SUSTAINABLE SONOMA
Economy. Environment. Everyone.

HOMES FOR A SUSTAINABLE SONOMA VALLEY:
Strategic Recommendations for Our Community

2020
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Together we can solve the housing affordability crisis that affects every aspect of our community.

Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration

Sonoma Valley suffers from a severe housing affordability crisis that affects every aspect of our community. The future of our community is at stake.

We, the undersigned, pledge to work together, across boundaries, to increase, improve and preserve housing that is affordable for people who live or work in the Valley, within already developed areas, to create diverse, safe, complete neighborhoods.

A Call to Action

Sustainable Sonoma finds that all segments of the Sonoma Valley community align around a vision for a whole, sustainable community—a place where people can find meaningful work, affordable homes, a sense of connectedness, access to open space, healthy lifestyles, and the other essential pieces of wellbeing.

We now have the foundation for true cross-community collaboration on an issue that affects every aspect of our community—affordable homes.

To reach this vision, we in Sonoma Valley need to...

- Strengthen public will for housing affordability
- Help people keep their existing affordable homes
- Build new homes that embody the principles of the *Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration*

Table of Contents

> **" Sustainable Sonoma is exactly what our Valley needs at exactly the right time. Its leaders have carefully laid the groundwork to give us what we have lacked—a chance to understand the integrated nature of the complex challenges ahead of us, and choose our future together.**
>
> **— Katherine Fulton, national philanthropy expert and co-author of Sonoma Valley Fund's 2017 *Hidden in Plain Sight***

Sustainable Sonoma: Who We Are

This report is by Sustainable Sonoma, a forum of community leaders from a wide range of sectors across Sonoma Valley, finding solutions and taking action to address our community's biggest challenges.

Our vision for Sonoma Valley is a thriving, just, sustainable community, a model for Sonoma County, the state, and the nation.

A *sustainable community* meets all three "E"'s:

E for Environment: A Healthy Climate and Environment
E for Equity/Everyone: Social Well-being for All
E for Economy: Economic Security

This is the value system that underpins Sustainable Sonoma.

Sustainable Sonoma answers needs that were highlighted in the 2014 *A Portrait of Sonoma County* [1] and 2017 *Hidden in Plain Sight* reports. Both studies concluded that if we want to see resolution of our persistent challenges, we need a new level of collaboration to address our systemic, interconnected challenges. Hidden in Plain Sight, describing Sustainable Sonoma, said "Sonoma Valley is fortunate that a group of leaders has been slowly laying the groundwork for just such an effort." [2]

> The elements of a sustainable community are a healthy environment, a strong economy, and the well-being of the people living in the community. A sustainable community meets challenges through integrated solutions rather than through fragmented approaches that meet some goals at the expense of the others.

Sustainable Sonoma is a project of Sonoma Ecology Center.

The time is now for a new level of collaboration to address Sonoma Valley's systemic, interconnected challenges.

Sustainable Sonoma is bringing the Sonoma Valley community's different sectors together to increase, improve, and preserve housing that is affordable for people who live or work in the Valley, within already developed areas, to create diverse, safe, complete neighborhoods.

Sustainable Sonoma recognizes that Sonoma Valley is the ancestral land of the Pomo, Wappo, and Miwok peoples.

This report is based on a thoughtful process of learning and problem-solving.
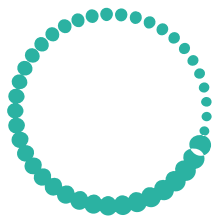
Formation.

No one organization or sector can solve the biggest challenges facing our community, or alone preserve what we love about it. People from health, business, schools, emergency response, social justice, environment, housing, and viticulture came together as the Sustainable Sonoma Council for the first time two weeks after the October 2017 fires.

Listening.

At 20 listening sessions in 2018, we recorded over 1,600 comments about what Sonoma Valley residents and workers want for the future of their community. The report, *Voices of Sonoma Valley*, showed that housing affordability is the #1 issue in Sonoma Valley.

Reflection.

Everyone has a stake in housing. People have strong feelings about their homes, their neighborhoods and towns, subsidies, land use planning, poverty, and justice. The Sustainable Sonoma Council teased out the principles or values related to housing that are most broadly held by the community interest groups they represent. We sought out the "highest common denominator" among these interests.

The definition of sustainable community that underpins Sustainable Sonoma means that the housing strategies Sustainable Sonoma promotes must improve equity and integration across ages, races, incomes, and immigration status; must improve the local economy; and must positively affect the environment.

Sustainable Sonoma coalesced its learning about housing into the Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration.

Expert input.

Regional housing experts recommended a menu of actionable housing strategies during a convening in early December 2019. Their ideas were customized for Sonoma Valley's particular assets, trends, and challenges, and based on the values expressed by community interests.

The Need for Action on Housing in Sonoma Valley

Sonoma Valley suffers from a housing affordability crisis that affects every aspect of our community. The future of our community is at stake.

We are losing core members of the community because people can't afford to live here.

- Teachers: 14 of 19 new teachers hired by Sonoma Valley Unified School District for the 2019-2020 school year lived outside Sonoma Valley.

- Firefighters and EMTs: 15 out of 50 firefighters employed by Sonoma Valley Fire & Rescue Authority live in the Valley (Jim Comisky, battalion chief, reported at Sustainable Sonoma's 2019 Learning Lab).

- Children: Children are disappearing from our community. Sonoma Valley Unified School District expects to see a 5 to 8% decline in school enrollment by 2029.[3]

The ongoing exodus of artists, families, young single people, grown children, fixed-income seniors, and many other cherished members of our community, erodes the foundation of our community from the bottom up.

Little data exists specifically for Sonoma Valley, because Sonoma Valley is not a government jurisdiction, neither a city nor a county. This is a problem, because housing action in Sonoma Valley should fix the specific problems that only local data can reveal.

" Each year, it is becoming harder and harder for local employers to find people to fill existing jobs, much less allow for any job growth. Regardless of industry, the availability of workers is at the top of the list of many business owners' and managers' concerns. Worse yet, our recent business survey showed that our area's lower-wage workers tend to commute farther than do those who earn more. As a result, their expenses for child care, gas, car maintenance and other transportation costs absorb a disproportionately high percentage of their income.

— Mark Bodenhamer, Executive Director, Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce

Housing costs here are too high compared to wages.

- Sonoma County workers have the lowest median earnings ($50,919) in the nine-county Bay Area.[4] The state classifies several parts of Sonoma Valley, both within and outside the City of Sonoma,[5] as "disadvantaged" based on low household income.

- 16,825 low-income renter households in Sonoma County do not have access to an affordable home.[6]

- 77% of extremely low-income households in Sonoma County are paying more than half of their income on housing costs, compared to just 2% of moderate-income households.[7]

- Renters in Sonoma County need to earn $34.31 per hour to afford the average monthly asking rent of $1,784. This hourly wage is almost three times the City of Sonoma's minimum wage.[8]

- After paying the high cost of housing, very low-income households in Sonoma County are short $12,011 annually to meet their basic needs.[9]

- As the pandemic keeps so many people from working, homelessness and housing insecurity have ballooned to a previously unknown extent.

Housing costs make employers in the public and private sectors already struggle for every hire, and the future looks worse.

- There are not enough homes—affordable or not—to house the people who have jobs in Sonoma Valley. "In 2016, in both the Bay Area and Sonoma County, the ratio of jobs to housing was 9 to 1, almost three times that of the highest ratio ever posted from 1990 to 2007. The 2017 fires only further exacerbated an already challenging situation in terms of balancing jobs to housing."[10]

- Local employers—businesses, health care and education providers, and nonprofits—struggle to hire and retain staff across the earning spectrum. For three years in a row, the Sonoma Valley Business Survey, administered by the Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce, reports that local businesses name housing availability and affordability as the biggest challenge for the future of Sonoma's business community and local economy.

- The future of work in Sonoma Valley is expected to be dominated by the service sector, with a high share of low wage jobs and fewer opportunities for upward mobility into middle and higher paying jobs.[11][12] Without a change in this trajectory, even fewer workers will be able to afford to live locally.

It's a fairness issue. The problem is far worse for some community members than others.

- In Sonoma County, as of 2018, the "vast majority of rent burden [was] concentrated in households earning less than $50,000/year." "For homeowners, 35% to 40% of the households making less than $50,000 per year were cost-burdened," meaning they are paying more than half their income for housing.[13]

- As of 2017 (before the fires and the pandemic), "almost 20% of families with children in Sonoma Valley were in poverty as the government defines it. That represents at least a 60% increase between 2009 and 2014."[14] This is still an under-count, because the federal poverty level does not account for the high cost of living in Sonoma Valley.

- Housing is unaffordable for the vast majority of farmworkers, who pay 30%-60% of their monthly income in rent. Two-thirds of farmworkers live in overcrowded conditions that directly impact the physical and mental health of their families and the educational achievement of their children.[15]

- Many low-income people share housing in order to shoulder the cost of rent, doubling up with extended family members, fictive kin or family friends, leading to disproportionate rates of COVID-19 transmission, illness and even death. These disparities are most pronounced for members of the Black and Latino communities.[16]

> " Given the complexity of the affordable housing crisis here in Sonoma Valley, we must begin exploring all possible solutions.
>
> — Priscilla Essert, Executive Director, Vintage House Senior Center

All of these problems—community members being unable to stay in the Valley, the extraordinarily high cost of housing, the difficulty in staffing businesses and organizations, and inequality in income and housing burden—were made worse by the 2017 and 2020 fires.

Covid-19 has further exacerbated these problems, but not necessarily in expected ways. Housing prices have remained high since the pandemic, as new home buyers take advantage of historically low interest rates and many Bay Area professionals embrace the potential to work remotely for the long term, relocating to Sonoma Valley from high-income, high-cost markets in San Francisco and Silicon Valley.[17] Home sales in May 2020 for properties over $1 million dollars in value skyrocketed with a 134% increase from 2019, while properties under $650,000 saw a 91% increase.[18] In these ways, pandemic-related economic factors have further constrained the affordability of existing housing stock in Sonoma Valley.

Many local small businesses will close permanently or have dialed back the number of employees, leaving many low-wage residents out of work during a historic period of national unemployment.[19] Valley families with undocumented household members, central to the productivity of the local economy, are not eligible for most government safety net programs or one-time support under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES).[20] As a result of all these changes, many families have fallen into poverty. Desperate for work, a larger number of local residents will now seek jobs outside of the community, increasing commuter traffic on already overburdened roads or forcing them to permanently relocate.

Sonoma Valley Housing Opportunities and Constraints

The Sonoma Valley community faces its housing affordability challenge at the same time as thousands of other communities. All over the world, all across the west coast of North America, desirable locations face the same problem. Our solutions must be appropriate to our particular location, our geography. The map here illustrates where Sonoma Valley has already developed much of its housing, where our population is concentrated, where infrastructure such as water and sewer exist for denser housing, and where our gorgeous open space lies.

BUILDINGS

URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY of City of Sonoma

URBAN SERVICE AREA designated for urban development by Sonoma County

PROTECTED PRIVATE OR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

COMMUNITY SEPARATOR prevents intensification of zoning

SONOMA VALLEY

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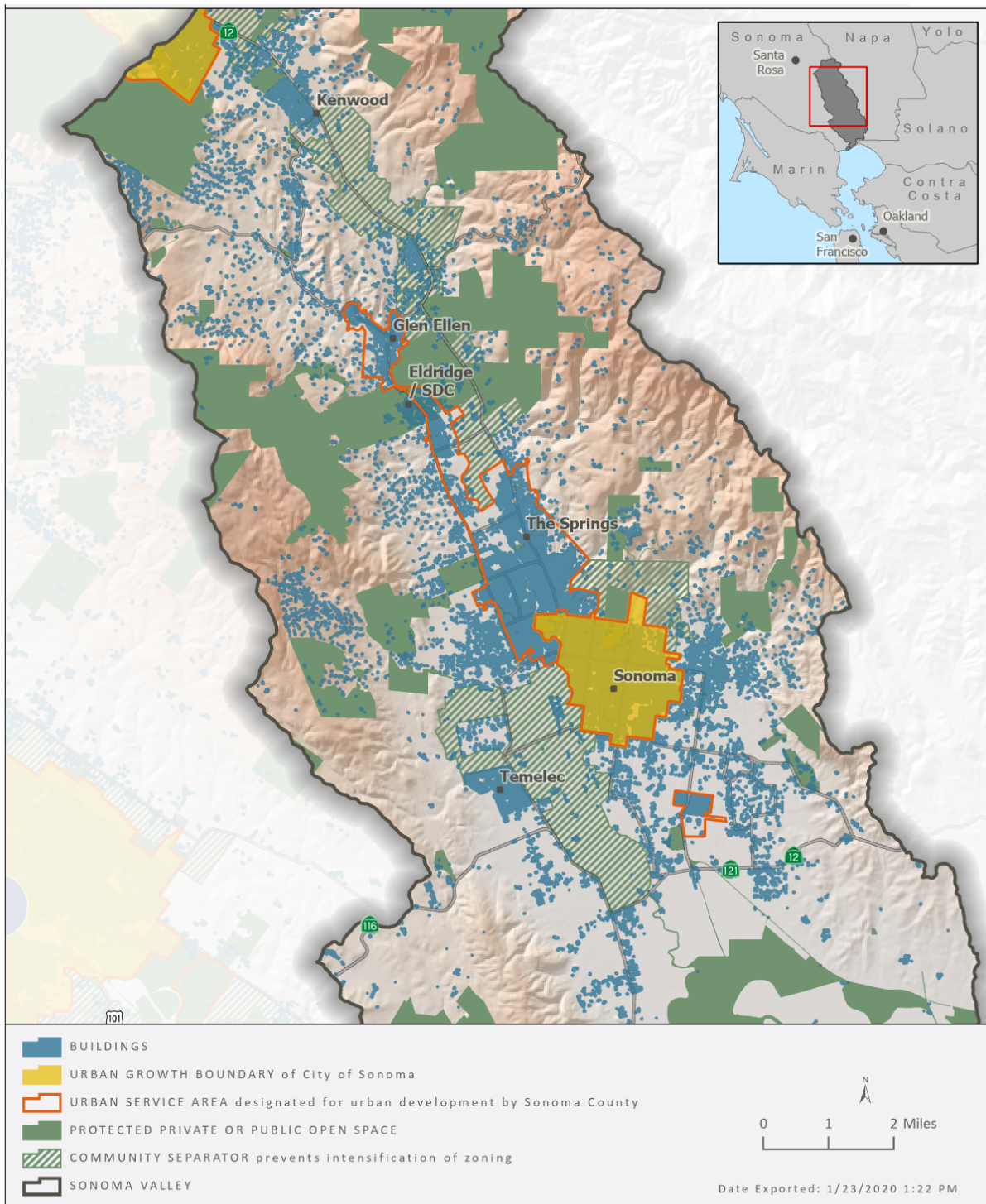
Homes for A Sustainable Sonoma Valley:
Barriers We Face

Why haven't we already seen more action to remedy the problem of unaffordable homes, even though community leaders agree that the biggest challenge facing Sonoma Valley is the lack of homes at prices affordable to those who live and work here?

Sustainable Sonoma spent considerable time uncovering answers to this question. Drawing upon community input through listening sessions, a review of the literature on housing, and discussions with industry experts, we identified three major barriers.

First, ours is a community where many have a strong resistance to changing how things have long been.

- **IDENTITY.** Many residents believe that Sonoma Valley's identity as a "small town" and a place with "rural character" would be violated if we change the look of our built places by increasing the height or density of homes. Related, many people are attached to using private cars, and they resist giving space to homes or transit instead of parking.

- **NO GROWTH.** Some community members use environmental arguments to oppose most new construction, even infill, even though such projects reduce commuting and sprawl.

- **SILENT MAJORITY.** Pro-housing voices are often unheard. When opponents of housing proposals are the only ones who speak up, elected officials will often choose not to support even good projects. Two recent examples in Santa Rosa: County Supervisors did not approve redevelopment of the former Sutter hospital on Chanate Road, and affordable housing construction is stalled in newly incorporated Roseland.

- **ISOLATION.** While Sonoma Valley's location, away from major highways and from the county seat, contributes positively to our semi-rural way of life, it also means that we are poorly served by housing entities in government and in the nonprofit sector, which generally operate out of Santa Rosa, 40 minutes away. The Springs, with more residents than the City of Sonoma, needs the same urban services as a city, but without a city government, this area does not received them.

Second, high costs make new, infill, and/or affordable housing very difficult financially.

- The cost of construction is extremely high and increasing, in terms of labor availability, materials, land, and time needed for approvals.

- Lenders are cautious about financing types of construction projects that aren't already common here. Appraisers can't find "comps"—comparable properties—to estimate the market value of taller or denser projects, or multi-family buildings, within a matrix of other housing types.

- Parking requirements, combined with very high land costs, are a particular barrier. Parking requirements can result in more area on a site given to cars than to homes. Historic parking requirements conflict with the trends toward less car ownership and more transit, and a declared climate emergency.

- Cuts in federal and state funding reduced investment in affordable housing in Sonoma County by more than $42 million annually between 2008 and 2019, an 88% reduction.[21] The COVID-19 pandemic has caused further budget cuts.

- State and federal sources of money can subsidize the cost of housing to bring its rent or purchase price lower than what's dictated by the open market. But these funding sources require a local "match": funds contributed by city, county, or private sources. Sonoma Valley lacks those local matching funds, and Sonoma County lacks a county-wide housing strategy that could meet Sonoma Valley's needs.

Lastly, some land use and zoning patterns create barriers for the types of housing Sustainable Sonoma promotes: infill, affordable, denser, taller or smaller.

- Not enough land is zoned for housing, or dense enough housing, even within already-developed areas. Our zoning patterns have not responded to the housing crisis or the worldwide decline in demand for brick-and-mortar retail businesses.

- Sonoma Valley's transit services are insufficient to meet the requirements of some housing funding sources.

- Water and sewer infrastructure needs constant, expensive upgrades to maintain function and to meet future needs.

- Many homes in Sonoma Valley sit empty much of the time, with 856 approved vacation rentals as of August 2020,[22] and many part-time homes. Many are second or seasonal homes, some are rented out for short periods such as for vacation rental, some are only permitted for use by seasonal agricultural workers, and some are empty because they are on the market. In 2015, "rural Sonoma Valley" plus "Sonoma" accounted for about a quarter of all AirBnB listings in Sonoma County.[23]

Why is it that some can afford to live here and so many others cannot? As in most communities across our country, the Sonoma Valley community was historically, and continues to be, deeply divided along racial, class, and economic lines. This history explains why today's housing crisis affects some of our neighbors, friends, and employees far more severely than others.

Our history brings with it additional barriers to equality and justice.

- The US and California governments sponsored forced eviction, land grabs, and genocide of California Indians until the 1870's.[24]

- People of color have been systematically excluded, through law and custom, from getting mortgages to buy houses. Discriminatory lending practices—sometimes called "redlining"—were legal in California until 1959,[25] widespread until the national Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, and continue today.[26] As late as 1964, a state-wide proposition allowing real estate discrimination on racial, religious, and ethnic grounds passed by a margin of more than two to one. It was later found unconstitutional.[27] A study of home loan activity during 2009 found the majority of loans in the City of Sonoma were made to white residents, and when Hispanics/Latinos did submit loan applications, they were much more likely to be denied.[28]

- The realty board in Sonoma County had an informal agreement during the 1960's not to show property to Black potential homebuyers in Sonoma.[29]

- The largely white City of Sonoma is incorporated and therefore well represented with its own government, but the historically Latino and working-class Springs is not.

- Where you live determines what you learn and what you earn. Public elementary schools in Sonoma Valley have historically had widely different levels of money and other resources, exacerbating disparities in opportunity between neighborhoods.

- People of color in Sonoma County are substantially underpaid for the same work compared to white people, even after accounting for income and educational differences.[30]

- Our economy, led by agriculture and hospitality, predominantly creates low-wage jobs.

- Housing prices here, for ownership or rental, stay high even in times of crisis because affluent people from all over the world want to live here, at least part-time, and they can afford higher prices. As of 2015, the average income for the top 1% in Sonoma County was 22 times greater than the average income of everyone else.[31] This trend is stronger than ever. Now that many better-paid people can work from home, Sonoma Valley is deluged with real estate buyers from the greater Bay Area and elsewhere.[32]

- These inequities are magnified for Sonoma Valley's undocumented people, who likely comprise 5%-10% of Sonoma Valley's population.[33]

Strategic Recommendations For Our Community

Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration

Sonoma Valley suffers from a severe housing affordability crisis that affects every aspect of our community. The future of our community is at stake.

Sustainable Sonoma is working across boundaries, to increase, improve and preserve housing that is affordable for people who live or work in the Valley, within already developed areas, to create diverse, safe, complete neighborhoods.

Sonoma Valley is fully capable of accomplishing a great shift in our approach to housing our community members. Our love for this place motivates us to craft a better future for it. We are blessed with an abundance of richly resourced people who love this community and want it to thrive, whether they live here full time or not. Some have had successful careers in property development, social marketing, and finance, which are key skillsets for increasing the amount of Sonoma Valley housing that's affordable. Some sit on the boards of local faith groups and social services nonprofits, and are keenly concerned about poverty, children, and equity, all of which are directly affected by the quality and cost of people's homes. And we have Sustainable Sonoma, which brings many of these groups together for joint action.

The strategies recommended here are the most effective approaches for achieving the intentions of the Sonoma Valley Housing Declaration, according to both our community's expressed views and the experts Sustainable Sonoma consulted. The recommended strategies are consistent with Sustainable Sonoma's values of sustainable community, they benefit ALL of Sonoma Valley's communities, they appear to be politically and financially feasible at this time, and they are customized for Sonoma Valley's particular challenges and assets.

More details for tackling specific actions are provided in the Appendix, to help guide and structure future work to accomplish the strategies.

> **We cannot afford to waste this moment. With so much division in the world today, where leaders are often divided on so many issues, the fact that we have the foundation for true cross-community collaboration on an issue as important as this one, is key.**
>
> — Dr. Tiffany Manuel, President and CEO, TheCaseMade

Summaries of Recommended Strategies

STRATEGY 1
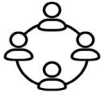## Strengthen public will for housing affordability

1A.	Strengthen the voice of community members supporting housing affordability.
1B.	Increase public and private funding for decent housing that's affordable.
1C.	Track real-world housing gaps and opportunities in Sonoma Valley, and publicize these findings on a regular basis.
1D.	Assure that the City of Sonoma and the Springs equitably share the benefits and burdens of being urban places.
1E.	Develop a cohesive joint City-County housing strategy.
1F.	Establish an enduring capacity for long-term housing advocacy in Sonoma Valley.

STRATEGY 2
Help people keep their existing affordable homes

2A.	Help those who are most vulnerable to stay in their affordable homes.
2B.	Support and expand existing programs for home sharing and housing navigators.
2C.	Expand access to existing programs that pay for home repairs and rehabilitation, so more people can remain in their already affordable homes.
2D.	Upgrade mobile homes and mobile home parks, for both renters and owners.
2E.	Assure that landlords accept federal housing voucher holders as tenants.

STRATEGY 3
Build new homes that embody the principles of the Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration

3A.	Build a variety of types of homes in thriving neighborhoods for low and moderate income people, including on nontraditional types of land.
3B.	Improve infrastructure to support infill, low- and moderate-income homes.
3C.	Reduce regulatory barriers that limit housing production of infill, affordable, integrated housing. Actively incentivize production of such housing.

Time-sensitive windows of opportunity

Influence the revision of the City of Sonoma's development code
🕐 Through fall of 2021
→ Suggested Action in Strategy 3C

Help decide the future of Eldridge
🕐 2021
→ Suggested Action in Strategy 3A

Help those who are most vulnerable to stay in their affordable homes
🕐 Through the "eviction cliff," early to mid-2021
→ Strategy 2A

Influence the fate of mobile home parks
🕐 Next two years
→ Suggested Action in Strategy 2D

Influence the final Springs Specific Plan
🕐 By mid-2021
→ Suggested Action in Strategy 3C

Strategies that Sustainable Sonoma will focus on for the next half year

Share and promote the recommended strategies in *Homes for a Sustainable Sonoma Valley*.

Strengthen public will for housing affordability
→ Strategy 1

All strategies listed in Time-sensitive windows of opportunity

The most important strategies for nonprofits and donors to focus on

Invest philanthropic and employer dollars in demonstration projects, either directly or by contributing to housing funds and housing land trusts.
→ Suggested Actions in Strategy 1B

Track real-world housing gaps and opportunities in Sonoma Valley, and publicize these findings on a regular basis.
→ Strategy 1C

Establish an enduring capacity in the nonprofit sector to improve housing in Sonoma Valley.
→ Suggested Actions in Strategy 1F

Increase the capacity of Sonoma Valley to prevent homelessness and displacement, especially during crises, by helping people pay their rent.
→ Suggested Action in Strategy 2A

Invest in mobile home parks and their residents.
→ Suggested Action in Strategy 2D, Suggested Action in Strategy 3A

The most important strategies for government to focus on

Hold the upcoming City and County Housing Element updates to the high standards of Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing.
→ Strategies 1B-1E, Strategy 3

Influence the revision of the City of Sonoma's development code.
→ Suggested Action in Strategy 3C

Increase the amount of local government funds designated toward Affordable Housing.
→ Strategy 1B

Equitably distribute the burdens and benefits of being urban, between the City of Sonoma and the unincorporated, already-developed portions of the Valley.
→ Strategies 1D and 1E

Promote Affordable Housing on land that's not zoned residential, within already developed areas, such as commercially zoned land or land owned by public agencies and nonprofits.
→ Suggested Actions in Strategy 3A

Reduce regulatory barriers that limit the production of infill, affordable, integrated housing.
→ Strategy 3C
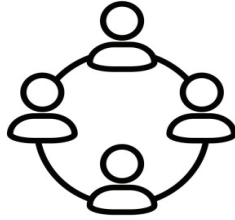
STRATEGY 1

Strengthen public will for housing affordability

Context

Sonoma Valley is fully capable of accomplishing a great shift in our approach to housing our community members. For Sonoma Valley to shift direction and become a community actively supporting the housing of all its community members, those who are most affected need to have a bigger voice with more power, and those who have had the biggest voice historically need to step back, listen with humility, and do what's best for the whole community for the long term.

Ideally, housing affordability in Sonoma Valley can be improved to the degree that some of the hundreds or thousands of Sonoma Valley residents who have already been pushed out—families, artists, business owners, and so many others—could return.

Recognizing that the housing market, on its own, is not producing the homes and neighborhoods that all our community members deserve and need, government and private money must go beyond what the market produces to make good on the Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration. Government and philanthropy can be guided by public will, when it is expressed effectively.

1A. Strengthen the voice of community members supporting housing affordability.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Design and promote public messaging campaigns that shift the narrative by highlighting the benefits of housing more of our community members.	• Continue to work with Generation Housing on a county-wide 2021 public messaging campaign. • Use evidence-based framing as those recommended by Dr. Tiffany Manuel (https://www.sustainablesonoma.net/dr-tiffany-manuel), to amplify support and avoid backlash.
Meet with local government elected officials, appointed representatives, and staff, privately, to help them make the right decisions for housing and social equity.	• Establish a jointly funded position with Generation Housing to dedicate one full-time, bilingual, bicultural staff person to focus on housing issues in Sonoma Valley. • Engage for the long term to drive an agenda based on the strategies in this document. Draft policy language and advocate for it.
Mobilize a more representative cross-section of the Sonoma Valley community to voice support for housing that is consistent with the Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration.	• Help people show up in numbers, regularly, when and where decisions are being made. See more detailed ideas in the Appendix. • Prioritize getting the people most affected, those most at risk of losing their homes or moving away, at the decision-making table about where, when, and what types of new or existing housing are most important. "Taking an equity lens" takes time. Work through formal and informal local and county-level groups including religious, Latino, justice, youth, tenants, and humanitarian groups. See Appendix for more details.
Publicly endorse specific projects and policies that meet the standard of the Housing Declaration.	• Complete Sustainable Sonoma's effort to adapt endorsement criteria from Generation Housing, Silicon Valley @ Home, Greenbelt Alliance, Intersections Coalition, and others. • Contribute information to, and help keep current, Generation Housing's new online tracker (https://generationhousing.org/housing-project-tracking/) of Sonoma County land development projects that include some level of Affordable Housing. • Partner with aligned organizations to help identify important policies and projects to support, for example, https://generationhousing.org/policy-update/.

1B. Increase public and private funding for decent housing that's affordable.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Leverage state and federal housing dollars by increasing the amount of local government funds designated toward Affordable Housing.	• Advocate for more local government funds to be allocated to housing affordability, during the springtime City and County budgeting process. See Appendix for more detail. • Become indispensable allies with City and County staff to write more proposals for state and federal grants, and then to effectively, equitably, and quickly spend those funds. See Appendix.
Invest philanthropic and employer dollars in demonstration projects, either directly or by contributing to housing trust funds.	• Foster a pipeline of donors to support affordable housing projects, including philanthropists and employers. • Host conversations that connect supporters of affordable housing with each other, to build relationships that center on triple-bottom-line solutions. • Increase awareness and knowledge among local philanthropists about housing land trusts and community land trusts. See Appendix.

1C. Track real-world housing gaps and opportunities in Sonoma Valley, and publicize these findings on a regular basis.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Publish a report on housing need, on a regular basis.	• Support the work of Sonoma County agencies to publish comprehensive, regular reports on housing needs, demographics, and geographic inequities.
Establish local capacity to track real-world housing opportunities and share data on a regular, recurring basis with government agencies, local nonprofits and the wider public through online publications and social media platforms.	• Design and fundraise for this reporting project. • Work with housing agencies, graphic design pros, and local organizations to identify the most important kinds of data to report on, and what report formats will be most effective for building local public will for housing affordability. See Appendix, and text box on opposite page.

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Best data sources on Sonoma Valley housing

Little data exists specifically for Sonoma Valley, because Sonoma Valley is not a government jurisdiction, neither a city nor a county. This is a problem, because housing action in Sonoma Valley should fix the specific problems that only local data can reveal.

- The American Community Survey uses computer models to extrapolate the findings from the decadal US Census into estimates for every year. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html

- The Sonoma County Community Development Commission used housing-related data in the American Community Survey to create recent profiles of the two main census tracts that make up the Springs. The profiles compare over-crowding, housing cost burden, displacement risk (gentrification), and many other attributes, between those neighborhoods and the County as a whole.

- Sonoma County recently conducted a community survey to inform their upcoming Fair Housing Assessment.

- Both the previous bullets can be tracked at https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/CDC/Strategic-Support/Equity-in-Housing/.

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1D. Assure that the City of Sonoma and the Springs equitably share the benefits and burdens of being urban places.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Assure that housing projects and policies, from zoning to assistance programs, proactively repair—not maintain or exacerbate—the current inequities between Sonoma Valley's communities.	• When advocating for affordability in new construction, assure that density and height are increased in affluent areas, such as the City of Sonoma, not just in lower-cost areas, such as the Springs. • Assure that new housing construction projects include enforceable conditions that prevent displacing existing lower-income residents in the neighborhood. • Insist on integration, not more segregation. Subsidized homes, whether units within a building or buildings within a neighborhood, need to be integrated seamlessly with non-subsidized housing, small homes mixed in with large, owned homes mixed in with rented. • Use public laws and staff as allies. Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (2015) at the federal level, and AB 686 at the state level, mandate that governments redress historical inequities in their housing decisions and investments. See Appendix for helpful models.

1E.   Develop a cohesive joint City-County housing strategy.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Improve the partnership between City and County on planning and land use policy.	• Work with the new county-wide housing organization Generation Housing to build this capacity while elevating attention to opportunities in Sonoma Valley. • Engage with staff at City and County (Permit Sonoma, Community Development Commission) over the long term to support their functions and build connections.

1F.   Establish an enduring capacity for long-term housing advocacy in Sonoma Valley.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Establish a new organization, or a new capacity at an existing entity, that effectively advocates for building and repairing housing, increases density equitably, gets funding, and conducts studies.	• Work Generation Housing to build this capacity while elevating attention to opportunities in Sonoma Valley. • Establish and maintain a funded position to dedicate a full-time staff person to focus on housing issues in Sonoma Valley, including reviewing projects for consistency with local endorsement criteria. Staff for this effort should predominantly be people with roots in the community who are bilingual, bicultural, Latino or Indigenous. They should be paid at a level that provides them a decent standard of living here. • Over time, this entity can conduct studies, secure funding for projects, and possibly add Sonoma Valley locations to the purview of the Renewal Enterprise District. • Maintain ties to MAP One Sonoma, which may build a county-wide, cross-sector capacity for systemic change. Sustainable Sonoma is already a partner.

" **There's no way to rectify a housing shortage other than to build housing, and there's no way to take care of people who the private market won't take of other than subsidies or rent control, or both. The details are democracy.**

— Conor Dougherty. 2020. Golden Gates.
Fighting for Housing in America. Penguin Press, New York.

" **Right now we are going through major displacement. With all these increases in housing costs and the fires [from 2017], people cannot afford living here. Yes, they want to, and they continue to work here, but they have to move to places like Vallejo. Many people, for example, moved to Rohnert Park in 2013. I am fearful because it is getting very difficult. There is an entire concentration of Latinos between the McDonald's that is here on [Highway] 12 and Agua Caliente [Road], but nobody owns their house. So it is very easy for that identity of the Latino barrio to disappear because if...Latinos do not own a house, then how does it maintain its identity?**

— Xochitl, Sonoma Valley Resident, quoted in
Finding Positive Health in "Fortalezas" and "Comunidad": A Case Study of Latinos/X in Sonoma Valley [34]

STRATEGY 2

Help people keep their existing affordable homes

Context

Making it possible for Sonoma Valley residents to stay in their homes is important. It prevents homelessness, costs far less than building new homes, retains customers and employees of local businesses, and maintains the health, dignity, and quality of life for our fellow community members, including children of low-income families.

As described above, we lack Sonoma-Valley specific data on our housing stock. However, a few points are clear.

Mobile homes and RVs are the largest category of unsubsidized, non-deed- restricted affordable housing. These homes are affordable "by design." The state's official listing of mobile homes–which may be incomplete–shows that Sonoma Valley has 9 active and 1 closed mobile home or RV parks with a total of 1,135 spaces.[35]

Sonoma Valley has approximately 510 deed-restricted Affordable homes that are already built or are being built now.

Sonoma County posts a list of existing deed-restricted Affordable homes (search on "Sonoma County Affordable Housing Inventory"). The entry for "Sonoma" covers Sonoma Valley. While there is no authoritative list of deed-restricted or otherwise affordable homes that are under construction, adding the ~350 units on the county's list to three projects in construction—Celestina Garden Apartments (40 deed-restricted units), Altamira Family Apartments (48), and Verano Family Housing (~70)—brings the total to approximately 510.

A critical segment of under-occupied single-family homes are owned by seniors who face economic hardship while now living in houses that are now too big for them. Most people in this position are women. SHARE Sonoma County estimates there are at least 2,500 empty bedrooms in Sonoma Valley homes owned by seniors. These homeowners may be unable to afford their house, yet unable to sell, because they cannot afford housing elsewhere.[36]

2A. Increase the capacity of Sonoma Valley to prevent homelessness and displacement, especially during crises, by helping people pay their rent.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Increase the capacity of Sonoma Valley to prevent homelessness and displacement, especially during crises, by helping people pay their rent.	• Aggregate and analyze data from the rent assistance programs at FISH, La Luz, Comida para Todos, UndocuFund, faith communities, and Sonoma County Community Development Commission through Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers, and any other programs directly assisting Sonoma Valley households. • Facilitate rent negotiations between landlords and tenants, so that landlords keep their tenants and tenants keep their housing. Petaluma People Services has a successful model in Petaluma. • Assess needs and gaps, and determine the most promising way to coordinate rent assistance programs, scale them up, and prepare for the next crisis.

2B. Support and expand existing programs for home sharing and housing navigators.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Match up homeowners who have extra space with people needing homes.	• Raise funds and other resources for SHARE Sonoma County. • Raise awareness to locate potential home sharers (people with empty bedrooms) and home seekers who can be matched through SHARE. See text box on page 25.
Invest in long-term housing navigators who connect people to housing-related services.	• Financially support permanent housing navigator positions in Sonoma Valley, for example to maintain the recent positions at Vintage House and La Luz. • Deepen the resources available through housing navigators by making more use of assistance and funding from Home Sonoma County, SHARE Sonoma County, and other agencies.
Assist homeowners to build Junior Accessory Dwelling Units, so they can afford to remain in their homes.	• Work with the nonprofit Napa Sonoma ADU and volunteers or nonprofits who have contractor and construction skills to help interested homeowners plan, design, and build JADUs. JADUs create an additional living unit of 500 square feet or less, with its own access, within an existing house. No fees are charged. Return on investment can be estimated using this calculator. More info at https://napasonomaadu.org.

SHARE Sonoma County

SHARE Sonoma County carefully matches homeowners with home seekers to provide permanent, affordable, "attainable housing that helps seniors age in place." Home sharing is a fast, inexpensive, permanent, voluntary approach to resolving at least part of our housing crisis. "Home shares are living arrangements between two or more unrelated people, one of whom is 60 years of age or older, who agree to share a home or apartment for their mutual benefit. Each person has their own bedroom and possibly bathroom, while sharing common living areas." SHARE Sonoma County has been working closely with Vintage House in Sonoma Valley. https://sharesonomacounty.org.

2C. **Expand access to existing programs that pay for home repairs and rehabilitation, so more people can remain in their already affordable homes.**

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Expand targeted funding for home repairs and enhancements that allow seniors and adults with disabilities to remain in their already affordable homes.	• Establish a public-private partnership between local contractors and public or nonprofit agencies serving seniors and people with disabilities to fund and provide additional home enhancements at low or no cost to local residents. • Expand access to programs for seniors, such as CAPABLE, which offers funding to make repairs and improvements that ensure they can age safely in place. See text box below.
Provide low-cost loans to rehabilitate existing affordable homes.	• Tap into the Sonoma County Community Development Commission's Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program and increase utilization among residents with homes in qualified neighborhoods.

Community Aging in Place - Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE)

"CAPABLE is a five-month structured program delivered at home to community-dwelling older adults to decrease fall risk, improve safe mobility, and improve ability to safely accomplish daily functional tasks. CAPABLE is delivered by an occupational therapist, who makes six visits to each participant; a nurse, who makes four visits; and a handyman, who contributes up to a full day's work providing home repairs, installing assistive devices, and making home modifications. Participants work with the therapist and nurse to identify independent living goals, examine the barriers to achieving those goals, and then make action plans, supported by changes to the home and medication environment, to achieve those goals." —from CAPABLE website

2D. Upgrade mobile homes and mobile home parks, for both renters and owners.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Help mobile home renters and owners replace their aging and unhealthy homes. Upgrade mobile home infrastructure, facilities, and management.	• Facilitate purchase by a capable nonprofit of Lazzarrotto's mobile home park, reputedly on the market for approximately $10M, to operate it for long-term benefit. • Track and influence the fate of the Oaks Mobile Home Park on Siesta Way, which is not included on the state's list of mobile home parks, and its residents.[37] • Fund Spanish-language assistance to help mobile home residents understand their rights and access resources from Sonoma County and California. • Leverage state and County programs to assist mobile home owner-residents to purchase their mobile home parks. See Appendix for details.

Innovation to Finance Aging in Place

The expense of housing and care for older people in specialized facilities is so high, and the risk of contagious disease in confined facilities so great, that efforts are increasing to pay for people to get the help they need to stay in their homes–where they tend to be healthier and happier–in order to save a greater amount of money by avoiding healthcare and boarding costs. Potential partners on this strategy include:

• California Endowment
• Kaiser Permanente: invested in extending the term of housing affordability deed restrictions
• Health Action: conducted a Sustainable Health Financing Analysis in 2017
• Vintage House Sonoma

2E. Assure that landlords accept federal housing voucher holders as tenants.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Assure that landlords accept federal housing voucher holders as tenants.	• Work with tenant advocates such as Sonoma Valley Housing Group, North Bay Organizing Project, Legal Aid of Sonoma County, and the Sonoma County Housing Authority to address instances of discrimination against voucher holders.

STRATEGY 3

Build new homes that embody the principles of the Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration

Context

Sonoma County has a number of ongoing housing initiatives "to provide more opportunities and better certainty to housing developers in order to reduce risk and increase investment, to help meet the County's ambitious housing production goal. These initiatives focus on urban-centered growth." As of 2020, a small number of Sonoma Valley sites already served by water, power, and sewer, whose owners wish to build more housing than current regulations allow, are being analysed through the County's Housing Sites Initiative, and vetted for feasibility. The intent is to shepherd them through the process until those sites are included in the Housing Element and the Housing Element is integrated with the General Plan. However, affordability is not a stated objective of these initiatives.

The City of Sonoma is also paying more attention to housing. At the start of 2020, the City of Sonoma had 350 affordable rental units.[38] Said Sonoma City Mayor Logan Harvey in March 2020,[39] "Over the past two years, the City has approved some 200 units of housing at a variety of income levels. The new Affordable Housing Trust Fund [established in 2019] is intended to generate sustainable revenue from taxes on hotel stays; we've created affordable housing impact fees on the building of large homes and new hotels; we've raised the minimum wage; we've put a moratorium on new AirBnBs and hired a consultant to track illegal ones; we've streamlined the process of building of ADUs in the city; and we are now embarking on the process of restructuring our development code to create clarity for developers as well as

restructuring our Urban Growth Boundary language to make affordable housing more possible." The City began to revise its development code in the later months of 2020, which provides an opportunity to promote rules that are consistent with the Housing Declaration.

Two agricultural employers in the south Valley offer limited housing for their agricultural employees who have temporary work status as part of the H2-A temporary worker program.[40]

Sonoma Valley residents of all stripes say they want more integrated neighborhoods, neighborhoods where people of all ages, races, household sizes, and incomes live side-by-side and interact to form a diverse but connected society. See Sustainable Sonoma's 2019 report, *Voices of Sonoma Valley*, at https://www.sustainable sonoma.net/listening-sessions-report.

Sustainable Sonoma's intent is to see increased affordability and integration, without displacing current residents. Here in Sonoma Valley, this means that incentives and subsidies should be focused not only in the Springs, which is already integrated (in terms of race, age, household size, and income), but in the other urbanized areas of Sonoma Valley, such as the City of Sonoma, which are generally highly segregated.

There's a risk of displacing current residents in a neighborhood when new homes (whether for sale or rent) are built and prices go up. State law has provisions to prevent displacement for projects that use a density bonus, but smaller projects and market-rate projects can still displace people.

3A. Build a variety of types of homes in thriving neighborhoods for low and moderate income people, including on nontraditional types of land.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Diversify Sonoma Valley's housing stock so that more units are better priced to match the purchasing power of the local workforce, seniors on fixed incomes, and farmworkers or others who often face seasonal gaps in employment.	• Bring construction costs down and reduce construction delays by promoting the mainstreaming of manufactured, modular, 3D printed, and prefabricated homes, as well as ADUs and JADUs. See Appendix for more. • Consider forming a community land trust (see text box on next page, and Appendix under Strategy 1B) or partnering with an existing one like the Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County, to hold land in perpetuity for more affordable housing, with reasonable rates of return to homeowners upon resale.
Build housing on non-traditional types of land.	• Allow and promote residential uses on commercially zoned parcels, especially where retail space is under-utilized, such as shopping centers and retail zones along Highway 12, Napa Road, Broadway, and "downtown" Glen Ellen and Kenwood. • Push for the use of small lots to build smaller homes in urbanized areas that can be affordable by design, though these may still need additional protections or incentives to be functionally affordable. • Repurpose land owned by nonprofits, schools, churches, employers, and public agencies in urbanized areas to build homes or increase density for low and moderate income residents. • More details in the Appendix.
Promote homes that are consistent with the Sustainable Sonoma Housing Declaration at Eldridge, the former Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC).	• Convey support to the SDC Public Advisory Team, Permit Sonoma, and state legislators for dense, taller, affordable homes for rent and for sale, in a diversity of sizes, within the former campus area, as ways to create a "diverse, safe, complete community." • Investigate whether adding the former SDC campus to the Renewal Enterprise District would further this goal.

Community Land Trusts for Permanently Affordable Housing

A housing land trust or community land trust is a successful, common approach to making lower-cost home ownership possible. The land trust owns the land. Homeowners own their home and all improvements. Taking the price of the land out of the equation makes the home more affordable. The land trust leases the land to homeowners for a nominal fee through a 99-year ground lease. This model is familiar to banks. It's often used by universities to house their staff. We can be inspired by these examples:

- Champlain Housing Trust, serving Burlington, Vermont, the largest and most successful in the country. https://www.getahome.org/
- Island Housing Trust, serving Martha's Vineyard, a community similar in some ways to Sonoma Valley. http://www.ihtmv.org/
- Elevation Community Land Trust, serving Denver, Colorado. https://www.elevationclt.org/
- Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County, serving Sonoma County. https://housinglandtrust.org/

3B. **Improve infrastructure to support infill, low- and moderate-income homes.**

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS.
Improve provision of water, sewer, and transportation to already-developed areas, to facilitate infill development.	• Explore the feasibility of an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District, and State Infill Infrastructure Grant programs for Sonoma Valley, including at the former SDC campus.
Seek money from the State of California to fund infrastructure to support affordable, desirable housing at the former SDC campus.	• Convey support to the SDC Public Advisory Team, Permit Sonoma, and state legislators for dense, taller, affordable homes for rent and for sale, in a diversity of sizes, within the former campus area, as ways to create a "diverse, safe, complete community."

3C. **Reduce regulatory barriers that limit housing production of infill, affordable, integrated housing. Actively incentivize production of such housing.**

HOW DO WE GET THERE?	SUGGESTED ACTIONS.
Reduce barriers for a variety of innovative construction methods.	• Encourage Sonoma County and the City of Sonoma to clarify their planning and building requirements for modular, prefab, 3D printed, and other innovative construction methods, to streamline the planning approval and building permit process.

	• Support and facilitate the establishment of a nearby licensed prefab manufacturing facility to address the primary obstacle for prefab home installation in Sonoma Valley, which is the absence of a licensed manufacturing facility within a reasonable distance.[41]
Reduce, waive, and modify fees as appropriate.	• Advocate for revised procedures at the City of Sonoma and at Permit Sonoma for development or redevelopment projects that include substantial numbers of below-market housing units. Changes could include: disclose and freeze all fees early in the entitlement process, bill impact fees close to the time the impact occurs, charge fees only for impacts that actually occur, and reduce fees more for taller or denser buildings.
Reduce the need for developers to pay for parcel by parcel-by-parcel environmental review by using specific plants that include an EIR.	• Advocate to the First District Supervisor and Permit Sonoma, for more complete environmental review for specific plans, such as the Springs Specific Plan and the SDC Specific Plan. This increases the near-term cost of producing these Plans, but reduces cost and delay in implementing the Plans.
Rezone as needed, and take other steps to provide by-right approval with limited discretionary review for desired housing types.	• Rezone to allow higher densities in all residentially zoned areas, for example allowing 4-plex multifamily, senior living, multiple ADUs, residential care housing, 20 dwelling units per acre. • Establish a local Fair Share policy, by which a community determines a more equitable allocation of new housing development based on historic patterns of inequality. • Participate vigorously in the City of Sonoma's planned update of its development code, starting in late 2020, so that its language guarantees actual construction and preservation of homes that are denser, taller, more affordable, socially integrated, and transit-oriented. • Encourage the City of Sonoma and Sonoma County to reshape their land use policies to provide a more equitable allocation of new housing development that addresses historic patterns of inequality. • Allow housing in at least some commercially-zoned areas. Much commercial property is projected to remain under-utilized long term.

Where possible, reduce the area required for parking private vehicles.	• When commenting on a project, or in comments on land use policies generally, advocate to reduce or eliminate parking requirements, citing climate impacts, air quality impacts including noise, the need to develop transit, and the value of space for other uses. SPUR has example language.[42] • Establish parking space maximums that could replace today's parking space minimums.
Limit the loss of affordable housing to vacation rentals.	• Promote the recommendations in the County's 2015 report[43] on this subject, including dedicating a portion of, or an additional increment of, the transient occupancy tax on vacation rentals to an affordable housing fund.

The Bigger Picture

The homes we live in affect every part of our lives, from our health to our level of community involvement. Conversely, creating the housing landscape that's articulated in Sustainable Sonoma's Housing Declaration will demand other changes beyond those described here. We won't get housing right until we grapple with several big issues that the housing conversation is connected to, such as:

- **Climate change and the imperative to reduce emissions and be prepared for climate impacts. Housing and climate influence each other strongly.** Greenhouse gas emissions are determined by where homes are located in relation to jobs, schools, and services, and by how homes are constructed, cooled, and powered. Buildings are Sonoma County's second greatest emissions source after transport. What we build and renovate now will affect our emissions, and thus everyone's climate, for decades to come. Conversely, the impacts of climate change fall disproportionately on those who live in the worst housing. Heat waves, fires, floods, price hikes in food or water, air quality problems that shut down tourism…all of these projected climate impacts hurt those in old, crowded, unhealthy housing worst.

  Climate justice is housing justice, and vice versa. The climate-housing link is strong, and yet for some, climate is seen as a distraction from housing. We did not explicitly consider climate in this paper, but our insistence on infill, and reducing commuting, make a strong climate contribution.

- **Homelessness.** The strategies recommended here do not directly serve homeless people, but they go far to keep people in their homes and thus prevent the personal and social catastrophe of homelessness.

- **Lack of quantitative targets.** Although several government plans include numbers of homes that should exist in the future, the Sonoma Valley community itself has not developed a shared idea about what our total population size should be, and how much of that population should be at various places on the income spectrum. This lack of clarity or agreement about our future, or our very identity, affects our ability to say how many housing units we want, at what prices, sizes, or locations. This in turn impedes our ability to achieve housing goals. Setting these targets is a challenging and worthy outcome for a community visioning effort. Such targets will need to reckon with the very large new Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) target numbers from the Association of Bay Area Governments that have been allocated to both the City of Sonoma and to Sonoma County.

- ***De facto* Segregation.** The economic inequity and *de facto* segregation between the City of Sonoma and the Springs is an ongoing, festering issue in Sonoma Valley. These inequities will only be resolved when the City and the Springs share the burdens and the benefits of being urban places. There was a sustained, unsuccessful attempt to address this imbalance in the 1970's, that tried to merge the two areas into a new single city to be called Sonoma Valley. What avenues and allies are available to right this situation?

- **A diversified economy.** Sonoma Valley's economy is currently concentrated in lower wage industries: hospitality, services, tourism, and agriculture. Workers in these industries generally have a hard time affording good homes. We need to ask ourselves how we want our economy to evolve, to create a productive relationship between homes and jobs. Thought-provoking future scenarios (with illustrations!) along these lines were illustrated at the Bay Area scale by SPUR.

- **Regional solutions.** Housing for people who live or work here is a regional issue, not just a local one. People commute long distances to and through Sonoma Valley, throughout our "commute-shed." It will serve Sonoma Valley to engage in the housing and jobs conversation across the North Bay, and with the greater Bay Area.

- **Housing evolution.** A raft of new and expected state laws that promote or mandate housing affordability affects all we do in Sonoma Valley. Sonoma County legislators in Sacramento have often voted against measures that would help achieve the Housing Declaration's goals. For this reason, Sonoma County is often specifically excluded from newer state bills that would otherwise help increase housing affordability, and reduce commuting, in our urbanized areas. Sonoma Valley and County could change our history of exclusionary housing and instead advocate for better neighborhoods consistent with the Housing Declaration.

MAP One Sonoma

One of the few county-wide venues for addressing these interlocking issues is an emerging initiative from the nonprofit sector called MAP One Sonoma. MAP One Sonoma (M1S) is a systems change initiative that was launched after the Sonoma Complex Fires of 2017. Over a two-year period, nearly 200 leaders from business, health, education, housing, climate change, sustainability, government and philanthropy contributed to a unique map that displays the inter-connectedness of local systems. The goal of M1S is creation of a prosperous, resilient, inclusive, sustainable Sonoma County where everyone has opportunity to thrive. For more information, visit https://unitedwaywinecountry.org/map-one-sonoma/.

Several additional strategies were considered for inclusion in this document, but were ultimately left out because for various reasons they did not fit Sonoma Valley or Sustainable Sonoma. Section 2 of the Appendix describes these strategies and why they were excluded.

Sustainable Sonoma's Role In Implementing These Strategies

The strategic recommendations in this report are tailored to Sonoma Valley—its challenges, assets, and particular makeup. Many parties can and should take hold of these recommendations and make them real. These include local government staff, elected officials, nonprofits who serve Sonoma Valley, and also Sonoma Valley's famously capable residents.

Sustainable Sonoma as a coalition will focus on a subset of these strategies, consistent with its consensus Housing Declaration; its commitment to improving the economy, the environment, and equity in Sonoma Valley; its unique ability to speak with one voice representing so many aspects of the community; and its available resources. Although the rapidly changing landscape may shift Sustainable Sonoma's focus, currently our priorities are:

- **Share and promote the recommended strategies in *Homes for a Sustainable Sonoma Valley.***

- **Strengthen public will for housing affordability**
  Strategy 1

- **All strategies listed under Time-sensitive windows of opportunity on page 16:**
  - **Influence the revision of the City of Sonoma's development code**
    Suggested Action in Strategy 3C

  - **Help decide the future of Eldridge**.
    Suggested Action in Strategy 3A

  - **Help those who are most vulnerable to stay in their affordable homes**
    Strategy 2A

  - **Influence the fate of mobile home parks**
    Suggested Action in Strategy 2D

  - **Influence the final Springs Specific Plan**
    Suggested Action in Strategy in 3C

Sonoma Valley is by no means alone in facing a home affordability crisis that is eroding its character. Strong allies in the public and private sectors—nonprofit housing developers, elected officials at all levels, government staff across the entire Bay Area, business and equity groups both local and regional, cross-sector pro-housing groups like Generation Housing, and many others—can buoy our local efforts if we partner effectively with them. Sustainable Sonoma's efforts so far have put Sonoma Valley on the map as a place wanting to change its housing trajectory for the better. This puts Sonoma Valley in a great position to leverage the expertise and resources of others, marry those with our local passion, knowledge, and connections, and create a future here where secure, affordable homes make our community an even better place to live, work, and grow up.

Housing Advisors to Sustainable Sonoma

Meet our housing experts, to whom we are so grateful. They worked with us to reality-check and develop our hopes and dreams for a better-housed Sonoma Valley. Thanks most especially to those experts who donated or discounted their time in helping us.

Joshua Abrams, Principal, Baird + Driskell Community Planning

Josh Abrams is a Principal at Baird + Driskell Community Planning. He has more than 15 years of professional planning experience working on a range of strategic planning issues. He has managed numerous projects in the areas of organizational development, housing, land use planning, long-range comprehensive planning, community design and transportation. He gives particular emphasis to ensuring effective and meaningful participation of key stakeholders as well as the general public in the planning and design process. Josh has a strong process-orientation and technical planning background. He is a seasoned meeting facilitator, writer and editor with expertise in packaging technical information in a way that is accessible to a wide audience. He has a BA from Carleton College and a Master's degree in City and Regional Planning from Cornell University.

Cassandra Benjamin, Principal, CSB Philanthropic Solutions

A seasoned philanthropic and nonprofit executive, Cassandra Benjamin founded CSB philanthropic solutions in 2005. She helps stakeholders work across sectors and issue areas to improve outcomes for low-income communities and communities of color. She provides a range of services, including design and management of philanthropic initiatives, development of strategic grantmaking programs, design and facilitation of learning communities, and coaching and capacity building for collaborative partnerships. Prior, Cassandra's career included two decades of service in the philanthropic sector with a focus on housing and homelessness at the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, Shelter Network, and Larkin Street Youth Services among others. Cassandra's credentials include a master's degree in Nonprofit Administration from the University of San Francisco, a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan, and a certificate in Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management from Harvard Business School.

Brandi Campbell Wood, Planner, Baird + Driskell Community Planning

Brandi Campbell has 10 years of planning and project management experience across the private, public and non-profit sectors. As a Planner at Baird +Driskell Community Planning, she works on numerous projects in the areas of housing and land use, always emphasizing meaningful engagement—with key stakeholders as well as the public—throughout the planning process. As a skilled writer, editor and graphic designer, she enjoys figuring out how to visually and approachably communicate technical concepts, which she views as a necessity to ensure community involvement.

Ali Gaylord, Director of Housing Development-North Bay, Midpen Housing Corporation

Ali Gaylord, Director of Housing Development for MidPen, is responsible for the oversight of MidPen's North Bay regional real estate development office. With over 16 years of experience in Affordable Housing, she has contributed to the development and rehabilitation of over 1,000 affordable homes for families and seniors in California. Ali supervises her team in all aspects of development including the entitlement process, financing, deal structuring, design, construction, and closeout. She works closely not only with her team at MidPen but also with stakeholders including financial partners, local jurisdictions and community members. Ali joined MidPen after 8 years with BRIDGE Housing Corporation, where she served most recently as Director of Development in Northern California. She helped launch the Emerging Leaders Peer Network, a network of affordable housing practitioners of all disciplines, and served on the Steering Committee for four years. Ali received a B.A. in Economics from Michigan State University.

Walter Keiser, Principal and Co-founder, Economic and Planning Systems, Inc.
Walter Kieser is a Senior Principal and a founder of Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. During his 40-year career, he has worked for diverse public and private-sector clients on projects ranging from land use planning and regulation, land and resource conservation, master planned development, major infrastructure financing, and government reorganization. He has focused on providing sound economic and fiscal analysis, creating implementing agreements and financing programs, and supporting public-private negotiations and real estate transactions. Walter has a BA degree in Biology and Environmental Studies from Sonoma State University and did graduate studies at University of California, Berkeley. He began his professional career in 1973 as an associate planner in Sonoma County.

Libby Seifel, Principal Seifel Consulting
Elizabeth (Libby) Seifel has focused her professional career on creating sustainable infill developments, structuring successful public private partnerships and catalyzing the development of mixed-income housing. As president of Seifel Consulting, Libby has advised hundreds of public and private clients on how to plan, fund and develop a broad variety of projects that meet financial objectives, respect the environment and create enduring value for communities. She has prepared successful strategies and funding programs to build thousands of affordable housing units. Libby serves on the faculty of UC Berkeley's Master of Real Eestate and Design program and co-chairs the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Housing the Bay Steering Committee. Libby received her Bachelor of Science and Masters in City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is a certified planner (A.I.C.P.) and has been elected to the LAI Honorary Society of Land Economists and the Northern California Hall of Fame for Women of Influence in Real Estate.

Margaret Van Vliet, Founder and Principal, Trillium Advisors
Margaret is an accomplished public sector affordable housing leader, with roots in banking. In Sonoma County, she ran the Community Development Commission for three years, and co-created the Renewal Enterprise District. During her tenure the CDC tripled the amount of new housing financed and garnered new resources to facilitate a production agenda. Margaret also spearheaded a redesign of the County's homeless system that has increased the pace at which people move from the streets to permanent housing. Prior to leading CDC she held high level housing posts in Oregon, including five years as Director of Oregon's Housing and Community Services Department. Her practice at Trillium Advisors focuses on strategy development, organizational improvement, project management, and cross-sector facilitation. She holds a BA in Economics from Linfield College, and two executive education certificates from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Sustainable Sonoma also consulted with Jane Riley, Comprehensive Planning Manager at Permit Sonoma (Sonoma County). Jane is an experienced AICP-certified planning manager with a proven history of advancing successful planning and housing policy initiatives. She sits on the Housing Methodology Committee for the Association of Bay Area Governments and is driven to find effective ways to solve the housing crisis using her 30 years of experience.

Sustainable Sonoma also consulted with David Storer, Planning and Community Services Director at City of Sonoma. David has over 32 years of experience in planning and community development in both the public and private sectors. His public sector experience includes the Town of Moraga, El Dorado County, Elk Grove, and Director of Planning, Inspections and Permitting for the City of Folsom for 8 years. David has had his own consulting firm since 2004. He served for four years on the Environmental Quality Policy Committee of the League of California Cities, is actively involved with the American Institute of Certified Planners, and has taught over 50 AICP Exam preparation courses.

Appendix

Appendix Section 1: More detail on select recommendations

1A. **Strengthen the voice of community members supporting housing affordability.**

To give authentic voice to under-represented Sonoma Valley residents and workers, particularly Latino and low-income people, Sustainable Sonoma and other groups promoting housing affordability need to put equity principles into practice. The key principle is for White community leaders to learn why and how to cede their habits of leadership to the people facing the greatest housing disparities, and their representatives. Practices need to include the following:

- Recruiting, supporting, and giving decision-making positions to younger, Latino, and lower-income people.
- Providing stipends for participation, so that participants are not harming their own financial security by participating.
- Treating Spanish and English speaking participants on a fair basis:

    - Providing translation as a matter of course, which means adjusting the duration of topics, since translation takes time.
    - Consistently releasing information in Spanish and English simultaneously, which will generally mean shortening the information so that it can fit in both languages.

- Holding meetings outside work hours.
- Providing transportation to and from in-person meetings or activities.
- Providing childcare.

Depending on the project, policy, or program being considered, the relevant decision-making bodies who need to hear from Sonoma Valley people could include:

- City of Sonoma City Council
- City of Sonoma Planning Commission
- Springs Municipal Advisory Council
- North Valley Municipal Advisory Council
- Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission
- Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
- Sonoma County Board of Zoning Adjustments
- Sonoma County Planning Commission
- Sonoma County Community Development Commission

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it easier to virtually attend meetings held in Santa Rosa, so this is a good time to build capacity for Sonoma Valley to participate. When physical meetings resume, strategies to boost attendance will need to ramp up. For example:

- Make the trip a social one. Rent or borrow a van so everyone can ride together.
- Practice talking points on the way, to build attendees' confidence and team spirit.

- Explore how to build cross-cultural relationships through these trips, including participating or leadership by bicultural staff and volunteers from Sonoma Valley organizations or schools.

- Provide WiFi and snacks.

Advocate for decision-making bodies to hold their review of Sonoma Valley projects in Sonoma Valley.

1B. Increase public and private funding for decent housing that's affordable.

Since the housing market is not producing the homes we need to house all our community members, government and private money is needed to go beyond what the market produces, and make good on the Sonoma Valley Housing Declaration. Large funding pools are available from state and federal sources, but only if they are leveraged by funds contributed at the city or county level. Such "local" funds "leverage as much as $7.50 from private, nonprofit, and other governmental sources … for every $1 spent from the [local funds].[45] Budget decisions made every year by locally-accountable elected officials can substantially increase these local funds.

More analysis is needed to decide which of several housing funds or funding approaches would best serve Sonoma Valley. Below are several vehicles. Of the housing experts that Sustainable Sonoma empaneled for this report, Margaret Van Vliet is the most experienced with housing finance, and could

- City of Sonoma Affordable Housing Trust Fund, established in 2019. The Fund, always modest in size, has been tapped for rental assistance during the COVID pandemic.
- The Sonoma County Housing Fund was established in February 2020, at Silicon Valley Housing Trust. The website says "The Housing Fund prioritizes supporting multi family workforce housing with an emphasis on in-fill projects in urban and priority development areas throughout Sonoma County." All funding so far, $1,000,000, is from the Santa Rosa Metro Chamber and Kaiser, so it's likely that the current focus is on Santa Rosa. It may be possible to establish a section of this new Fund that is focused on investments in Sonoma Valley. It could be beneficial for Sonoma Valley, as a small community, to work through an established Housing Trust with experienced personnel, such as the Silicon Valley Housing Trust.
- The Housing Land Trust of Sonoma County uses a different funding approach that should also be considered, particularly given Sonoma Valley's very strong nonprofit and philanthropic resources. Housing land trusts hold title to the land underneath rented or owned homes, thus reducing the cost to residents. Local governments and philanthropy can work with housing land trusts to acquire and hold properties temporarily, through a city/county-controlled land bank, and then transfer them to a growing network of community land trusts, nonprofit entities that hold land in perpetuity for publicly beneficial uses.
- "In June of 2020, the Bay Area Housing Finance Agency (BAHFA) was launched equipping the 9-County Bay Area region a new set of powerful financing tools and authorities made possible with the passage in 2019 of AB 1487 (Chiu). BAHFA's purpose is to raise and deploy funding to develop new affordable housing, preserve existing affordable housing, advance tenant protections; provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions; and generate useful data to inform local housing policies and programs."

Note that the impressive Partnership for the Bay's Future (https://baysfuture.org/) does not extend to the north bay counties, but that several of its partners have made housing investments in Sonoma County.

City and County staff need nudges and assistance in writing funding proposals, in order to access more funding from state and federal sources. Example likely funding sources include:

- The Mobilehome Park Rehabilitation and Resident Ownership Program of the California Housing and Community Development (HCD).
- HCD's Permanent Local Housing Allocation https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/active-funding/plha/docs/PLHA_Competitive_NOFA_0 82820_ADA.pdf

In some cases, staff need help getting money spent that is already in hand. At this writing, Sonoma County Community Development Commission has not yet spent approximately $6.5M in Emergency Solutions Grant funds for rent assistance through Home Sonoma County that expires shortly.

Some finance experts contend that the Renewal Enterprise District's funding approach is too risk averse and demands too high a rate of return. Any projects that are novel in a given area, that don't have comps (comparable properties), such as 4-story apartments on the Sonoma Plaza to choose a random example, will require patient capital that just might not get their money back, and at best might would paid only after the deal is done. From this point of view, it would be better to use an approach more like that of the Community Reinvestment Corporation, which uses a combination of bank loans, philanthropic money, and government funds to size loans in various risk categories.

1C. Gather and report reliable data so the Sonoma Valley community can track its housing situation.

Generally, housing-related data is aggregated and analyzed at the scale of Sonoma County and the City of Sonoma, but not Sonoma Valley. Assistance with government datasets, mapping, statistical analysis, and graphs and charts may be available for free or low cost from Sonoma County's Economic Development Board or the Sonoma County Department of Health Services' Health Policy, Planning and Evaluation Unit.

The most important missing information includes the following:

- Housing opportunity locations such as vacant urban land, under-utilized land that's zoned commercial or industrial, land zoned multifamily, public land, transit hubs. These may be different than what's currently mapped as opportunities in government plans such as Permit Sonoma's Housing Sites or Plan Bay Area. Any known information about the preference of landowners should be recorded.
- Compare job growth vs. housing growth, so that we can say "for every 10 jobs created in Sonoma Valley, only X bedrooms have been built." Consider quantifying this ratio for Sonoma Valley and also for its "commute-shed".
- Compare the wages of local jobs with costs of local housing. Report this alongside data about the race make-up of various wage levels.
- Compare RHNA numbers with the actual distribution of housing of various costs. Confirm or deny the statement that "plenty of needed housing is in the pipeline" and will realistically get built.

- Quantify housing cost burden across race and household income.
- Report on the housing gap by home type and price.
- Estimate over-crowding, and the disparities in over-crowding, by location, race, and household income, using census data, building from the estimates done by Sonoma County Community
- Development Commission in their two Sonoma Valley housing profiles
- Determine the quantity and location of any affordable housing that has expiring deed restrictions.
- Estimate the number and location of empty homes, second homes, vacation rentals, and potentially even empty bedrooms.
- Be on the lookout for any way to document the number, race, age, and income of Sonoma Valley residents and families who have had to leave the area due to housing costs.
- Quantify trends in investor ownership of single family homes, as compared to private person ownership.
- Look for ideas on data, data sources, and presentation to the following:
  - Terner Center for Innovative Housing SPUR
  - TransFORM
  - Housing Works Austin
  - Bozeman, Montana's plan for housing

More facts that could inform action:

- Percent of household income going to housing, for renters vs. owners, maybe also for different income levels.
- Household income trends over time vs rent trends.
- Average monthly housing cost that is considered affordable, by household type, by age, and by ethnicity, compared to actual average housing cost.
- Geographic segregation of the community by income, age, and race, such as trends in majority-white or majority-Latino census areas.
- Trends in home ownership by race/ethnicity
- Map of sale price, showing affluence in hills and east Sonoma
- Trends in prices (including absolute cost and percent increase) for middle, low, and very low cost homes in Sonoma Valley.

1D. Assure that the City of Sonoma and the Springs equitably share the benefits and burdens of being urban places.

Relevant models for how local governments should enact Fair Housing.

- San Joaquin Valley Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (2014): https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/SJV-Fair-Housing-and-Equity-Assessment.pdf
- California Housing and Community Development guidance document on how to make the City and County Housing Elements consistent with Fair Housing law: https://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/housing-element-memos/docs/AB686_SummaryHousingElementFinal_04222020.pdf
- Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing and Health and Thriving Neighborhoods: Community Engagement in The Latinx Communities for The Assessment of Fair Housing (2019), by Ana Lugo of Equity First Consulting, for Sonoma County Community Development Commission, City of Santa Rosa, and City of Petaluma. As of September 2020, this report is not posted on the CDC webpage. Pdf available from Sustainable Sonoma on request.

Sonoma County's most recent posted Fair Housing analysis and recommendations:

- Sonoma County Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (2012). By BBC Research & Consulting for Sonoma County Community Development Commission, City of Santa Rosa, and City of Petaluma.
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2A.   Increase and improve short-term need-based rent assistance.

This strategy focuses on renters, but there are also many homeowners in Sonoma Valley who cannot afford their mortgages. This issue arose most vividly after COVID-19 struck. Therefore, it was not discussed with Sustainable Sonoma's panel of housing experts in December 2019, and is not covered in this report.

2B.   Upgrade mobile homes and mobile home parks, for both renters and owners.

There is a state funding program to assist owners of individual mobile homes in mobile home parks to purchase their parks and run them themselves. Sonoma County's Housing Element has a program to provide assistance to owner groups that want to do this. For more information, inquire of Permit Sonoma staff.

3A.   Build a variety of types of homes in thriving neighborhoods for low and moderate income people, including on nontraditional types of land.

A wide variety of constituencies can join forces to create lower-cost housing, whether it is called affordable housing, workforce housing, senior housing, veterans housing, or agricultural worker housing.

The largest opportunity for new housing in Sonoma Valley is unquestionably the former campus of Sonoma Developmental Center. The future of this 200-acre site, nestled among hundred of acres of accessible open space, already served by utilities and transit, with reliable water sources, is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create the types of neighborhoods envisioned in Sustainable Sonoma's Sonoma Valley Housing Declaration. For information, see https://transformsdc.com and https://www.sdcspecificplan.com.

Market demand for retail shops is expected to permanently be less than what is currently zoned and built, due to internet shopping. If governments respond to the imperative to reverse climate change, then demand for parking for single-occupancy vehicles will also decrease. Both trends suggest that there is a lot of space currently dedicated to retail and parking that would be better used for housing. In Sonoma Valley, there appears to be general support among leaders for converting such spaces. A major upside of these parcels is that they are centrally located near services and transportation corridors.

Possible examples include:

- Rezoning and redevelopment at shopping centers such as those anchored by Lucky, Whole Foods, Safeway, and Kenwood Market.
- Rezoning and redevelopment of under-utilized commercial parcels, such as those along Broadway and Napa Street in Sonoma, and throughout the City of Sonoma and The Springs on Highway 12.

Other types of land that could be converted to housing are properties owned by schools, houses of worship, nonprofits, and governments. Schools and religious institutions both have declining attendance, which could free up some of their land.

Employer-owned housing carries some baggage. There are concerns about the level of control an employer has over an employee when the employee's house is owned by their employer. There can be environmental concerns about, for example, building homes for vineyard and winery workers in agricultural open space. Large employers in Sonoma County recently created the Sonoma County Employers Housing Council, and their approach to these concerns thus far is to pool their resources and contribute to projects led by nonprofit housing developers. On the upside, building costs are far lower when the land is already owned by the developer, who in this case is the employer. There is a dedicated state financing program for agricultural worker housing. California has a searchable database of employee housing.

Accessory Dwelling Units (also known as granny units, second units, or casitas) are allowed in all residentially zoned areas. Assistance for homeowners is available from the nonprofit Napa Sonoma ADU. Return on investment can be estimated using this calculator. Junior ADUs create an additional living unit of 500 square feet or less, with its own access, within an existing house. No fees are charged. More info here.

Appendix Section 2: Strategies not included

These strategies were considered by Sustainable Sonoma's panel of experts but were considered not high priority for Homes for a Sustainable Sonoma Valley, for the following reasons. (Not in any order. SuSo means Sustainable Sonoma. SV means Sonoma Valley.)

REJECTED STRATEGY	WHY REJECTED?
Rent control.	SuSo did not have consensus for this strategy, so experts did not discuss it. Most studies of cities (SV is not a city) that have instituted rent control find that in the short term, it greatly helps the renters who qualify (including renters who don't financially need the help). In the long term, under rent control, landlords tend to leave the market, apartments tend to get converted to condos, and the overall supply of rental housing shrinks. Anti rent-gouging policies (already in place here) are meant to achieve some of the benefits of rent control without the downsides.
Restrict vacation rentals.	Vacation rentals are restricted by county and city policy to some extent. Further restrictions have not been politically feasible, though this could change.
Tax vacant second homes at a higher rate.	This has been politically impossible, though this could change.
Tax vacant homes at a higher rate.	More viable than taxing second homes, but still experts rejected as politically infeasible.
Rent guarantees for employees to boost demand for infill housing.	Experts said this is not high priority.
Convert existing market-rate multi-family buildings to permanently affordable units.	Experts said it's not clear there are enough, big enough buildings, in decent enough shape to be profitable. Public funding not available.
Policies to prohibit landlord discrimination and rent gouging.	Already is policy.
Supportive and transitional housing.	Experts said to support it politically, but do not lead. Covered by other strategies.
Economic development and diversification to increase higher paying jobs.	This is not a housing strategy per se, though it would improve the housing situation.

Designate Priority Development Areas in Springs and City.	Experts said a Sonoma City PDA wouldn't change anything. The area covered by the Springs Specific Plan is a designated PDA already.
Inclusionary zoning, linkage fees, and tax increment financing.	Sonoma City and County already have inclusionary zoning and linkage fees (called "in lieu fees"). We did not get expert input on tax increment financing.
Density transfer from SDC to City.	Experts unclear how this would work.
Improve availability of public sector infill financing, enhance access to sales and use taxes.	Incorporated into other recommendations.
Market study and project development navigator to streamline infill investment.	Experts said SV is too small to pay for this position, though it could exist at a county scale and assist SV.
Combine City of Sonoma and urbanized Springs into one incorporated city.	Experts say something like this will need to happen before housing challenges and other inequities are resolved. However, LAFCO criteria for incorporation or annexation appear not to be met. Even the City of Sonoma, if trying to incorporate today, would not meet today's criteria. Not a SuSo strategy at this stage.
Create or support a mobile home preservation ordinance.	Sonoma County has a strong policy that protects residents when mobile home parks close, so it is not clear that more is needed for mobile home preservation. Related, Sonoma County now allows mobile homes on any lot. Therefore, the county no longer has mobile home park zoning.
Extend the length of existing deed restrictions to preserve affordability.	We don't know yet the number of units with expiring deed restrictions, so we don't know yet whether this is a worthy strategy. Answering this question is part of recommended data collection.
Get Sonoma Valley recognized in the demographic data and budget for the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.	This is a tall order even for well-funded advocacy and legal groups. This will only change with better state and county coordination.

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