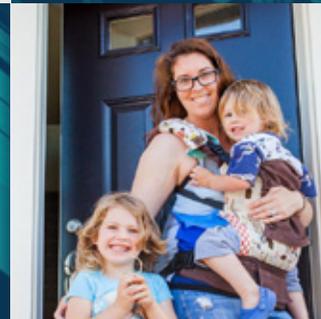


APRIL 2023



# State of Housing

in Sonoma County





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# Foreword



**Jen Klose**  
Executive Director,  
Generation Housing

The Sonoma County landscape today is peppered with new multifamily housing in various stages of construction; hundreds of new units, from studios to three-bedroom rentals, duets for purchase, some guaranteed as affordable to low wage earners, some for middle income families, will be available soon.

And while this uptick in housing production is just what Sonoma County needs—it's just a start. Our 2021 *How Much Housing Do We Need?* study concluded that the county's failure to produce enough housing to match the pace of population and job growth for nearly two decades had left us 38,000 units behind. And let's remember though that these projects have been years in the making. They are in many cases the result of incentives put in place after the 2017 fires, one-time federal funding made available to wildfire-impacted areas, and collaborative efforts by philanthropic and community-based organizations to fill funding gaps. This is a moment in time created by combined efforts over several years. If we are to successfully chip away at our deep housing deficit, newly laid foundations, visible scaffolding, and hard hats need to become a regular part of our scenery for the next several years. And so it is incumbent on us to keep our eyes on the goal and our feet on the gas. We need to watch closely how our progress waxes and wanes and iterate as necessary.

This 2023 State of Housing in Sonoma County report ("SOH"), the first annual update to Generation Housing's first SOH in 2022, tracks changes in the housing shortage crisis over the past year and presents new ways to look at housing data for the policy solutions that lie ahead. This annual update has a renewed focus on solutions because it is paired with our first annual jurisdictional housing progress reports. These scorecards highlight exemplary policies and challenges facing each jurisdiction so that local leaders can draw upon successful models regionally and around the state. In constructing these community profiles, Generation Housing acknowledges there are many paths to the goal of more housing—one effect of our local-driven approach in California. Yet no challenge is so unique as to prevent each jurisdiction's participation in the overall goal of more, more diverse, and more affordable housing.

Because many economic realities are outside of our local control, and our existing housing stock and system are inherited outcomes, we call upon our local policymakers to use their considerable power to carve a different path—one that creates a housing system that supports a more equitable, sustainable, resilient, and prosperous community for all. And we call upon all our local leaders, across sectors, to support those efforts.

This community has shown its ability to band together to drive solutions in response to disaster after disaster. We can draw upon those same assets, spirit of innovation, and determination to make Sonoma County a model of innovative housing systems change.

We hope that this annual report will continue to keep us focused in that effort and ultimately document and celebrate success.

In partnership,



Jen Klose  
Executive Director,  
Generation Housing



# Report Sponsors

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The Press Democrat

## Survey Collection Funders



# Executive Summary

The 2023 State of Housing in Sonoma County report observes changes in the county's housing shortage over the past year and analyzes new data to understand our deficit as a consequence of continued housing policies. Across three updated sections, we analyze **housing stock** to understand the shortage and its causes, then turn to **household data** to see the impact of rising costs on residents' experience of cost burden, overcrowding, and migration patterns, and finally look at **housing production** in order to assess the pace of our progress and how we can better target our solution.

The report begins by looking more closely at the trends that precipitated our housing shortage and made it more difficult for younger residents, workforce residents, and families to enter the housing market in the last two decades. We compare the stagnation of housing production in the 2000s to the robust production levels of the 1970s when jurisdictions built for future generations. We demonstrate that the beginning of the housing production decline in Sonoma County preceded the region's first halt in population growth. If trends continue, then today's production decline will contribute to the aging population as well as to its overall downward net migration. Key findings also reveal that the region's housing has not kept pace with modest job growth since 2020, exacerbating the housing shortage for the local workforce. This is especially true of affordable units and rental units that meet the housing needs of workforce residents, younger residents, and low-to moderate income households. Currently, half of all jurisdictions in the county have more than five low-income workers competing for every affordable unit.

# Executive Summary

The housing deficit has prevented jurisdictions from providing sufficient affordable options in the rental market, which can sustain a healthy budget without the responsibilities of homeownership, and provide opportunity for households to save for a down payment on a home. For decades, the county has underbuilt workforce housing, or housing that is affordable to moderate-income earners such as teachers, nurses, or service workers.

Homeownership, which promotes individual economic stability and generational wealth growth, is enjoyed disproportionately by older and higher earning households. Although ownership is still more common than renting among Black and Latino households, their homeownership rates remain at two-thirds the rate of whites. On the rental market, households face rising rents that drive more residents into cost burden. Overall median asking rents have increased significantly since the initial wave of Covid-19 in 2020, outpacing median income. The result is an effective “rent gap” of \$200 (the difference between monthly rent and income) for households earning the median income. Teachers and librarians, among other workforce residents, on average require rents of just over \$1,000 in order to be able to afford to live in Sonoma County—roughly \$800 below the median asking rents at present.

Meeting the needs of its residents requires that the county add housing stock of all types and income ranges, yet the region’s housing growth remains constrained by local policies, including the overwhelming dominance of single-family zoning. The vast majority of land in Sonoma County’s cities remain zoned exclusively for single-family homes with little to no change in most jurisdictions in recent years. Six of ten jurisdictions have set aside only one-quarter of their land for multifamily homes, limiting the total land and parcel numbers on which higher density housing can be built. As a result, over 90 percent of owner-occupied homes remain single-family homes; only 15 percent of the county’s total housing units (renter- or owner-occupied) are found in plex-style housing including duplexes, triplexes, and quads or upper Missing Middle housing (5–19 units in a structure). Options to buy or rent in smaller houses are even rarer: 11 percent of homes are one-bedroom units and under three percent of homes are studios.

These converging trends produce outcomes that confirm and expand on findings in our 2023 Housing Cost Burden survey earlier this year. Housing lies at the intersection of the county’s economic growth, its efforts to rectify racial inequality, its care for children and young families, and its attempt to create environmentally sustainable neighborhoods and combat climate change. Housing is a linchpin to necessary structural reform and systems change in these areas.

## Housing Stock

The region is marked by substantial housing growth before 2000, then subsequent periods of moderate to very little growth. Our analysis lays bare the distinct lack of housing that is accessible, safe, and large enough to accommodate families with young children and our dwindling workforce population.

- Building has declined precipitously in this century. Nearly half of our existing housing stock was developed over a thirty-year timeframe (1970–1999).
- After keeping pace with population growth between 1970 and 2000, housing supply leveled off, preceding the region’s first stagnant period of population growth in nearly 30 years.
- Yearly increases to housing stock production are now at a 20-year low. The county saw a net decline in housing units of 1.2 percent after 2020.
- When it builds, Sonoma County almost exclusively builds single unit homes, which are larger and more expensive.
- An overwhelming majority of our single-family homes are owner-occupied units, while the remaining share of owner-occupied units constitute a mere 5 percent of the total stock.
- Renters are poorly insulated from rising costs—year over year, since 2005, the median monthly rent for an apartment in Sonoma County has outpaced the county’s median monthly income.
- The effective “rent gap” for households earning the median income in Sonoma County has remained roughly \$200 since 2016 and peaked at nearly \$240 in 2018.

(continued)

## GLOSSARY

**Missing Middle Housing:** House-scale buildings with multiple units in walkable neighborhoods, which can include triplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, and courtyard buildings. Missing Middle housing provides diverse housing options and supports locally-serving retail and public transportation options. They are most often composed of 4 to 11 units. “Upper Missing Middle Housing” can consist of projects ranging from 12 to 19 units. We call them “Missing” because they have typically been illegal to build since the mid-1940s and “Middle” because they sit in the middle of a spectrum between detached single-family homes and mid-rise to high-rise apartment buildings, in terms of form and scale, as well as number of units and often, affordability.

**Infill Housing:** The term “infill development” refers to building within unused and under-utilized lands within existing development patterns, typically but not exclusively in urban areas. *(Adapted from the California Governor’s Office of Planning & Research)*

**Workforce Housing:** Workforce housing (sometimes referred to as middle-income or moderate-income housing) is housing for individuals and families typically earning between 60 percent and 120 percent of the Area Median Income (or AMI; see definition of AMI on page 29). *(Adapted from the California State-wide Communities Development Authority)*

**Affordable by Design:** This refers to housing that achieves its affordability through smaller spaces, efficient design, or fewer amenities rather than governmental regulation, government subsidies, or deed restrictions. These features help reduce the per-unit cost of building and allow developers to charge less in rent; they can include accessory dwelling units, plex-style housing, and other unit styles that similarly save on cost. Affordable by design is a strategy typically used to achieve housing that is affordable for middle income residents.

## Residents and their Homes

As median rents increase at a slightly higher rate than median incomes, members of our workforce who are more likely to rent—including service workers, healthcare providers, teachers, and construction workers—are more likely to remain cost-burdened. These outcomes further manifest in the declining population of younger residents and families and, as found in our 2023 Housing Cost Burden report, greater uncertainty about the ability to remain in Sonoma County in the next five years.

- Overall median asking rents in Sonoma County have increased rapidly between 2021 and late 2022 by over 20 percent.
- Rent burden disproportionately impacts Black and Latino residents relative to other ethnicities in Sonoma County.
- The share of Black renters who are severely cost burdened has increased roughly 3 percent, while the share of white renters experiencing severe cost burden dipped slightly.
- Overall median asking rents have increased significantly since the initial wave of Covid-19 in 2020. From January 2017 to January 2023, Sonoma County has had higher median asking rents than California as a whole.
- Nine in 10 extremely low income and very low-income renters are cost-burdened.
- Density is proportionate to the rate of single-family homes in a jurisdiction. As cities look to add density, they should consider areas with a higher percentage of single-family housing.
- Latino households experience the highest rate of overcrowding, with over one in four living in crowded housing conditions.
- Sonoma County experienced a positive growth rate until 2016. Since reaching a peak of immigration in 2016, the county experienced a net out-migration of 4,534 residents in 2019.
- The proportion of families with young children is declining. The alarming rate of decline in homes reporting children under 18 supports the data indicating our population is skewing older, year over year.

## Homebuilding

Sonoma County's limited gains in housing stock since 2000 have produced a deficit of homes below the rate of population and job growth. These totals also fail to meet the current need among existing residents, contributing to declines in net migration, especially among young residents and families. The county has struggled to add significantly to its share of HUD-subsidized affordable housing in order to supplement its lower levels of affordable housing for low-income residents. Its smaller homes-to-population ratio has contributed to rising housing costs and rates of cost burden.

- The vast majority of permitting in Sonoma County has been for single-family homes since at least the 1980s.
- Multifamily permitting has occurred mostly for units with 5+ structures, leading to a near absence of plex-style housing (duplex, triplex, and fourplexes) throughout the county.
- Overall yearly permitting totals declined in the early 1990s and never recovered to those prior highs, with the decade spanning 2010 and 2020 seeing the lowest production totals in nearly four decades.
- Sonoma County's vacancy rates dipped below that of the statewide average in 2020 and had fallen three percentage points to 4.1 percent by January of 2023, below the healthy rental vacancy rate of 5 percent.
- Nearly all jurisdictions surpassed their above-moderate housing RHNA goals by larger rates than their low and very low targets. Only 22 percent of the units permitted by all jurisdictions were for low and very low income units.
- Half of all jurisdictions have more than five low-income residents competing for every affordable unit—well above the 2.0 ratio needed to achieve a healthy supply.
- Between 2018 and 2021 the county added only 40 additional subsidized units, an increase of 0.4 percent county-wide.

KEY FINDINGS:

# Housing Stock

Over the past several decades of development, our housing stock has predominantly favored the creation of detached single-family home subdivisions. A vast majority of this housing stock, which accounts for roughly 90 percent of our total housing stock, is unaffordable to low and middle income earners that comprise a sizable portion of the Sonoma County workforce. Meanwhile, the median asking rent continues to outpace the county's median monthly income—driving up the cost burden of our residents and making it nearly impossible to acquire a home, create intergenerational wealth, and build parity among all members of our community irrespective of their race, gender, or sexual identity.

The immediate precipitants of the housing shortage in the Sonoma County region began in the late 2000s when housing production stagnated. Prior to this period, housing production was not beholden to the existing population, as the county built for future residents in the expectation that more would arrive. The county's population doubled between 1970 and 1990—and cities built for it. After keeping pace for at least four decades, starting in the late 2000s, year-over-year housing stock growth decoupled from future population growth. A period of housing stock stagnation from 2000 on preceded sluggish population growth as people had fewer units to move into.

The Housing Stock section serves as an assessment of the problem. It sets the foundational stones on which we construct the broader analysis on the true state of housing in Sonoma County. These include the alarming finds that the median-earning renter in Sonoma County has been cost-burdened since at least 2005. The housing shortage also manifests in an aging population—as younger residents and young families are priced out of the market—and a declining population overall as people leave the county. Understanding past development trends underlying our existing housing stock is critical to shifting the narrative towards a stronger collective prohousing voice and the creation of more, more diverse, and more affordable housing.

# Project Endorsement

## Cotati Station



**DEVELOPER**  
**Elliott Associates**

**TOTAL UNITS**  
**98**

**JURISDICTION**  
**Cotati**

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- **79 Affordable by Design units**
  - **19 deed-restricted affordable units**

The aptly named Cotati Station will be situated next to the Cotati SMART Station as part of the larger Santero Way Specific Plan.

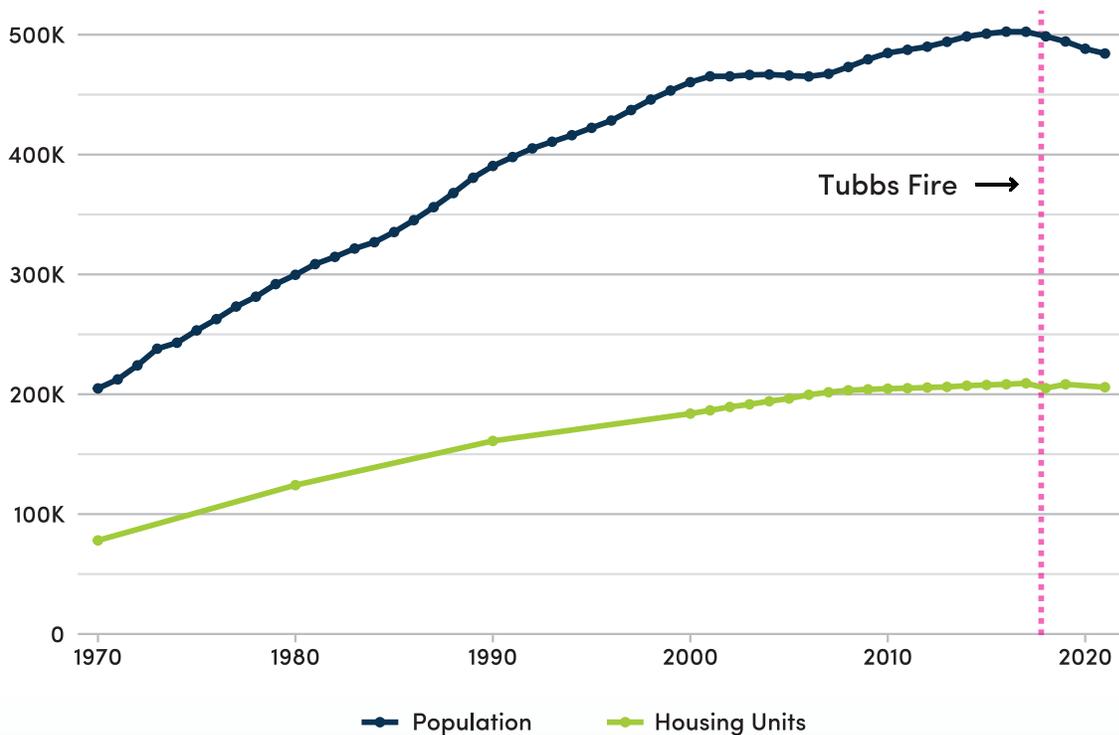
It's a mixed-use development that further aids Cotati in achieving a 15-minute city status. Located near this project is a major job center, a full-service grocery store, health care facilities, and public parks which enable residents of this project to consider alternative modes of transportation for daily essentials.

It also stands in close proximity (less than one mile) to Sonoma State University, a full-service grocery store, health care institutions, and public parks, thereby reducing vehicle miles traveled, which is critical to reducing our overall greenhouse gas emissions.

# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 1. HOUSING UNITS AND POPULATION OVER TIME, COUNTY**

- Between 1970 and 2000, the county added roughly 105,000 units of housing, or a yearly average of 3,500 units. In the 22 years since, it has added under 23,000 units, or an average of 1,050 units per year, less than a third of its prior production rate.
- In the 2000s housing supply leveled off, preceding the region’s first stagnant period of population growth in nearly 30 years.
- As population growth resumed around 2007, housing production failed to keep pace. Between 2010 and 2020, population grew by 1 percent while housing stock grew by only 0.1 percent.
- After the boom in production after 1970, the county reached its highest persons-per-housing unit ratio in 2001, at 2.5 residents for every unit. Today that number has declined to 2.35.

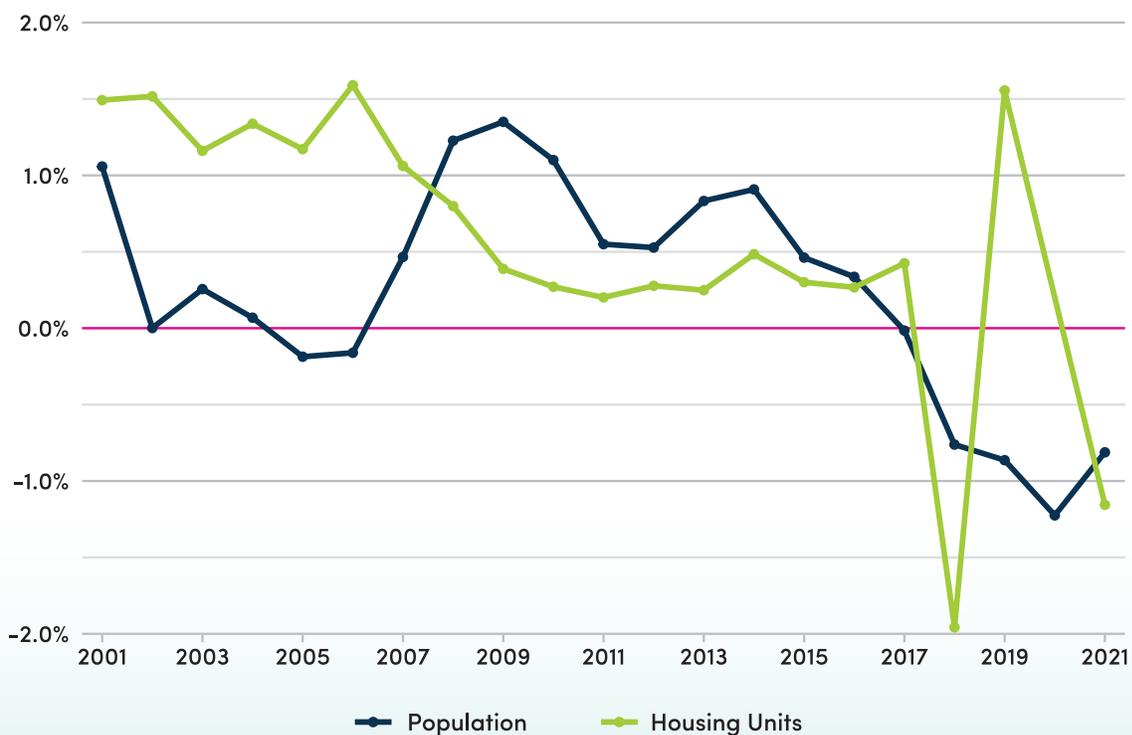


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and American Community Survey; IPUMS NHGIS

# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 2. PERCENT CHANGE IN HOUSING UNITS AND POPULATION OVER TIME, COUNTY**

- Between 2001 and 2007, the county added an average of 1.3 percent new housing units to its housing stock each year before plummeting to annual growth rates of 0.3 percent until 2017.
- The year-over-year rate of housing production outpaced population growth before 2007 but remained below the rate of population growth for the next decade.
- Housing gets pinched after 2010 as we begin building at a lower rate than population growth—reaching nearly flat levels of housing stock growth.
- The series of fires experienced by the county starting in 2017 led to a major loss in housing stock. In response, the county launched several re-build initiatives resulting in a net 3.5 percentage point jump in the rate of production.
- Yearly increases to housing stock are now at a 20-year low. The county saw a deceleration in housing production and now sits at a 1.2 percent rate of growth as of 2021, setting the county up for larger deficits unless trends are reversed.

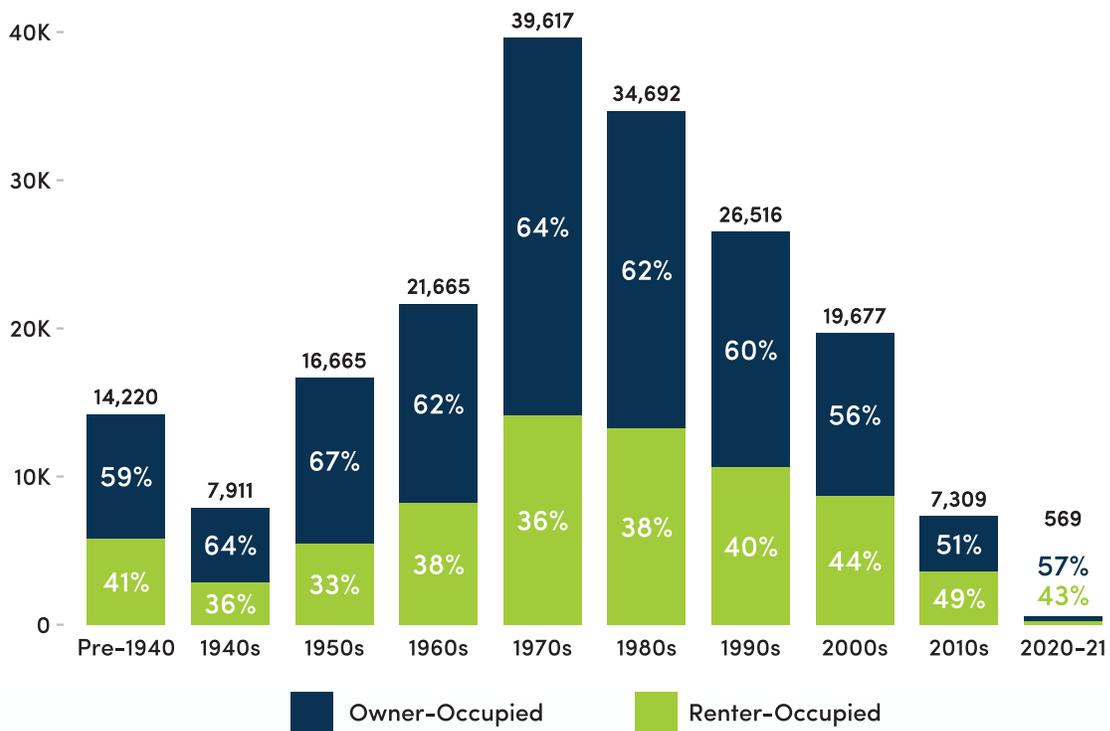


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and American Community Survey; IPUMS NHGIS

# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 3. HOMES BUILT BY DECADE**

- Nearly half of our existing housing stock was developed over a 30-year timeframe (1970-1999).
- The decade with the largest rate of housing production was the 1970s with nearly 40,000 units that are still occupied today.
- Owner-occupied homes constitute the majority share of units built decade over decade, but the percentage of renter-occupied units as a total share of all units built is growing, reaching a high of 49 percent of all new units added in the 2010s.
- The number of homes built per decade, both owner-occupied and renter-occupied, fell precipitously from nearly 40,000 in the 1970s to less than 8,000 during the 2010s.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

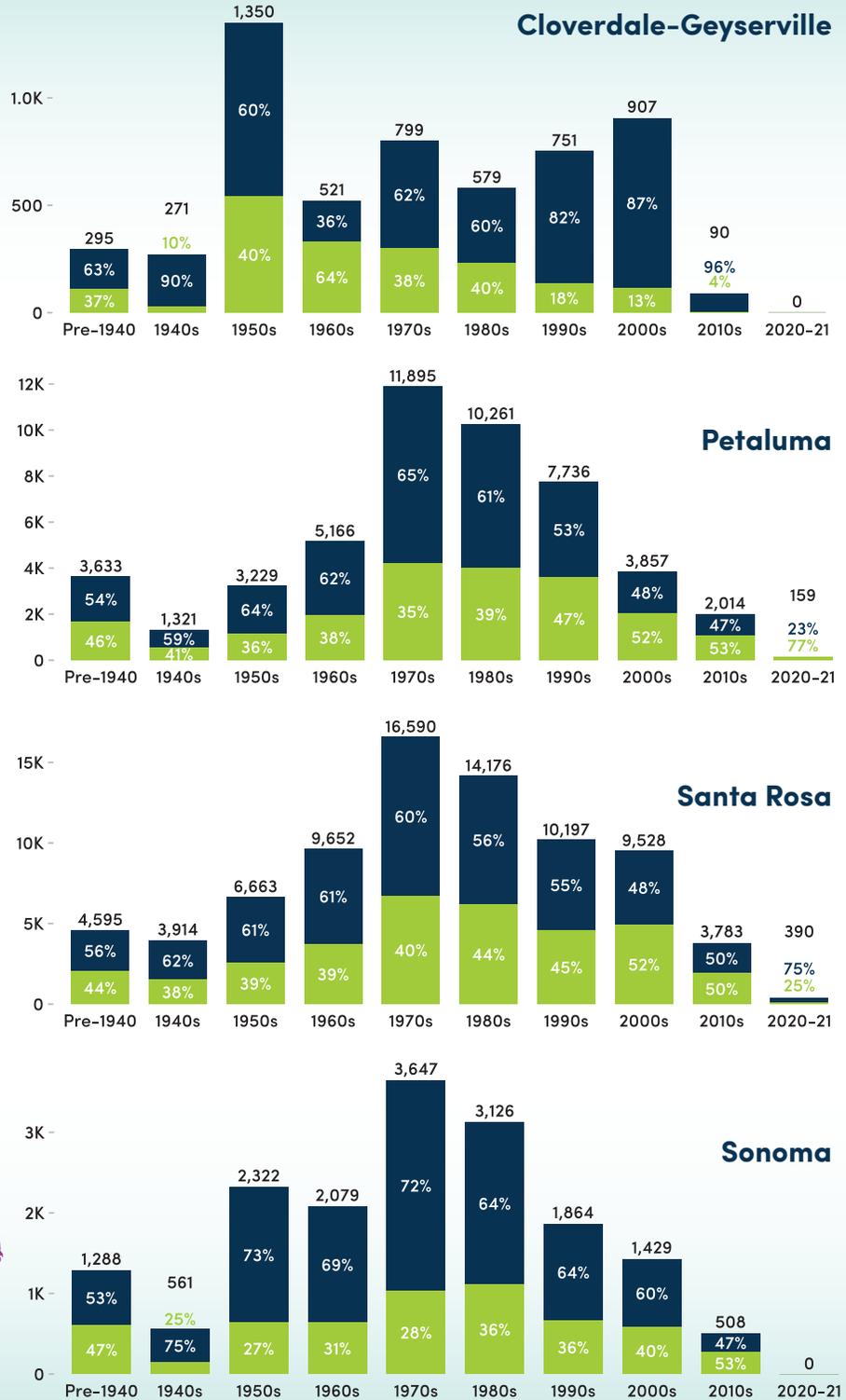
# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 4. HOMES BUILT BY DECADE, BY CCD**

- Jurisdictional production mirrored regional trends, as most cities and towns produced the majority of their existing housing stock between the 1960s and 1980s. The Petaluma region, the Santa Rosa-Rohnert Park region, Sebastopol and its surroundings, and the City of Sonoma region most closely followed this production cycle.
- By the 2010s, housing production stagnated across all jurisdictions in Sonoma County.

(continued)

Owner-Occupied  
 Renter-Occupied

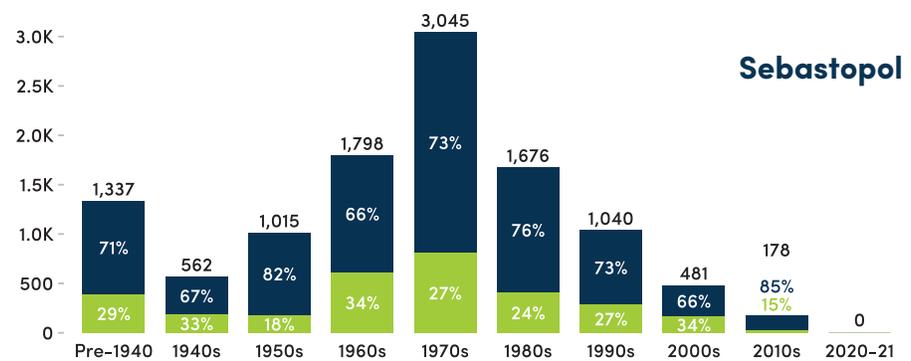
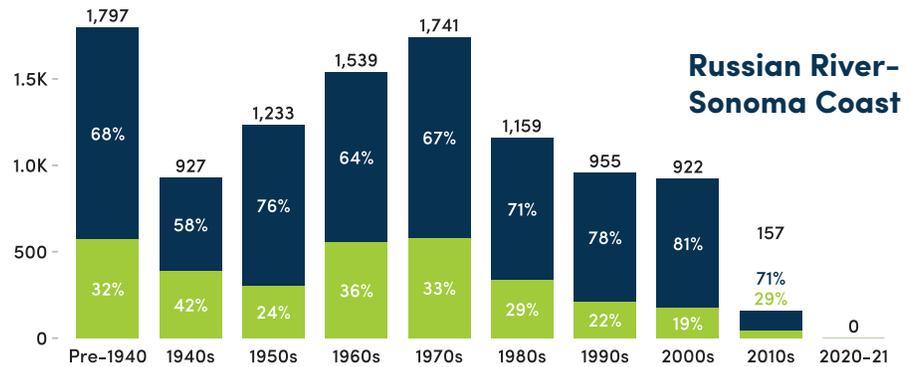
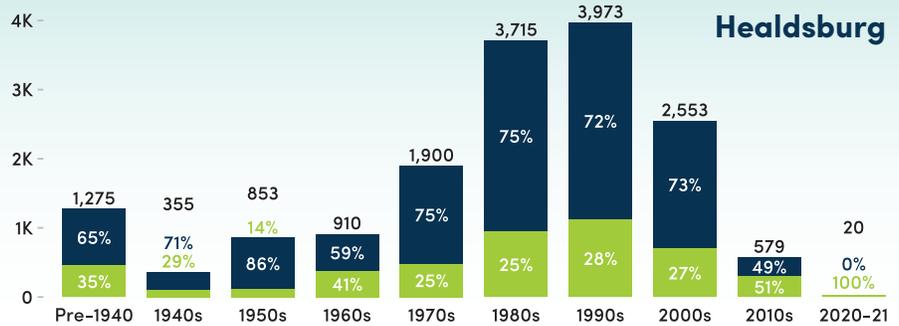


# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 4. (continued)**

- The production of owner-occupied units has fairly consistently outpaced renter-occupied units across all decades and jurisdictions, with few exceptions.
- The Santa Rosa-Rohnert Park region, the Petaluma region, Healdsburg and its surrounding areas, and the City of Sonoma region have produced higher rates of renter-occupied units in recent decades, ensuring nearly half of all new units go to renters.

Owner-Occupied  
 Renter-Occupied



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Note: Data is presented at the Census County Division, or CCD, level. CCDs are subdivisions of counties that remain relatively fixed across time, which assists with collection of statistical data, and are typically named after the subdivision's largest population center or a prominent geographical feature.

# Project Endorsement

## Dry Creek Commons



### DEVELOPER

**Burbank Housing**

### TOTAL UNITS

**58**

### JURISDICTION

**Healdsburg**

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **5 units of permanent supportive housing**
- **Deed-restricted Low and Very Low Income units**
- **Includes 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom options**

Dry Creek Commons is located a mile or less from several essential services such as a full-service grocery store, major hospital, fitness center, and city park. This in conjunction with its proximity to transit and a bicycle friendly design further encourage residents to reduce use of a vehicle for common day-to-day activities.

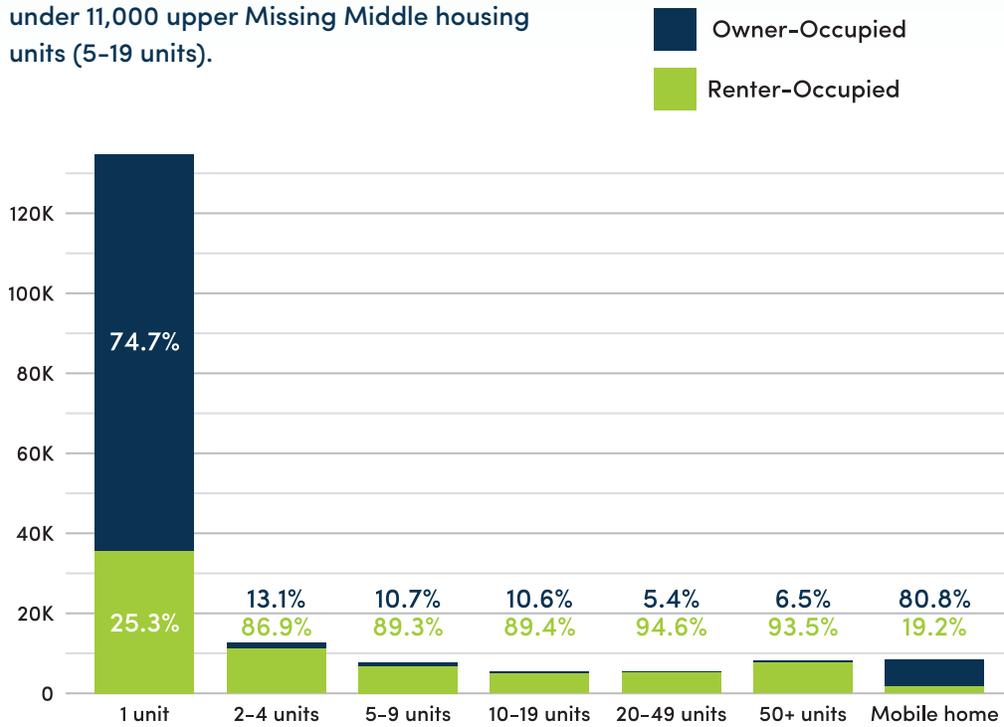
It also uses a development design that integrates the dense multifamily development seamlessly with existing natural features such as wetlands and the nearby Foss Creek and accompanying pathway.

It is a prime example of how natural, existing features can be blended into new developments, creating living environments that promote healthy, sustainable, and affordable lifestyles.

# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 5. HOUSING UNITS BY BUILDING SIZE, SONOMA COUNTY**

- The vast majority of the county’s housing stock are single unit homes. Over 135,000 single-structure units supply residents with the bulk of their housing compared to just under 15,000 plexes (duplexes, triplexes, and quads) and under 11,000 upper Missing Middle housing units (5-19 units).
- Over 90 percent of owner-occupied homes remain single-family homes while the remaining share of owner-occupied units constitute a mere 5 percent of the total stock.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



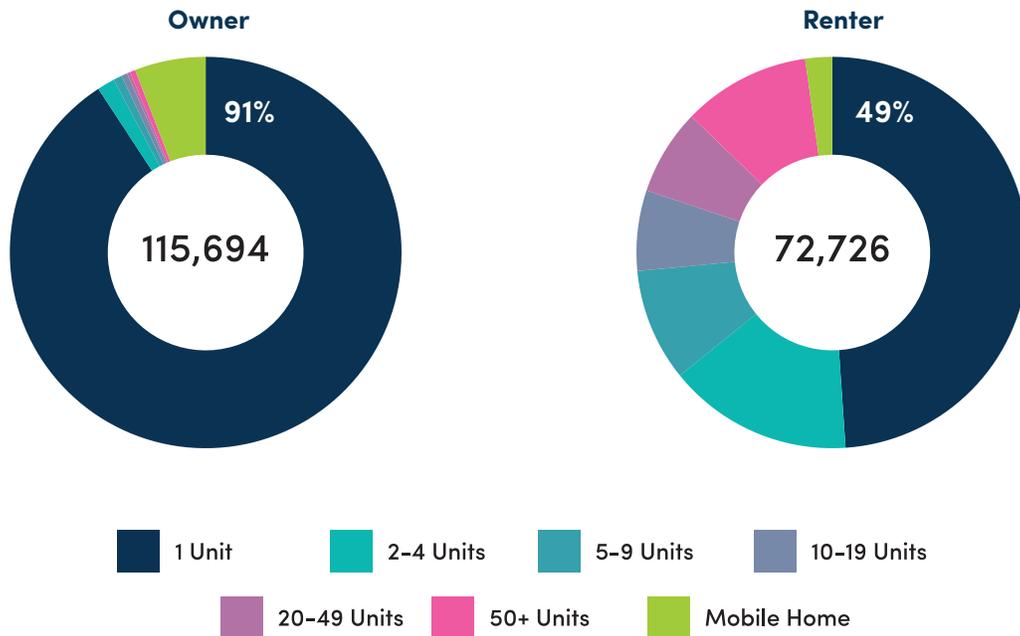
“At Providence Health, we see the tangible effects of housing insecurity on the health of our patients every day. By investing in housing solutions, we can proactively address the root causes of many health issues, leading to better outcomes for individuals and families in our community. Our commitment to creating and supporting affordable housing options is a testament to our belief that everyone deserves access to safe, stable, and healthy living conditions. As a healthcare provider, we feel it is our responsibility to contribute to the long-term wellness of the communities we serve.”

—Amy Ramirez, MSW, Manager of Community Health Investment, Providence Health

# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 6. BUILDING SIZE BY HOMEOWNERSHIP AND RENTERSHIP, SONOMA COUNTY**

- Multifamily homes provide a disproportionate share of renter households. Renters comprise nearly all residents of Missing Middle multifamily housing, from small plexes to larger midrise structures.
- Total rental units supplied by single-family homes is roughly equivalent to the total number of rental housing units supplied by multifamily structures.
- The 7,500 units provided by 50+ unit structures indicates there are only an estimated 150 50+ structures in all of Sonoma County.

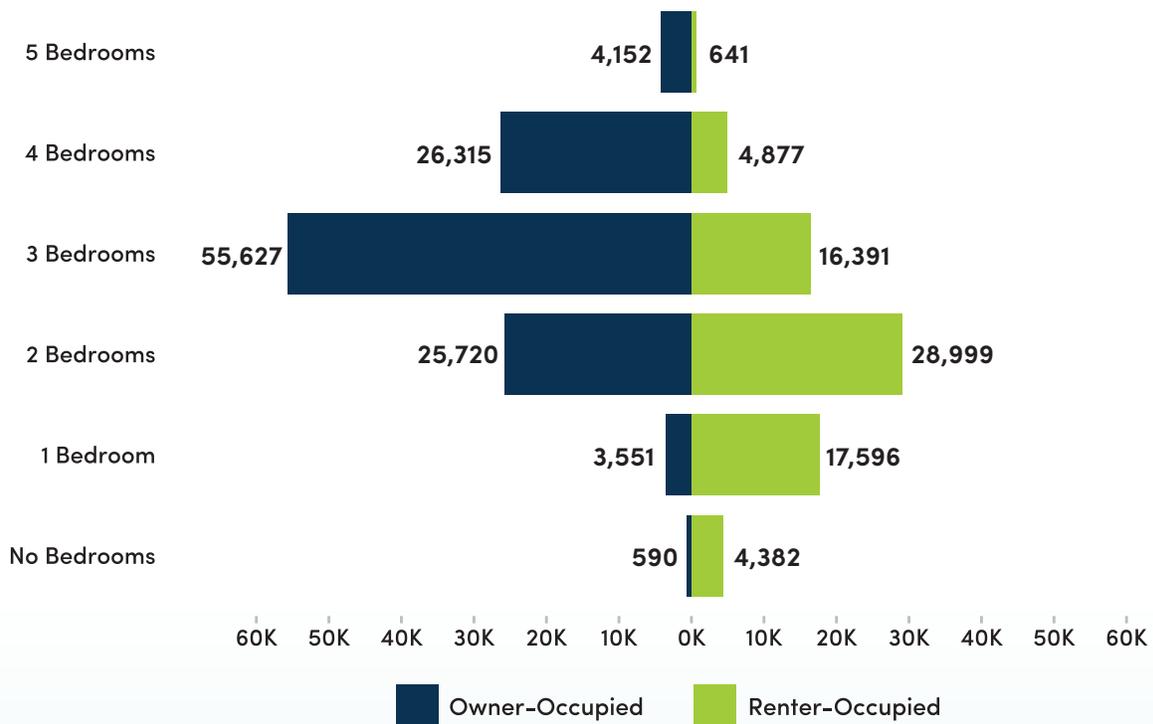


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 7. BEDROOM COUNT BY HOMEOWNERSHIP AND RENTERSHIP**

- Owners predominantly live in larger structures. Nearly 60,000 owner-occupied homes contain 3 bedrooms or more. Less than a quarter of 3-bedroom structures go to renters within the county.
- Smaller units are rarer, as 11 percent of homes are one-bedroom units and under 3 percent of homes are studios.
- Three-bedroom renter-occupied units represent only one-third of the total 3-bedroom units that are owner-occupied.
- While owner-occupied units skew larger (3+ bedrooms per unit), renter-occupied units are predominately smaller (with an average size of 2+ bedrooms per unit or less).
- The majority share of 4+ bedroom units are owner-occupied relative to renter-occupied units which represent less than one-fifth of the total.

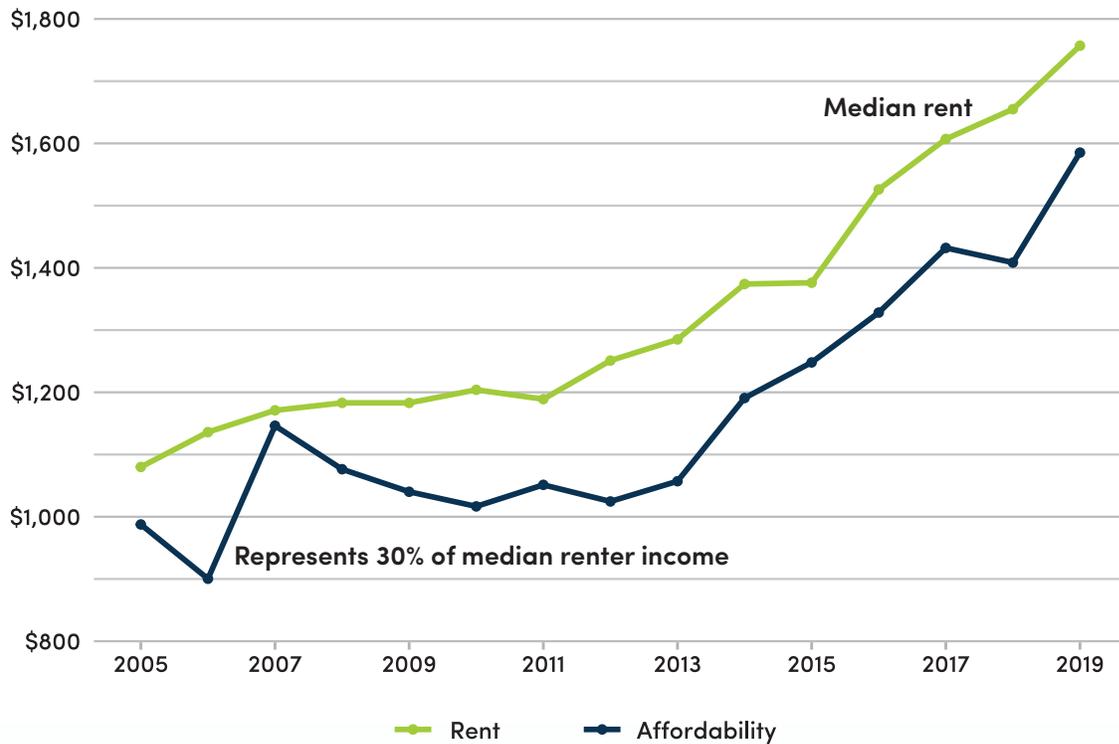


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

# Housing Stock

**FIGURE 8. MEDIAN RENT AND MEDIAN RENTER INCOME, 2005-2019**

- Year over year, since 2005, the median monthly rent for an apartment in Sonoma County has outpaced the county’s median “affordability line”—a calculation of what the median earner can afford on rent without spending over 30 percent of their income.
- The effective rent gap for households earning the median income in Sonoma County has remained roughly \$200 since 2016 and peaked in absolute dollars at nearly \$240 in 2018. The largest disparity between median rents and affordability by percent was in 2006 when rents reached 126 percent of median affordability.
- The median rent has maintained a constant upward trend even when average income falls or stagnates.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

KEY FINDINGS:

# Residents and their Homes

Single-family homeownership, which can offer relative benefits compared to renting—including stable costs relative to income, longer duration, and steps to wealth accumulation—is not equally accessible to all Sonoma County residents, with wide impacts on residents' experiences. Nonwhite, lower income, and younger residents are more likely to rent. As a result, they are more likely to experience cost burden, overcrowding, and shorter duration in their homes.

The divergence between race and class in Sonoma County as it relates to income, homeownership rates, and cost burden continues to impact long-term sustainability goals—especially for families that have children under the ages of 18. This precipitates a variety of market and social responses from steep increases in median asking rents to outward migration as families seek greener pastures.

This section showcases the impact of our land use decisions and the effect it has on Black and Latino members of our community. This part of our report will also shine a light on the alarming decline in the share of families with children under the age of 18 and outward migration trends that likely stem from a combination of limited professional opportunities and a lack of diversity and affordability in our regional housing stock. Ultimately, our findings illustrate trends, that absent bold political and policy-based intervention, will lead us down an unsustainable path.

# Project Endorsement

## Pullman Phase II



**DEVELOPER**  
Phoenix Development  
Company of  
Minneapolis, LLC

**TOTAL UNITS**  
38

**JURISDICTION**  
Santa Rosa

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- 20 units of 1-bedroom units (varying sizes)
  - 20 units of 1-bedroom units with office space, to be marketed to the missing middle population
  - Two units will be deed-restricted affordable

Pullman Phase II is the next phase of a larger project located just north of Railroad Square that aims to create a mixed-income community close to the core of Santa Rosa. This project will help to further the City of Santa Rosa's vision for an energized downtown area.

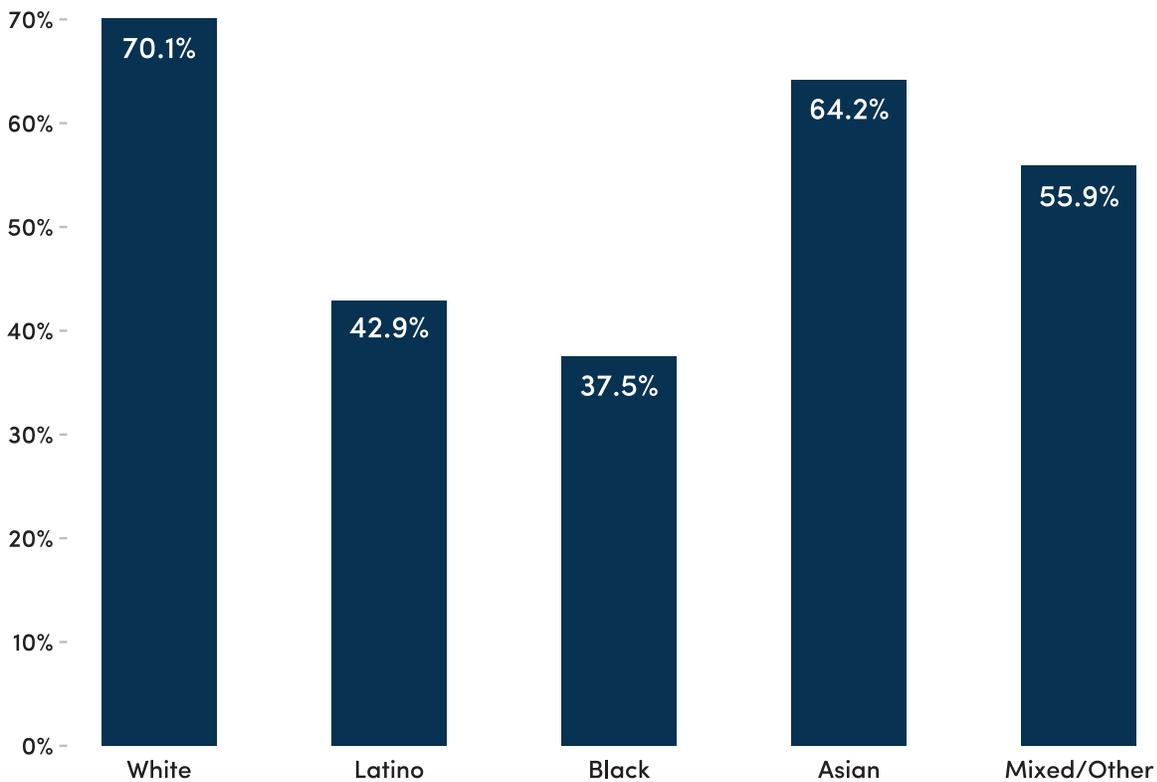
This project will share amenities with Pullman Phase I, including a dog run, dog wash station, gym, office, conference room, a pool, BBQ area, fire pit, lounge, and a bike storage and repair area.

We are in need of housing at all income levels, and infill mixed-use housing such as this project are an important part of our total housing ecosystem as we aim to realize a more sustainable future.

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 9. HOMEOWNERSHIP BY RACE/ETHNICITY, SONOMA COUNTY 2021**

- Homeownership rates for white households remain significantly higher than those for Latino and Black households, at 43 percent and 38 percent, respectively.
- Homeownership rates for Black and Latino households have only increased marginally since 2019, by about 3 percentage points.
- Black homeownership rates are over 30 percentage points lower than white households.

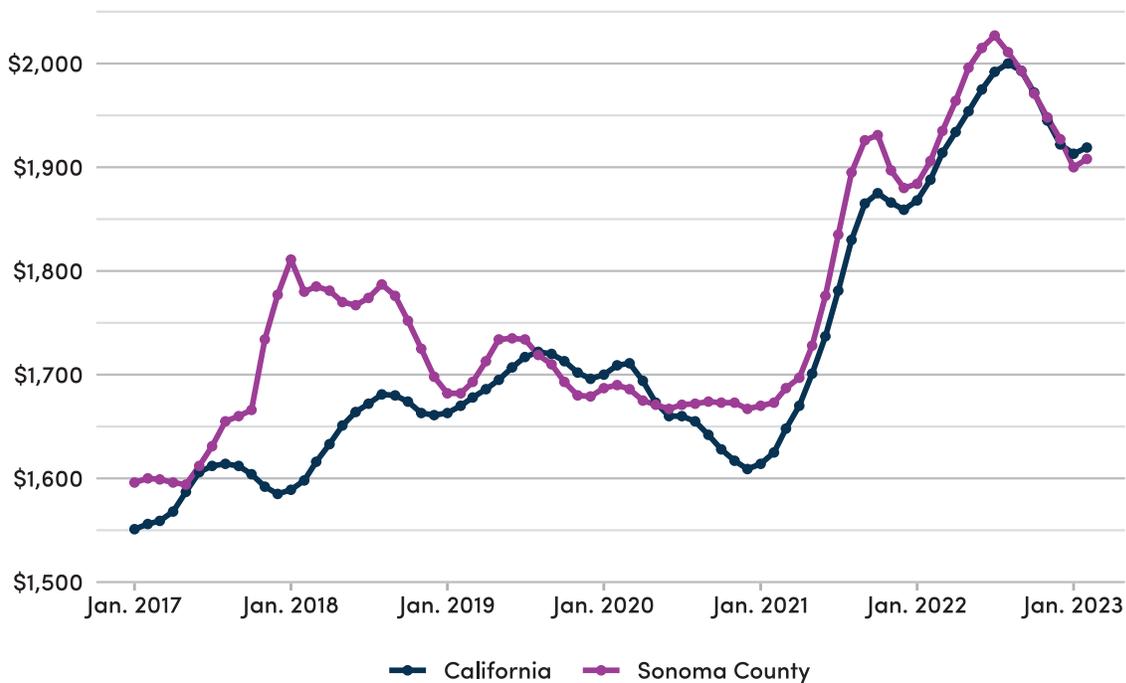


Source: IPUMS USA

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 10. MEDIAN RENTS IN SONOMA COUNTY AND CALIFORNIA, 2017-2023**

- Overall median asking rents in Sonoma County increased rapidly between 2021 and late 2022 by over 20 percent.
- From January 2017 to January 2023, Sonoma County has predominantly had higher median asking rents than California as a whole.
- Despite the moderate decline in median asking rents during the latter half of 2022, median asking rents are once again increasing.
- The decline in median asking rents during the middle of 2018 corresponds to rebuilding efforts, decreasing some of the pressure related to a limited housing stock as fire survivors returned to their homes.



Source: Apartment List

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 11. MEDIAN EARNINGS AND AFFORDABLE RENT BY SELECTED OCCUPATIONS**

- Teachers and librarians would on average require rents of just over \$1,000 in order to be able to afford to live in Sonoma County—roughly \$800 below the median asking rents at present.
- The median asking rent of \$1,900 comprises about 68 percent of the typical farmworker’s average monthly income, putting the typical worker from this sector in the severely cost-burdened category.

Median Earnings by Occupation			
Occupation	Annual Income	Monthly Income	Affordable Rent Needed
Legal Occupations	\$81,023	\$6,752	\$2,026
Education/Libraries	\$44,787	\$3,732	\$1,120
Healthcare Support	\$30,102	\$2,508	\$753
Food Preparation & Service	\$20,009	\$1,667	\$500
Farming/Fishing/Forestry	\$33,514	\$2,793	\$838
Construction/Extraction	\$52,138	\$4,345	\$1,303

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



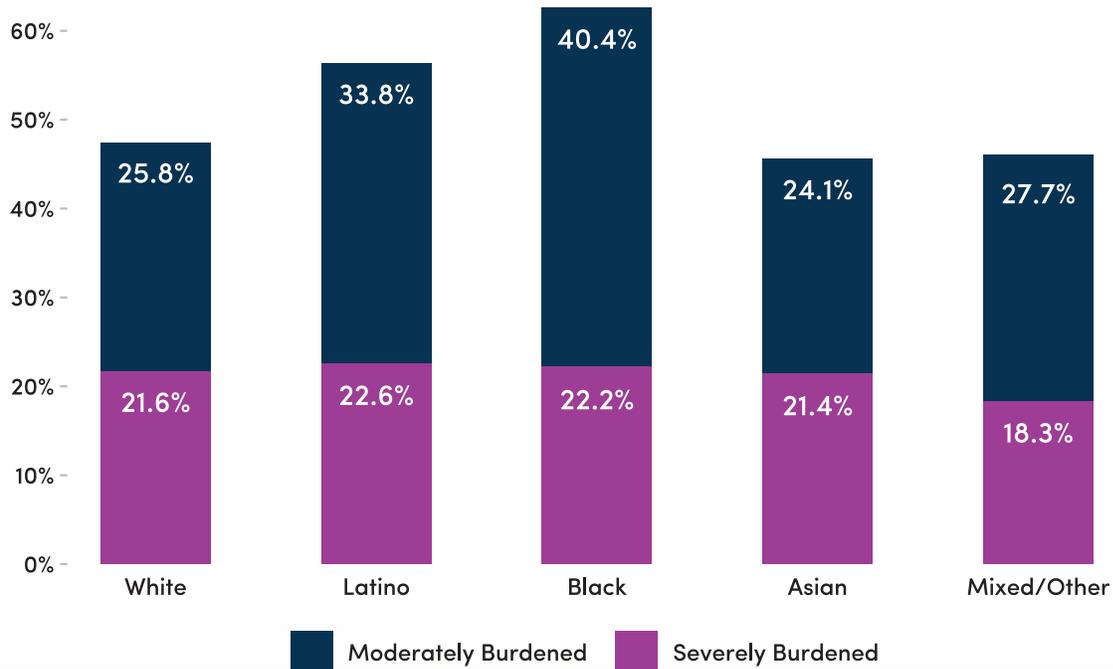
“The health of our small businesses relies heavily on a stable, thriving workforce. Unfortunately, the housing crisis in Sonoma County makes it challenging for workers to secure affordable living options close to their workplaces. That’s why we launched the Sonoma County Housing Fund, a vital initiative designed to create more housing opportunities and ensure that local talent can live and work within our community. Through this initiative, we are addressing the needs of local businesses and also fostering a vibrant and sustainable local economy. The success of our community depends on collaboration, and the Sonoma County Housing Fund demonstrates the power of working together for a brighter future.”

—Peter Rumble, CEO, Santa Rosa Metro Chamber

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 12. RENT BURDEN BY RACE/ETHNICITY, SONOMA COUNTY 2021**

- Rent burden disproportionately impacts Black and Latino residents relative to other ethnicities in Sonoma County, at 63 percent and 56 percent respectively.
- Total rent burden has increased for all groups save for white renters which bucked this trend and recorded an approximate 2 percent decrease.
- The share of Black renters who are severely cost-burdened has increased roughly 3 percent since 2019, while the share of white renters experiencing severe cost burden dipped slightly.
- New data indicates that since our last report, nonwhite households have seen some margin of increase in the share of renters experiencing severe cost burden. Nonetheless, the share of severely cost burdened renters across all groups is relatively equal.

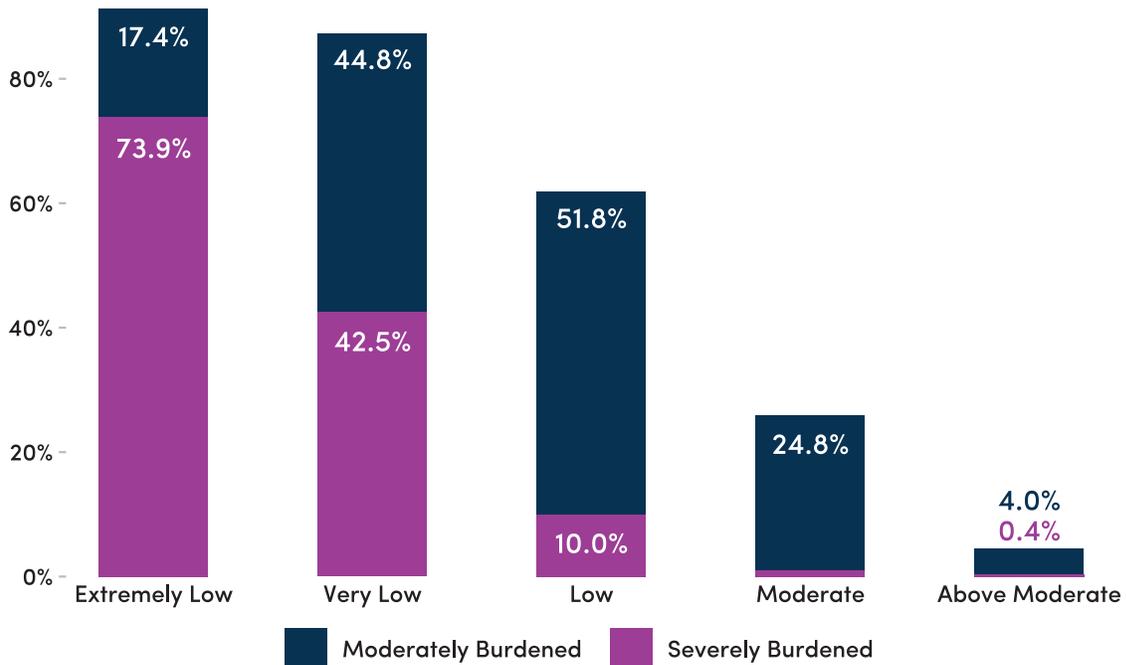


Source: IPUMS USA

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 13. RENT BURDEN BY INCOME TYPE, SONOMA COUNTY 2021**

- Only 10 percent of Sonoma County’s Extremely Low-Income renters and 13 percent of its Very Low-Income renters are not rent-burdened.
- The rates of those experiencing severe cost burden declined only moderately for Very Low-Income renters, at a 10 percentage point drop.
- The share of moderate- and above-moderate income brackets experiencing rates of cost burden are three to ten times lower than the share of lower income earners.
- One in 3 moderate-income renters experience cost burden.



Source: IPUMS USA. Source for table below: County of Sonoma CDC Income Limits, [sonomacounty.ca.gov/incomelimits](http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/incomelimits)

INCOME BASED ON AREA MEDIAN INCOME	SINGLE HOUSEHOLD	
	Sonoma County AMI: \$78,950	Minimum Monthly Rent Equivalent of Cost Burden
Very Low Income: <50% AMI	Income: <\$41,600	30% on Housing: \$1,040
		50% on Housing: \$1,733
Low Income: 60-80% AMI	Income: \$49,920-\$66,550	30% on Housing: \$1,248-1,663
		50% on Housing: \$2,080-2,772
Middle Income: 80-120% AMI	Income: \$66,550-\$94,750	30% on Housing: \$1,663-2,368
		50% on Housing: \$2,772-3,948
Higher Income: >120% AMI	>\$94,750	30% on Housing: >\$2,368
		50% on Housing: >\$3,948

# Project Endorsement

## Lago Fresca Apartments



**DEVELOPER**  
**Auxon Lago Fresca, LLC**

**TOTAL UNITS**  
**50**

**JURISDICTION**  
**Santa Rosa**

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- **16 1-bedroom flats**
  - **22 2-bedroom flats**
  - **4 2-bedroom townhome apartments**
  - **4 3-bedroom Townhome Apartments**
  - **4 4-bedroom flats**

Lago Fresca Apartments will be located west of Spring Lake Park. This project aims to promote walkability and bikeability through its close proximity to local transit, a full-service grocery store, major city parks, medical services, and several local schools.

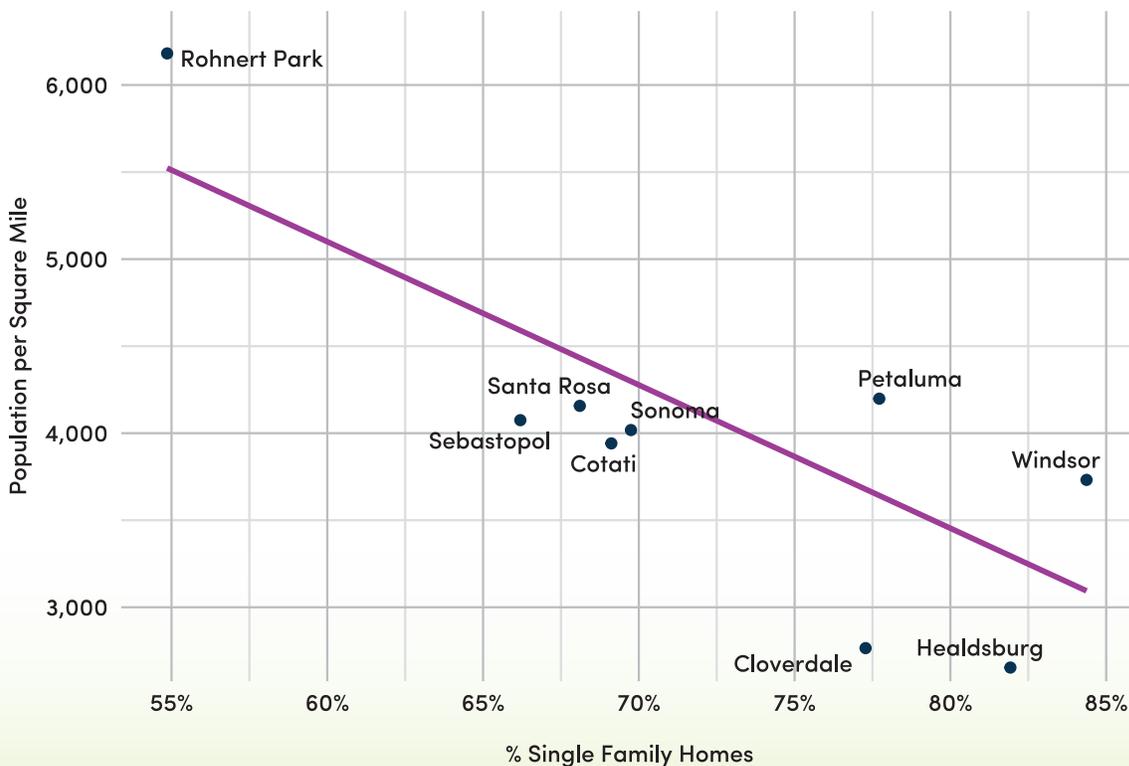
The project features a rooftop terrace and other amenities such as a community room complete with a kitchenette, fireplace and lounge that will strengthen resident relationships and overall resiliency.

A standout feature of this project is the diversity of unit types. Offering a variety of differently sized units is critical to ensuring young families can stay rooted in the community.

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 14. POPULATION DENSITY BY SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING, BY JURISDICTION 2021**

- Density is proportionate to the rate of single-family homes in a jurisdiction. As cities look to add density, they should consider areas with a higher percentage of single-family housing.
- Healdsburg and Windsor are two of the least dense cities in Sonoma County as a result of their high rates of single-family homes. With both jurisdictions above 80 percent of total stock devoted to single families homes, they can consider policies that would allow multifamily housing in existing single-family zones.
- Rohnert Park is the densest city in Sonoma County at roughly 6,200 people per square mile and has the lowest share of single-family homes in their housing stock.
- Most cities and towns in Sonoma County enjoy only moderate density, below the density rates of cities in Contra Costa County like Dublin (4,624 people per square mile) but above that of cities in Marin County like San Rafael (3,622 people per square mile).

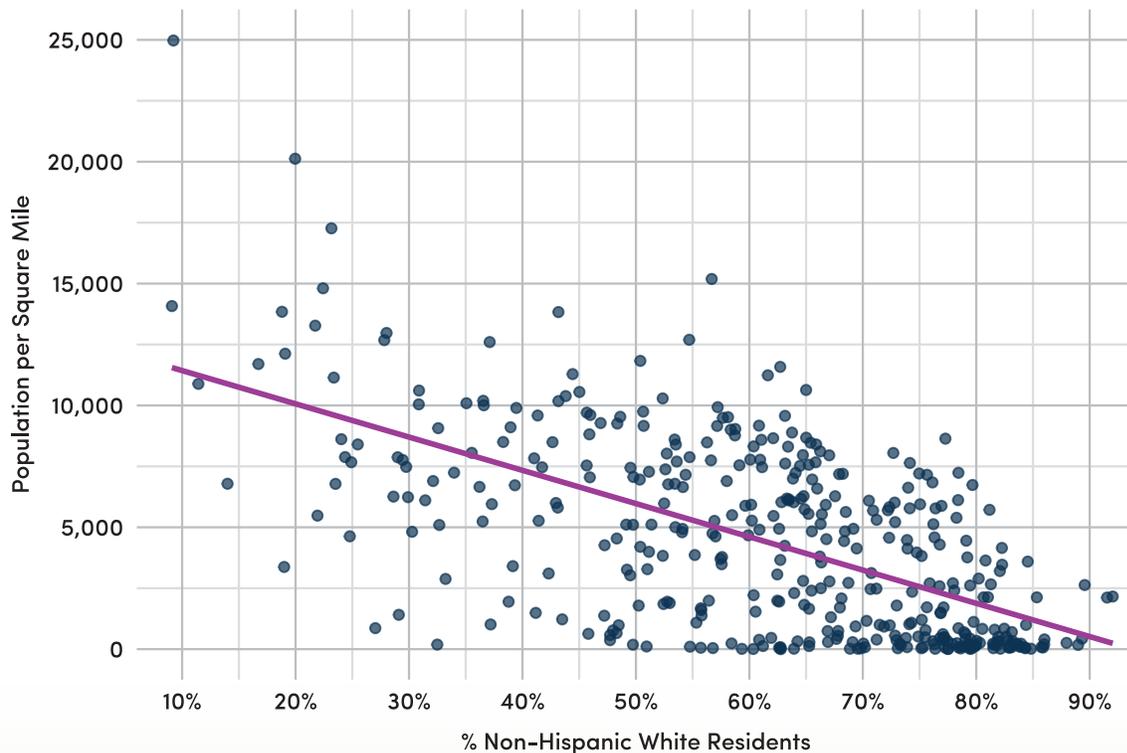


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and American Community Survey

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 15. POPULATION DENSITY VS. PERCENT OF WHITE RESIDENTS, BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP 2021**

- White residents tend to live in less densely populated neighborhoods within the county. As the share of non-Hispanic white residents increases in a neighborhood, the overall population density decreases significantly.
- Census Block Groups comprised of over 75 percent white households tend to have a density below 2,900 people per square mile, close to that of cities like Mill Valley (2,927 people per square mile).
- The majority of Census Block Groups with a percentage of white households below 50 percent typically have densities between 5,000 and 10,000 people per square mile, approaching that of cities like Berkeley (10,755 people per square mile).



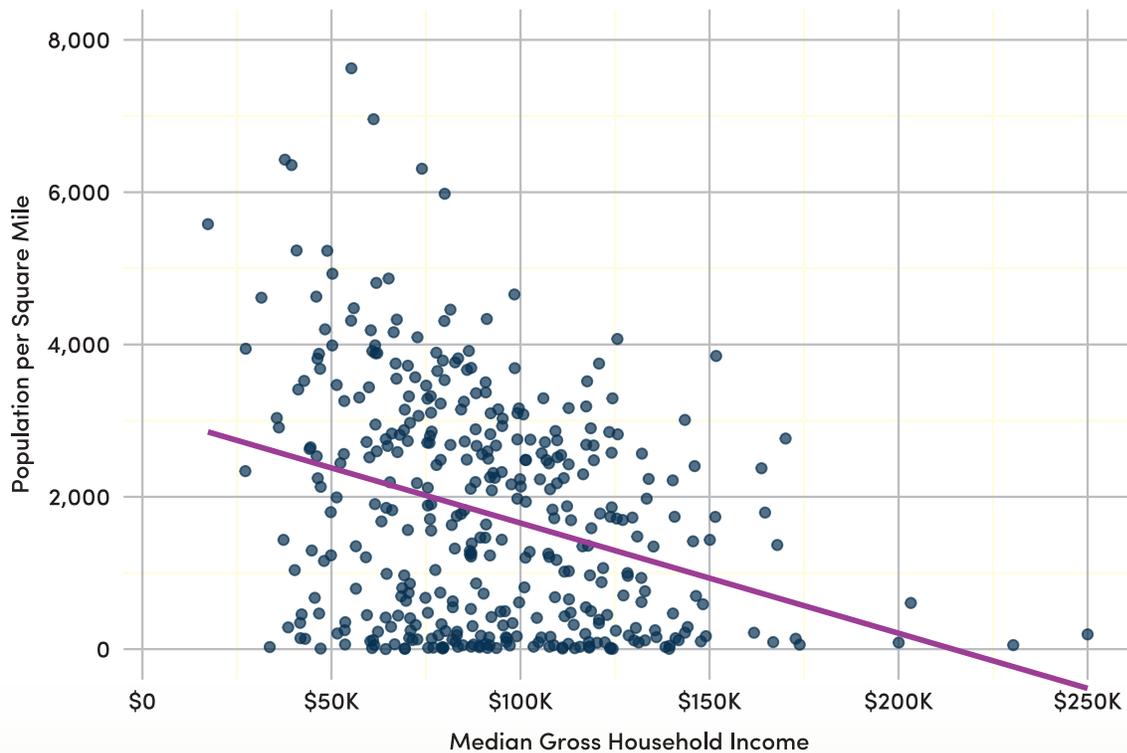
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Planning Database

Note: Data is presented at the Census Block Group level, an intermediate geographical unit used by the Census Bureau comprised of Census Blocks and typically containing 600 to 3,000 people.

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 16. POPULATION DENSITY VS. INCOME, BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP**

- There is a negative relationship between annual gross income and overall population density, so that as income increases the overall population density declines.
- Neighborhoods in Sonoma County with higher levels of population density have lower shares of earners above \$120,000 per year.
- As cities and towns look to add density in their prospective housing policies, neighborhoods with higher concentrations of high-earning residents may be considered for additional density.



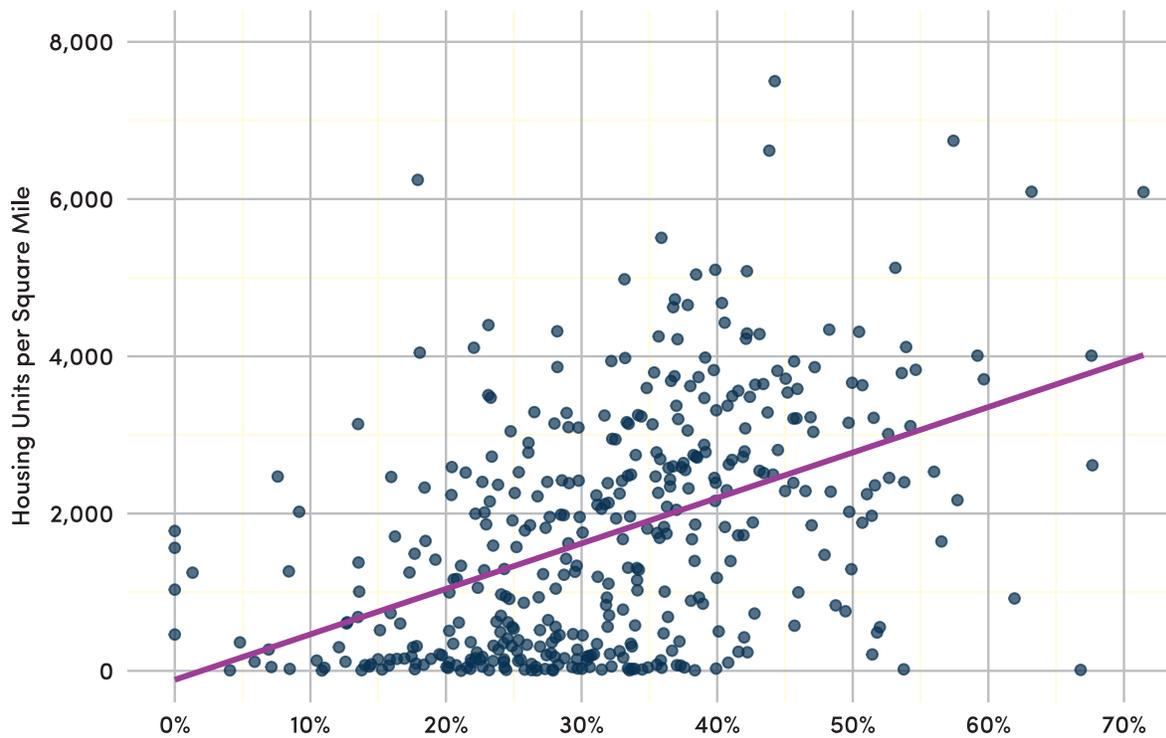
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Planning Database

Note: Data is presented at the Census Block Group level, an intermediate geographical unit used by the Census Bureau comprised of Census Blocks and typically containing 600 to 3,000 people.

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 17. HOUSING DENSITY VS. PERCENT OF YOUNG AND MIDDLE-AGED, BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP**

- As the share of the young and middle-aged (18–44) residents increases, we see a corresponding increase in those residents living in higher density housing situations.
- The greater share of those residents who are young and middle-aged (18–44) in higher density areas could be the result of lower levels of affordability in areas zoned for single-family housing.



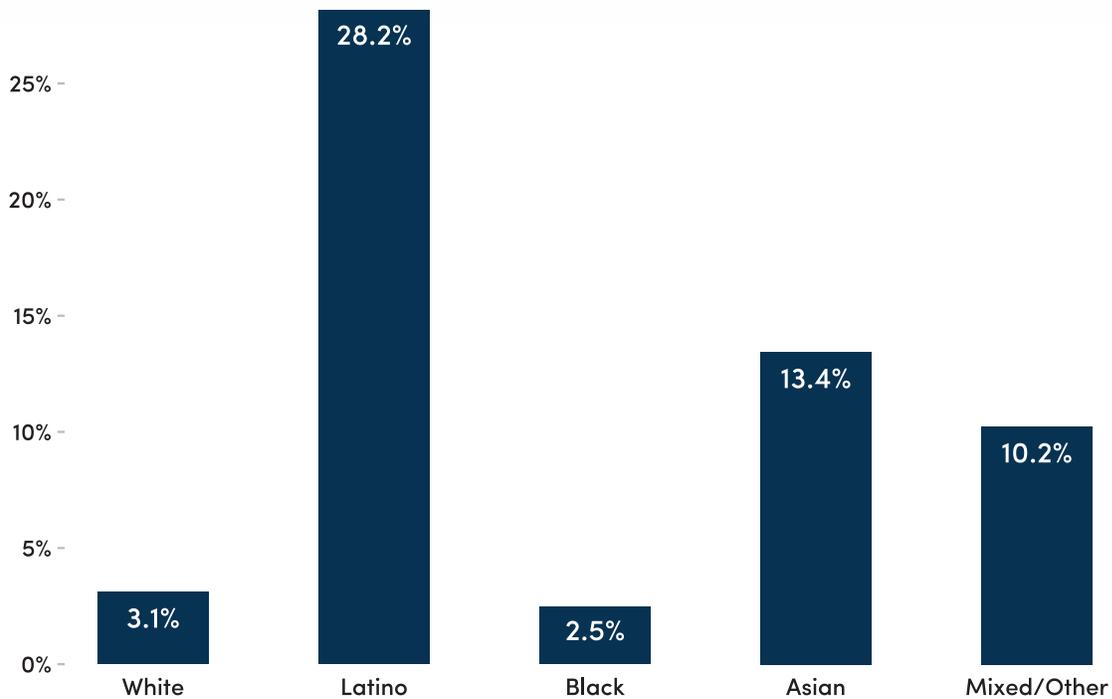
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Planning Database

Note: Data is presented at the Census Block Group level, an intermediate geographical unit used by the Census Bureau comprised of Census Blocks and typically containing 600 to 3,000 people.

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 18. OVERCROWDING BY RACE/ETHNICITY, SONOMA COUNTY 2021**

- Latino households continue to experience the highest rate of overcrowding, with over one in four residents living in crowded housing conditions.
- Black residents experience slightly lower rates of overcrowding than white households.
- Asian and mixed/other residents experience three to four times the rates of overcrowding relative to white and Black residents.



Source: IPUMS USA



Affordable housing is a critical component of overall community health. At Kaiser Permanente, we recognize that housing stability directly affects physical and mental health outcomes for our patients. By investing in innovative housing solutions, we are not only addressing a pressing social issue but also fulfilling our mission to improve the health and well-being of the communities we serve. These investments highlight our commitment to a holistic approach to healthcare that extends beyond the walls of our hospitals and clinics.”

—Alena Wall, Public Affairs Director, Kaiser Permanente

# Project Endorsement

## 595 Dutton Avenue



**DEVELOPER**  
**Hedgepeth Architects**

**TOTAL UNITS**  
**44**

**JURISDICTION**  
**Santa Rosa**

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- **5 units of deed-restricted affordable for Very Low Income households earning up to 50 percent of the Area Median Income**
  - **Reduced parking-to-unit ratio of 1 stall per unit (45 total)**

595 Dutton Apartments is located a few blocks northwest of Railroad Square in Santa Rosa. This project will redevelop an underutilized parking lot into a 4-story single building structure.

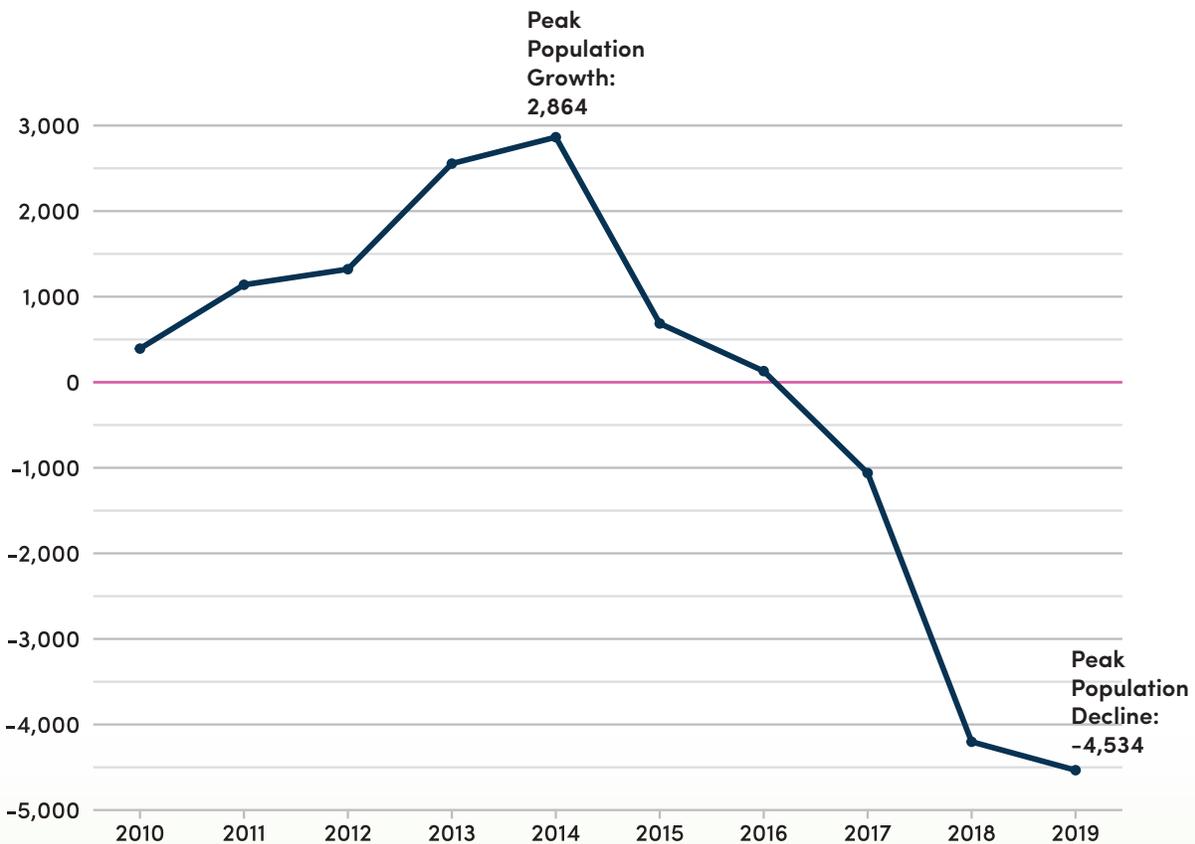
It proudly includes “Parisian” style balconies, a shared rooftop terrace, an onsite fitness room, robust bike storage options, onsite community room, and a significant reduction of off-street parking stalls.

This project is an example of a sustainable infill development, demonstrating that pockets of higher density housing can be an ecologically sound use of underutilized parcels within a historically lower density neighborhood and commercial zone.

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 19. DOMESTIC MIGRATION IN/OUT OF SONOMA COUNTY, 2010-2019**

- Sonoma County experienced positive migration growth until 2016. Since reaching a peak of in-migration in 2016, the county experienced a net out-migration of 4,534 residents in 2019.
- Net domestic migration into and out of Sonoma County fell below zero in 2016 and has steadily decreased until reaching -4,500 residents in 2019.
- Data suggests that an estimated 3,400 people left Sonoma County by 2019 following the various wildfires in 2017.
- The increasing lack of affordable housing mirrors the trend of outward migration that began in 2014 and has continued to drive residents to other areas of the state or country.

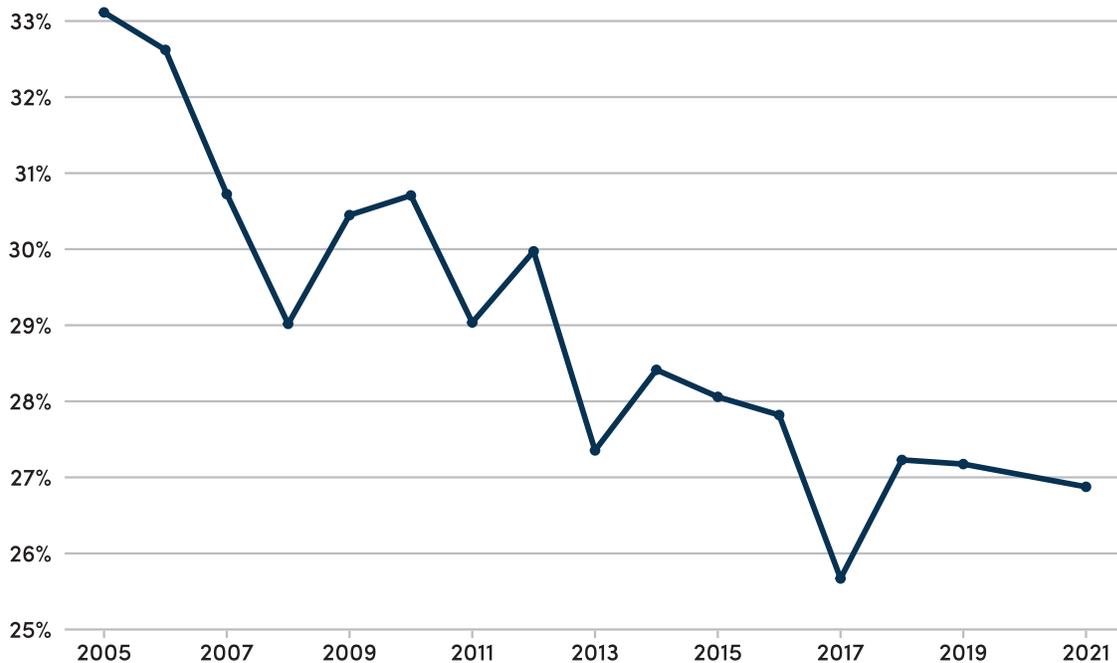


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 20. PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN SONOMA COUNTY, 2005-2021**

- Sonoma County as a whole has experienced a steep and steady decline in the share of homes with children 18 years or younger, with an estimated 6.5 percentage point reduction during the time period of 2005-2021.
- As of 2021, only an estimated 27 percent of all households in Sonoma County report having children 18 years or younger in their household.
- The alarming rate of decline in homes reporting children under 18 supports the data indicating our population is skewing older, year over year.
- Without intervention and decisive action, by 2037 the share of households with children could drop to 20 percent or lower.

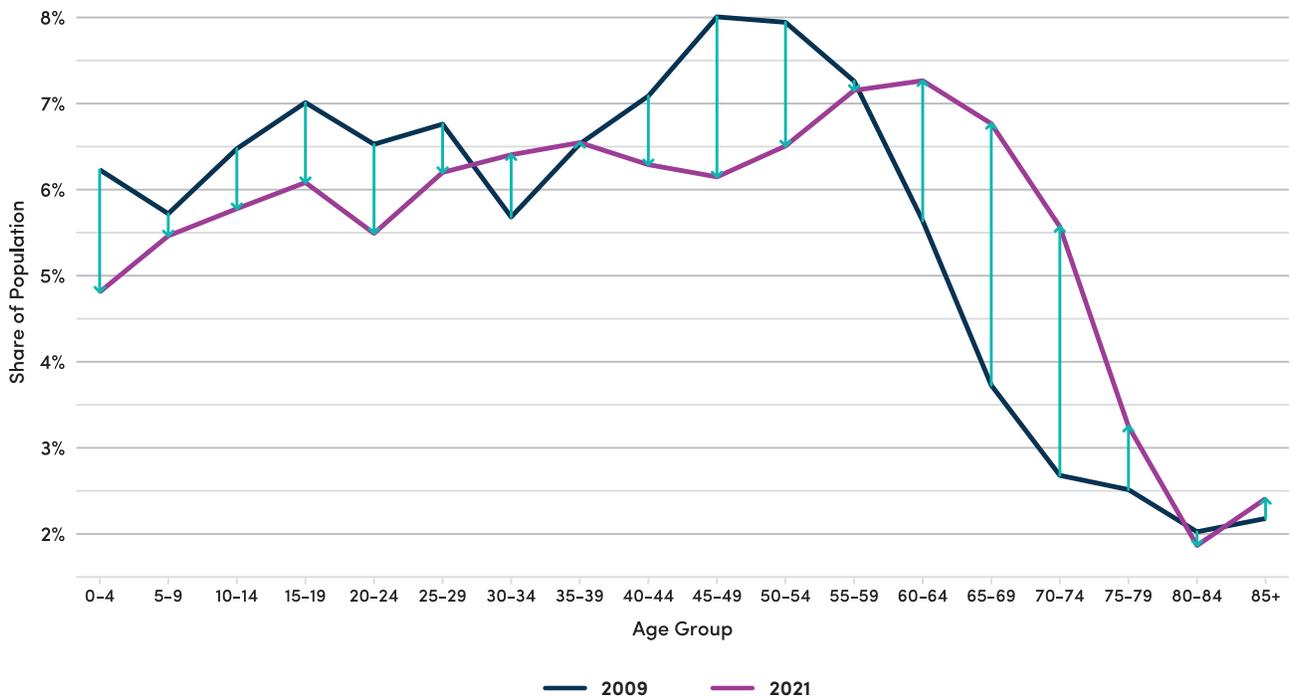


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 21. AGE DISTRIBUTION IN SONOMA COUNTY, 2009 VERSUS 2021**

- The county’s youngest adult residents, as a share of total population, has declined since 2009.
- Simultaneously its share of older residents has grown, contributing to reported accounts of the aging of the county’s population. All age groups from 0-59 years old saw their share of the population decline.
- In 2009 the age group making up the largest share of the population was 45-49 year olds at 8 percent; in 2021 the largest age group by share of population was 60-64 year olds at just over 7 percent.

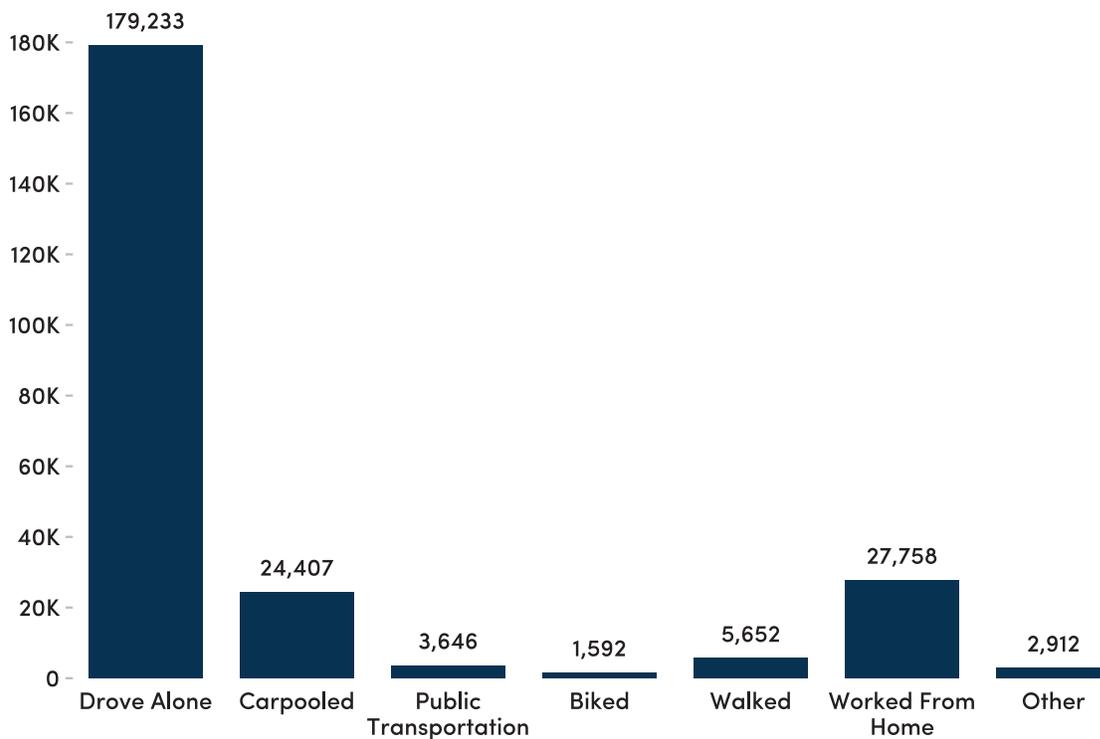


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

# Residents and their Homes

**FIGURE 22. COMMUTERS BY TRANSPORTATION METHOD, 2021**

- Driving alone is the predominant mode of commuting to work for the vast majority of Sonoma County residents.
- Of the roughly 200,000 commuters (excluding those who work from home), 175,000 drive alone, or nearly 88 percent of commuters.
- In the last year, under 1,000 residents took public transit to work on a daily basis. As jurisdictions seek to reduce vehicle miles traveled, public transit targeting job centers must be a top priority.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

## KEY FINDINGS:

# Homebuilding

Adding to the supply of homes to keep pace with demand is the goal for all jurisdictions. But accounting for unmet existing needs requires greater supply than jurisdictions have produced in recent years. Nearly all jurisdictions met (or are on pace to meet) their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) totals during the last 8-year cycle. The RHNA process is used by state and regional governments to determine how many new homes, and the affordability of those homes, each local government must plan to build. But RHNA needs are only a legal minimum—not a definition of full need based on job totals, population change, and existing unmet need. Evidence of that existing shortage in Sonoma County includes overcrowded households, cost-burdened households (those paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing), and population decline among younger residents. The goal is to produce enough housing in excess of need to reach a target vacancy rate for a healthy housing market, typically assigned at 5 percent. The county's vacancy rate currently sits at 4.1 percent.

Jurisdictional achievements during the prior Housing Element cycle have been positive, but totals alone can be misleading. Most totals were met through an excess of permitting for above moderate housing. Only 22 percent of the units permitted by all jurisdictions were for low- and very low-income units. What's needed is a balanced approach that produces moderate- and below-moderate housing totals alongside, and, where possible, in conjunction with, market-rate housing for higher earning residents. A healthy measure of jobs-to-housing fit provides roughly two affordable homes for every low-income worker (assuming two workers to a household). Currently no jurisdiction has below 2.5 low-income jobs for every one affordable housing unit.

Local policies ranging from single-family zoning, density maximums, and high impact fees for multifamily housing make this balance harder to achieve. Housing is more likely to be affordable to residents of diverse needs if it can incorporate modest density, be located near existing amenities or within access of transit, and save on space. Existing policies reduce the share of these options. In order to keep rents down, cities must enact policies favorable to the cost-effective development of housing for moderate and low-income workers. The new totals set by the state are the minimum required to prevent the current housing deficit from growing.

# Project Endorsement

## Huntley Square



**DEVELOPER**  
Healthy Buildings

**TOTAL UNITS**  
10

**JURISDICTION**  
Sebastopol

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- Zero-net energy townhomes
  - Homes are less than 600 square feet and will be affordable-by-design

Huntley Square offers unique affordable-by-design “Missing Middle” townhomes for different family sizes. Each unit will feature a small backyard and will have access to a shared central courtyard.

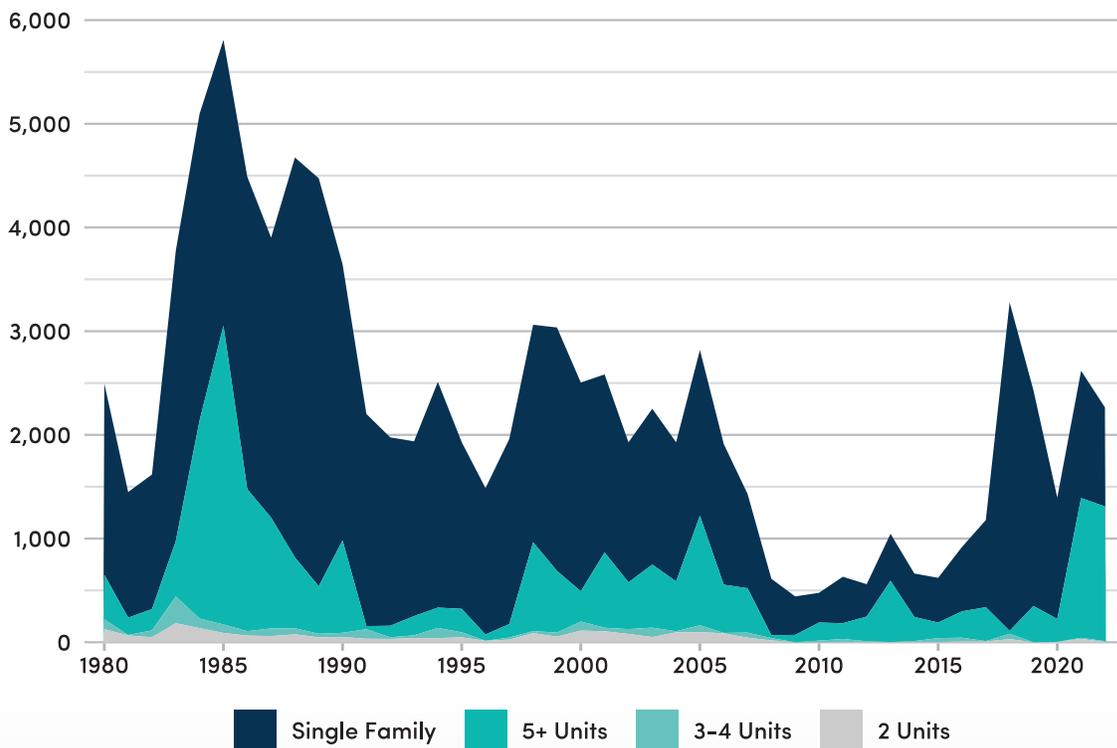
The net-zero energy aspect of Huntley Square ensures minimal to no impact to the surrounding environment. Additionally as an infill project, with close proximity to Sebastopol’s downtown core, it adds to the city’s climate-smart, walkable, bikeable community.

Huntley Square spotlights the feasibility of building smaller for-sale housing in a compact and sustainable manner that is more attainable to workforce members of Sebastopol.

# Homebuilding

**FIGURE 23. NEWLY PERMITTED HOUSING UNITS IN SONOMA COUNTY, 1980-2022**

- The vast majority of permitting in Sonoma County has been for single-family homes since at least the 1980s.
- After peaking around 1985 with an annual total of over 9,000 housing permits, overall yearly permitting totals declined in the early 1990s and never recovered to those prior highs. The decade spanning 2010 and 2020 saw the lowest production totals in nearly four decades.
- Multifamily permitting has occurred mostly for units with 5+ structures, leading to a near absence of plex-style housing (duplex, triplex, and fourplexes) throughout the county.
- We see an upward trend on multifamily starting in 2020, surpassing its last peak in 2005 and closing the gap to single-family permits.

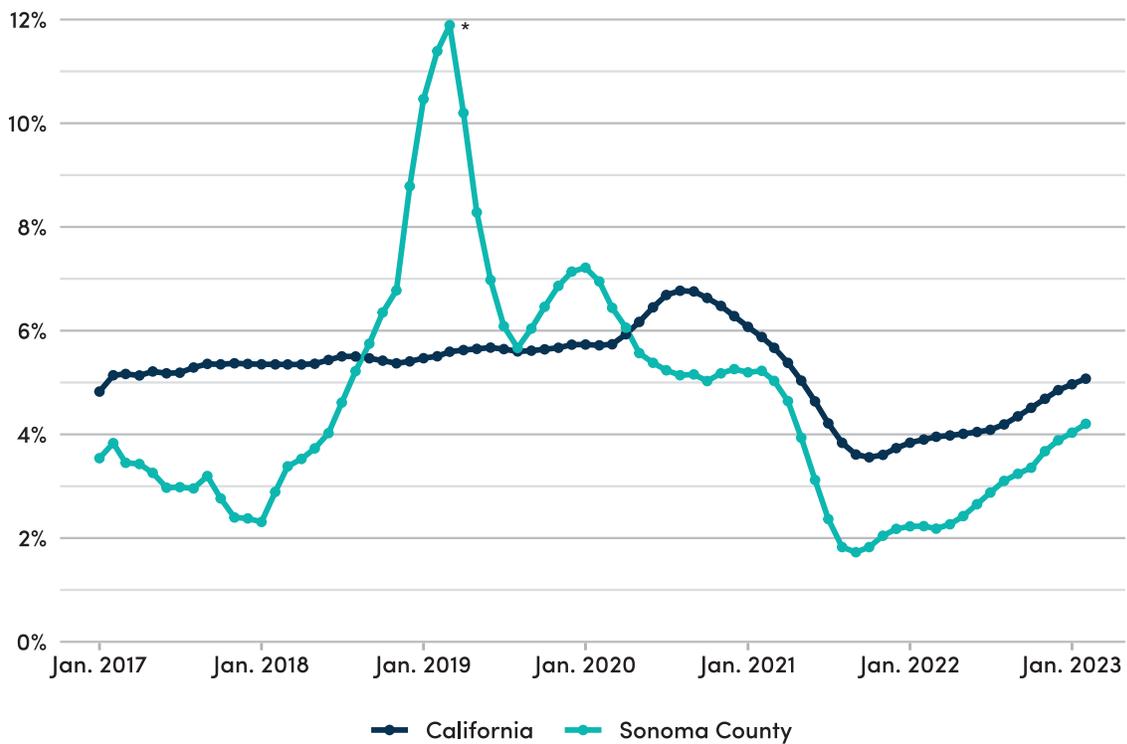


Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, Building Permits Database

# Homebuilding

**FIGURE 24. VACANCY RATES FOR SONOMA COUNTY AND CALIFORNIA, 2017-2023**

- Sonoma County's vacancy rates dipped below that of the statewide average in 2020 and have fallen three percentage points to 4.1 percent by January of 2023.
- A healthy rental housing market will typically feature a 5 percent rental vacancy rate, which is recommended to ensure appropriate movement and access for prospective tenants and available units of housing.
- The county's vacancy rate reached its lowest level, below 2 percent, in mid- to late 2021.



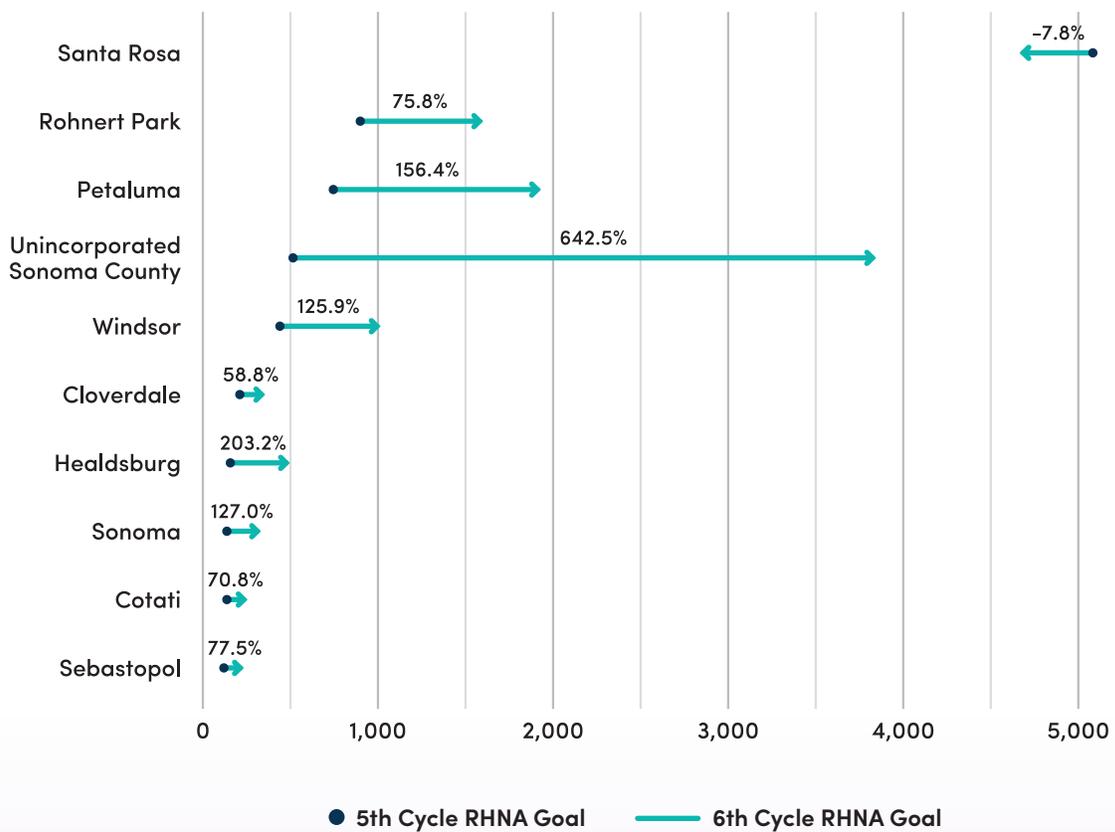
\*We theorize that this spike in vacancy is caused by a period of increased flux in housing related to fire recovery during which fire survivors were moving to permanent homes either in or out of the county, or choosing to leave the county altogether, creating vacancies that in turn generated higher than average movement in our housing system.

Source: Apartment List

# Homebuilding

**FIGURE 25. TOTAL UNITS REQUIRED TO MEET FIFTH VERSUS SIXTH CYCLE RHNA GOALS, BY JURISDICTION**

- The RHNA targets for all jurisdictions have risen for the 6th cycle Housing Element as the region seeks to close the deficit in housing units across all income levels.
- Significant increases are expected of Healdsburg, Windsor, Petaluma, and the City of Sonoma in particular.
- Sonoma County received the single largest increase in targeted housing totals, adding over 3,000 units from last cycle's goal.

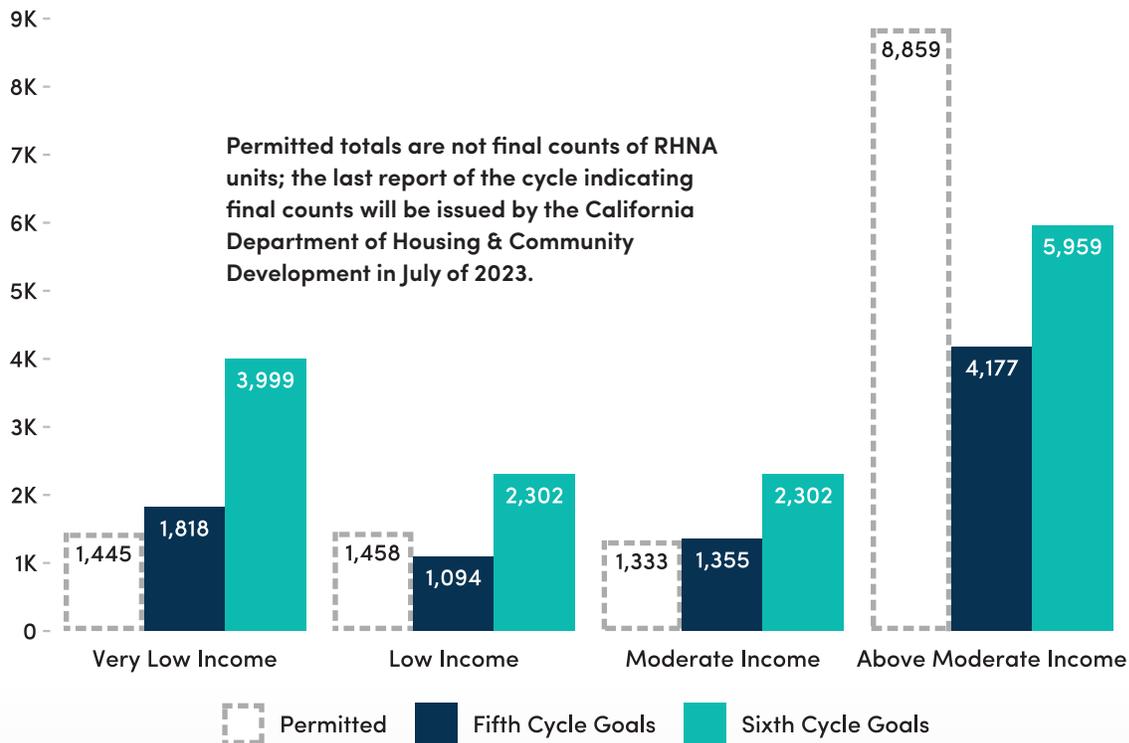


Source: California Department of Housing and Community Development, Annual Progress Reports

# Homebuilding

**FIGURE 26. FIFTH CYCLE PROGRESS BY INCOME LEVEL VERSUS SIXTH CYCLE GOALS, ALL SONOMA COUNTY (AS OF 2022)**

- Nearly all jurisdictions surpassed their above moderate housing RHNA goals by larger rates than their low and very low targets, yet 6 of 8 jurisdictions met their very low-income targets.
- Only 22 percent of the units permitted by all jurisdictions were for low- and very low-income units. Two-thirds of the houses permitted were for above-moderate units.
- Healdsburg, Petaluma, and Rohnert Park doubled their expected RHNA totals as of 2022.
- Sonoma County permitted the largest number of units relative to its RHNA expectations, permitting five times as many units as it was required by the state.

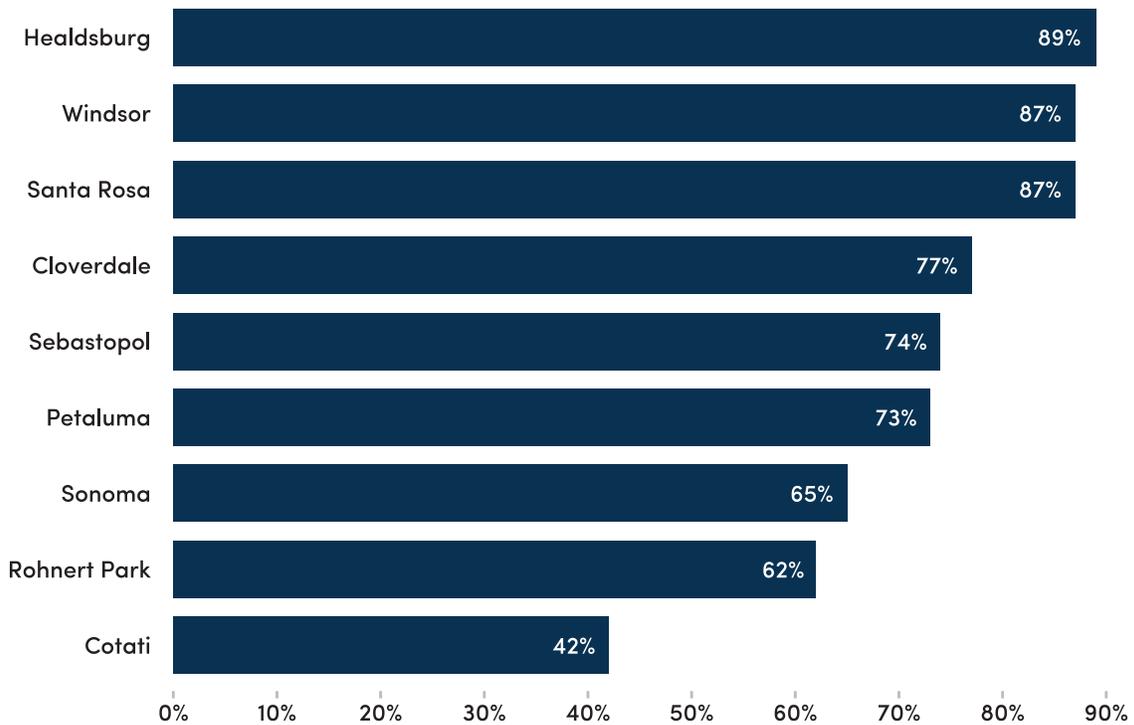


Source: California Department of Housing and Community Development, Annual Progress Reports

# Homebuilding

**FIGURE 27. SHARE OF SINGLE-FAMILY ZONING BY JURISDICTION**

- The vast majority of land in Sonoma County's cities remain zoned exclusively for single-family homes with little to no change since last year.
- Six of ten jurisdictions have set aside only one-quarter of their land for multifamily homes, limiting the total land and parcels on which higher density housing can be built.

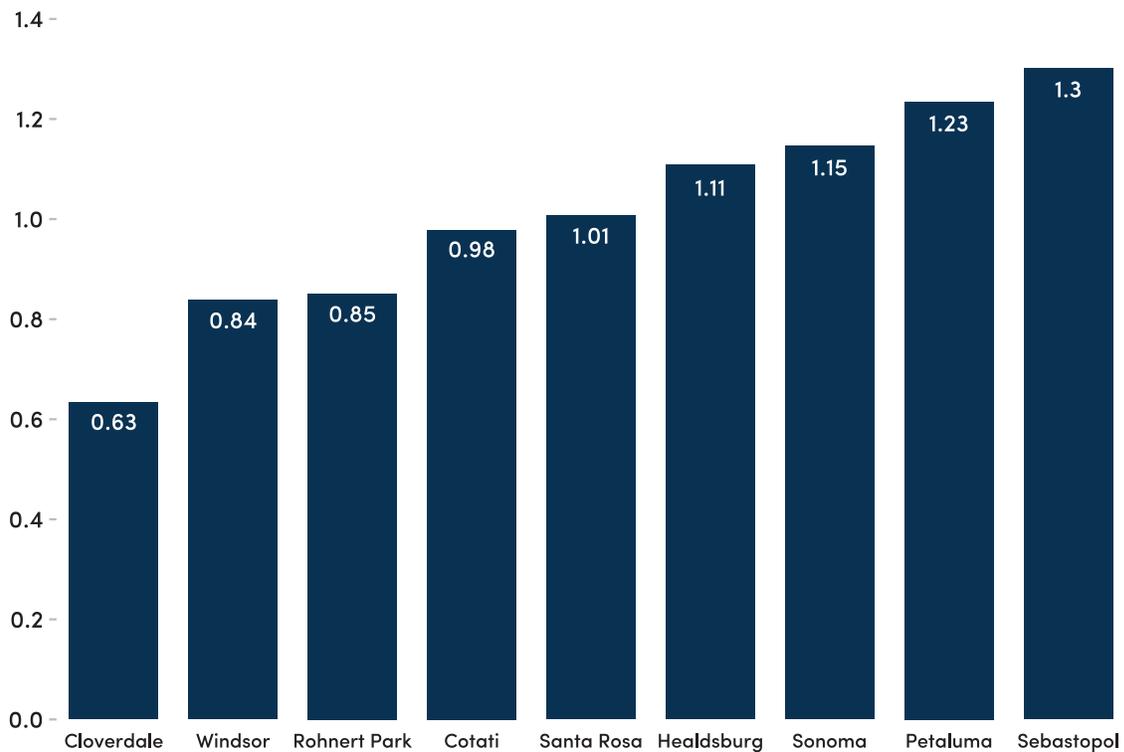


Source: *Othering and Belonging Institute*

# Homebuilding

**FIGURE 28. JOBS-TO-HOUSING RATIO BY JURISDICTION**

- Sebastopol and Petaluma top the list of jobs-to-housing ratios, with nearly 1.25 jobs for every housing unit. This is below the rates of regional job centers like San Francisco and San Jose that have more than three jobs for every permitted home.
- Cotati and Windsor saw slight decreases in jobs-to-housing ratios, dropping from 1.10 to 0.97 jobs per housing unit and 0.90 to 0.83, respectively.
- Cities like Cloverdale possess lower ratios in large part due to the lower number of jobs located within their jurisdiction.

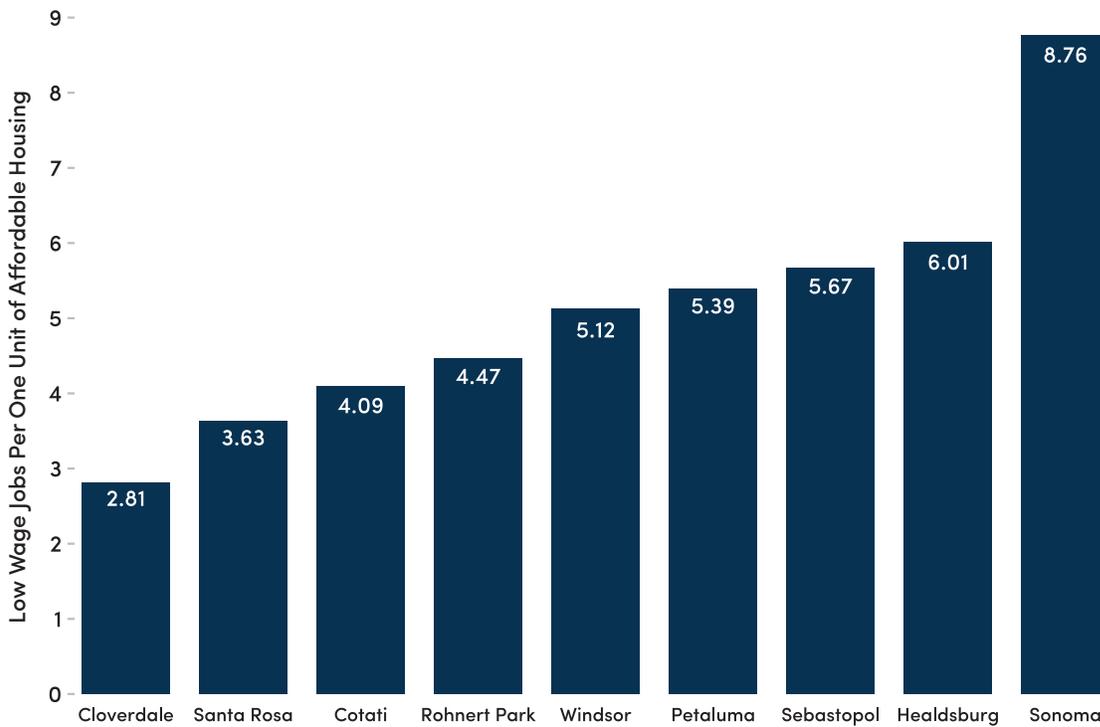


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics and American Community Survey

# Homebuilding

**FIGURE 29. JOBS-TO-HOUSING FIT BY JURISDICTION**

- Half of all jurisdictions have more than five low-income residents competing for every affordable unit.
- No jurisdiction has fewer than 2.5 low income workers competing for every one affordable unit—above the 2.0 ratio needed to achieve a healthy supply.
- The City of Sonoma has the highest number of low-income workers competing for every one home considered to be affordable to them, at nearly 8 workers for every unit.

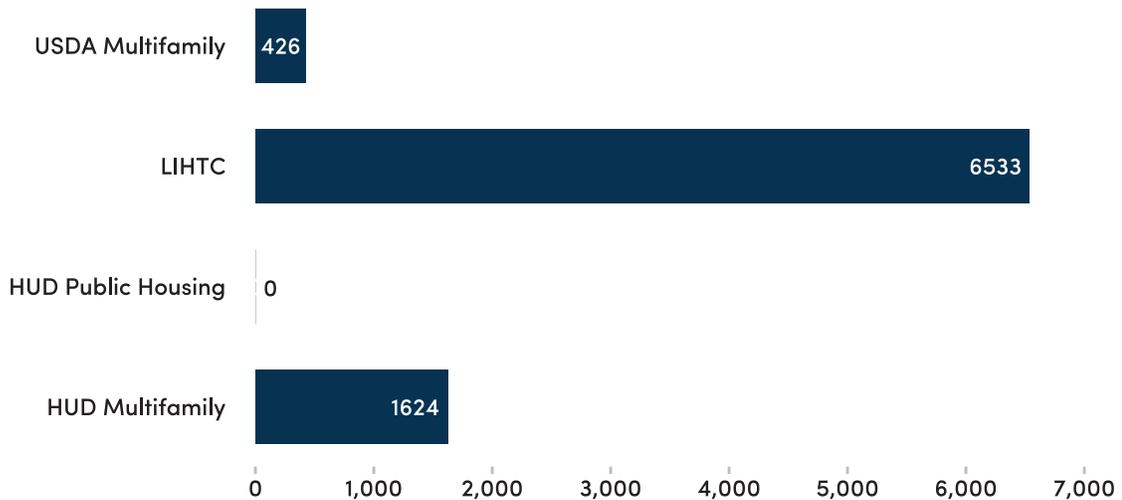


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics and American Community Survey

# Homebuilding

## FIGURE 30. FEDERALLY SUBSIDIZED HOUSING UNITS

- As of 2021, the housing stock of federally subsidized rental housing in Sonoma County featured 8,583 homes, or about 11 percent of Sonoma County's overall rental housing inventory.
- Between 2018 and 2021 the county added only 40 additional subsidized units, an increase of 0.4 percent county-wide.



Source: PolicyMap



“The housing crisis in Sonoma County has a direct impact on our ability to attract and retain quality educators and support staff for our schools. By addressing the issue of affordable housing, we can create a more sustainable environment for our educators, enabling them to live and work within the community they serve. A fully staffed and stable school system is essential for the educational success of our students. As we work together to find housing solutions, we’re not only supporting our educators but also investing in the future of Sonoma County by fostering a well-educated, thriving community.”

—Dr. Amie Carter, Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools

# Jurisdictional Progress Reports

## GLOSSARY

**Density Bonus:** A percentage increase in the number of homes authorized for a particular parcel of land beyond the maximum allowed, used to incentivize the developer to include affordable homes.

**Impact Fees:** A fee that is imposed by a local government on a new or proposed development project to pay for all or a portion of the costs of providing public services to the new development.

**Inclusionary Zoning:** A requirement that developers of new housing include a certain percentage of below market-rate homes.

**Ministerial Approval:** A streamlined permit process for development approval involving little or no personal judgment by the public official.

**Specific Plans:** Plans prepared by city government to attract, stimulate and guide development in a particular neighborhood.

**Transit-oriented Development (TOD):** Development of housing and mixed-use development close to public transit such as SMART, frequent bus lines, etc.

**Upzone:** Changes to a zoning code made to increase the amount of development allowed in the future.

# Jurisdictional Progress Reports

In the last decade, California has adopted policies to correct both the undersupply and distribution of new housing where it has typically remained insufficient. Local jurisdictions in California now possess a greater variety of resources, direction, and incentives from the state to build housing than at any point in the last 30 years. The state relies, in turn, on local implementation, and local policy that expands on and amplifies state policy, to see the fruit of these efforts. In this section, we evaluate the uptake of policies at the local level as well as the means by which their intended impact may inhibit the goal of abundant housing. With the belief that cities have at their disposal the means to educate residents and win public support for housing, we intend to hold leaders accountable to a high level of transparency and impact on housing policy.

## Why Look Locally?

Local jurisdictions have historically been the source of housing policy in America. The power to zone, set fees, exercise review, and set hard limits on total units all existed within the purview of local jurisdictions. This localization of housing policy operationalized land use and building law in a way that supported residential racial restrictions, controlled access to amenities like schools, and concentrated lower-income residents in single neighborhoods. Fast forward to the present day, and these inherited policies—all of which were later deemed illegal and unconstitutional—continue to challenge current efforts to undo exclusive zoning and respond to changing economic, climate, and vocational contexts. New state codes designed to accelerate the production of housing, center equity, and minimize bureaucracy have enabled jurisdictions to design their communities in a manner that is emblematic of their values.



“Attracting businesses to Sonoma County is essential for maintaining a thriving local economy. However, the current housing crisis presents a significant challenge when trying to entice large employers to establish themselves in our community. Providing a diverse range of affordable housing options is crucial for ensuring that our workforce can meet the demands of these employers. By addressing the housing crisis, we create an environment where businesses can grow, and our community can prosper. The Sonoma County Economic Development Board is committed to working together to develop sustainable housing solutions that attract businesses and create opportunities for everyone in Sonoma County.”

—Ethan Brown, Interim Executive Director, Sonoma County  
Economic Development Board

## How Can We Compare Different Cities?

As noted above, jurisdictions have wide latitude over a range of policies, from mitigation fees, zoning, permitting and project review processes, and less control over land and labor costs. This localized approach is what results, for example, in a very different mix of housing types by income, typology, and density across our county. It can also lead to what the Sonoma County Grand Jury identified as “the inconsistency from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in processes and procedures” for housing development.

Some argue that because housing policy requires complicated cost-benefit assessments tailored to each municipality’s specific goals and needs, comparing mid-size urban cities to small towns or job centers in California is ineffective. But the basic economics of housing production apply to all cities regardless of context. No jurisdiction is exempt from the fact that higher density projects yield higher-per-acre revenues or that affordable housing is costlier to build. Common markets, challenges, and trends invite shared standards.

## How to Use these Profiles

Data on year over year housing production tells a needed story about the region’s overall housing response and outstanding need. But housing totals alone tell us very little if we don’t understand the underlying factors and policies driving lower, or higher, rates of housing production. In the following progress reports we provide a comparison of policies utilized by each jurisdiction, measured against policy standards that have demonstrated some level of success with spurring higher rates of housing production. These standards are drawn from the California Department of Housing and Community Development’s newest housing program—its Prohousing Designation, which awards cities who accelerate the approval and construction of housing by giving them prioritization for competitive state housing and infrastructure grants. We note exemplary policies already in use by each jurisdiction, recommend specific steps to improve those policies as awarded by the Prohousing Designation, and finally offer a preliminary ranking of 1 to 7 floors based on policies and impact, as shown to the right.

The Prohousing Designation criteria identifies key policy steps across four areas: (1) Upzoning that makes it easier for cities to add higher and gentle density to erase deficits in Missing Middle housing that are more affordable to moderate and lower income residents; (2) Ministerial approval practices such as objective design standards that help housing to be built without the years of delay and oversight; (3) Efforts to minimize the cost of building that makes smaller, more affordable units easier to build and to pass savings along to residents (sometimes called affordable by design); and (4) Parking requirements that take up space along high-transit corridors, encourage greater vehicle miles traveled, and add cost to housing development.



Majority of policies that severely constrain housing across typologies and affordability ranges and maintain historic deficits and inequities in housing.



Updated policies that prevent further decline in housing stock but add little to overall housing supply or to alleviate existing housing inequity.



Narrow reforms aiding in production that remain constrained by the majority of a jurisdiction’s zoning, permitting, or approval policies.



Best practices in one policy area with **emerging evidence of impact** on housing supply but insufficient relative to the size of the need.



Best practices in more than one policy area with **measurable impact** on housing supply but insufficient relative to the size of the need.



Majority of policies that speed the production of all housing types with measurable impact sufficient to the size of need.



Comprehensive housing reforms that meet existing needs and address our equity and sustainability goals.

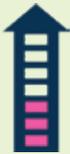
*Note: In the first year of our Jurisdictional Progress Reports our goal is to offer preliminary scoring and specify the criteria against which we will measure progress of our jurisdictions going forward.*

# Cloverdale

## A community with a rich agricultural heritage and high development capacity

Cloverdale, Sonoma County’s northernmost town, links the region’s deeply agricultural origins and its somewhat more visitor-centric present, offering a variety of amenities in a small-town setting. A home for farm workers, regional service workers, and (its main employment sector) health and educational providers, many residents live and work in Cloverdale while others simply reside there while working elsewhere in the county or beyond. As a result, Cloverdale has one of the lowest jobs-to-housing ratio in the region, meaning it has adequate housing relative to residents who work there, even among lower income workers. Yet this tells only part of the story given the fewer number of jobs located within the confines of the jurisdiction. For those who reside

in Cloverdale, housing costs remain high. The city has seen a relatively large rise in the rate of housing cost burden among its residents: 62 percent of renters are housing-burdened today, up from 51 percent in 2010. And among residents earning 30-50 percent of the Area Median Income, 80 percent are moderately or severely cost-burdened. A balance of vacant urban lots and continuing greenfield development presents opportunities to accommodate those who reside in Cloverdale either for work or lifestyle. As Cloverdale continues moving forward with their long term planning efforts, it should do so with the assumption that the SMART train will arrive by 2030 or before the end of this current Housing Element planning cycle.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>In order to attract younger residents—who are more likely to rent—and enable them to stay, the city has taken some key steps.</p> <p>The city allows for flexible density for infill development on a case by case basis, resulting in a relatively diverse housing stock for renters. Just over 60% of all rental units are supplied by non-single family homes; and Cloverdale has the largest percentage of rental options supplied by rental complexes—duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes—at 29%.</p> <p>Cloverdale’s pro-ADU policies stand out in the region, allowing 2 ADU’s per parcel—though its modest addition of an average of 4 ADUs per year since 2018 shows room for growth through incentives and permitting procedures.</p>	<p>Just below 80% of Cloverdale’s residential land is zoned for single family housing, and as a result 77% of its housing stock is single family units. The city has added very few denser, multifamily units since 2010.</p> <p>Relaxing development standards such as setbacks, height restrictions, and the above-mentioned parking requirements would aid in the development of “plex-style” or Missing Middle housing.</p> <p>Density bonuses on a case-by-case basis are unpredictable for developers.</p>	

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>In order to attract younger residents—who are more likely to rent—and enable them to stay, the city has taken some key steps.</p> <p>The city allows for flexible density for infill development on a case by case basis, resulting in a relatively diverse housing stock for renters. Just over 60% of all rental units are supplied by non-single family homes; and Cloverdale has the largest percentage of rental options supplied by rental complexes—duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes—at 29%.</p> <p>Cloverdale’s pro-ADU policies stand out in the region, allowing 2 ADU’s per parcel—though its modest addition of an average of 4 ADUs per year since 2018 shows room for growth through incentives and permitting procedures.</p>	<p>To achieve the goal of 80% of housing projects using Objective Design Standards, we recommend eliminating design review board and discretionary review for developments with three or more new units.</p> <p>Multifamily housing should not require a conditional use permit or city council approval unless the builder is asking for unique and extraordinary concessions.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>The city has planned to defer the payment of development impact fees for residential projects and will consider reducing development fees for lower-income housing on a sliding scale.</p> <p>Cloverdale also plans to review its development impact fee program in order to comply with AB 602.</p>	<p>AB 602, when triggered, automatically requires that impact fees be updated from a per unit assessment, to a proportional or square footage assessment. This ensures that smaller individual homes pay smaller fees.</p> <p>In order to increase the likelihood of affordable housing, we recommend Cloverdale remove impact fees for deed-restricted housing.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>Code changes to allow flexibility in parking standards in the downtown core were adopted in 2021.</p> <p>Development constraints mitigated through parking flexibility were expanded to comply with AB 2345 requirements.</p>	<p>The city should consider expanding its shared parking opportunities to leverage existing lots.</p>	

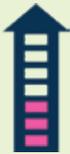
# Cotati

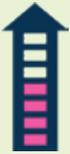
## A small town with a big regional role

A town proximate to a regional university and host to a SMART train hub, Cotati has maintained and strongly values its small-town feel. Its goal is a balanced approach to accommodate the needs of its residents and students, while maintaining housing for all. Cotati has demonstrated amenability to gentle density with its lower rate of single family zoning and density provisions such as the Cottage Housing Ordinance passed in 2021. But long term economic and sustainability goals might come into conflict with their more modest rate of growth. Cotati is fortunate, however, to have several greenfield parcels ideal for dense multifamily and mixed-use development available along key arterial corridors in the city.

Their downtown area is also ripe with opportunities. It has significant potential for upzoning and a robust, mixed-use core that attracts people from all around Sonoma County.

Cotati met its (modest) RHNA numbers in the 5th Cycle Housing Element across nearly all income categories, but RHNA should be the floor, not the ceiling. With some of the least restrictive single family zoning rates in the region, the city possesses flexibility to meet its needs without significant rezoning. Currently, over half of its rental units (54 percent) are supplied by plexes, Missing Middle housing, and slightly larger upper Missing Middle housing structures—all while retaining a small-town feel.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>Cotati makes possible provisions for Missing Middle housing and other affordable by design options through strategies such as the Cottage Housing Ordinance, a flexible zoning provision that allows a doubling of density in underlying zoning. The East Cotati Cottage Housing project is a six-unit moderate-income cottage housing development that is among the first to utilize the provision.</p> <p>These and other provisions, such as increasing the allowable share of housing in mixed-use developments from 25% to 75%, have helped Cotati reach a lower than regional average rate of housing cost burden of around 49%.</p>	<p>Cotati could sustain a new policy allowing for 25 units per acre, in line with other smaller, mid-density cities.</p> <p>It should also exempt affordable housing units from the Growth Management Ordinance (GMO) allocation altogether by adopting SB 10, which allows developments of ten or fewer units to be exempt from the GMO.</p> <p>Revising zoning to allow triplexes and fourplexes in all neighborhoods, and allowing 2-9 unit Missing Middle Housing and 9-19 unit and Upper Missing Middle Housing where practicable can loosen this constraint while improving its moderate rental diversity.</p>	

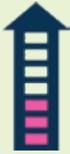
Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>Cotati has taken the bold step of reducing discretionary oversight of developments by combining preliminary and final review processes into a more streamlined and direct negotiation. This is in response to the burden of multi-step review processes that add time and costs to development.</p> <p>It has also removed conditional use permits within the NU Zone to expedite more housing approved on a staff level.</p> <p>The Cottage Housing Ordinance is both a density provision and a design reform. In exchange for construction of smaller units that are affordable by design, the city in turn provides more flexible requirements for housing development on smaller lots at a greater unit capacity.</p>	<p>The city could consider form-based coding (or FBCs), which ensures more housing is built while also respecting the communities interests. FBCs regulate the form of the buildings in a prescriptive manner and at a sufficient level of detail so that the outcome is predictable and developers can more easily understand what the code is allowing to ensure the prescribed outcome is appropriate for the neighborhood.</p> <p>Discretionary land use approvals, or Use Permits, should be removed to help support the development of integrated and diverse communities.</p> <p>Cotati should consider fast tracking the permitting process, with priority given to projects proposing affordable housing levels in excess of the minimum 15% inclusionary BMR housing units.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>The city has worked to waive impact fees for affordable units and to defer fees to reduce carrying costs on units under construction.</p> <p>It has committed to the use of Housing Fund dollars to subsidize the development impact fees of extremely low, very low, and low-income units, where the City fell short of its 5th Cycle RHNA targets.</p>	<p>The city plans to align with the spirit of AB 602 before July 2023 to require impact fees to be proportional to the size of a new home so that smaller individual homes pay smaller fees.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>Cotati has committed to amending the city's Zoning Code to limit the maximum parking requirements for all multifamily projects without the need for any developer request.</p>	<p>It should consider elimination of parking minimums within a half-mile of the Cotati SMART station.</p> <p>It can also allow more flexibility in parking requirements for mixed-use developments along mixed-use corridors.</p>	

# Healdsburg

## Leveraging their destination status for the benefit of their workforce and residents

Healdsburg’s status as a destination for domestic and international travelers has propelled the creation of a vibrant downtown rich with amenities and visitor-oriented services. Revenues generated from this sector support high level city services that benefit long-term residents. But its success has also spurred rising housing costs; limited greenfield spaces and a severe shortage of affordable housing have resulted in an undue level of cost burden on moderate, low, and very low income residents. Families with young children struggle to enter the rental and for-sale housing market, which is driving up the average age of residents and increasingly challenging the

ability for local businesses to secure a workforce that is capable of maintaining residence in the city without contributing to the congestion born from daily commuting. The city is taking steps towards responding to their housing shortage, having surpassed their 5th cycle share of moderate-income permitted units by nearly four times the required total. Healdsburg must continue to explore and exhaust all possible avenues that can aid in driving the production of moderate and lower income housing units or otherwise run the risk of becoming a predominantly older, visitor-oriented community not accessible to younger residents.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>The city has demonstrated the value of zoning reform for affordable development: reducing the percentage of land zoned for single family residences has added density and diversity of structures, contributing to a reduction of cost burdened residents by 19 percentage points since 2010.</p> <p>To increase its supply of multifamily housing, the city permits multifamily, small-family and commercial mixed uses in Downtown Commercial and Service Commercial districts. And it allows for the approval of a density bonus greater than 20 units per acre.</p> <p>To prioritize homes for existing residents, especially local employees, the city sets aside a portion of affordable housing through title or price restrictions through its Local Preference clauses.</p>	<p>The largest constraint on new development is the Growth Management Ordinance. Although affordable units are exempt, there is limited space for infill development. Without further rezoning, the city will have to get creative about where to add its Missing Middle housing, which currently only consists of a quarter of its rental units.</p> <p>Revising zoning to allow triplexes and fourplexes in all neighborhoods, and allowing 2-9 unit Missing Middle Housing and 9-19 unit and Upper Missing Middle Housing where practicable can loosen this constraint while improving its moderate rental diversity.</p> <p>The city has proposed increasing its allowable maximum densities and adjusting its height limits to allow higher density. In areas it deems fit, it could expand this flexibility through a Development Standard overlay, modifying the minimum lot size, setbacks, and parking ratios in line with design standards, as awarded by the Prohousing designation.</p>	

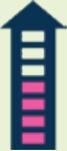
Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>The city has committed to reducing the project review requirements for small subdivisions of residentially-zoned land (10 or fewer units).</p> <p>It has also reduced the scope and discretion in the City's Design Review process by providing consistent and predictable policy direction, adding objective design standards, and reducing the scope of uses requiring a Conditional Use Permit.</p>	<p>We urge the city to fulfill its vision of streamlined permitting for 'multiplexes' and regulatory incentives within single-family zones.</p> <p>It could expand its restrictions on discretionary oversight by establishing 'by right' residential and mixed use in commercial zones or by right density maximums of up to 30 units or more per acre, as awarded by the Prohousing designation.</p> <p>The City could establish ministerial approval of infill housing for projects of a preset number of units that meet objective standards, as awarded by the Prohousing designation.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>Healdsburg's biggest strength may be in cutting the impact fees for developers—a tool they can maximize using large revenues generated through tourism related taxes.</p> <p>It has reduced the project review requirements for small subdivisions of residentially-zoned land (10 or fewer units) by comparison to larger, more complex projects.</p> <p>It will ensure compliance with AB 602 by requiring that impact fees be updated from a per unit assessment, to a proportional or square footage assessment.</p>	<p>To aid its vision of ensuring that aggregate impact fees and related application exactions do not deter new residential development, it is weighing whether to limit fee burdens totals in excess of 15 percent of the expected retail value of new development.</p> <p>It could target particular affordability levels through a waiver of impact fees for 100% affordable housing development, as awarded by the Prohousing designation.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>The city has proposed waiver of development standards (e.g., required number of parking spaces) when feasible and where certain criteria are met.</p>	<p>As the city develops along its downtown corridors, it could require parking maximums along transit corridors.</p>	

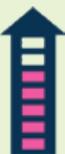
# Petaluma

## A community that centers 15-minute city ideals and climate-friendly development

Petaluma’s steady approach to housing development has helped it balance commercial and visitor-oriented growth while working towards their long held goal of becoming a 15-minute city. Form-based code surrounding its major transit hub, a riverfront focus on new development, and a wholesale vision of housing integrated with commercial use and access to the environment all point towards planning decisions that are intentional and centered on quality of life. The percent of residents who are housing cost burdened has dipped below 50% but it remains high for the

region, meaning Petaluma must find ways to promote affordable housing for its moderate and workforce residents. The goal of becoming a 15-minute city is within reach for parts of the downtown, but more work lies ahead as they work to complete their General Plan update and execute a vision that realizes this higher level of livability for all. Finally, to sustain its vision of carbon neutrality, the city should aggressively pursue alternative construction materials such as mass timber, or look to sustainable prefabricated housing units that can more efficiently be developed at scale.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>Facing a limited supply of land and seeking a balance of a variety of housing types, Petaluma has introduced minimum densities in the residential classifications in this Housing Element and will consider establishing minimum residential densities in mixed-use zones.</p> <p>Its most ambitious land use policy is the form-based SmartCode, adapted in 2013 to regulate mixed use development around the transit hub. In addition to raising residential densities up to 60 units per acre around transit, there is no longer a limit to the number of units per acre. Building heights of up to six stories are also possible in some areas.</p> <p>Gentle density is being gradually added to areas surrounding the downtown. But single family zoned areas, especially on the city’s west side, have even more potential.</p>	<p>To facilitate residential development in Downtown, the city could consider allowing up to six units on small lots of 6,000 square feet and explore policies that facilitate small lot consolidation.</p> <p>There has been little change to its single family zoning percentage, which has hovered at 77% percent. Revising zoning to allow triplexes and fourplexes in all neighborhoods, and allowing 2-9 unit Missing Middle Housing and 9-19 unit and Upper Missing Middle Housing where practicable can loosen this constraint while improving its moderate rental diversity.</p> <p>Petaluma could also consider raising its height maximums, currently at 6 floors in the SmartCode transit areas; but more impactful would be a minimum height in downtown areas so that new developments sustain the density needed.</p> <p>With its focus on developing the riverfront area and other public amenities, the city could consider allowing projects to exceed FAR or density limits if they provide a significant community benefit, as awarded by the Prohousing designation.</p>	

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>The city received a state grant to develop objective design standards and parking standards for multifamily residential and mixed use development.</p> <p>It has committed to amending the Zoning Code to permit residential/mixed use projects by right without discretionary review on reuse sites from previous Housing Elements, if the project includes 20 percent of the units affordable to lower income households.</p>	<p>The city has proposed, but not yet certified, the development of an ADU construction guide to clarify the process and requirements for permit applications.</p> <p>The city could establish a Ministerial Approval process for infill housing projects of a preset number of units that meet objective standards. This City-specific program could be a separate option and in addition to SB 35, as awarded by the Prohousing designation.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>Petaluma has taken its boldest step to support affordable housing that it struggled to produce during the 5th Housing Element Cycle by waiving [nearly all impact fees for all affordable housing.</p> <p>It has demonstrated how increased flexibility on impact fees by unit versus sqft on projects deemed essential to addressing homelessness (i.e. its Homekey project) can lead to quick production.</p> <p>It is considering reducing impact fees for floors above the third story to encourage development of higher intensity projects.</p>	<p>The city has a lower percentage of its rental units supplied by Missing Middle housing (just above 25%) and has the third lowest percentage of studio and 1 bedroom units, attractive to and affordable for younger residents.</p> <p>To incentivize the creation of units below 500 sqft (affordable by design) the city could exempt them from impact fees. Just as it's done by waiving impact fees on ADUs of less than 750 square feet, we recommend codifying development impact fees that are established by unit size to promote smaller units that are affordable by design.</p> <p>The city could add discounted fees or deferrals for affordable housing development instead of relying on the City to provide financial support, which can be inefficient.</p> <p>The city should expand the fee reduction program to include multi-unit affordable-by-design housing and wrap in geographical high resource areas on transit corridors and outside of the downtown.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>With a pedestrian and river focus to its development, the city has included lower and flexible parking requirements and opportunities near the SMART rail corridor and the city's bus transit mall.</p>	<p>The city could allow more flexibility in parking requirements for mixed-use developments along mixed-use corridors. The city currently requires one space per bedroom.</p>	

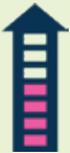
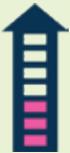
# Rohnert Park

The region’s most housing-diverse city is aiming high

Rohnert Park looks to develop a robust, mixed-use downtown in the middle of the region’s densest (and most diverse) housing stock. Its clustered neighborhoods, which center housing around schools and parks, is designed to make public amenities accessible and equitable. The result of even development and flexible zoning across the city has yielded lower levels of racial isolation, and steady (albeit lower) walkability. One of the challenges Rohnert Park faces, that this exciting downtown project can ameliorate, is that while for-sale home prices have gone down, rents have not—despite lower than average regional incomes. Over the

past 5 years or so, Rohnert Park has become one of the most creative and friendly communities when it comes to deploying innovative housing policies. This includes the unique program in their Housing Element that aims to financially support affordable housing and corresponding infrastructure through the use of a tool known as tax increment financing that projects tax revenue within a defined business district and leverages those revenues in order to post a bond. The city should continue incubating and implementing these types of innovative approaches as they move forward with bringing their long sought after downtown to life.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>The city boasts the largest multifamily zoning rates in the county—a housing trait associated with creating communities with greater diversity.</p> <p>Its zoning for a variety of housing types has ensured that the vast majority of its rental units are supplied by missing middle structures (33%) and upper missing middle to mid-rise structures (40%) instead of single family homes and reached a moderate 4.5 low wage jobs for everyone affordable home.</p> <p>The city requires inclusionary zoning in residential projects over 50 units.</p>	<p>New permitting since 2018 has seen declines in multifamily and moderate income units. As a result, between 2010 and 2019, housing burden has risen 7 percentage points to 63%, the highest in the Bay Area relative to residents’ income.</p> <p>Its plan to amend the density bonus consistent with AB 2345’s allowance of a 50% bonus is a good start and it could expand this plan by allowing moderate income units to qualify for density bonus incentives, consistent with the Prohousing designation award.</p> <p>As the city targets housing in and around its downtown development, it could consider eliminating maximum density for mixed-use projects, as awarded by the Prohousing designation.</p>	

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>Although not formally a mode of ministerial approval, Rohnert Park deploys form-based codes (FBCs) as part of its downtown plan.</p> <p>FBCs regulate the form of the buildings in a prescriptive manner and at a sufficient level of detail so that the outcome is predictable. Developers can more easily understand what the code is allowing and can work with city staff to vet the code to ensure the prescribed outcome is appropriate for the neighborhood.</p> <p>The city plans to develop an SB 35 application process, preparing Objective Design and Development Standards for multifamily and mixed-use projects.</p>	<p>As the city focuses on the downtown, it could consider streamlining the permitting of all multifamily housing within the downtown</p> <p>area through either an over-the-counter, inexpensive process that is approved administratively by the Planning Manager or through reduced public hearings for this housing type, so that the need for housing near the downtown keeps up with demand. Both are Prohousing policies.</p> <p>We urge the city to offer design standards that are clear and concise, and that minimize overly prescriptive language or aesthetic requirements that could add uncertainty to the development of projects.</p> <p>The city could also specify and target multifamily projects with at least 20% affordable housing who may use the City’s Objective Design Standards checklist.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>The city’s impact fees meet the state’s AB 602 standards to an extent that exceeds the majority of the county. They require impact fees to be proportional to the size of a new home so that smaller individual homes pay smaller fees.</p> <p>The city’s Essential Housing Bond Financing Program provides developers with access to tax exempt bonds to finance low-income, multifamily housing.</p>	<p>The city may be missing out on below market rates in upper Missing Middle housing of 30-50 units. Since a large majority of its rental units are supplied by those sizes, reducing fees could add some additional lower-income units while maintaining feasibility of development.</p> <p>The city should expand the fee reduction program to include multi-unit affordable by design housing and wrap in geographical high resource areas on transit corridors and outside of the downtown.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>Modifications to the Zoning Ordinance parking requirements on infill development, including parking reductions, eliminating parking minimums, and instituting parking maximums, is a comprehensive step towards reducing overreliance on vehicle travel throughout the city.</p>	<p>The walkability gap between neighborhoods is significant, from 19 (out of 20) in the city’s center to as low as 9 in nearby neighborhoods. This goes against elements of its clustered approach to neighborhood design, which is intended to foster accessibility to public amenities.</p> <p>As the city develops along its downtown corridors, it could require parking maximums along transit corridors.</p>	

# Santa Rosa

## A community ripe for change and a bold sustainable future

Santa Rosa, the county’s seat and largest city, is the region’s best poised city to support denser housing. With more infill sites, extensive infrastructure, and a larger downtown footprint by square acre, the city has the assets to correct its undersupply of housing. It can do so while charting a different course away from its historic pattern of lower-density development in the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown core. Its area-specific plans are models for the type of higher-density development that will power our

economic engine, forge a more sustainable future, and encourage ambitious development proposals that foster more pedestrian-centric, transit-oriented lifestyles. Building out from the downtown with gentle density can close the walkability gap, support middle-income housing for the local workforce employed downtown, and keep the downtown at full capacity, all steps worthy of the West Coast’s largest city between San Francisco and Portland.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>The city’s area Specific Plans are models of higher density planning. Tailored to community need and linked to transit, commerce, and job centers, the city is driving growth within these neighborhoods.</p> <p>The Downtown Station Area Specific Plan spurs high density primarily through its limitation of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) restrictions. The city’s allowance of FAR rates of nearly 4–6 yields multi-story in neighborhoods that sustain it.</p> <p>Creating affordable housing near sites of employment is an important goal. The city made good progress on affordable units for low- and very low-income households in the 5th Housing Element cycle, yielding a moderate 3.7 low wage jobs for every one affordable home—but many service workers, teachers, and essential workers continue to commute longer distances to work downtown.</p>	<p>The total amount of land zoned for single family housing remains relatively high compared to the region, at 87%. Revising zoning to allow triplexes and fourplexes in all neighborhoods, and allowing 2–9 unit Missing Middle Housing and 9–19 unit and Upper Missing Middle Housing where practicable can loosen this constraint while improving its moderate rental diversity. Currently 45% of all rental units are situated in single family homes and only 25% in Missing Middle (2–9 unit) structures.</p> <p>Santa Rosa can expand its vision of transit and arterial routes beyond the downtown SMART station in order to upzone its “neighborhood hubs” with similar prioritization as downtown.</p> <p>Executing on its Missing Middle housing is constrained by lack of incentives equivalent to its downtown permitting. The city could allow moderate income units to qualify for density bonuses, as awarded by the Prohousing designation.</p> <p>To meet its housing needs while preserving character, the city could adopt form-based codes, allowing it to balance historic preservation with diversity in unit sizes and styles.</p>	

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<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>The city employs some Objective Design standards that can speed development and provide certainty, but challenges remain in its execution.</p> <p>High priority processing of housing developments of 50 to 150 units for all income levels on lots larger than 10 acres will help close the 50% permitting gap between above moderate and below moderate homes since 2018.</p> <p>The city pre-reviews ADU plans and provides incentives to residents using these pre-reviewed plans—a model plan that can be extended to several additional affordable-by-design housing types. In its 6th Housing Element Cycle the city has promised to review and revise the subjective design review findings.</p>	<p>The recent initiation of the Cannery project, in development for 20 years, serves as a cautionary tale of how delays prevent the city from meeting residents’ demands. A similar delay on housing proposed today would postpone groundbreaking until 2043.</p> <p>The city’s objective development and design standards (Ord-2019-018) entails a number of requirements (such as facade changes) that can become overly prescriptive and retain subjective assessment. The city could develop a clear Design Standards checklist, as awarded by the Prohousing designation, which allows applicants to self-certify that their projects meet a set of objective standards, and require no additional entitlements, notices, or hearings.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>The Downtown Station Area Specific Plan allows deferral of development impact and permit fees. A fee reduction program for high density multi-unit affordable housing in the downtown area also represents significant innovation and has led to increased applications from developers.</p> <p>The city’s EIFD, though in its early stages, could help target funding to affordable housing projects.</p>	<p>The city should continue to certify its compliance with AB 602 to ensure that impact fees are proportional to the size of a new home so that smaller individual homes pay smaller fees.</p> <p>City fees can add considerable cost to the total development cost of affordable housing, upwards of \$20,000 per unit. By reducing the need to pay these city fees, the savings to an affordable housing development is significant.</p> <p>The city currently offers other incentives on a case-by-case basis for development of high-density residential on large sites. But fee reductions on a case-by-case basis are unpredictable for developers.</p> <p>The city should expand the fee reduction program to include multi-unit affordable-by-design housing and wrap in geographil high resource areas on transit corridors and outside of the downtown.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>The city complies with the state’s restrictions on parking minimums within a half mile of transit.</p> <p>The city’s modification of parking requirements on infill development, including parking reductions, eliminating parking minimums, and instituting parking maximums, are an excellent step built on the recognition that existing parking is underutilized.</p>	<p>The walkability gap between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods is significant, from 19 (out of 20) in the downtown area to as low as 9 in nearby neighborhoods. The city can close this gap through enhanced transit options that will reduce VMT in less walkable neighborhoods.</p>	

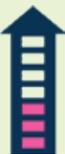
# Sebastopol

## Arts and culture hub with the potential to create a more diverse community

The signature addition of the Barlow Market District and all that has followed—from a pedestrian-friendly dining and shopping center to a community space—affirmed Sebastopol’s livability-focused approach to development and provided a launch pad for the city’s recovery from the pandemic. In turn, it’s created the opportunity to add dense housing on the city’s smaller footprint. Sebastopol is taking steps in the right direction: is the only city in the county to see a drop in its share of older population between 2015 and today and continues to attract diverse residents. Still, there is work to be done: it has the second oldest population, the smallest foreign-born population, and the third highest average income by household. Sebastopol has seen a drop in its rate of housing cost burden across

the region, down to 43 percent of renters from 60 percent in 2010—although this may be due more to the rising income of its newest residents. The challenge is how to accommodate its newest residents and new employees at all income levels, especially those in the service sector, arts, and other professions that make Sebastopol unique. Currently, Sebastopol has the highest ratio of jobs to housing. When it does build, it is most welcoming to its higher earners: it currently has the third highest low wage jobs-to-affordable housing ratio in the region, with nearly six low wage jobs for every one affordable housing unit. Expanding affordable and affordable-by-design housing options could further leverage its vibrant social environment to create a more diverse community.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>Sebastopol has demonstrated ambition and creativity when it comes to land use designations that permit a diversity of development. It has eliminated the 2-story limit and now allows up to 3 units on qualifying single-family parcels.</p> <p>By-right residential uses in underutilized commercial and downtown zones and allowing exemptions to affordable housing in the growth ordinance have supplemented these steps.</p>	<p>Relaxing development standards such as setbacks, height restrictions, and the above-mentioned parking requirements would aid in the development of “plex-style” or Missing Middle housing.</p> <p>Revising zoning to allow triplexes and fourplexes in all neighborhoods, and allowing 2-9 unit Missing Middle Housing and 9-19 unit and Upper Missing Middle Housing where practicable can loosen this constraint while improving its moderate rental diversity.</p>	

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<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>The city has expedited processing for affordable housing including one-stop preliminary review, concurrent application review, designation of a primary contact, and prioritizing building permit and grading plan review, permitting and inspection.</p> <p>The city allows units in which 40% is affordable to be eligible for a by-right review process. This is ambitious and in the spirit of pro-housing development, but may prove unfeasible. We recommend modifying this requirement to allow residential uses by-right in commercial and downtown zones when at least 20-25% of units are affordable.</p>	<p>To achieve the goal of 80% of housing projects using Objective Design Standards, we recommend eliminating design review board and discretionary review for developments with three or more new units.</p> <p>Multifamily housing should not require a conditional use permit or city council approval unless the builder is asking for unique and extraordinary concessions.</p> <p>Streamlining the adjustment application by eliminating public hearing for projects limited by property features such as a parcel’s size, shape, or topography is excellent and can be extended.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>The city commits to deferring collection of residential development fees until final building inspection or certificate of occupancy.</p>	<p>The city could target affordable housing by removing impact fees for deed-restricted housing.</p> <p>The state’s AB 602 law, when triggered, automatically requires that impact fees be updated from a per unit assessment, to a proportional or square footage assessment. This ensures that smaller individual homes pay smaller fees.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>Sebastopol is bikeable and walkable. Finding ways to encourage a mode-shift that supports alternative transportation options should build on those options and allow for greater reductions in parking minimums.</p>	<p>Parking minimums continue to be a topline constraint to the feasibility of residential development/mixed-use development opportunities for gentle density within the downtown Sebastopol Footprint. We recommend reducing parking standards and eliminating parking minimums, especially for lower cost housing types. They can add in excess of \$30,000 per spot to the cost of development and can raise rents by as much as 17%.</p>	

# City of Sonoma

## Building taller and denser in a historic community

A hub of the County’s wine-based tourism and site of a historic downtown, the City of Sonoma provides long-time residents with amenities and infrastructure that sustain the high quality of life. But preservation of historic districts and restrictions on new development run the risk of exacerbating an already expensive housing market, which is driven by the high cost of land. New development—especially of affordable units—is constrained and desperately needed in order to attract and ensure young families, workforce residents, and younger residents can live where they

work, which happens to be a core element of the city’s 2020 General Plan vision statement. However, a high rate of housing cost burden (60 percent) continues to challenge the ability for the local workforce to plant long-term roots in the community. The City of Sonoma boasts the region’s boldest inclusionary zoning requirement (25 percent), but the City will likely find greater long-term success through the courting of affordable housing developers which can deliver more units at deeper levels of affordability.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>Zoning reform faces two limits within the City of Sonoma: the GMO currently limits development within the city to an average of 65 units per year. And the designation of historic districts imposes restrictions on height, among other design features.</p> <p>Partial steps towards high inclusionary zoning by requiring that rental projects with 5 or more units have at least 25% of units be affordable to extremely low, very low, and low-income categories is ambitious, though it may be difficult for developers to supplement those units in smaller projects.</p> <p>As noted in Housing Element reviews, placing lower-income units in a small range of neighborhoods and none in the higher-resource areas east of Broadway maintains the historic division of a wealthy east and lower-income west. This has contributed to higher than average regional racial isolation scores.</p>	<p>The city must do more to make it affordable to workforce residents. Sonoma has the highest low wage jobs-to-affordable housing ratio at a rate of 9:1, meaning many employees in service industry roles and agriculture compete over fewer affordable units.</p> <p>It can revise zoning to allow triplexes and fourplexes in all neighborhoods, and allowing 2-9 unit Missing Middle Housing and 9-19 unit and Upper Missing Middle Housing where practicable, as awarded by the Prohousing designation. For example, it could add up to 12-plex by right in select zones.</p> <p>Its current FAR limits constrain the height and massing of the building; additional calculations on what counts towards FAR also constrain growth. Reducing height restrictions can unlock plexes that are still consistent with neighborhood design features.</p> <p>Revising the Development Code along Highway 12 to allow for 100% affordable projects should be a priority. The city can allow or require 4-5 stories and reduce requirements for setbacks, parking, open space, and public space.</p>	

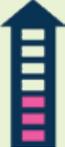
Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>The city has adopted multifamily objective zoning standards and design standards to ensure multifamily projects are permitted pursuant to an objective project review.</p> <p>To ensure that the city’s historic, small-town character is preserved and enhanced, the city deploys more intensive subjective design and review standards that can add time, uncertainty, and cost to development.</p>	<p>The city must address excessive subjective terminology in order to provide objectivity in the design review process for more housing typologies including Missing Middle, multi-unit development, and allowances under SB 9’s lot-split provisions.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>The city has lower impact fees on both single- and multifamily housing relative to regional cities.</p> <p>It is in the planning stages of adopting an impact fee to address the demand for affordable housing generated by new single family units and smaller residential projects.</p>	<p>Currently, fee reductions on a case-by-case basis are unpredictable for affordable developers. The high cost of land already acts as a deterrent for affordable developers.</p> <p>The city could structure fees for 2-4 unit projects by square footage rather than unit number for a more proportional fee size in compliance with AB 602.</p> <p>The city should tap new or existing tax revenues (i.e. through a second home tax) to create a funding stream for affordable housing developments.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>The city of Sonoma offers reductions in its residential parking standards for affordable as well as mixed-use, live-work, and pedestrian-oriented housing.</p> <p>Parking reductions are also offered as an incentive for developments to provide increased pedestrian-oriented open space.</p>	<p>The city must allow more flexibility in parking requirements for mixed-use developments along mixed-use corridors.</p>	

# Windsor

## A vibrant town square with opportunity to add density

Windsor, slated as the next newest terminus of the SMART train corridor, has embraced its role as a regional transit stop with the development of a townsquare. With it comes the opportunity for greater density in the city core. However, the town should consider revising its approach to downtown development, whether on infill sites or for new development with inclusionary zoning. The existing lower density downtown is capable of supporting increased density, but higher parking requirements, prolonged permitting, and restrictions on multifamily housing all have the potential to limit where affordable housing is developed. Reforming these within the next year would better align with Windsor’s stated commitment of encouraging a more transit-oriented,

climate conscious, and walkable downtown. The significantly high rate of single family zoning (currently near 87%) is a major constraining factor that will limit gentle density, especially for desperately needed Missing Middle housing. Currently, around two-thirds of the city’s rental units are supplied by single family homes while only 30% of the rental units consist of smaller 2-, 3-, and 4-unit plexes. The city has made good progress with low-income affordable development during its 5th Housing Element cycle, showing that it can build for many income ranges. As a result, it has a moderately higher number of affordable units for its lowest income members than the rest of the region.

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<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>The city will make it easier for affordable units in mixed-use zones by removing the non-residential requirements for projects that include affordable units and by expanding allowable uses to include community rooms, leasing office, childcare, and similar uses.</p> <p>The town will also remove the second-floor residential requirement and will allow residential on the first floor if a project includes affordable units.</p> <p>The city allows for multifamily homes in mixed-use zones but as noted by the Housing Element it must clarify these provisions in its Town Center and Boulevard Commercial zones to ensure residential uses are allowed on all floors.</p>	<p>Given its restrictive growth ordinance constraints, the city’s best option is to build up at a gentle density (4-5 stories) near transit and downtown. Revising zoning to allow triplexes and fourplexes in all neighborhoods, and allowing 2-9 unit Missing Middle Housing and 9-19 unit and Upper Missing Middle Housing where practicable can loosen this constraint while improving its moderate rental diversity.</p> <p>In order for gentle density to be impactful, the town should consider minimizing its existing height limits and expanding the allowable density ranges from three to six dwelling units per acre within single-family residential.</p>	

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>The town received a Senate Bill (SB) 2 grant to develop residential objective design and development standards to facilitate non-discretionary permitting for multifamily housing projects in accordance with SB 35.</p> <p>The city has made progress facilitating consolidation of its smaller lots—a means to maximize the allotted land for use. It utilizes a ministerial process for lot consolidation unless other discretionary reviews are required as part of the project.</p>	<p>The town’s entitlement standards can be extended to projects of 11 or more dwelling units which will address a slower approval process for multifamily projects designed for lower-income households.</p> <p>Currently, multifamily housing is only allowed with a Use Permit in the Surrounding Residential, Village Residential, and Neighborhood Center Commercial zones. This can add considerable delay and costs to much needed denser housing.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>The town offers deferral of development impact or permit fees for projects that include units affordable to lower income households, on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>Impact fee deferrals on a case-by-case basis are unpredictable for developers.</p> <p>The city’s impact fee structure currently makes it harder for smaller units to be favored over larger homes. The state’s AB 602 law, when triggered, automatically requires that impact fees be updated from a per unit assessment, to a proportional or square footage assessment, ensuring that smaller individual homes pay smaller fees.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>The town is set to review and reduce its per-unit parking requirements for multifamily, affordable, homeless, and farmworker housing in order to lower development costs.</p> <p>For example, in return for increased inclusionary units, the Shiloh Terrace project proposed a reduction in the number of parking spaces, changes in height restrictions and a reduction in open space requirements.</p>	<p>Windsor’s parking standards are relatively high in comparison with other cities in Sonoma County. For example, the multifamily residential parking requirements are a significant constraint to development and need to be lowered.</p> <p>The town should allow more flexibility in parking requirements for mixed-use developments along mixed-use corridors.</p>	

# County of Sonoma

## Room to build near infrastructure, concentrate future housing development, and realize sustainable outcomes

The county’s unincorporated land covers both a large and diverse territory, next to urban centers and rural regions, and adjacent to natural space. The diversely situated, non-contiguous, and multi-jurisdictional quality of unincorporated land presents unique challenges for growth as well as opportunity to find creative solutions. But as with many formal cities and towns, the high cost of housing in unincorporated zones means that long-term residents, families with young children, teachers, and visitor-serving business workers have been increasingly displaced.

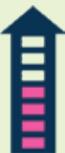
Although the county is developing creative ways to incentivize density, the Housing Element notes the dramatic trend towards renting for newer residents, from 7 percent prior to 1989 to 62 percent who moved after 2017. This means the County must pivot towards housing stock suitable for affordable renting. Allowing itself greater flexibility to provide Missing Middle housing, smaller and denser units near infrastructure will allow for affordable by design options that take advantage of adjacent, existing infrastructure.

Certain restrictions on where dense housing can be situated, such as near septic and sewer services, can

prove challenging in unincorporated areas. The county has taken steps that address this unique challenge, for example, by assisting developers in locating sites for affordable and mixed-income rental housing in areas served by public transportation, schools, retail, and other services. It is also expanding its Affordable Housing (AH) and Workforce Housing (WH) combining districts to sites in light industrial and commercial zones where infrastructure may already be available. These actions all have substantial opportunity to mitigate immediate financial impacts related to infrastructure updates.

This has the County poised to address its significant increase on RHNA numbers for the 6th Housing Element cycle—the largest increase of any of the jurisdictions. The County met and vastly exceeded its totals in the 5th Cycle in every income category, especially in low income, which it surpassed by nearly 850 percent. The unique challenge of unincorporated zones can also mean an opportunity for the County to take advantage of less uniform rules to find creative solutions in land use and nontraditional buildings like factory-built homes or modular units as part of a comprehensive solution to rental housing.

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Upzoning:</b> Land use reforms to promote Missing Middle housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plex zoning</li> <li>• Reduction of SFZ</li> <li>• Allowable Density through increased units per parcel or increased height limits</li> <li>• Density Bonuses</li> <li>• Inclusionary Zoning</li> <li>• By-right residential in non-residential zones</li> </ul>	<p>Faced with constraints on where to build in proximity to infrastructure, the County has created flexible land use provisions to make the most of land that can best accommodate denser housing.</p> <p>In addition to eliminating most provisions of the Growth Management Program, they have:</p> <p>Revised their Zoning Code to allow smaller units to count as a fraction of a unit toward a project’s density.</p> <p>Allowed “Cottage Housing”—multifamily housing comparable in size and scale to single-family development—in low- and medium-density zones.</p> <p>Expanded the Affordable Housing (AH) Combining District to include light industrial and commercial zones so that they have a better chance of having adequate public facilities like sewer and water and are located near transit, commercial uses, and schools.</p>	<p>Permit by-right development of other “plex-style” housing (2-12 units) in all residential zones to increase the availability of less expensive housing types as already shown by Cottage Housing.</p> <p>Increase the number of allowable units from three to four cottages after successful demonstration of its impact.</p> <p>Allow a higher density of up to 30 units per acre in the AH Combining district now that this housing can be sustained by infrastructure.</p> <p>Revising zoning to allow triplexes and fourplexes in all neighborhoods, and allowing 2-9 unit Missing Middle Housing and 9-19 unit and Upper Missing Middle Housing where practicable can loosen this constraint while improving its rental diversity.</p>	

Prohousing Categories and Policies	Sample Exemplary Policies	Progress Towards Prohousing Policies	Point Score
<p><b>Ministerial Approval:</b> To reduce subjective review and introduce clear standards for development with an eye toward increasing certainty and decreasing time and cost in the entitlement and permitting processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective design standards checklist for 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Pre-approved or prototype designs for Missing Middle, ADU, and multifamily units</li> <li>• Reduced approval levels from Planning or Design commission and/or consolidated approvals between departments</li> <li>• Minimization of public hearings</li> <li>• Over-the-counter design review and One-stop-shop permitting process</li> <li>• Priority processing for multifamily, infill, or low-income housing</li> </ul>	<p>Permit Sonoma continues to fast-track applications with an affordable housing component, aiming to reduce the processing time by up to one-half of the normal time it takes to process planning and building permits.</p> <p>One unique challenge is how to minimize the additional reviews required for developments not sited near infrastructure. For example, septic reviews can extend the review process and cause delay.</p>	<p>Some of the county's processes remain discretionary, including for multifamily and mixed-use projects.</p> <p>The development of a written SB 35 application process, as noted in the Housing Element, will provide a streamlined ministerial approval process to qualified residential and mixed-use development.</p>	
<p><b>Impact Fees Reduction:</b> To reduce the expense and uncertainty of development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver or significant reduction of impact fees</li> <li>• Elimination of fees on all affordable housing</li> <li>• Fees by size of unit rather than number</li> <li>• Fee deferral schedules on 1 or more housing type</li> <li>• Promotion of innovative housing and construction models (i.e. modular or other off-site development) that support affordable-by-design solutions</li> </ul>	<p>The county's boldest step has been to modify the Density Unit Equivalent program to encourage the provision of units suitable for large families. It has done this by eliminating the 1.25 unit calculation disincentive for four-bedroom units and allowing both three- and four-bedroom units to count as a 1.0 density unit.</p> <p>To support affordable housing the County has contributed \$30 million into the County Fund for Housing (CFH), making assisted projects more competitive.</p>	<p>The Affordable Housing Combining district allows a higher density but the city should consider more concessions to projects that meet additional affordable housing needs and address any backlog in affordable units.</p>	
<p><b>Parking Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination of parking minimums for all housing</li> <li>• Reduction of parking ratios to under 1:1 per unit</li> <li>• Reduced parking requirements for all affordable housing</li> <li>• Elimination of parking requirements within 1 mile of transit (AB 2097)</li> </ul>	<p>Considering the geographical coverage of the unincorporated communities, the county offers surprisingly robust incentives for reduced parking requirements and lower parking requirements generally than would be expected for unincorporated communities.</p>	<p>The county should continue to study potential parking reforms, particularly how smart parking policies could positively impact housing, transportation and other goals. Additionally, it could require unbundled parking for transit-oriented developments or communities adjacent to larger incorporated hubs.</p>	

# Project Endorsement

## Woodmark Apartments



**DEVELOPER**  
Pacific West  
Communities,  
LLC

**TOTAL UNITS**  
84

**JURISDICTION**  
Sebastopol

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- All units are deed-restricted affordable to those making 30–60 percent of the Area Median Income
  - 48 units deed-restricted affordable for current and/or retired farmworkers

Woodmark Apartments is a high-density, all-affordable, multifamily project close to downtown Sebastopol.

It is located approximately a mile from a variety of essential services and key amenities such as Ives Park, the Sebastopol Regional Library, and two grocery stores. In combination with its applicant restrictions, it offers a unique opportunity for workforce members of the community to secure housing in one of the highest resourced areas in the county.

Generation Housing strongly supports this project as it aims to deliver desperately needed affordable housing for the farmworkers that fuel the agricultural engine of West County.

# Appendix

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# Data Sources

## UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU

The United States Census Bureau conducts censuses and surveys on the American people and economy, including the decennial U.S. census and the American Community Survey. We use data from the Census surveys and programs listed below.

### Population Estimates Program (PEP)

The Population Estimates Program produces population and housing unit estimates for regions and jurisdictions of different sizes across the United States. We use decennial totals for population and housing, and intercensal estimates for the years in between decennial censuses, for years ranging from 1970 to 2020.

### American Community Survey (ACS)

The American Community Survey is a regular demographic survey of American households that began in 2005. We use both 1-year estimates and 5-year estimates of household summary statistics at various geographic levels, such as the county or Census Block Group level, with data ranging from the years 2005 to 2021.

### Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics (LEHD)

The Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics program collects detailed data on employers and employees at various geographic levels and across different industries. We specifically use LEHD Origin–Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) data from 2020 about jobs and workers located within Sonoma County.

### Planning Database (PDB)

The Census Planning Database contains housing, demographic, and socioeconomic data down to the Census Block Group, and was originally designed as a tool to aid census and survey planning. We use 2022 PDB data to study relationships between housing and demographic at the block group level.

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD) BUILDING PERMIT DATABASE

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development collects data on privately owned residential construction and stores it in their Building Permits Database Homebuilding. We use monthly data on permit-issuing entities in Sonoma County for the years 1970 to 2023.

## OTHERING AND BELONGING INSTITUTE

The Othering and Belonging Institute collects data on zoning designations from jurisdictions' General plan land use documents and zoning map shapefiles provided by the Association of Bay Area Governments, municipal planning departments, or downloaded from ESRI's ArcGIS HUB. The data was made available as part of their Racial Segregation in the San Francisco Bay Area publication series from 2019 to 2021 through their Zoning Report titled "Single-Family Zoning in the San Francisco Bay Area: Characteristics of Exclusionary Communities" (October 7, 2020). We use data on Sonoma County from their GIS sampling of land area by zoning designations.

## CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (HCD)

HCD collects data on all housing development applications, entitlements, building permits, and completions within California jurisdictions for the 5th and 6th cycle Housing Elements. It makes that data available through their Annual Progress Reports (APR). We use data on Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and construction and permitting activity for Sonoma County jurisdictions dating back to 2015.

## IPUMS

IPUMS is a census and survey database produced by the Institute for Social Research and Data Innovation at the University of Minnesota that integrates various census data across both time and space. We use data from the IPUMS programs listed below.

### IPUMS NHGIS

The National Historical Geographic Information System provides United States population and housing data at various geographic levels and across time. We use housing unit estimates from the 1970, 1980, and 1990 decennial censuses.

Steven Manson, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, Tracy Kugler, and Steven Ruggles. IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 17.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. 2022. doi.org/10.18128/D050.V17.0

### IPUMS USA

IPUMS USA collects and harmonizes United States census microdata, or information on individual census respondents. We use 2021 sample data from the 5-year American Community Survey.

Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, and Megan Schouweiler. IPUMS USA: Version 13.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2023. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V13.0

## APARTMENT LIST

Apartment List tracks pricing and availability changes on properties that list with its platform at various geographic levels (national, state, metro, county, and city) from 2017 on. Data is made available through their monthly Vacancy Index. We use monthly data on the ratio of vacant units to total units among properties that list on their platform from January 2017 to January 2023.

## POLICYMAP

Policy Map uses national data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates which average five years of ACS survey data. It makes these available through its Housing Needs Assessment Reports which present data, maps, and visualizations describing local demographics and measures of housing affordability, housing stock characteristics, and variations in key housing indicators by race, ethnicity, age and income. We use 2021 data from its Federally Subsidized Housing Units inventory, which does not include approximately 2,615 Housing Choice Vouchers.

# Report Contributors

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### Joshua Shipper, PhD

Director of Special Initiatives  
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Joshua comes to Generation Housing with community-based, academic, and policy experience working to understand how each generation defines what equity looks like for them. After helping to identify solutions to the growing racial wealth gap and home financialization trends shaping communities like West Oakland prior to 2010, Joshua completed his PhD in Political Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 2018. There he focused on American politics, race, and equity policy, contributing to survey and quantitative research on American attitudes shaping policies on wealth, taxation, and education. Applying those insights to politics and policy, Joshua taught political science courses in the Midwest while working to reform state funding for affordable housing with Wisconsin State Assemblywoman Francesca Hong.

Now having returned to the Bay Area, he has most recently served as the Director of Data & Grants at the Committee on the Shelterless where he helped support evidence-based, housing-first solutions to homelessness in Sonoma County including through Project Homekey and CalAIM.

## PRINCIPAL DATA ANALYST

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Max joins the Generation Housing team with academic and professional experience in data analysis. A recent graduate from the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in both Statistics and Economics, Max has worked on improving transparency and reproducibility in policy analysis with the Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences (BITSS) and studied pandemic unemployment insurance and Proposition 13 tax revenue impacts at the Berkeley Institute for Young Americans (BIFYA). He recently joined the private sector, working with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to improve the detection of fraud in the Medicare system. As a part of Gen H, Max is furthering a long-standing passion for effective, socially oriented policy by placing the power of modern data analysis tools in the hands of housing advocates.

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Calum (Cal) Weeks is an energetic, passionate, community-minded professional that brings over 5 years of experience building partnerships among diverse stakeholders in order to help deliver holistic policy solutions. Most recently, he worked for the Bank Information Center (BIC) in Washington D.C. as an Administrative & Research Assistant. In this capacity, he conducted research which sought to identify innovative solutions that would limit the harm multilateral development banks (MDBs) programs and policies have on people and the planet. Prior to that, he served as a Field Representative for a North Bay State Assemblymember, amassing substantive knowledge around an array of critical issues impacting community health, including: transportation, housing, small business, and K-12 education.

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# Acknowledgements

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# Founders and Members

## FOUNDERS



## #WEAREGENH CAMPAIGN & PROMOTORES FUNDERS



## Media Partners



## CATALYZING MEMBERS

### Platinum



### Diamond



### Gold



### Silver



North Coast Builders Exchange

Cory Maguire

Rick Theis

Tony Crabb + Barbara Grasseschi

# About Generation Housing



## VISION

We envision vibrant communities where everyone has a place to call home and can contribute to an equitable, healthy, and resilient North Bay.

## MISSION

Generation Housing champions opportunities to increase the supply, affordability, and diversity of homes throughout the North Bay. We promote effective policy, sustainable funding resources, and collaborative efforts to create an equitable, healthy, and resilient community for everyone.

## OUR STORY

In the aftermath of the 2017 wildfires, our community came together to help heal—including banding together to identify urgent solutions for the pressing housing crisis the fires exacerbated. Generation Housing was launched in the fire's wake to bring those solutions to life. Today, Gen H is leading the North Bay's prohousing movement. We're focused on breaking down the barriers that have led to the extreme shortage of housing in our community by working to: advocate for smart development projects (not sprawl!), change local policies that have held us up, bring in outside funding to help projects get built, and create a prohousing movement led by anyone who wants to make sure that folks from all backgrounds can afford to continue living here.

All of our work is driven by our Guiding Principles, which means that we engage collaboratively across sectors, view housing as a critical piece of our community's ecosystem, and promote its development through lenses of equity and sustainability.

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### PEOPLE

Everyone deserves to have a place to call home—a mix of ages, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic status contributes to our economic and social vibrancy.

### PLACE

Vibrant walkable urban areas, rich agriculture economy, and environmental stewardship require thoughtful, sustainable housing development.

### HOUSING OPTIONS

Our communities need a range of housing types, sizes, materials, and affordability levels.

### SUSTAINABILITY

We support development of energy efficient and climate resilient homes and communities that offer access to jobs, schools, parks, and other needed amenities.

### IMPACT

Safe, stable, affordable housing near community services is integral to economic mobility, educational opportunity, and individual, family, and community health.

### COLLABORATION

We are committed to working collaboratively and transparently—conducting positive advocacy, aligning efforts along the points of agreement, and working across sectors to create actionable and lasting solutions.

# Project Endorsement

## Montaldo Apartments



### DEVELOPER

Civic Park Sonoma Highway, LLC

### TOTAL UNITS

50

### JURISDICTION

Sonoma

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Extremely Low Income units
- Very Low Income units
- 5 Low Income units

Montaldo Apartments will be located less than a mile from Sonoma Valley Hospital, a half-block from the Sonoma Valley Community Health Center, a half-mile from the Sonoma Valley Regional Library, and less than a mile from two major grocery stores and other essential services.

The proximity of this project enables most daily trips to be achieved either through walking, via a bicycle, or through the usage of the public transit system. The intentional design of the outdoor community spaces promotes community cohesion and growth in natural environments.

This project aligns with the goals of Generating Housing by creating a community where the local workforce is able to live and thrive near their places of work, surrounded by nearby essential services and amenities.





**Generation Housing**

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Santa Rosa, CA 95401

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A project of Tides  
Center, a 501(c)(3)  
nonprofit organization

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