



## NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF PROGRAM EIR AND NOTICE OF PROGRAM EIR PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

### Sonoma County Housing Element Update Program EIR

**Date:** June 15, 2022

**To:** State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Parties and Organizations

**Project Title:** Sonoma County Housing Element Update

**Comment Period:** June 15, 2022 through July 30, 2022

**Scoping Meeting:** VIRTUAL, Tuesday, June 28, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. PST

**Lead Agency:** County of Sonoma

**Project Location:** Countywide (refer to Figure 1)

**Lead Agency Contact:** Eric Gage, Planner III  
County of Sonoma  
2550 Ventura Avenue  
Santa Rosa, California 95403  
[PermitSonoma-Housing@sonoma-county.org](mailto:PermitSonoma-Housing@sonoma-county.org)

The Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (Permit Sonoma) is preparing an update to the Housing Element of the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 and has determined that a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be necessary to evaluate environmental impacts of the Housing Element Update. The County requests comments and guidance on the scope and content of the Program EIR from responsible and trustee agencies, interested public agencies, organizations, and the general public in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.), and California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 (State CEQA Guidelines). The County prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15082(a) and 15375.

This notice provides a summary of the Housing Element Update project; includes the County's preliminary identification of the potential environmental issues to be analyzed in the EIR; and provides information on how to comment on the scope of the EIR and how to participate in the Public Scoping Meeting.



**NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT  
SONOMA COUNTY HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE**

The County invites any and all input and comments regarding the preparation of the Program EIR. If applicable, please indicate a contact person for your agency or organization. If your agency is a responsible agency as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15381, your agency may use the environmental documents prepared by the County when considering permits or approvals for action regarding the project.

**Public Scoping Meeting:**

The County will hold a virtual scoping meeting to provide an opportunity for agency staff and interested members of the public to submit verbal comments on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. The virtual scoping meeting will be held on **Tuesday, June 28, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.**

**PST.** To join the meeting by computer or provide comment by phone, use the Zoom link or phone number on the Housing Element webpage:

<https://permitsonoma.org/regulationsandinitiatives/housing/housingelement#events>.

The scoping meeting will begin with a presentation followed by a question and answer session.

The scoping presentation will be recorded and available to view after June 30, 2022 on: <https://www.youtube.com/c/PermitSonoma/videos>.

If you have questions regarding this NOP or the scoping meeting, please contact Eric Gage at 707-565-1391 or via email at [PermitSonoma-Housing@sonoma-county.org](mailto:PermitSonoma-Housing@sonoma-county.org).

**Written Comments:** Please submit written comments within 30 days of the date of this notice by 5:00 p.m. on July 15, 2022, via email to [PermitSonoma-Housing@sonoma-county.org](mailto:PermitSonoma-Housing@sonoma-county.org) or by regular mail to Permit Sonoma, Attn: Eric Gage, 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, California 95403.

**Proposed Project:**

The Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (Permit Sonoma) is preparing its 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Update, which will result in a series of zoning changes and a General Plan Amendment necessary to accommodate the County's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The RHNA is the number of dwelling units assigned to each jurisdiction by state and regional agencies that each city and county must plan for. The County is not responsible to construct the housing, but must identify and zone sites that can accommodate the assigned number of units for the duration of the 8-year Housing Element Cycle. For the current 5<sup>th</sup> RHNA cycle ending in 2022, the County was allocated a total of 515 units to be accommodated in its Housing Element inventory of adequate sites. The County's 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle RHNA is 3,881 dwelling units.

The Housing Element update presents a comprehensive set of housing policies and actions for the years 2023-2031 and will encompass all of unincorporated Sonoma County. The Housing Element update will be based on the County's final RHNA, which determined that the County needs to identify and zone sites for approximately 3,881 residential units, plus a buffer of some number of units to ensure ongoing compliance with the No Net Loss provisions of State housing law. The County expects to exceed the growth forecasts in General Plan 2020. Due to the anticipated increase in residents beyond current forecasts, the County has determined that a Program EIR will be the best document to comply with CEQA.

In order to accommodate as many as 3,881 new units, Sonoma County may be required to find additional sites – some in areas not previously targeted as inventory sites – as well as rezone other areas. The County



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anticipates a rezoning effort targeted in designated Urban Service Areas throughout unincorporated Sonoma County and the environmental analysis will also include the proposed rezoning effort.

**Project Background:** The County of Sonoma is updating its housing element as required by State law. This process is an opportunity for the County to examine all the policies, market conditions, and other forces that contribute to an adequate supply of housing homes for everyone in the community, regardless of income.

Under California law, the housing element is one of the seven mandated elements of the general plan and must be updated on a set schedule. A housing element is required by State law (“Housing Element law”) to establish policies and programs that will support the provision of an adequate housing supply for citizens of all income levels.

The housing element typically includes:

1. **Housing Needs Assessment:** Examine demographic, employment, and housing trends and conditions that affect the housing needs of the community.
2. **Evaluation of Past Performance:** Review the prior housing element to measure progress in implementing policies and programs.
3. **Housing Sites Inventory:** Identify locations of available sites for housing development or redevelopment to ensure that there is adequate capacity to address the Regional Housing Needs Allocation.
4. **Community Outreach and Engagement:** Implement a robust community outreach and engagement program, with a particular focus on outreach to traditionally underrepresented groups.
5. **Constraints Analysis:** Analyze and recommend remedies for existing and potential governmental and nongovernmental barriers to housing development.
6. **Policies and Programs:** Establish policies and programs to fulfill the identified housing needs.

In 2020, Permit Sonoma initiated the Rezoning Sites for Housing Project, and it circulated a Draft EIR for the project in May 2021 (SCH No. 2020030351). However, following circulation of that Draft EIR, Permit Sonoma determined that due to the imminent Housing Element Update it would not move forward with rezoning the 59 sites identified as a part of this effort as a separate project and instead would incorporate rezoning of these sites as one component of the broader Housing Element update. Accordingly, the Board of Supervisors did not certify the Rezoning Sites for Housing Project Draft EIR. Just as the Housing Element Update is a different project from the Rezoning Sites project, the EIR for the Housing Element Update will be a new and distinct document. To that end, the Housing Element Update EIR will incorporate some information from the Rezoning Sites Draft EIR, as appropriate, but it will be a new and distinct document that analyzes the environmental effects of the comprehensive Housing Element Update throughout the County.

**Project Location:** Housing Element policies and programs will apply countywide, and the County boundaries are shown in Figure 1.



**Project Alternatives:** The EIR will evaluate a reasonable range of project alternatives that, consistent with CEQA, meet most of the project objectives and reduce or avoid potential environmental effects, including a required No Project Alternative.

**Next Steps:** The County will issue a Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR at that time to inform the public and interested agencies, groups, and individuals of how to access the Draft EIR and provide comments.

When the Draft EIR is completed, it will be available for review at Permit Sonoma, located at 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, California 95403 and online at:  
<https://permitsonoma.org/regulationsandinitiatives/housing/housingelement>.

**Potential Environmental Effects:**

The EIR will describe the reasonably foreseeable and potentially significant adverse effects of the proposed project (both direct and indirect). The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the project when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The County anticipates that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts in the following topic areas, which will be further evaluated in the EIR.

- |                                 |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Aesthetics/Visual               | Noise                          |
| Air Quality                     | Population and Housing         |
| Biological Resources            | Public Services and Recreation |
| Cultural Resources              | Transportation                 |
| Energy                          | Tribal Cultural Resources      |
| Geology and Soils               | Utilities and Service Systems  |
| Greenhouse Gas Emissions        | Wildfire                       |
| Hazards and Hazardous Materials | Cumulative Effects             |
| Hydrology and Water Quality     | Growth Inducing Effects        |
| Land Use and Planning           |                                |

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eric Gage".

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Eric Gage, Planner III

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6/10/2022  
Date

Figure 1



Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2022.

- ★ Project Location
- ▭ Sonoma County
- ▭ Incorporated Cities

