



Sonoma Valley Collaborative Council Meeting
March 9, 2022, 3:00 – 4:30 pm
Sonoma Community Center

Calls to action are in yellow

Welcome

- This is our first in person meeting since being at La Luz in June 2021. Thank you to Sonoma Community Center for hosting.
- Desired meeting outcomes: Continuing to find consensus interests, so SVC can influence future of housing in Sonoma Valley, and also SDC
- New members: Diane Lumiere as alternate for Ann Colichidas representing mobile homes and other lower-cost alternatives to stick-built homes.
- Moment of silence for people affected by situation in Ukraine: Curran.

Show your pro-housing stance

Please take gorgeous yard signs to show your pro-housing stance, courtesy of our partner Generation Housing. Introducing Ramon Meraz from Gen H. Request a sign or banner, English or Spanish, [here](#) or call Caitlin at 707-322-1400. You and your org can become a member of Gen H for any amount. SVC is a member.

Location ideas for banners? There's already one at Verano and 5th West.

- Ask Steve Ledson if we can put one on an empty parcel on Donald Street.
- Broadway Market fence
- Homeless Action Sonoma site

Sonoma County Housing Element with Bradley Dunn, Permit Sonoma

“We obviously have a housing crisis in Sonoma County, which is felt by everyone, our friends and family, and is most felt by people with the least resources.” A Housing Element is a plan for how to house all community members. All jurisdictions are required to revise their Housing Element every 8 years. The 2 square miles of the City of Sonoma are not included in this plan, but the rest of Sonoma Valley is. Based on a Regional Housing Needs Assessment from bay-area-wide government agencies, Sonoma County is required to zone for [not actually build] 3,800 housing units at a certain range of price points all lower than market rate. We need to decide how we best absorb growth. We must produce a plan or the

State will take over zoning for more housing. Extensive outreach and engagement is part of this plan. Required to respond to everything we hear.

SVC already has submitted spoken comments derived from SVC's *Homes* report. More recent stances SVC is considering: affordable by design doesn't work in Sonoma Valley, vacation rentals and empty homes need to be disincentivized, rescuing expiring deed restrictions is a priority, income criteria need to be fixed, homes for families means more bedrooms, not bigger homes.

Bradley: It would be very useful for SVC to say what kinds of projects SVC would support being ministerial (meaning, approved just by checking boxes, not through extensive public review).

- Even Sierra Club has gotten to a place where it supports certain developments.

City/County/Springs:

- Unfair that the County is being proactive about housing while the City of Sonoma is being such a bad actor. Several SVC members feel that way about the City. It's a topic for gov decision-makers to address, not gov staff.
- County is working on agreements with cities, like asking cities to "take" some of County's assigned housing units.

2nd homes

- Bradley: There seems to be widespread agreement that this is a direction we should go. Taxes are difficult. Oakland has a flat fee based on size of house. Permit Sonoma is looking at. Enforcement is a challenge. Ideas on enforcement are helpful. 2nd homeowners have money, are often politically connected. Disincentivizing 2nd homes or empty homes is politically hard. County could use support from SVC and its members.

Community engagement, getting input

- County has done outreach using best practices, like paying low-income participants. Several focus groups. Established a Housing Advisory Committee. Sonoma Valley members include SVC members Blanca Escobedo and Fred Allebach, and Joanne Brown who's on Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission.
- Q: Who does Advisory Committee report back to, who are they accountable to, how does one get on it? A: Members were nominated by Supervisors, representing various interest groups and locations.
- Q: Many La Luz clients are Latinos, many experience that after they attend a public meeting at their inconvenience, nothing happens. Clarity requested about the

requirement to “respond to all input” Respond to everything? A: County is required to respond. They bundle similar comments together and respond programmatically to all the themes they have heard, or else justify why we aren’t going to respond.

- Look at North Bay Organizing Project’s campaign on Housing Element.

Survey will be distributed next week. Bradley to share w/ Caitlin, Kim send to Council, ask to share.

Bradley asks: Springs has the most overcrowding of any area in the County. Communities to the North have much less housing density. Should those be areas we consider for more housing? Which ones? Why?

- Highly encourage infill to protect the biodiversity of Sonoma Valley. If we want survival, we cannot push further and further out into the undeveloped land.
- Infill is more likely to have access to services, amenities without getting in car.
- Springs is full of badly built, badly planned single family homes. Would love to see area around La Luz built up [redeveloped] so generations can live together.
- Principle that we want to see density where it already exists, ADU law will make density problem in the Springs worse. Lots of tiny, less expensive units in the Springs are not well maintained. We cannot keep dumping affordable and Affordable housing just in the Springs. [The current position of SVC is that the City and the other built-up areas of the Valley should share the burdens and benefits of being urban places.]
- North Valley doesn’t have services like sewer, water, so harder for housing. Once infrastructure is there, then Affordable Housing more possible. The County should focus on infrastructure. Also a car is needed. Rohnert Park with miles and miles of housing with no stores is what not to do.
- Eastside e.g. 8th street east. has a lot of land. Can we do mobile homes, prefab homes there? If the City would relax hookup fees, can set up a mobile home park for around \$100,000. Bradley: Not looking at mobile homes, but interested to hear any support for pre-fab, “modular” homes. [SVC position is support for alternative types of construction to be treated same as stick-built.]
- Q: How/if is County avoiding putting homes on farmland. Bradley: We have policies like “community separators” to stem outward growth of places like Kenwood, Glen Ellen. Have heard in process that infill is important. Does that kind of infill have political support? I.e. SVC supports “the right” development, but what is that? Q: Should SVC advocate for allowing certain projects to be build more by-right [with less oversight, faster, cheaper, less opportunity for appeal]? Bradley: are we willing to give up some of the tools for preventing the wrong units to make building the right ones easier?

- Approach should solve the issue of affordable housing, should be holistic. Things are changing fast. People are moving north from Boys Hot Springs into Agua Caliente and Fetters, soon they will be moving out of Sonoma Valley entirely. Soon we will find ourselves in a very different community. Underserved people want access to housing, jobs and health services. Q: My question is will the housing element solve the housing affordability crisis in SV. A: A government document doesn't solve problems. If we try to implement them, it won't solve the problem of not building housing where people want and need to live. The Housing Element is not a magic bullet for a problem this complex, that has been going on this long. [The Housing Element zones enough land to solve the problem, but does not get anything actually built.]
- Provision of affordable housing is stipulated in the legislation guiding the SDC Specific Plan, so obviously housing will be part of that. The question is how much; how dense. People who live adjacent to the property know the constraints well: minimal transit (which means more travel via car), wildfire danger (how will people evacuate safely, and how will people rebuild when the next wildfire blows through), the interface with the wildlife corridor that runs through the property (how do people live in harmony with the natural areas so cherished and so important to everyone's health and sanity). The question is also what kind; how much affordable? Many of my neighbors and friends who live adjacent to the property or love the property have voiced support for all of that housing to be affordable. The challenge for all of us is to come up with a way to provide entirely affordable housing that addresses overcrowding for people who work in the valley, and enables people commuting to work in the valley to live here. Market-rate housing directly gives benefits to a developer and the wealthy homeowner and is expected to "trickle down" to the community at large via an affordable allotment. This is a paradigm that needs revision, and the community at large has to address it on multiple levels: transforming vacation rentals into long-term rentals; raising wages so workers can afford existing housing; enabling property owners in areas with necessary services to subdivide; building true infill developments.

Q's for Bradley

- Q: Why is SDC not included in the County's Housing Element? A: Housing there won't be built within the 8-year period.
- Q: The Housing Element covers housing for what income levels? A: The market will produce market-rate housing for wealthy people. Housing Element's job is creating conditions to make all other types of housing more possible.
- Q: Is this housing for anyone or only people already live here? A: Public government funding for any subsidy prohibits any neighborhood preference because it can be

used to exclude people. For deed-restricted affordable housing, residents are chosen by lottery.

- Q: Timeline for Housing Element? A: Community engagement through March. **Sooner we can get feedback the better.** Writing draft doc April-May. Submit draft to State in June.
- Q: Are shelter beds, temporary emergency or transitional housing, counted as units for the Housing Element? A: Will have to look at that, follow up.

We should start working now on the numbers that will be dictated to Sonoma City and County in the next RHNA.

Bradley: “You [members of SVC individually and together] have a big voice, you are listened to.” **You can state your wishes to Supervisors, planning commissioners, legislators. And work with SVC staff to develop statements. Bradley Dunn is at bradley.dunn@sonoma-county.org. Sign up to get news and surveys about the Sonoma County Housing Element on the right-hand side of [this webpage](#).**

Sonoma Developmental Center (*did not have time to discuss any of this*)

- Status:
 - Thanks for member input to letter on what impacts Permit Sonoma should analyze.
 - Virtual workshops coming up on how the future SDC should operate, things like transit, trails, fences, firerready design, etc. March 22 (Tues eve) and 25 (Sat AM).
- Affording affordability. How does SVC promote greater levels of affordability at SDC, despite the expense?
- What does the climate center/Eldridge Enterprise concept mean in relation to SVC’s priorities (affordability of housing, integrated neighborhood, open space/wildlife protections)? Concerns and desires.
- **Staff always looking for help and partners to make effective statements on SDC.**

Sonoma Valley Youth Council update (*did not have time to discuss*)

SVC staff fostered connections for organizers and supported formation meeting. Engaged high school students have extremely limited time, so they are Still finalizing how they will decide what to take on and how they’ll interact with other groups. SVC staff have promoted offering anonymous discrete stipends on request, at least to officers. **What does SVC or your own org want to ask the Youth Council to consider?** E.g. shall SVC ask Youth Council to endorse/co-sign SVC’s next SDC letter?

Updates, calls to action

- Seeking very brief speakers to introduce SVC to North Sonoma Valley MAC on March 16: Collin, ?, Caitlin, Ann C
- Testimonials for fundraising appeal needed. Thank you to Leonardo, Charlotte, Kimberly!
- SVC joined a stakeholder group that is informing PG&E's court-mandated community engagement. Input welcome.
- Seeking volunteer to help organize a virtual talk by an expert on designing fire-ready developments. Relevant to SDC.

Closing

- Next meeting April 13. Venue TBA.
- Hang out and re-acquaint yourselves after all this time on zoom.

Attendees

Council

Curran Reichert, First Congregational Church,
Minister, Sonoma Valley Interfaith Ministerial
Association, Member
Collin Thoma, Disability Services & Legal Center,
Systems Change Advocate
Tom Conlon, Transition Sonoma Valley, Sierra
Club, Climate Coalition
Charlotte Hajer, Sonoma Community Center,
Executive Director
Ann Colichidas, Golden State
Manufactured-Home Owners League
Diane Lumiere, Pueblo Serena
Leonardo Lobato, La Luz Center, Executive
Director
Blanca Escobedo, Greenbelt Alliance
Suzanne Ashimine, Sotheby's International Realty,
Real Estate Associate
Celia Kruse de la Rosa, Sonoma Valley Hospital,
Community and Marketing
Jim McFadden, Sonoma Valley Housing Group
(alternate for Fred Allebach)

Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging Advisory
Council, Vintage House Former Executive
Director

Guests

Ramon Meraz, community engagement director at
Generation Housing
Bradley Dunn, policy manager at Permit Sonoma

Staff

Caitlin Cornwall, Project Director
Kim Jones, Coordinator

Steering Committee

Richard Dale, Sonoma Ecology Center Executive
Director
Cynthia Scarborough, Chair