



Dear City of Sonoma City Council and Planning Commission,

The revised draft Housing Element that the City submitted to HCD, that City Council will vote on January 31, incorporated many of our requests. We are sincerely pleased to see these changes, because they signal that you are aware how big and urgent the problem is. There are still areas where the HCD draft falls short, so we ask you to make the following additional changes.

Why this is so important

Sonoma is losing its families and young people, which is ominous for our quality of life and local economy. Housing cost is a major cause, if not the overriding cause, of these losses. Very high housing costs are keeping away new families, younger people, and workers.

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

The HCD draft's site inventory does not Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, as required by law, because it puts 88% of Very Low- and Low-income units on three sites on Hwy 12 while putting none in the higher-resource areas east of Broadway. It maintains the historic division of a wealthy east and lower-income west. All over the country, jurisdictions are doing away with single-family zoning, but the current HE keeps 65% of Sonoma's area in single-family zoning. We request that the HE integrate these commitments into Program 22:

1. Locate half of Very Low and Low-Income units on the east side
2. Allow modest multi-unit buildings, potentially 8 units, by right in all zones
3. By January 2024, identify parcels that contained racially restrictive covenants and upzone them to medium or high density residential or Housing Opportunity. These parcels likely include large areas of the Central East Planning Area. These should include two 0.5-acre parcels in the Armstrong Estates development.
4. Rezone the Sebastiani agricultural production area to commercial, so it can provide housing.

5. Commit to reviewing the Conditions of Approval and minimum parcel size at large-lot subdivisions (Armstrong Estates is one example, and there may be others), to identify and implement changes that would invite smaller, more affordable homes or multi-family buildings on empty or under-utilized residentially-zoned sites, such as rezoning to Affordable Housing Overlay, medium or high density residential.

Make Sonoma more welcoming for 100% affordable projects

Sonoma's very high land costs make it unlikely that modest-sized market-rate units like ADUs or "cottage homes" can resolve our housing crisis. So the HE must make Sonoma's landscape inviting and feasible for 100% subsidized affordable housing projects. These projects need larger parcels, greater flexibility, and reduced requirements and fees. We request:

1. Increase frequency of meetings with nonprofit housing developers, to quarterly from annually. Add Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County to the list of invited entities. (Program 2, third Objective; Program 22)
2. By 2025, join the Renewal Enterprise District, which exists to "to make it as easy and cost-effective as possible for builders and developers to produce the needed housing stock that aligns with community values", in part by "pooling and leveraging financing tools and funding sources." (Program 7, new objective)
3. Revise the Development Code along Highway 12 so that, for 100% affordable projects, it allows or requires 4-5 stories and reduces or removes requirements for setbacks, parking, open space, and public space requirements. (Programs 15, 18, 19)
4. Add an objective to meet with local philanthropists who raised \$20 million for Sonoma Valley Hospital, to raise funds to buy larger residential lots (Doyle is an example) before market-rate developers do. Once acquired, these lots can be donated or sold at a discount to nonprofit developers or the Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County. Sonoma Valley Catalyst Fund, Impact100, and other philanthropic groups can assist. (Program 7)

Speed up implementation of certain programs

Programs 1, 2, 8, 11, 19 are our highest priorities, and should be on a faster timeline that reflects our housing crisis. We have current capacity to help the City move these priorities forward, and we are fundraising to increase our capacity.

Thank you for considering these requests. Our understanding of AFFH, Sonoma's housing market, and state law show us that these requests are needed, feasible, and aligned with both Sonoma's best interests and its legal requirements. Sonoma residents—those who live here now, and those who we hope will live here in the future—deserve a safe, accessible, affordable place to call home, with a range of choices free of barriers to fair housing.

Signed,

[Sonoma Valley Collaborative](#). Caitlin Cornwall, Project Director

Members include: Boys & Girls Club of Sonoma Valley Teen Program, Disability Services & Legal Center, Friends in Sonoma Helping, Golden State Manufactured-Home Owners League, Greenbelt Alliance, Hanna Institute, Impact100 Sonoma, La Luz Center, Midstate Construction, SHARE Sonoma County, Sierra Club, Sonoma Community Center, Sonoma Overnight Support, Sonoma Police Department, Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce, Sonoma Valley Climate Coalition, Sonoma Valley Community Health Center, Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, Sonoma Valley Hospital, Sonoma Valley Housing Group, Sonoma Valley Interfaith Ministerial Association, Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance, Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance, Transition Sonoma Valley, Valley Bar + Bottle, Vintage House Sonoma, Winery Sixteen 600.

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