



## COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

### SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 12/16/2025

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**To:** Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Permit Sonoma

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Scott Orr, (707) 565-1754, Ross Markey, (707) 565-2543, Haleigh Frye, (707) 565-2477

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

General Plan Update Project Phase 2 Contract Award

**Recommended Action:**

Authorize the Director of Permit Sonoma to execute an agreement with PlaceWorks, for the preparation of the remainder of the second phase of General Plan Sonoma, an update to the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 and its associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR), in the amount of \$3,428,048.00 plus a 10% contingency of \$342,805.00, for a total not to exceed amount of \$3,770,853.00 and for a term ending July 31, 2029.

**Executive Summary:**

On December 12, 2023, the Board of Supervisors held a public workshop to kick off the General Plan update, known as *General Plan Sonoma*. As part of that item, the Board received information and provided comments to Permit Sonoma on its proposal to recruit a consultant to assist with the initial community engagement and project development work.

On June 10, 2024, the Board authorized the Director of Permit Sonoma to finalize and execute an agreement with PlaceWorks to support the first stage of the update, focused on community visioning. Permit Sonoma and PlaceWorks have completed the community visioning process and presented results and recommendations for continuing the update through policy development and plan preparation on August 12, 2025.

The remaining scope of work for the General Plan Update includes ongoing community engagement, preparation of an Existing Conditions and Trends Report, land use and alternatives scenario planning, development of the updated General Plan (General Plan Sonoma), technical analysis and environmental review, and updates to the zoning database.

**Discussion:**

The General Plan guides land use decisions and reflects the community's shared values for development throughout unincorporated Sonoma County. The current general plan, General Plan 2020, was adopted in 2008. In 2024, Permit Sonoma initiated General Plan Sonoma to update the existing plan to address changes in local demographic and environmental conditions, and identify goals, objectives and policies to support the

community's vision for the future.

Permit Sonoma has now completed Community Visioning and is preparing to begin the Policy Development stage with consultant support, once a contract is executed.

Community Visioning began in June 2024 with public engagement activities conducted from January through July 2025. Engagement during this phase focused on raising awareness of the update process, educating the public about the role and importance of the General Plan, and gathering broad input on key issues, needs, and aspirations across the County.

More than 4,000 community members participated, and over 5,000 comments were received through 50 community engagement activities and a range of other outreach efforts, including regular newsletter communications, social media posts, and a countywide mailer announcing the launch of the update.

Input received during Visioning informed the development of the Draft Community Vision and Guiding Principles, intended to serve as the foundation for the upcoming Policy Development work. The results of Community Visioning were summarized in an Outreach Summary, and the feedback also informed the General Plan Scope Report, which presented recommendations for how to approach Policy Development, and the remaining steps of the update.

On August 12, 2025, the Board of Supervisors directed staff to proceed with a comprehensive medium-tier update, consistent with the major themes heard throughout community engagement, including broad support for the core emphasis of the existing General Plan.

The Policy Development stage will include all work necessary to prepare, refine, and ultimately adopt an updated General Plan and EIR.

Permit Sonoma will also continue to conduct outreach with local Tribes through its established government-to-government consultation process

**Request for Proposals:**

Permit Sonoma released a Request for Proposals (RFP) on September 16, 2025, to solicit proposals to complete the remainder of work for the General Plan update. One firm, PlaceWorks, responded with a proposal to the requested scope of work. County staff evaluated and scored the proposal according to criteria outlined in the RFP which included: approach and capacity; proposed approach, methodology, and demonstrated ability to perform the services within the scope and timeline, including integration of equity driven and inclusive engagement practices; proposal clarity and flexibility, relevant experience and qualifications, quality of work, innovation; and recommendations, and costs relative to the scope of services.

The review panel consisted of three staff members from the Planning Division of Permit Sonoma, one staff member from the Outreach and Engagement Division of Permit Sonoma, and one staff member from the Sonoma County Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures. Staff unanimously selected PlaceWorks as the preferred consultant based on its strong emphasis on flexibility and adaptability, commitment to an equity-driven planning process, demonstrated understanding of Sonoma County, and positive feedback from an

external reference, Placer County, who rated the firm highly. PlaceWorks also highlighted its successful experience leading General Plan updates for jurisdictions across the state, including Contra Costa, Placer, and Lake Counties.

Permit Sonoma also worked with PlaceWorks throughout Phase I Community Visioning. During that work, the firm consistently delivered high-quality products on schedule, maintained clear and proactive communication, demonstrated strong responsiveness and adaptability to evolving project needs, and completed all tasks within the approved budget. Their performance during Phase I further demonstrated their technical strength, professionalism, and ability to effectively support a complex, multi-year planning effort.

Policy Development is expected to span a three-year period, with implementation, including updates to the zoning database, occurring after adoption of General Plan Sonoma. The remainder of the project involves recruiting and hiring a consultant to collaboratively complete the remainder of the General Plan update including:

- Project management and coordination.
- Community engagement.
- Existing conditions and trend analysis.
- General Plan development and integration.
- Land use alternatives and scenario planning.
- Draft plan preparation.
- Technical analysis and environmental review.
- Public hearings, meetings, and events.
- Updates to the official zoning database.

Following execution of the contract, Permit Sonoma and PlaceWorks will begin preparing an updated Community Engagement Plan and will seek additional input from the public and decision makers in Spring 2026 on both the updated plan and the Draft Vision and Guiding Principles that were presented to the Board and the public as part of the August 12, 2025 item. That feedback will be incorporated before finalizing and implementing the Community Engagement Plan and the Vision and Guiding Principles for General Plan Sonoma.

The RFP and resulting professional services agreement include a modified indemnification provision for claims related to professional services (e.g. CEQA claims) by which the contractor will indemnify the county only when there is negligence, recklessness, or willful misconduct on the part of the consultant. This is intended to better align with professional liability insurance policies and County practice and has been review by Risk and County Counsel. Indemnification for all other claims aligns with the County's standard contract language.

#### **Strategic Plan:**

As the County embarks on its fourth comprehensive overhaul of its General Plan, the Board of Supervisor's current Five-Year Strategic Plan has created a starting point to shape the next generation of Sonoma County residents.

On January 28, 2020, the Board held a planning retreat to develop a strategic direction for the County. The process is centered around several topics (Healthy and Safe Communities, Racial Equity and Social Justice, Climate Action, Organizational Excellence, and Infrastructure) that are all relevant to the General Plan update and can ultimately be reflected priorities, or as new or refined policies within the plan. The strategic plan was adopted March 02, 2021. The Board's strategic plan provides valuable direction and framing to community conversations that would occur for General Plan 2040.

This item directly supports the County's Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

**Pillar:** Climate Action and Resiliency

**Goal:** Goal 5: Maximize opportunities for mitigation of climate change and adaptation through land conservation work and land use policies

**Objective:** Objective 1: By 2025, update the County General Plan and other county/special district planning documents to incorporate policy language and identify areas within the County that have the potential to maximize carbon sequestration and provide opportunities

**Racial Equity:**

**Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?**

No

**Prior Board Actions:**

8/12/2025: General Plan Sonoma: Community Visioning Outcomes and General Plan Scope Recommendations

6/10/2024: Board authorized an agreement with PlaceWorks for the preparation of the first phase of an update to the Sonoma County General Plan 2020.

12/12/2023: Board of Supervisors Workshop: Sonoma County General Plan Kick-Off

FY 2022-23 Budget Hearings: The Board allocated \$2.8 million in onetime discretionary funds to support the General Plan Update.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY25-26 Adopted</b>	<b>FY26-27 Projected</b>	<b>FY27-28 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses	\$250,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF	\$250,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
State/Federal			
Fees/Other - Planning Administration Fund (Fund 11110)		\$500,000	\$500,000
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			

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<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
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**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

FY 2025-26 estimated contract costs of \$250,000 are included in the General Plan Administrative Fund budget sourced from \$2.8 million discretionary funding allocated by the Board in FY 2022-23 for the General Plan update (Fund 10047). Future years will be financed through a combination of the General Plan Administrative Fund, and the Planning Administration fund (Fund 11110) which is funded by a 15% Planning Administration Fee charged on top of building and planning permit fees.

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Professional Services Agreement

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

N/A