

General Plan Sonoma: Community Visioning Outcomes and General Plan Scope Report



Board of Supervisors

August 12, 2025

Background



- Board initiated work plan for General Plan update in December 2023
- Community Visioning
 - June 2024 through August 2025
- Next: Policy Development



Background



- Community Visioning Included
 - Preliminary audit of the existing General Plan
 - Preparation and implementation of Community Engagement Plan
 - Preparation of a Draft Vision and Guiding Principles
 - Development of a General Plan Scope Report



Community Engagement

GENERAL PLAN
Sonoma
Envisioning Our Future Together



Engagement Activities



- Community Workshops and Events
 - 7 Countywide Visioning Workshops
 - 11 Local Communities Visioning Workshops
 - 12 Community Events
- Inclusive and Targeted Outreach
 - 6 Focus Groups with underserved communities
 - 8 Citizens/Municipal Advisory Councils/Commissions meetings
- Online Engagement and Surveys
 - Online survey and mapping tool
 - Community-wide statistically significant survey

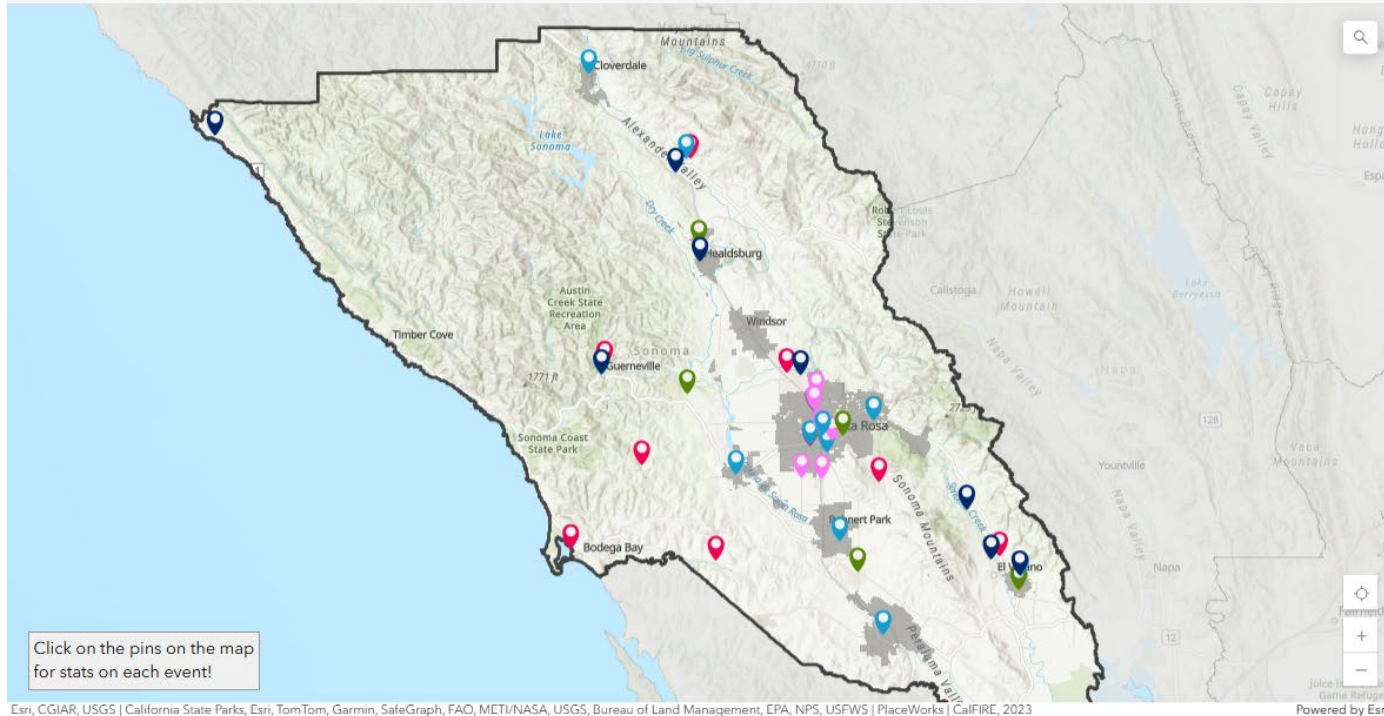
Outreach Dashboard



General Plan Sonoma Phase 1 Outreach Dashboard

Haga clic aquí para español

info



Number of People Engaged

3,916

Number of Comments Received

5,413

Total Mailers Sent Out

51,799

Social Media Posts and Newsletters

22

Number of Outreach Activities

49

including meetings, workshops, community events, and online engagement

Phase 1 Completion Metric



Visit our website to access the dashboard! permitsonoma.org/generalplan



Scan the
QR Code

Key Themes



- Key themes included but were not limited to:
 - Focus new growth in existing urbanized areas
 - Diversify and protect local food systems and small farms
 - Protect natural resources and sensitive ecological areas
 - Support diverse and affordable housing
 - Expand open space and recreation opportunities
 - Maintain essential infrastructure
 - Protect communities from wildfire and flooding
 - Preserve and improve water supply and quality
 - Preserve community character and rural communities
 - Increase roadway safety for all users and reduce traffic

Draft Vision



Sonoma County is home to small towns and rural communities united by a deep appreciation for its natural beauty, native ecosystems, and iconic agricultural and open space lands, including farms, ranches, and forests. We share a commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and resilient community. We embrace thoughtful development that expands housing and economic opportunity, with a focus on city-centered growth, conservation of natural resources, protection of agricultural and open space lands, and celebration of our unique unincorporated communities. Our future is grounded in responsible growth, climate resilience, resource stewardship, and sustainable infrastructure to support a high quality of life for generations to come.

Guiding Principles



Equity Inclusion and Community Identity

Celebrate the character, culture, and identity of Sonoma County's people and places, ensuring all residents have equitable access to housing, services, and opportunity - and meaningful ways to participate in shaping their future.



Sustainable Land Use and Resource Stewardship

Promote thoughtful, city-centered growth to accommodate the County's fair share of regional growth, meet the needs of residents and protect Sonoma County's iconic agricultural and open space lands, rural character, natural beauty, and ecosystems. Conserve water, wildlife habitat, open space, and agricultural lands to ensure long-term ecological health and preserve nature-based services like clean water, healthy soil and climate resilience that benefit the public.



Resilient and Diverse Economy

Foster a thriving and diverse local economy by enabling conditions for good-paying jobs, workforce development, and the success of small businesses and agriculture—expanding opportunities that meet local needs and build long-term community resilience.

Robust and Adaptable Agriculture and Local Food Systems

Celebrate Sonoma County's deep agricultural roots and the essential role agriculture continues to play in the County's landscape. Support the viability and adaptability of agricultural lands and operations in the face of changing environmental and economic conditions. Support innovation, diversification, and sustainable practices that protect natural resources and strengthen climate resilience. Ensure the stability, adaptability, and productivity of the County's agricultural lands and industries. Expand access to healthy, local food by supporting producers, farmworkers, and food systems that connect communities to the land. Ensure that agricultural workers and families have safe conditions, and access to opportunity.



Complete, Connected, and Healthy Communities

Facilitate housing, mobility, parks, services, and infrastructure that support vibrant, inclusive communities while protecting open space and working lands. Ensure that all residents, especially in rural and underserved areas, can safely and efficiently access daily needs and opportunities.



Guiding Principles



Climate Action and Long-Term Resilience

Prepare for a changing climate and environmental challenges through proactive planning: reduce emissions through climate-smart infrastructure, prioritize development in low-hazard areas, support emergency preparedness, and harness the protective and restorative benefits of nature. Protect communities from wildfire, flooding, and other climate hazards, while planning for the well-being of current and future generations.

Tribal Partnership and Cultural Stewardship

Honor the sovereignty, history, and living cultures of Native American Tribes and Indigenous Peoples in Sonoma County. Continue and expand government-to-government engagement with local tribal governments through intergovernmental agreements, regular consultation, and co-management arrangements, building on CAO-led Tribal Affairs and Climate Action initiatives. Prioritize early notice, enforceable agreements, incorporation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and capacity-building support for tribal participation.



Policy Development

GENERAL PLAN
Sonoma
Envisioning Our Future Together



Guiding Principles



- The next step of the General Plan update will be focused on updating the General Plan to reflect the community's vision, align with State law, and reflect current conditions in the county



General Plan Scope Report

GENERAL PLAN
Sonoma
Envisioning Our Future Together



- Presents three scope options for Phase 2
- Intended to assist staff and Board with development of scope of work
- Outlines key policy considerations, outreach recommendations, and feedback



Staff Recommendation Comprehensive Update



- Reflects community priorities, modernizes the Plan, and retains its core framework.
- Key Features
 - Policy updates aligned with current law & best practices
 - Focused land use & circulation analysis
 - Targeted, equity-centered engagement
 - Interactive online format
 - Clear implementation tools & metrics
- Estimated:
 - Timeline: 3 years
 - Cost: \$3-\$3.5 million

Board Discussion



- Provide comments on Community Visioning outcomes
- Staff Recommendation for Policy Development: Comprehensive Update
 - Provide Direction on the recommended scope for Policy Development



Photo credit: Adrian Tamblin

Next Steps



1. Prepare and issue a request for proposals
2. Report to Board on full scope
3. Proceed with steps outlines for Policy Development



Photo credit: Adrian Tamblin

Questions

GENERAL PLAN
Sonoma
Envisioning Our Future Together



GENERAL PLAN
Sonoma

Envisioning Our Future Together



Scope Options Detail



| Category | Option 1: Statutory Compliance (Low Tier) | Option 2: Comprehensive Update (Medium Tier) (Staff Recommended) | Option 3: Replace with New (High Tier) |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| General Plan Format | Retains current format. | Published as an interactive website with summary versions (English & Spanish). | Multi-platform digital plan with interactive tools, maps, and print-on-demand. |
| Existing Conditions | Limited review, only technical memos for select topics. | Targeted analysis with technical studies and policy papers. | Countywide baseline study with modeling and white papers on emerging topics. |
| Outreach & Engagement | Limited workshops, surveys, tribal consultation, and C/MAC meetings. | Quality-focused outreach with equity lens; workshops, interviews, CBO partnerships, digital tools. | Extensive outreach campaign with artist residencies, youth-led events, pop-ups, and more. |
| Land Use & Circulation Alternatives | Not included. | Focused analysis in key areas; balances growth, risks, and infrastructure. | Countywide and place-based alternatives using modeling, real-time tools, and visualization. |
| Policy Development | Updates only for legal compliance; limited changes. | Major updates focused on clarity, resilience, and local input; includes incremental update strategy. | Ground-up restructure with new elements and place-based layers. Aligns with state policy trends. |
| Environmental Review (CEQA) | Addendum to 2008 EIR; full EIR may be required depending on changes. | Full EIR with public comment period. | Programmatic EIR and open-access tools. |
| Adoption & Implementation | Hearings and plan adoption only; no implementation plan. | Includes full implementation plan, metrics dashboard, zoning updates, and review strategy. | Advanced implementation with action plans, accountability metrics, and grant programs. |
| Cost Estimate | \$500K – \$1M | \$3M – \$3.5M | \$4.5M – \$5M |
| Schedule | 1.25 – 2 years | ~3 years | 5 – 6 years |

Outreach Recommendations



- Keep working with CBOs to reach underserved communities through focus groups
- Continue outreach to tribal communities
- Offer bilingual materials and translation services
- Use the County's equity tools to guide outreach
- Attend and host casual, easy-to-join events
- Use interactive tools and fun activities to engage people
- Bring in expert input when needed
- Connect with more stakeholders
- Spread the word about General Plan Sonoma
- Collect voluntary demographic info to improve outreach

Key Policy Considerations



- Equity, Inclusion and Community Identity
 - Equity in access and outcomes
 - Celebrating diverse identities and cultures
 - Inclusive community participation
 - Recognizing and preserving unique community identities
- Sustainable Land Use and Resource Stewardship
 - City-centered and infill development
 - Agricultural protection and diversification
 - Natural resource conservation
 - Compliance with AB 1889
- Resilient and Diverse Economy
 - Economic diversification and local resilience
 - Workforce development and job creation
 - Aligning economic growth with community values
- Robust and Adaptable Agriculture and Food Systems
 - Agricultural viability and adaptability
 - Advance sustainable and regenerative practices
 - Protect farmworker communities and expand opportunity
 - Promote agricultural diversification and innovation

Key Policy Considerations



- Complete Connected, and Healthy Communities
 - Housing diversity and affordability
 - Mobility and access
 - Infrastructure and services equity
- Climate Action and Long-Term Resilience
 - Wildfire, flood, and hazard preparedness
 - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
 - Planning for a changing climate
 - Compliance with Senate Bill 743, Senate Bill 932, and Assembly Bill 98
- Tribal Partnership and Cultural Stewardship
 - Government-to-government collaboration
 - Protection of tribal cultural resources and ancestral lands
 - Integration of indigenous knowledge