



Sonoma Valley Collaborative
Council Meeting
February 9, 2022
3:00 - 4:30 pm

I. Welcome and orientation

- Welcome new Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council members:
 - Blanca Escobedo, Greenbelt Alliance
 - Annie Falandes, Homeless Action
 - Charlotte Hajer, Sonoma Community Center
- Desired meeting outcome: Updated clarity on what we want to do as a group, and as individual organizations/sectors, to engage with the opportunities presented by...
 - City of Sonoma housing policies
 - County County's housing policies
 - Future of SDC
 - Stronger youth voice

...in alignment with our road map and previous statements

- [Housing Declaration](#)
- In our [Homes for a Sustainable Sonoma Valley](#) report
- Previous SVC [statements](#) for both City of Sonoma and SDC

II. Quick round of input:

Can you share any new perspectives or announcements that the group should hear, so they can understand your sector better, about how your organization or sector sees itself as being affected by the housing situation, or the future of SDC, or what you might be doing about these things?

- Mobile homes legislation last year allows owners of mobile homes to rent out or share their homes, making it more affordable for them.
- Think about “keep people in their affordable homes” in reference to SDC, where there were 5,000 people housed who are now adding to the housing need elsewhere. We are starting very far behind at SDC, especially for those most vulnerable. Important to use the carbon that has already been expended to build those homes.
- Homeless Action is building homes for people transitioning out of homelessness. Suggests Habitat for Humanity-type, sweat equity homes for such people, and others.
- Existing project at Jones and Napa Road, only one in town by Burbank, where residents helped build homes they now own. Cut the cost of building. Would love to see more like that.

III. Finding an advocacy approach that fits your organization's culture.

Advocacy: action taken to support a particular cause, proposal, or outcome.

- Different formats are possible:
 - Org's own letters
 - SVC letters. With all members' signatures, or a subset.
 - Letter to editor
 - Op-ed or article in newspaper. Write or ghost-write.
 - Getting others (your clients, staff, or members) to make statements
 - Public verbal comments at a government meeting
 - Phone calls to decision-makers before a decision
- Different types of content are possible:
 - Describing how the issue harms or helps your mandate or constituency—e.g. SVH
 - Telling others' stories that illustrate a problem or solution, or story of someone displaced, or biz/tourism survey
 - Making a specific ask: "we urge you to..."—e.g. SVHG

Greenbelt Alliance prepared a [Housing Element Toolkit](#) with sample public comments, template letters, and more so you can advocate for climate-smart housing in your community.

IV. Specific activities/projects to get input on.

For each of these: Do you endorse these? Any thumbs-down? Any direction or suggestions? How can you, your staff, your volunteers, make these happen?

1. HOUSING: SVC comment on SVC's evolving platform of asks regarding the City of Sonoma's housing policies.

Increase # of permanent Affordable homes, both for sale and rent. *No objections.*

- The affordability crisis seems insurmountable. Why Affordable vs affordable (i.e. by design) is necessary. All projects by Affordable Housing Developers are restricted to low-income people.
- Assure that people actually in need are living in subsidized homes. Find legal criteria. *No objections.*
- Support this and prioritizing people living here vs people moving in from outside of the County. The city of Sonoma was not involved at all with a housing development on 1st W, only County. Also a problem that building was not maintained.
- Income AND wealth as dual criteria for affordable access: At a minimum, it may be possible and legal to collect these data and publish them...additional steps may also be advisable.

Save expiring affordability for dozens of homes. Transfer ownership units to Housing Land Trust; City manage rentals. *No objections.*

- Affordability expires after 20 years. Housing California and Disability Rights California might have ideas on how to keep them subsidized (also on 2nd homes).

Disincentivize vacation rentals and second homes. Tax and cap.

- There is an advantage to the Pacaso model. Rather than 8 houses going to middle-class families, 1 house that would otherwise be out of their reach goes and is likely used more often.
- Stopping or making a dent in the 2nd home market would make a positive difference because so many homes are going to 2nd home buyers. Might impact our tourism.
- Talked to Kelso Barnett about an empty house tax to support unhoused people. It has been successful in other communities.
- Second homeowners don't contribute their fair share to paying for services like roads, because they don't pay much sales tax.
- Empty Homes tax is a key strategy for Sonoma's unique problem with its high fraction of second homes.

Allow small plexes (2-9 units) in all residential zones. Below market?

- This could negatively impact the middle class. This building will happen where there is a dilapidated building, not in neighborhoods with expensive homes.

Zone for taller buildings including multi-family apartments along Broadway, on W. Napa St, at intersections, where else?

Faster, cheaper, more predictable, by-right development.

- SVC consider contacting the Attorney General of the state to say the City of Sonoma is falling short by declaring the whole place something that needs to be preserved. There are likely policies that are in place that are against the law, that have so far gone under the radar, but are against SB-9. Owners should have the right to densify their properties in already developed areas. The City of Sonoma is on the wrong side of history defending single-family zoning for all the wrong reasons. (RE Small Plexes / By Right: The SVCC should ask the Attorney General to investigate the City's attempt to thwart the legislature's intent with SB 9)
- Q: What is the City's reasoning? A: Don't want to bypass the local approval process, which they think is needed to preserve community character, which our tourism economy depends upon.

Annex land [where?] to build 100% affordable homes.

Other comments: La Luz supports all planks in general and would have no issue in adding our name to a position letter. We look forward to contributing to the process in developing a position for Sonoma Valley Collaborative.

2. HOUSING: Discuss what Sonoma Valley Collaborative and its members should say at Feb 12 and 15 County housing workshops. Permit Sonoma wants to meet with SVC Council.

[Link](#) to Sonoma County Housing Workshops. Discussed the questions from workshops:

- What are the most important features of a neighborhood that you'd like to live in? Schools, parks, grocery stores, jobs – anything important to you.
 - Public free places for community members to gather.
 - Buildings that are actually attractive. People living in low income buildings should still have a beautiful aesthetic. People can be against how a development looks, not that it is low income.
 - Children, who are increasingly missing from SV neighborhoods.
 - Intergenerational communities.
 - Space is needed for larger families. This means more bedrooms, not bigger homes.
 - Affordable, accessible, prevent homelessness, for people exiting homelessness, more resilient to natural disasters (which can lead to homelessness). Condos, and townhouses need elevators. Help for first-time renters.
 - Yes, more children/diversity in Sonoma! Plaza used to be good for public meeting place, but now much of the time it is overwhelmed by tourists and not very welcoming to locals. We are victims of tourism promotional investments.
- Are there features that you don't want to have near your home?
- Where and what kind of housing should we build to support neighborhoods you said you'd like to live in?
- What are the biggest challenges to achieving that? How about over the next 10 years?
- What else would you like us to know about housing in your community?

3. HOUSING: A survey of businesses about housing need, to counter the narrative that more, denser, taller, lower-cost homes in the City of Sonoma will harm tourism.

- I like the poll idea. If folks want to claim a linkage between increased height/density and negative impacts on tourism, they need to substantiate such claims with data. I have long imagined that such trailers, etc. could be sited temporarily.
- Acquire local apartment buildings without raising rents that displace tenants.

4. HOUSING: Initiate a series of talks, first private and then potentially public, about how local philanthropy can create housing solutions: buy land, buy trailers, buy options on land, bring in Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County, etc.

- Do you have any examples of this being successful in other communities? Caitlin: Churches that donate land for a housing project.

- NIMBY reaction to any AF development. If we really want to advance equity, we would find a way to share these developments in all neighborhoods. Like the idea of trailers, parking on streets, rotating over time through lots of neighborhoods.
- Good idea to talk to Land Trust for more advocacy around safe parking programs. Look at Housing California's Road Map Home 2030 <https://roadmaphome2030.org/>.

5. COMMUNITY: SVC is supporting a new Youth Council of teens to advise the City of Sonoma, the Springs MAC, SDC planning, and the School District. Long-term goal we've discussed here: share/transfer power between generations, classes, and races. Would your organization want to have access to a Youth Council to ask advice, recruit youth board members, etc?

- I like it, having access to their opinions would be good, great way for young people to connect with work we are doing. Wonder what teens outside SV are doing.
- Has come up to surface for Greenbelt Alliance, trying to develop a strategy for engaging youth in their outreach and decision-making processes.
- As a Community Center, our goal is to be both community-responsive and community representative. Want youth on board, advisors, etc.
- Think it's a good concept.
- Love the Youth Council idea!

6. Sonoma Developmental Center

- New flush state agency at the table: focus on SDC at future meeting. Send us your burning questions and viewpoints ahead of that.
 - Re: Coastal Conservancy: Very skeptical of this organization, given its pro-tourism mission, principles, and history. We need to look into where the funding is ultimately coming from to understand the motivations behind this curious offer. If fossil fuel, biomass energy, and other Business As Usual corporate interests are seeking to set up a greenwashing think-tank in Sonoma County, we should oppose that, even if "climate change" is in their mission statement. Look at [ULI recommendations](#) about SDC.
- Volunteers from SVC Council for presenting March 16 on who Sonoma Valley Collaborative is, at North Sonoma Valley MAC and Springs MAC.
- Create a public talk by fire-ready design experts, to inform new development at SDC. Fire Ready Design Experts: <https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=41379>.

V. Closing

- Next meeting March 9. Outdoors? Got a space? Probably Permit Sonoma re SDC and county housing element. Always open to your ideas for topics.
 - Lots of yes's to meeting in person. Sonoma Community Center offered.

Attending:
Council:
 Tom Conlon

Annie Falandes
 Angela Ryan

Blanca Escobedo
Sarah Cardona
Orlando Rodriguez
Collin Thoma
Celia Kruse de la Rosa
Leonardo Lobato
Charlotte Hajer
Suzanne Ashimine

Steering Committee:

Richard Dale
Kimberly Blattner

Other:

David Morell
Michael Tinoco