County Strategic Priority:

Housing For All

Lead Departments

Community Development Commission, Permit and Resource Management, General Services, Health Services, Economic Development Board

Vision

We envision a Sonoma County where people at all income levels have choices and the housing market is in balance: Where rents and home prices rise at the same pace as wages, and the vacancy rate for rentals is steady at 5%. This market balance is achieved because the County and its partner jurisdictions facilitate new home construction by the private sector at a rate commensurate with in-migration. New development is concentrated in our urban centers, and throughout the county vibrant mixed-income communities are the norm. In this way, we are preserving our infrastructure investments and our environment and open spaces, while decreasing commute times for workers.

Priority Summary

Like other west coast communities, Sonoma County is facing a worsening housing crisis that is impacting not just those with modest means, but businesses, the health care sector, educational institutions, the criminal justice system, environmental interests, and the overall quality of life within the County. The Board of Supervisors has recognized this growing problem, and in just the last five years the County has increased its investment of local dollars which helped fund some 600 new affordable housing units, issued building permits for 900 housing units, and lowered the barriers and costs of the building of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs or "Granny Units") and Junior Units.

Notwithstanding these important wins, the severe shortage of affordable homes persists, as does the prevalence of homelessness. The time is now for the County to further sharpen its focus, to bring new players into the development and funding conversations, and to set a bold policy agenda. And while the County will never have enough money to solve the problem on its own, it does play a critical role in articulating the needs, marshalling resources, and driving the agenda.

To address this priority, the County will work to increase the pace of housing development at all income levels. Working in collaboration with cities, Sonoma County will use all available tools – regulations, fee structures, flexible capital funding, strategic needs assessments and the general plan update – to drive production of more housing units serving a continuum of needs, from very low income units for homeless and at-risk populations, to workforce. The effort will also leverage key County assets, including owned property and flexible local funding to drive this agenda. New development will be focused in urban centers.

Specific goals for this priority are to:

1. Create 3,375 new homes countywide for people of all incomes by 2022.
2. Speed the pace of development by reducing the cycle time for entitlements and improving flexibility of local funding sources.
3. Reduce incidence of housing instability and homelessness.
4. Raise the credibility of County government as a vital partner in housing creation.

Potential outcome measures to track progress toward these goals could include:

1. The creation of an average of 675 new units per year over the next five years.
2. Vacancy rates for rentals to increase to 3% by 2022 and rental price inflation to slow.
3. The number of homeless individuals and families to drop below 1000 county-wide.
4. The length of time any person or family is not in permanent housing drops.

Priority Projects

The County has identified a number of existing and future projects to advance the Housing for All priority, all of which will require strong partnership with the cities, developers, and other funders. In addition, there are a number of influencing factors, representing potential opportunities to advance this priority or threats to its progress. These include: Changes in state and federal funding may limit resources for projects; public resistance to development in particular areas; political siloes between jurisdictions; lack of agency bandwidth; housing market downturn; and increasing interest rates which raise the costs of capital.

Based on the County's current assessment, the following projects will help the County accomplish the goals of this priority.

1. Achieve up to 1,375 units by focusing reuse of select County-owned properties on mixed-income and mixed-use housing development in Santa Rosa. Projects include Chanate (800 units); West College Ave (200 units); Main County Administration Center Campus (200 units); Roseland Village (175 units)
2. Facilitate development of an additional 2,000 units countywide in collaboration with cities, key stakeholders and potentially involving other publicly-owned parcels.
3. Create a five-year strategic housing investment plan, leveraging the *Building Homes Toolbox*, the California Statewide Housing Needs Assessment, and the General Plan update to clearly articulate housing needs and investment priorities by income level, geography and population type (i.e. seniors, families, special needs). The plan should consider jobs/housing balance, commute patterns, and projected population growth.
4. Update and refresh land use, entitlement regulations and fee structure, including deferral collection of impact fees; enacting housing code amendments for workforce housing; creating an Affirmative Housing Inspection Program to inspect, maintain and improve multi-unit housing.
5. Update and refresh housing finance programs and policies to entice more developers and target local funds to highest priority areas of need.

6. Pursue sustainable funding for the Palms Inn with Catholic Charities, and encourage similar projects.
7. Redesign homeless services funding to emphasize "housing first".
8. Aggressively pursue new capital funds to support housing development.

Stakeholders

Housing for All requires the partnership and collective work of many stakeholders. Among these are:

- Cities and towns throughout the County
- Developers in both the non-profit and for-profit sector
- Property owners
- Financial institutions
- Non-profit organizations that provide safety net services
- Real estate industry
- Schools and hospitals
- Neighborhood groups