councils.

Budget discussions were held throughout the year regarding use of remaining FY 2024–25 funds. Updates from the County Administrator’s Office indicated approximately \$4,000 in remaining TIF/MAC funding available for allocation. Options discussed included community listening sessions and small-scale local improvement efforts.

Key Policy Areas & Initiatives

General Plan Update

The 2025 County General Plan update was a central topic of discussion across multiple meetings.

In June, staff from Permit Sonoma presented updates on the General Plan process. The Council discussed priority topics and the formation of an Ad Hoc General Plan Committee to help prepare feedback.

In July, the MAC considered whether to submit a consolidated formal letter to the County as part of the public input process. Members reviewed community feedback and discussed the appropriateness of submitting a unified response.

The General Plan process remains ongoing.

Transportation and Infrastructure

O’Donnell Lane Bridge

Improvements were completed in 2025 at the O'Donnell Lane Bridge to allow safe pedestrian and bicycle access.

Because major structural repairs were not feasible for restoring full vehicle traffic, the County installed protective bollards. The bridge now serves pedestrians and bicyclists while allowing limited annual equipment transport for the Glen Ellen Village Fair. It functions as a pedestrian-priority crossing.

Traffic Safety Improvements

Following roadway improvements at London Ranch Road and Arnold Drive, new crosswalks were painted to improve pedestrian visibility and safety.

The Pedestrian-Friendly Glen Ellen ad hoc committee continued surveying local roadways and communicating directly with the MAC and County Infrastructure staff.

No new dedicated funding was secured for additional traffic-calming measures in 2025.

Infrastructure Financing

In July, County Administrator Analyst III McCall Miller presented on Community Infrastructure Financing (CIF/TIF) funding tools and their potential applications. The Council reviewed funding structures and discussed how such tools might support local priorities in future years.

Emergency Preparedness

The Sonoma Valley Fire Evacuation Study concluded in 2025. The study evaluated evacuation timing and roadway capacity during wildfire scenarios.

It remains unclear how Sonoma County and State agencies will incorporate the study's findings into formal planning processes. The MAC will continue monitoring developments and advocating for practical implementation of safety recommendations.

Housing and Land Use

The Council continued monitoring redevelopment planning at the Sonoma Developmental Center.

Discussions focused on density, infrastructure capacity, wildfire risk, environmental impacts, and compatibility with the surrounding rural character.

Community Services & Equity

In March, the Council reviewed a draft letter to the Board of Supervisors regarding funding support for immigrant services.

In April, the Council hosted a presentation from Secure Community Collaborative on immigrant rights, led by Executive Director Margaret Flores McCabe. The discussion focused on community education, rights awareness, and available support networks in Sonoma Valley.

Water Sustainability

In September, the Council received a presentation from the Sonoma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency regarding groundwater management and long-term sustainability planning in Sonoma Valley.

Community Improvement Projects

Firehouse Triangle Beautification Project

The Firehouse Triangle project was completed in 2025. Improvements include a new entry sign, repaired and upgraded safety signage, volunteer-supported maintenance, landscaping with seasonal wildflower plantings, and holiday lighting enhancements. The project continues to strengthen the visual identity of Glen Ellen.

Community Engagement

In December, the Council hosted an informational presentation from the Kenwood Business Association regarding business conditions and economic activity in Kenwood.

The MAC continues encouraging public participation and remains committed to serving as a forum for constructive civic dialogue. Funding was allocated for advertising in the Kenwood Press. The MAC recognizes it's an ongoing process to increase community participation in MAC meetings.

Looking Ahead to 2026

As the NSV MAC moves into 2026, priorities include continued engagement in the General Plan update process, monitoring implementation of Fire Evacuation Study findings, supporting pedestrian safety improvements, tracking redevelopment planning at the Sonoma

Developmental Center, exploring infrastructure funding tools, and strengthening communication between County leadership and residents.

The Council remains committed to thoughtful, community-driven solutions that support safety, sustainability, and the rural character of North Sonoma Valley.